

**Conference in reverence of the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
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“YOUTH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE UNITED NATIONS ”**

**Panel I, Youth unemployment**

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Up until 2007, the youth labor market trends were somewhat encouraging (decreasing rates of youth unemployment, increasing enrollment in education). But the global economic crisis clearly changed these favorable trends and now we can assume that the impact of that crisis has been quite dramatic for young people who have paid a heavy price over the past years. Indeed, in 2009, 80.7 million young people were unemployed around the world; this is the highest global number of unemployed youth ever measured by the ILO. Of course, youth is a minority population in the labor market but they represent the workers of tomorrow, hence youth unemployment is an important issue.

During our roundtable, we first tackled issues of definitions. Differences continue to exist in the way national statistics programs define and measure youth. Moreover the notion of “unemployment” has several definitions. It basically concerns people that are without work, available to work and actively seeking work. However this last term is subjective and economist do not always agree with it. Indeed, many unemployed people get tired of searching and simply abandon because of a lack of hope.

Then we focused on the different impacts of the crisis around the world. The most important difference is the one between developed countries and developing countries. Youth in developed economies were hit hard by job losses. In developing regions, the crisis generally increased the challenges of finding work for young women. In lower-income regions, the crisis was not felt so much in terms of youth unemployment but in terms of the exacerbated challenges of decent work deficits amongst the youth. In regions that were already the most vulnerable, an increase in the number of working poor risks prolonging the cycle of working poverty through at least another generation. There is a real danger of stalling the progresses made in recent years in the fields of poverty reduction, education, fertility and health... All elements of human development that shape the current and future generation of young people.

We also considered the differences between unemployment through adult and young populations. We cannot clearly assume that young people are hit harder than adults but youth unemployment rates rose more than that of adults and, unlike adults, global youth unemployment numbers have dropped as well during the crisis. Unemployment rates for young people is three time higher than those for adults in some countries it even reach a five time higher average which reflects an important issue. The unemployment

rate of youth is more sensitive to the economic crisis than that of adults which support the “first-out, last-in” argument.

Here we pointed out that some of the young people are more vulnerable in time of economic shocks. Their lack of skills and work experience ends up making them less marketable to employers.

Likewise, we discussed the lack of information concerning how to look for a job. We can say that young people are often thrown into the market labor without even knowing how to find a job that fits them.

The “shopping around” effect during recession also clearly appeared as an important fact. Indeed some young people voluntarily refuse offers in order to find the most interesting job. Of course this kind of behavior has severe effects during an economic recession period because of the lack of supply in the labor market.

In that kind of situation a financial support is clearly needed. However in most cases there are only few resources owned by the young job seekers which leads them to rely on parental or governmental support if available.

We concluded that disadvantages of youth population on the labor market are made more apparent during times of economic crisis.

Then we shifted the discussion analyzing how during times of recession the entry of youth on the labor market is slower. Indeed it is quite a bad timing of labor market entry if the research for a job is led during a recession period; so some young people 'hide' themselves in education, or follow a “smooth” transition between unemployment and work. Again, in that situation, most of them are finally forced to rely on government support system which may lead to a total loss of faith : young people end up thinking that chance is more important than hard work to find a job and that there is no hope of getting out of unemployment, and they mistrust the willingness or availability of help from governments.

At this point, however, we noticed that educated young people now have the same problem than unskilled ones used to have, in facing long job search.

Throughout this reflection we interested ourselves in the concept of a “lost generation”, an expression that media dealing with the global crisis enjoy using because of its dramatic effect. Indeed a lot of young people decide to simply avoid the market, disengage themselves of it and become independent.

We concluded that it is way too soon to pull back from governmental interventions. Training programs are needed in response to the economic crisis and it is obvious that mostly wealthier economies have the chance to develop these kind of programs. In any case, withdrawing now could have devastating effects on the still high trends of unemployment. And even if some research predict optimistic outcomes it should not be forgotten that it is still too soon to clearly know what is going on in most sectors in the aftermath of the global crisis. That’s why, more than ever, it is urgent to react and effectively invest in youth questions.

With regard to that issue, an ILO guide sets out the desired process underpinning the preparation of national action plans for youth unemployment. The strategy mostly points out that it is essential to identify barriers youth face in the labor market in order to provide an efficient support. Youth is a heterogeneous group so it is really necessary to profile youth to identify early enough vulnerable groups in order to avoid dramatic events concerning employment.

Source: Global Employment Trends for Youth, August 2010, ILO

For further readings:

[www.ilo.org/trends](http://www.ilo.org/trends) (where you can find the link to the latest GET Youth report);

[www.ilo.org/youth](http://www.ilo.org/youth) (which summarizes the activities of the ILO Youth Employment Programme)

[www.ilo.org/yen](http://www.ilo.org/yen) (with details on the activities of the ILO-World Bank-UN partnership on youth employment).



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