

► Youth, employment and the future

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►► The youth employment challenge is constantly evolving, but the policies are not keeping pace.

Youth is a passage in life – it is not a permanent condition. Yet, it is a period that can define the rest of a person's life, with access to work one of many preoccupations. Appropriate guidance and support during this passage into adulthood is necessary, no matter the culture or the country.

Every young generation tries to foresee its future. Even if they do not have enough information, they wonder about expected scenarios of the future labour markets they will encounter. And they make lifetime decisions based on those expectations: what they will study, where they will work, what type of business they will seek out, where they will live, whether they will marry, will they have children and, if so, when.

These questions and quandaries are nothing new for any young generation. But in addition to these usual issues, the current (and future) generation of young women and men are facing unique challenges due to the period of time in which all of humanity is living.

For one, they are living in a time of rapid change, with many implications for the capacities of economies and societies to guarantee good jobs for youth.

- i. They are likely to live longer than previous generations, including more years after their retirement from work. But healthcare and pension systems are already challenged, especially in regions with a high dependency ratio, and will probably face additional stress when the current generation retires.
- ii. Climate change is also critically affecting long-term job scenarios – new jobs will be created in the renewable energy sector while many traditional, less environmentally sustainable sectors will decline.
- iii. Migration may partially offset the effects of an ageing population and shrinking labour force.

Today, around 70 per cent of migrant flows involve people younger than 30 (ILO 2017a).

- iv. While new technologies are both creating and destroying jobs, young workers are more at risk of losing their jobs due to automation than older workers because they tend to be employed in sectors and occupations that are likely to automate (ILO 2020b). Technologies are also creating new forms of work and new employment relationships that are not within legislative frameworks. New business models, including in the sharing economy, are common destinations for youth that often remain unprotected.

To add to these challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic and its recessionary impact on the global economy will have devastating effects on the world of work, particularly on young workers. Youth are harder hit by recessions in general because they tend to be the first fired, and they suffer more than older workers from interruptions to hiring because they constitute a disproportionately large share of job-seekers (O'Higgins 2001). Young workers are also overrepresented in the informal economy and in economic sectors that are likely to be more severely affected by the pandemic, such as the wholesale, retail and tourism sectors. Overall, the pandemic already has dealt a triple shock to young people:

- i. disruptions to education, training and work-based learning that may reduce young people's chances to obtain decent work in the future;
- ii. increased difficulties for those previously unemployed as well as for young jobseekers who enter the labour market amid a collapse in job vacancies; and
- iii. job and income losses for those in employment, along with a deteriorating quality of their jobs (ILO 2020b).

As countries open up after the extended lockdown period, how young people are addressed in employment policies will be a crucial aspect of sustainable development.

Policies for youth employment must take into account the impact of these unique drivers of change, which requires a rethinking of how to meet the emerging challenges and leverage the opportunities through appropriate policy development and implementation. **Youth employment policies need to be upgraded to the new circumstances of the youth. A new approach must be embraced.**

The ILO has recently adopted an organisation-wide strategy to address the youth employment challenge post COVID 19. The ILO's Youth Employment Action plan 2020-30 is based on a longstanding engagement with policymaking to ensure more and better jobs for young women and men. In 2012, in the continuing response to the 2008–09 financial crisis, the ILO constituents adopted the Call for Action for Youth Employment and a follow-up plan on youth employment for 2012–19. The Call for Action recommends measures to foster pro-employment growth and decent job creation through macroeconomic policies, labour market policies, youth employability and entrepreneurship, and rights at work. It is based on the principle of an integrated, balanced and coherent approach that addresses the demand and supply sides of the labour market and employment quantity and quality and is built on social dialogue.

The normative underpinnings of the Call for Action are reflected in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, adopted by ILO constituents in June 2019. The Centenary Declaration, articulating the direction for going forward from the past 100 years as an organization, charts a people-centred approach, with social justice the goal. It is defined by three pillars: (i) strengthening the capacities of all people; (ii) strengthening the institutions of work; and (iii) promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all people.

As we look to the future and to policies that can address the evolving world of work for young women and men – a future that is likely to be different from what previous generations of youth faced, it is necessary to be pragmatic. **These**

policies must be based on the solid and tested paradigm of the Call for Action while reflecting the human-centred approach of the Centenary Declaration. In addition, they need to take into account the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on life trajectories.

Youth aspirations for the future, in the context of recurring crisis

Young people today are experiencing a crucial stage in the labour market: They are part of the largest segment of the population of all those of working age. They were born in the late 1990s and have grown up in the midst of numerous and major transformations in the world of production and work – the globalization of markets, massive migration processes, increased use of information technology, automation, artificial intelligence and new forms of work.

Despite being more educated than previous generations, being a “digital generation” and having experienced one of the greatest economic growth and poverty reduction periods in recent history, they have also witnessed (in real time via television or other social media), major events that have had global impact. These include terrorist attacks, financial crises, trade wars, civil wars and now the coronavirus pandemic and other social protests. Each event has had and is having significant economic and social consequences. Today's youth, in some cases, are likely to be poorer than their parents, despite progress on many fronts.²²⁹

From the labour market perspective, all these events have likely influenced young people's expectations and perceptions about the future. With youth, aspirations are crucial because they are the basis for decisions that will greatly shape their life-long (personal and labour) itineraries or trajectories, such as education, emancipation, labour market insertion and reproduction.

The ILO organized national dialogues on the future of work (ILO 2017b) to contribute to its Centenary Initiative,²³⁰ which launched the work of the Organization's 100th anniversary year. The dialogues sought to understand and thus best

229 See www.if.org.uk/research-posts/will-young-people-be-poorer-than-their-parents/.

230 See www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/WCMS_448448/lang-en/index.htm.

respond to the ongoing changes in the world of work to advance the ILO mandate for social justice. The more than 110 dialogues contributed multifaceted perceptions of how national actors see developments in the world of work and how they see their influence in the future. Many of the national dialogues included a youth employment perspective, and some included youth groups in the dialogue. The main points that emerged from these dialogues reflected both concern about the increasing role of technology in the labour market and its effects on the quality of employment as well as the aspiration of youth to break new ground using technology to create innovative income-earning opportunities for themselves.²³¹

An ILO survey on the aspirations of young people found similar leanings, albeit with differences among them based on where they lived – a more positive perspective in relation to new technologies was greater among youth in developing countries than in developed countries. The survey also found that for the young adult age group (25–29 years), what matters most is a stable and secure job (ILO 2017a).

Due to these uncertainties and to the reality that many young people have lived in a recurring youth employment crisis their entire working life, some of them may question whether education and/or the job market are vehicles for personal and social progress. For them, other options include a complete disconnection from the labour market. Indeed, a portion of the young population has emerged who are uprooted and even overlooked by the system, who do not study or work and who do not trust institutions. With them, there has been the proliferation of exclusion, frustration and even anger and protests against the status quo, which is challenging the cohesion of families and societies. Youth discontent has also been fuelled by the fact that they will be the main generation bearing the costs of the pandemic and its consequences.

If young people are to realize their hopes and aspirations for the future, structural-transformative investment in that future must be a top policy priority. Failure to do so will only exacerbate exclusion and inequalities, now and in the future. Knowledge, education and new technologies are vehicles of progress only for those who can access them. Those who cannot will be left out of the new

opportunities. **It is the role of public policies to equalize the access to those opportunities.**

Youth employment policies for evolving labour markets

The transformations taking place in the labour markets will have important impact on the future prospects for youth. Whether these impacts are positive or negative will depend on the public policies and actions that must be put in place now. Young persons are already making decisions based on their expectations of the future, and sound youth employment policies should accompany those decisions.

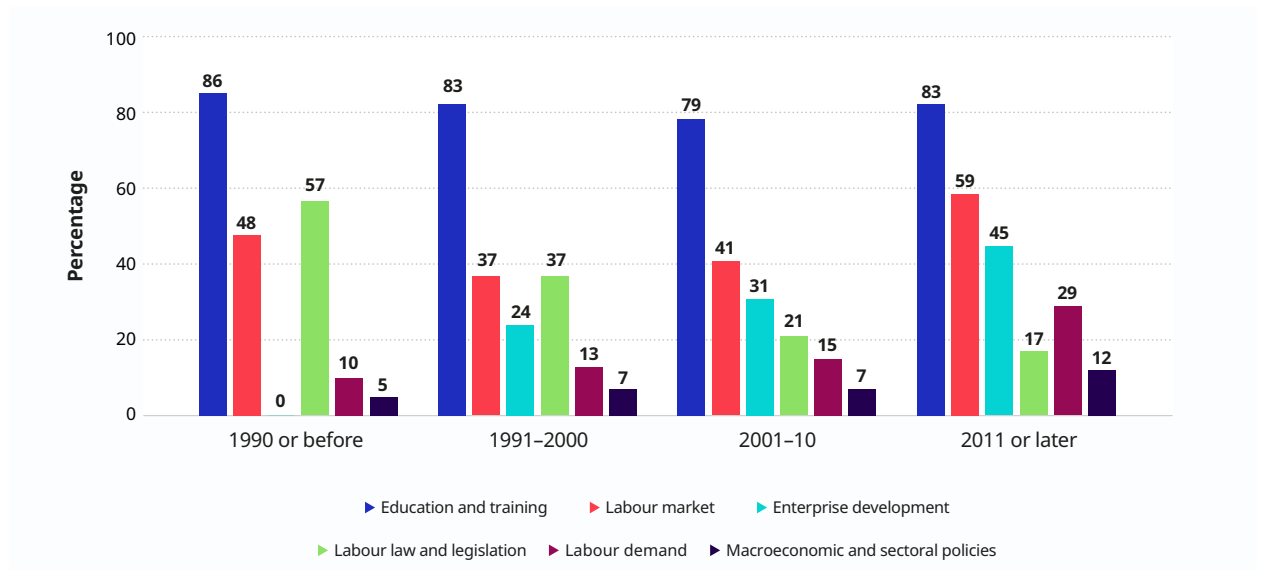
Putting the youth perspective into an overall context of a lifelong active society requires acknowledging that work and age should not be considered in a linear manner. Different stages of a person's life call for different needs and responsibilities. For today's world of work, there is an urgency to bring the generations together in support of improving living standards for all persons as well as productivity in general.

Over the past few decades, there has been extensive discussion on youth employment policies. The main policy lesson from the second part of the previous century is that the youth employment challenge requires integrated policy measures at the macroeconomic and the institutional dimensions. An interesting and positive trend is that approaches to youth policy, particularly youth employment policy, are evolving. At the country level, the evolution in policy discussion is occurring (although slowly) in different dimensions: from programmes to policies (because of the evolution of labour market institutions); from individual interventions to multiple drivers, including more integrated frameworks; from emphasis on salaried work to increasing attention on entrepreneurship; from interventions with social goals to more productive goals; from short-term goals to a lifetime approach; and from supply-side to demand-side interventions. This evolution is of course heterogeneous among countries.

The ILO database on Youth Employment Policies and Legislation, known as YouthPOL, contains 485 youth employment policy documents from 65 countries and dating from 1947 to 2015 that were recently reviewed. The review found that youth employ-

²³¹ A summary of the youth-related outcomes of the national dialogues are reflected in ILO 2017b.

► **Figure 1. Evolution of youth employment policies in 65 countries, 1990–2015**



Source: More, Barucci and Chacaltana (unpublished) based on the ILO Youth Employment Policies and Legislation database, www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/youth-pol/lang--en/index.htm, accessed February 2018.

ment policies are evolving in different dimensions as countries are increasingly embracing more integrated measures (at least in their policy documents). It also shows that an increasing number of countries are improving their policy coordination, including budget considerations, and conducting more impact evaluations (although they are still too few). These evolutions are far from complete, and there are large differences among countries.

Yet, youth employment remains a problem. So, are these strategies working? Perhaps these documents only reflect intentions but not implementation? Or is there too much focus on the supply side while fundamental changes to nature of economic growth and investment in job creation remains relatively neglected (ILO 2020a)? Certainly, the youth employment challenge is constantly evolving, but the policies are not keeping pace.

Due to the rapid changes in the labour market caused by persistent drivers of change alongside the slow adaptation of the major players (the private sector, the public sector, governments and civil society), there is a need to discuss – at the international and national levels – the next generation of employment policies for youth. While it is clear that youth employment should be approached from a lifelong active society perspective and not in isolation of the other cohorts, there are some features that a new generation of youth employment policies should contain:

Job-rich growth and transformations that support decent work for young women and men

One of the most important concerns of our times is the scarce capacities of economies to generate good jobs. While it is true that good-quality jobs are needed in general, it is also true that this need is particularly acute for some demographic groups. This is especially relevant for the youth who are usually the first to lose their jobs in economic downturns and the last to recover in the growth periods. Matsumoto et al. (2010) argued that youth employment is much more sensitive to business cycles and policy-induced economic downturns than adult employment, and short-run demand shocks turn into long-run “scarring” effects that manifest in reduced employment and earnings opportunities that can last decades. From the policy perspective, macroeconomic policies are not distributional-neutral with respect to specific groups (Sen, 2019), and that applies to the youth as well.

ILO research has shown that prompt expansionary fiscal policy as part of an overall development and employment strategy can promote youth employment during economic downturns, considering that young people have a low propensity to save. In such an event, the multipliers are likely to be

high, thus transferring the stimulus to the rest of the economy (O'Higgins 2017). Youth are also more intensive users of non-cash transactions, giving further degrees of freedom – and speed – to monetary policy, for example, in emergency situations. However, fiscal and monetary policies need to be combined with a range of sectoral strategies and industrial policies for expanding youth employment. The Global Employment Trends for the Youth 2017 reported that the share of youth employment was growing in the services sector, in particular in the health and care sector, and led by young women, who account for more than 70 per cent of its employment, while it is declining in manufacturing (except in Asia and the Pacific). Investment in infrastructure and data systems may support other growing and dynamic sectors that have significant potential for youth. Investment in the health and care systems and sector, which is at the forefront of the COVID-19 crisis, would ensure that jobs in this sector are decent.

Because young people are relatively more adversely affected by crisis, preparing for downturns must be integral to the policy design. Lessons from the European Union's Youth Guarantee, which was introduced to prevent the long-term exclusion of young people from study and work in the aftermath of the 2008–09 financial crisis, could be a useful reference, even for resource constrained developing

countries. Targeted sectoral measures, particularly in the green and digital sectors, could also be the basis of a youth-friendly economic revival.

All these developments need to be accompanied with skills strategies to prepare youth for changing labour markets, such as skills policies that facilitate a lifelong learning approach for both adapting to new skills needs and the flexibility to respond to the fast-changing skill demands. In the context of a crisis, on-the-job training and apprenticeship schemes to complement other activation measures aimed at facilitating youth's transitions into the labour market can bring long-term gains.

Support to lifelong learning and lifelong employability

Where it occurs, the discussion on the "integration" of youth employment policies should be re-examined. The usual approach involves combining multiple interventions with better coordination. While this is necessary, an additional issue is the balance of work and non-work activities to support personal trajectories as well as labour trajectories. Work-related policies must regard all facets of young people and not just their worker status. One possibility is to support multiple transitions, including the transition to emancipation, to parenthood,

► Table 1. A simple scheme for supporting multiple youth transitions

Level	Policies
Transition to parenthood or other care work (elder)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Prevention (sexual and reproductive health) ► Mitigation (combine education or work with reproductive role) ► Compensation (care economy)
School-to-skills transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Lifelong learning policies ► Access to labour skills education or training ► Improving pertinence and reducing skills mismatch ► Improving quality of skills
School-to-work transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► First-job orientation and insertion ► Work-quality programmes ► Occupational safety and health
School-to-business transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Removing restrictions to generate and initiate business ► Creating an enabling environment for young entrepreneurs (including access to finance and business development services) ► Supporting productivity of young entrepreneurs ► Supporting entrepreneurship training
Transition to migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Youth-migration management (information and transparency in recruitment)

Source: Authors.

the school-to-skills transition, the school-to-work transition, the transition to entrepreneurship or the transition to migration (table 1). The policy perspective also needs to take into account that these transitions are not linear and that they can occur simultaneously or in different sequences.

Policies should prepare young people for the multiple transitions they are likely to experience when they enter the labour market and facilitate their ongoing participation in the labour market. This implies supporting lifelong employability, for which lifelong learning is an essential entitlement for every (young) person. It is therefore essential that lifelong learning is included in social dialogues (Chacaltana and Prieto 2019).

Support for multiple transitions should lead to decent work trajectories. In this process, the quality dimension is critical, and hence, the transition to a formal job should also be part of this scheme. This means that specific policies for youth can be envisaged, including the first formal job or the first formal entrepreneurship programme. The most important message is that investing in formalization for youth employment has greater impact because

there is more time to recover those investments and it may be less costly.

Greater focus on work quality for youth requires increasing the overall quality in the labour market. This means formal employment-generation policies, structural transformation policies (so that every point of growth generates more formal employment) and general growth and general labour demand-boosting interventions.

Harnessing new technologies for youth employment

Another re-examination required of countries relates to the new technologies that are transforming the way labour markets work. They are generating new forms of production and of work, increasing productivity and efficiency but also increasing risks and creating additional inequalities due to the uneven access to new technologies. These technologies are also transforming the way traditional youth employment policies are implemented (table 2). **Public policies need to keep up, or even better, get ahead of the changes if possible.**

► Table 2. Examples of how youth employment policies use new technologies

Youth employment policy area	Use of technologies	Examples
Training	Digital skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► The European Union's Digital Opportunity Traineeships provide participants with hands-on experience in fields that are in high demand. A certificate is issued by an enterprise to the trainee within five weeks after the conclusion of the traineeship. ► The One Million Arab Coders, launched in the United Arab Emirates in 2017, aims to provide free training in coding and web development to 1 million young Arabs.
	Delivery of skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Using blockchain technology, Blockcerts in the Bahamas helps employers easily verify the academic credentials and professional certifications of job applicants. The National Training Agency provides jobseekers with a digital portfolio that employers can access. ► In Chile, the National Training and Employment Service launched the Elige Mejor (Choose Better) programme, which is a website platform that provides more and better information for persons looking for training courses. ► The Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Union created the Europass, an electronic credential that seeks to ensure that workers' skills and qualifications are clearly understood and recognized across member countries, regardless of the differences in education systems.
Public employment services	Online portals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► The National Career Service of India launched an online job portal in 2015 that brings together employers, jobseekers, private employment providers, non-government organizations, training institutions, vocational guidance specialists, career advisers and local artisans working in the informal economy. ► Estonia is increasingly using new technologies in public employment services as part of an e-society environment that relies on the secure exchange of data. A digital signature allows all citizens access to most public services, including employment services.
	Artificial intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► In Flanders, Belgium, artificial intelligence is used to match jobseekers with job offers on the basis of their skills, residing location and preferences. Additionally, an app called the Digital Advisor helps school-leavers improve their job interview skills through online sessions. ► In 2018, Paraguay launched a new job-matching engine called ParaEmpleo (For Employment), using semantic indexing and location mapping algorithms to recommend suitable vacancies to jobseekers.
	Tool to improve multi-agency coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► The Ministry of Labour in Peru began providing in 2011 a free single employment certificate for young people, called Certi Joven, with various types of credentials required by employers (identity, educational and judicial records, work experience). Employers can verify jobseekers' credentials at the Ministry's website.

(Table 2 continued on page 236)

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Youth employment policy area	Use of technologies	Examples
Youth entrepreneurship	Information about business opportunities	► The Peruvian National Institute of Statistics created a Geographical Information System for Entrepreneurs in 2012 for people thinking of starting a business. The georeferenced system, with a graphic format, uses data from the economic census and provides information on sales, profits, costs and the number of workers in similar businesses for jobseekers to compare.
	Support to tech industries	► The Republic of Korea is supporting the creation of “smart factories” with fully automated technology-based manufacturing systems. The Government and enterprises equally share the costs of establishing the smart factory system, which is expected to promote innovation and efficiency and to improve working conditions.
	App to improve business	► In Kenya, the digital platform UjuziKilimo helps farmers to plan their work better and reduce weather-related risks.** Drawing on real-time farm data from sensor devices, the platform uses machine learning and data analytics to provide farmers with timely and accurate information on fertilizers, seeds, weather, crop management and markets. This information is transmitted to farmers together with recommendations via text messages.

Note: **=See www.ujuzikilimo.com/.

Source: Based on ILO 2020a.

In the case of training, for example, initiatives to equip young people with technical skills that are in high demand, together with life skills (such as communication and teamwork) that enhance their general employability, are crucial. For public employment services, countries with different levels of development are embracing new technologies to improve service delivery and outreach and to promote efficiency. These technologies have been instrumental in expanding coverage, improving the range and quality of services and making the labour market more transparent, all at relatively low cost. Technology is also facilitating the integration of unemployment benefit systems with employment services. Technology-based solutions are being used to help young people realize their entrepreneurial aspirations by facilitating their access to markets and market information and by enabling them to acquire financial, entrepreneurial and digital literacy skills (through online courses and coaching, mobile learning apps and digital training materials).

Rights at work, responding to the changing world of work for youth

New technologies can offer new employment opportunities for young people entering the labour market. The ILO (2020a and 2017a) finds that young workers perform better than adults in technology-rich environments. This suggests they might have greater probability of adapting to more technology-intensive working methods as well as training and education methods and finding a job virtually.

However, technologies also pose challenges that need to be properly regulated. Youth are still more affected by labour market changes and less protected by legislation. Policies must guarantee that the rights of young people are respected (Vega 2020). New regulations need to ensure that young people who lack work experience can prove their abilities and skills and to then progressively transition to regular employment. This will require updating labour legislation to provide basic rights protection and social protection in the new forms of work and employment relationships. As pointed out by the Global Commission on the Future of Work (2019), this includes an extension of social protection to all workers as well as an international governance system that requires online platforms to establish minimum working conditions.

As some studies suggest, digitalization is likely to contribute to labour market polarization, and access to technology or lack thereof will continue to exacerbate differences between high- and low-income countries (ILO 2017a). Programmes that include on-the-job-learning are extremely relevant. The high percentage of youth today and tomorrow in developing countries with limited access to new technologies will inhibit the positive effect on global youth employment.

As occupations evolve and technology makes working outside the workplace (at home or in a co-working space) easier, policymakers should establish mechanisms to ensure that young people enjoy a work-life balance. However, it is important to acknowledge that youth have a greater need to learn and be present in a workplace when they are entering the labour market to learn not only the work task but also “how to work”. In addition, their

personal data and privacy should be protected. And the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining are of particular importance, especially in the new forms of on-demand work (for example, young people working in the gig economy could benefit from extended membership in trade unions).

Young people are a heterogeneous group, and many factors (age, geography, occupational insertion, work experience, forms of work, among others) could affect the likelihood of exposure to occupational hazards, accidents and diseases. Occupational safety and health management would benefit from risk assessments that consider young workers' needs, characteristics, strengths and limitations and then measures that are adapted to their stage in life, including adequate training, appropriate personal protective equipment and participation.

To mitigate future health problems as a result of telework and ensure a human-centred approach, the right to disconnect (during non-working hours, sickness, holiday), the rules concerning breaks and rest during online time, the right to deactivate GPS on office digital devices, etc. should also be addressed.

The challenges associated with the new technologies have been exacerbated or even accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Young workers, highly represented among the self-employed, casual and gig workers, are likely to have been disproportionately hit by the lockdown measures because they have limited access to paid or sick leave mechanisms and are less protected by conventional social protection mechanisms and other forms of income smoothing. In addition, work-related risks associated with the pandemic, such as ergonomic and psychosocial risks, could impact young people, especially young women who experienced an increased unpaid care load. The widespread use of smart phones and other digital devices means that always being "on call" has become a reality for many people. This constant connectivity has been stretched during the COVID-19 times. The expectation that workers are available at almost any time for online or mobile communication is potentially hazardous to workers' health (EUROFUND), although legislation on this issue is lagging. In the digital age, governments and employers' and workers' organizations need to find new ways to effectively apply nationally defined hours of work (regardless of where the work takes place, at home or in the workplace) in tandem with the establishment of a right to digitally disconnect.

Social dialogue for a lifelong active society

Social dialogue, which is at the heart of the work of the ILO, is first and foremost a fundamental principle of democracy. Experience tells us that social dialogue leads to better policies by drawing on the knowledge and experience of the social partners, and it provides a forum in which the trade-off between competing interests can be negotiated and resolved in the overall national interest. Social dialogue also induces support for proposed measures and hence can pre-empt future opposition and conflict that would otherwise reduce their effectiveness (ILO 2012).

Social dialogue is extremely important in the context of policies for young people, and must be ensured either by the social partners or through the direct representation of youth organizations in a policy consultation process. Unfortunately, it is not so common to include youth in social dialogue. There are, however, some interesting examples of formal or institutional spaces in which the voices of youth can be heard (ILO 2013 and 2012). Different countries deal with the process of consultation with youth differently. Some countries that have adopted youth employment policies have involved youth representatives in discussing and drafting them (Chacaltana and Prieto 2019). Others consulted social partners, although not necessarily the young population. And still others inserted the youth agenda into the broader labour market tripartite discussion (see examples in the following box).

There is a need to strengthen the capacity of workers' and employers' organizations to include all workers, regardless of age. The future, as uncertain and unpredictable as it may be, requires the participation of all actors in social dialogue. Considering that effective social dialogue would need to accurately reflect the different stages of a person's life, a lifelong active society supported through social dialogue would better facilitate the transitions of people between school, jobs, training, care and eventually retirement.

Social dialogue can improve youth labour outcomes through the inclusion of young peoples' priorities, such as skills and lifelong learning, occupational safety and health protection, decent wages, hiring opportunities, apprenticeships, internships and private data protection. For example, in Austria, tripartite social dialogue led to the 2008 reform of the youth employment package to include training programmes for young people. Similar

Examples of formal or institutional spaces in which young voices can be heard

- A Tripartite Commission on Youth Employment was created in Spain in 2006 as a consultative body attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In Paraguay, a National Board for Youth Employment Creation was established by presidential decree in 2008; it is a participatory body comprising 26 institutions (including the social partners) and focusing on the design and implementation of youth employment policies and programmes. In Peru, a tripartite Social Dialogue Roundtable on Youth Employment with youth representatives was created in 2011 and formally included in the National Work Council structure.
- Many social partners have developed formal spaces for youth within their own structures. Examples include the development of young employers' organizations in Chile, Colombia and Mexico and the development of workers' organizations that target youth, such as in Tunisia.
- Institutions for social dialogue on youth employment programmes have emerged at the local level, such as the Local Plan for the Integration of Youth in France, two tripartite youth employment pacts at the regional level in Bulgaria and a similar pact in Albania.

training programmes were put in place in Lithuania that complemented reforms with incentives for employers hiring young people. Brazil launched the National Decent Work Agenda for Youth in 2011 as a result of tripartite social dialogue; the agenda confronts youth employment issues in a holistic way, including education, the work-life balance, employment and continuing social dialogue (ILO 2012).

Social dialogue with the participation of youth can be a powerful instrument to mitigate the negative effect of future economic and employment shocks on young workers. Issues to be addressed through social dialogue during a pandemic or other crisis may include hours of work, sick and other leave days, training that will accommodate new challenges, health implications at work and connectivity issues.

Challenging questions for the way forward

Given the reality of the rapidly changing labour markets, some issues warrant immediate attention. These relate to both the supply and demand sides of the labour market and based on good data, analyses and evidence. A smooth transition into the labour market from education would require that youth have adequate skills and preparedness to adapt to the changes in the nature of jobs and their technological content and requirements. This would depend on up-to-date skills development systems and on-the-job training and apprenticeship opportunities for young women and men. New investments in jobs are needed to ensure that there is an

adequate supply of decent jobs for young people in the labour market. Job creation for youth (and in general) must form the core of all development strategies but be supported by macroeconomic and sectoral policies. For the African region, which will soon harbour the major share of young people globally, such sectoral strategies must focus on agriculture and rural industries along with new technology-intensive industries and more green production systems. A clear vision for the future, along with supportive industrial policy, will be critical if we are to address the youth employment crisis in earnest.

Developing countries will need to prepare for and harness the benefits of the changing demographics – the global ageing population with an increasing youth bulk in the least developing countries. Protection systems will need to adjust and become more inclusive and sustainable towards an ageing population while supporting the burden that will fall on young people. Migration from “labour-surplus” to “labour-short” countries must be carried out in a manner that benefits both entities as well as the youth who are migrating. An expansion of labour force participation of young women is essential. However, such expansion needs to be supported with increasing opportunities that help women move out of the “not in employment, education or training (NEET)” status. Investments in the care industry for new and decent opportunities for young women and men, along with care sharing, will be essential.

In short, policies must offer more and better opportunities for youth. They can no longer only ask the youth to better prepare for the future. Even

then, they must properly support the preparation process. This includes working simultaneously on the economic, social and labour fronts, tackling climate change and the demographic megatrends and strengthening the labour market institutions (including social dialogue) to meet the youth employment challenge today and in the future.

With strong differentials of course, the current generation of youth is probably the most informed in

history and the one that participates more, via social media, than any other young generation in the past. As a result, they are increasingly aware of what policies are being implemented elsewhere and in their context. The new generation of youth employment policies must upgrade and reflect an emboldened integration of all the challenges, nuances and realities of the new generation of youth.

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