



A Youth-Led Talk Show:

The Economic Exclusion of young people in times of crises

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

On the 9th of July 2020, UN youth delegates from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands and Sweden, as well as the European Youth Forum and the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth organised an official side event at the UN's High Level Political Forum on behalf of Belgium on **the economic exclusion of young people in times of crises** ([watch HERE](#)). This document contains the main outcomes of the panel discussion from the perspective of the organizing UN Youth Delegates.

2020 is not just the year in which a **global health crisis** broke out, but it is also the year in which several **SDG targets expire**, including target 8.6 of the 2030 Agenda under which UN Member States committed to “substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” (NEET).

Some figures and key documents on the economic position of youth globally:

- According to the ILO, **22.4%** of youth worldwide were not in education, employment or training (**NEET**) before the global pandemic. This figure had slightly increased since 2015. In addition, the UNSG's report showed that young people are **three times more likely to be unemployed** than adults.

- The consequences of Covid-19 will disproportionately affect youth because of the shocks on the education system and overrepresentation in the most affected sectors and types of jobs. **One in six young people** worldwide stopped working since the start of the crisis according to the ILO.

- **Three key documents** should be mentioned concerning the disproportionate impacts of the Covid crisis on youth: (1) [The European Youth Blueprint to Recovery](#) published by the European Youth Forum, (2) [The “Youth and Covid-19. Response, Recovery and Resilience” report by the OECD](#), and (3) the ILO Policy Brief [“Preventing exclusion from the labour market: Tackling the Covid-19 youth employment crisis”](#).

How to bear the costs of crises so that youth are not disproportionately affected and in order to realize the 2030 Agenda?

Several recommendations and advice came forward during the panel discussion, which gathered **Sukti Dasgupta** (ILO - Chief Employment, Labour Markets, and Youth Branch), **Tina Hočevár** (EYF - Vice President), **Basma Mikhael** (IYCW - African coordinator) and **Lena Yuliana** (Indonesian Trade Union Confederation - Women and Youth Adviser) as well as from the introductory remarks made by the **Belgian Deputy Prime Minister De Croo**. They are summarized below and grouped in three categories: Economic-, social- and (mental)health recommendations.



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Economic Findings

As a consequence of the **2008-crisis**, youth unemployment in Europe has always been **double** the level of adult unemployment. Young people are still economically suffering from the aftermath of the Great Recession.

- When taking measures to combat the proportion of NEET's worldwide, the impact of **previous crises** should be kept in mind.

According to various panelists, recovery programmes should entail **countercyclical measures** remaining in place for a sufficient duration.

- When designing countercyclical measures during the economic aftermath of COVID, investments should be made in **scaling up youth social programmes and entry level jobs**, which are crucial for young people through a local, regional and national approach.

The **accessibility** and **availability** of **unemployment benefits** for young people is a concerning issue in many countries because of high minimum age requirements. In some countries for example, young people need to be 25 to access unemployment benefits. Panelists also raised the fact that many internships and traineeships are unpaid.

- To combat the economic exclusion of young people in the labour market, **the minimum age of unemployment benefits should be 18**, and their availability should be a priority in regions where they are not available yet. With regards to internships and traineeships, these should be meaningful and paid.

Panelists agreed on the fact that the consequences of the crisis are to remain for a certain time period. Furthermore, the realities of **young people among all layers of society** should be taken into account: youth is not a homogenous group.

- A **meaningful youth inclusion** approach should be designed by consulting young people from all different layers of society and by truly hearing their specific needs in regards to job creation policies and economic inclusion.



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Social Findings

When face-to-face education became impossible because of the pandemic, **education systems** have been disrupted worldwide. Those lucky enough to have access to digitalization and to live in regions with adequate infrastructure, could turn towards online forms of education. However, this was not the case for a large proportion of young people worldwide.

- There needs to be an enhanced focus on **developing digital skills** worldwide. Investing in countries where there is not enough infrastructure to make digital work and education possible should be a **priority**.

Globally, **more than three in four young workers had informal jobs** in 2016 according to the ILO. Since the beginning of the crisis, this level has risen even higher. Working without a contract puts young workers in a vulnerable position by not being able to access **unemployment benefits** and working under **precarious circumstances** that are dangerous to safety and health. Therefore, turning to informal work leaves young workers with an **impossible choice**: Working and risk being infected or to not work and have no income. Informal work very often is precarious work that lacks any social protection and health-infection protection. This particularly concerns **girls and young women**.

- The **quality of employment** should be taken into account by creating safety policies and social protection policies. Contrary to what has been observed in the past years, it should be made a priority. Legislation needs to be updated so that precarious circumstances can be tackled.

Mental Health Findings

One in two young people's mental wellbeing was affected since the beginning of this crisis through **anxiety or depression**. Fighting against youth exclusion from a purely materialistic perspective does therefore not suffice. Mental health impact of the global pandemic should be duly taken into consideration.

- Future social protection policies need to include a **mental health perspective** with concrete measures helping young people to deal with mental health issues.