

TRANSCRIPT

You have just published an update to the 2010 GET Youth Report. Could you please tell us what has changed in the past 12 months?

Sara Elder: “Unfortunately, one year on, we have to report that the situation for young people in the labour market has not gotten better. In fact with the economic crisis proving to be much more deep rooted than initially thought, it is unlikely that the situation in the youth labour market is going to improve any time soon.”

What are the particular challenges facing young people in developed and developing countries?

Sara Elder: “We have the youth in the developed economies which were hit particularly hard by the economic crisis. Here, the youth unemployment rate and the youth unemployment number in 2010 were higher than ever before measured. At the same time, the youth unemployment rate between 2009 and 2010 continued to increase, this makes the region unique.

Here we have a very different situation because few young people can afford to be unemployed. So the youth unemployment rate is not the indicator to focus on here. Rather we talk about working poverty, we talk about vulnerable employment. Most young people take up whatever work is available to them, often time under very poor working conditions and at poverty wages.”

Other than unemployment, what are some other challenges faced by young people today in the labour market?

Sara Elder: “Part-time employment for example has sky-rocketed in recent years in developed countries. Now part-time employment in itself is not necessarily a negative thing especially when young people are combining work and studies. However the recent magnitude of the increase hints at the fact that part-time employment has been taken up as an involuntary action. Many young people are finding that they can only find part-time and temporary employment.”

What can be done to address these challenges?

Sara Elder: “Sustained investments in young people are what we need now more than ever. Long-term investment in the education and training system for example; Creative fiscal policy that will subsidize youth employment; these are some of the examples of the solutions that are being called for. Unfortunately, they are being called for at a time when governments have very little fiscal space to respond to such action. Fortunately, we have other players that can now step in where governments cannot. Many non-state actors, trade unions, workers’ organizations, private enterprises for example are now playing more of an active role to promote youth employment. Private organizations are now recognizing that investing in youth makes perfect business sense.”

How does the future look for young people? What are the predictions in the GET Youth update?

Sara Elder: “The long-term unemployment rate is the measure of the share of the unemployed who have been looking for work for 12 months or longer. And what we see now is that the youth long-term unemployment rate is surpassing the adult long-term unemployment rate by far. This is a strong confirmation of the standard view that during economic crises and recoveries it will take the youth labour market longer to recover.”

“I know that it's not easy for young people but we should encourage our young people to not become discouraged, to keep themselves active. It doesn't have to be in the labour market - they can volunteer; they can come together through social networks, something that's keeping them engaged. Because it's the lack of engagement that can create a sense of social discontent, a sense of detachment. So, keep positive, keep engaged and push for a better future.”