

Council Conclusions on Young People and the Future of Work

(2019/C 189/05)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

WHEREAS:

1. The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 recognises that young people are architects of their own lives, contribute to positive change in society and enrich the EU's ambitions, and that youth policy can contribute to create a space where young people can seize opportunities and relate to European values. In light of the changing employment landscape, the European Union should support young people's personal development and growth to autonomy, build their resilience and equip them with the necessary resources to participate in society, thus contributing to the eradication of youth poverty and all forms of discrimination, as well as to the promotion of social inclusion.
2. 'The future of work' is an umbrella term that describes the evolution of jobs in the medium-to-long term as affected by certain trends. In a diverse EU youth context, 'the future of work' is driven among others by:
 - a) Demographic change in the sense that EU's growing economic old-age dependency ratio will put pressure on increasing the productivity levels of those who will enter the labour market in order to compensate for the exit of an experienced labour force into retirement and equally to contribute to the support of increased social expenditures, owing also to a more numerous old-age population. While opening up opportunities in the care economy, these evolutions can also require dialogue on inter-generational fairness issues.
 - b) Advances in technology and innovation, as supported also by EU's Digital Single Market and Research and Development initiatives, are expected to bring about an increased use of digital technology in the economy and make certain jobs obsolete, while employment opportunities in other economy areas can open up. In order to benefit from such transformations, all young Europeans, including those with fewer opportunities, must have access to inclusive and quality formal and non-formal education that will improve their full range of skills.
 - c) Demand for higher skills on the labour market. Already employers are finding it difficult to fill vacancies for higher and medium level jobs, while at the same time the workforce comprises three times more low skilled people than available elementary occupations⁽¹⁾. Since the demand for low-skilled workers is declining further, in varying degrees throughout Member States, young people entering the labour market will need higher levels of education and training, equipping them with the key competences for lifelong learning as well as specific digital, vocational and personal skills that will support them in managing their diverse future career pathways.
 - d) The need to address climate change, where EU's ambitions to move to a competitive low-carbon economy can generate an increased demand on the labour market for skills required in sectors such as renewable energy, environmentally sustainable construction and retrofitting or sustainable agriculture.
 - e) Increase in global value chains where production of goods and services are spread across continents. The process is further facilitated by the advent of new forms of employment as introduced for instance by the platform economy which affects the traditional employer-employee relationship, the evolution of labour market and the employment legislation. Challenges such as income insecurity, lack of social protection, in-work poverty, precarious working conditions and workplace harassment, need to be addressed.
3. Young people in the European Union tend to view their future working life with fear or uncertainty⁽²⁾. The presence of such distress, especially if joined by job rejection, job-match quality issues, precarious work or social pressure to find or keep a job, can adversely impact young people's emotional state, potentially leading also to mental and physical health issues or a growing concern among young Europeans⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat (2018) EU Labour Force Survey.

⁽²⁾ International Labour Organisation (2018), Addressing the situation and aspirations of youth, Prepared for the 2nd Meeting of the Global Commission on the Future of Work.

⁽³⁾ Structured Dialogue Cycle VI Thematic report on Youth Goal no. 5 Mental Health and Wellbeing (2018).

4. Today's experience with new forms of employment indicate that in the future there can be a rise in more flexible forms of contracting workers, with potential positive effects on workforce distribution and personal wellbeing for those adopting a freelance lifestyle. Conversely, while such jobs tend to be taken by young people, in particular by those with fewer opportunities, there is an increased risk of being trapped in low-income temporary jobs, with little social protection coverage and low probability of professional advancement.
5. A solid foundation of skills and appropriate guidance backed up by good quality skills intelligence and high-quality, adaptable and responsive education and training systems, including the promotion of lifelong learning, can help young people make successful transitions to and inside the labour market and build rewarding careers.
6. In the context of ensuring a solid cognitive foundation, promoting the formation of skills that foster the effective use and understanding of technology is a prerequisite in the future work setting. The skills should not only focus on mastering new technologies, but also on understanding how they can help influence society. When increasing their capabilities in order to effectively benefit from the changing nature of work, young Europeans should also be equipped with key competences involving soft skills related, inter alia, to problem solving, communication, entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking, creative thinking, self-presentation, self-expression and negotiation.
7. The European Pillar of Social Rights establishes the right of everyone 'to timely and tailor-made assistance to improve employment or self-employment prospects. This includes the right to receive support for job search, training and re-qualification. Everyone has the right to transfer social protection and training entitlements during professional transitions' and also 'to fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, access to social protection and training'. In preparing them for the future of work, it will be crucial therefore that 'young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or a job offer of good standing within 4 months of becoming unemployed or leaving education' ⁽⁴⁾.
8. The views and vision of European Youth on work-related issues, as reflected in the Youth Goals, in particular no. 7 'Quality Employment for All', have been integrated in the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 and the Work Plan 2019-2021 that accompanies it.

UNDERLINES THAT:

9. Future generations of young Europeans will enter a work landscape filled with opportunities and challenges, in a global context where the EU will strive to improve the quality of life of its citizens and thus enhance its economic competitiveness, labour productivity and labour force skills, and ensure that young people's goals, expectations and ambitions can be met.
10. The changing nature of work can make a positive impact in the lives of young Europeans and future generations. At the same time, it is necessary to address the relevant concerns and implications -related to, inter alia, employment forms and employment status- that accompany such transformations, especially as regards young people with fewer opportunities who may be low-skilled. In this context, there is a need to increase information and awareness among young people about the implications of different employment forms and employment status.
11. Young Europeans consider that employment should be one of the top three priorities of the EU, and also one of the areas where the EU needs to take action in order to encourage young people to express solidarity ⁽⁵⁾. This shows young people's inclination to take a human-centred approach to their future professional lives.
12. First jobs should create the premises for a rewarding career fostering upward social mobility, especially for young people with fewer opportunities, including young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 8, as well as with Youth Goal 7, decent work is to be treated as a legitimate aspiration of young people, starting with their very first remunerated professional experience.

⁽⁴⁾ European Pillar of Social Rights, Chapter I, Principle 4 (Active support to employment) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en.

The European Pillar of Social Rights has been jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017, at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth held in Gothenburg, Sweden.

⁽⁵⁾ Flash Barometer 455 on European Youth (2018), Survey conducted by 'TNS political & social' at the request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

13. Early school leavers and low-educated young people are expected to remain vulnerable in a future of work context, where wage disparities between low and medium-high skilled members of the labour force can be expected to increase, thus potentially generating in-work poverty challenges. While decreasing in number⁽⁶⁾, NEETs are still highly vulnerable and will continue to be assisted by the Youth Guarantee⁽⁷⁾. For those who slip through, Upskilling Pathways⁽⁸⁾ should offer further opportunities to boost their basic skills and to progress towards the qualifications demanded by the labour market.
14. Ensuring smooth school-to-work and work-to-work transitions, together with facilitating employment for young people, including reducing out-of-job spells, are key to avoiding scarring effects in their working careers⁽⁹⁾.
15. More emphasis should be placed on values and policies that promote work in relation to improving the quality of life of young people themselves, but also to making meaningful contributions to the general wellbeing of the social and physical environment they live in. In this context, sustainable development should underpin approaches to the future of work.
16. There is a continuous need to promote equal access to quality jobs for all young people in the future, and to take measures against all forms of stereotyping that influence today's children job aspirations and limit access to certain jobs, while also perpetuating discrimination and inequality in education and training, as well as in the labour market.
17. In addition to developing skills, youth work has a positive impact in the lives of young people, in particular those with fewer opportunities, including in the context of mental health or emotional issues associated with unemployment or setbacks in the job search process.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES, IN LINE WITH THE SUBSIDIARITY PRINCIPLE AND AT THE APPROPRIATE LEVELS, TO:

18. Pay special attention to youth at risk of marginalisation or discrimination based on elements such as their ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, belief or political opinion, in order to ensure inclusiveness of all young people in labour markets in the future.
19. Support the full implementation of the Youth Guarantee recommendation, while taking into account national circumstances, policies and measures as appropriate.
20. If necessary, promote and give priority to reforms of both the formal and non-formal education and training sectors, focusing on developing and validating key competences gained by young people in diverse learning contexts, whether in an education, volunteering, traineeship or job setting, with a view to facilitating the matching of such competences to the labour market and the future workforce demand.
21. Enhance cooperation with the overall aim of fulfilling the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning for all children and young people, specifically with regard to reducing early school leaving and increasing opportunities for equal access to education and work for all young people, including for those accompanying their families who relocate for work purposes to another EU Member State⁽¹⁰⁾.
22. Give ample space to employment-related topics during consultations with young people within and/or outside EU Youth Dialogue processes, in order to better understand their concerns, interests, expectations and capabilities. It is equally important to make the results of such consultations accessible to young people, policy makers and employers in order to ensure a follow-up.
23. Promote youth entrepreneurship, focusing, inter alia, on entrepreneurship education and training, advisory, mentoring or coaching services for young people, and where appropriate on relevant youth work activities. Social and inclusive entrepreneurship are also considered as viable alternatives for securing employment for young people by young people, thus promoting solidarity activities.

⁽⁶⁾ The NEET rate for those aged 15-29 has decreased from an all-time high of 15,9 % in 2012, to 13,4 % in 2017, according to Eurostat (Sustainable Development in the European Union: Eurostat 2018 Monitoring report on progress towards the SDG's in an EU context).

⁽⁷⁾ Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1).

⁽⁸⁾ Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (OJ C 484, 24.12.2016, p. 1).

⁽⁹⁾ Eurofound (2017), Long-term unemployed youth: Characteristics and policy responses, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

⁽¹⁰⁾ European Pillar of Social Rights, Chapter I, Principle 1 (Education, training and life-long learning) (ibid footnote 4).

24. Promote the use of the resources made available under the European Social Fund, the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation, the Youth Employment Initiative, Erasmus + or the European Solidarity Corps and their successor programmes. Where appropriate in this context, offer guidance to potential beneficiaries on how to make use of synergies and complementarities between these programmes.
25. Where relevant, make use of EU youth policy instruments such as Youth Wiki or Future National Activities Planners and mutual learning activities to exchange good practices with the aim of fostering concrete policy solutions in the context of young people's future transition to work.
26. Support youth organisations and other relevant actors in the preparation of young people to effectively participate in youth dialogue processes and to become beneficiaries of youth work.
27. Continue supporting young people in cases where unemployment, job expectations or professional/educational choices might make them the target of generational stereotyping.
28. Promote a cross-sectorial policy approach when addressing youth employment issues, both at national and European levels and in the framework of cooperation between Member States.
29. In light of national circumstances, improve access of young people to social protection by improving where necessary the capacity of social protection systems to adapt to the reality of young people's employment prospects, by taking into account the needs of young people who are not in employment.

INVITES THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO:

30. Further build on the positive experience of the Europass⁽¹⁾ and the Youthpass⁽²⁾ frameworks to identify and communicate individuals' skills and qualifications, in order to increase its outreach among young Europeans, in particular those with fewer opportunities, to help them showcase their skills and connect with relevant jobs.
31. Offer guidance to national management structures for raising potential beneficiaries' awareness on how to make use of synergies and complementarities when promoting EU funding opportunities for young people.
32. Give priority to putting in place systems that support Principle 1 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, namely 'everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market'⁽³⁾.
33. Continue to conduct more qualitative, quantitative and evidence-based research based on gender disaggregated data on inter and intra-generational social mobility with a specific focus on young people, as well as more qualitative research on young people' attitudes and concerns regarding transition to employment, with a view to supporting the effectiveness of EU Youth Policies on employment issues.
34. Organise mutual learning activities or events with representatives from the youth sector, trade unions, business organisations, and governments, to address from a cross-sectorial perspective, including youth policy, the challenges and opportunities that the future of work will bring to young Europeans.
35. Use all relevant EU instruments, including the EU Youth Coordinator, with regard to the trends affecting the nature of work, with a view to integrating a youth perspective in cross-sectorial policy-making at EU level and encouraging cooperation between Member States.

INVITES THE EU YOUTH SECTOR TO⁽⁴⁾:

36. Take an active approach with regard to ensuring that young people are represented and participate in an effective manner in the EU Youth Dialogue and the social dialogue processes, both at European Union, Member State and sub-national levels, hence fostering solid cooperation with public authorities and social and economic partners on aspects pertaining to young people's professional lives.

⁽¹⁾ <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

⁽²⁾ <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/>

⁽³⁾ Ibid footnote 10.

⁽⁴⁾ The 'EU youth sector' generally refers to the totality of organisations, youth workers, members of the academia, youth civil society or other experts involved in youth policy development that carry out youth-relevant activities and projects in the EU.

37. Contribute to the effort of raising awareness among young workers regarding their rights and responsibilities, including as regards workplace harassment and all forms of discrimination, with a view to protecting their educational pursuits and training in the context of work requirements.
 38. Take into account labour market and skills intelligence in order to constantly enhance youth work's methods, with a view to increasing its effectiveness as a skill development tool for young people.
 39. Promote youth work activities among all young people, including those at risk of marginalisation in the labour market due to poverty and social exclusion.
 40. Engage with relevant stakeholders with a view to setting up partnerships at national level and thus contribute to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.
 41. Make use of available opportunities at EU, national, regional and local levels to increase the quality of youth work opportunities for young people in accessing to employment.
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ANNEX

In adopting these conclusions, the Council recalls in particular the following Resolution, Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee ⁽¹⁾
2. Council Resolution on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 ⁽²⁾
3. Council Conclusions on the role of youth in addressing the demographic challenges within the EU ⁽³⁾
4. Council Conclusions on Future of Work: a Lifecycle Approach ⁽⁴⁾
5. Council Conclusions on the Future of Work: making it e-Easy ⁽⁵⁾
6. Council Conclusions on the role of youth work in supporting young people's development of essential life skills that facilitate their successful transition to adulthood, active citizenship and working life ⁽⁶⁾
7. Council Conclusions on smart youth work ⁽⁷⁾
8. Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽⁸⁾
9. Council Recommendation on graduate tracking ⁽⁹⁾
10. Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning ⁽¹⁰⁾
11. Council conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area ⁽¹¹⁾
12. Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed ⁽¹²⁾
13. Council Conclusions on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people ⁽¹³⁾

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 120, 26.4.2013, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 196, 8.6.2018, p. 16.

⁽⁴⁾ Doc. 10134/18.

⁽⁵⁾ Doc. 15506/17.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 189, 15.6.2017, p. 30.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 418, 7.12.2017, p. 2.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 189, 4.6.2018, p. 1.

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 423, 9.12.2017, p. 1.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ C 195, 7.6.2018, p. 7.

⁽¹²⁾ Doc. 10134/18.

⁽¹³⁾ OJ C 183, 14.6.2014, p. 18.