

**ROBERT SCHUMAN
ESSAY COMPETITION**

YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

2021 TOP TEN PICKS





ESSAY QUESTION

**IF TODAY'S GENERATION
IS THE BEST EDUCATED EVER,
BUT CURRENTLY
THE BIGGEST PROBLEM
IS UNEMPLOYMENT,
WHAT IS GOING WRONG?
WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING
FROM THE EU TO PROVIDE
A GOOD FUTURE
FOR THE YOUNGER GENERATION?**



On 9 May, 1950, Robert Schuman made a historic declaration which laid the foundations for the construction of the European Union, as we know it today. The first EPP Group's Robert Schuman Essay Competition was launched on the 45th anniversary of that Declaration, in honour of his unique and fundamental contribution to the European cause, a great Christian Democrat and one of the founding fathers of the European Community.

The relaunch of this competition, today in 2021, takes place while all over Europe our lives are being utterly changed by the Coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic is deeply affecting our countries and turning our worlds upside down, hitting our economies hard and transforming our societies. Young people are being particularly hard hit, educationally, socially and economically. The timing of the Conference on the Future of Europe and 'Europe Day' provided a unique opportunity for entrants to think about what future they want for the European Union. We want to reflect a Europe that protects the European way of life so that everything that constitutes our common European identity is a source of pride for our citizens.

With the aim of giving young people the opportunity to express their views on the challenges facing them and Europe in the 21st century, the title of the first edition of the Robert Schuman Essay competition was 'YOU are the future of Europe - Discuss'. We were delighted with the response we received from hundreds of young people throughout the European Union. The jury found the standard of the entries to be extremely high and the authors of the essays presented here, the top ten finalists, are to be congratulated on their particularly original contributions and on their excellent accomplishment.

I particularly wish to congratulate the winner of the 2021 competition, Tommaso Furio Clerici, who started his five-month traineeship in the EPP Group Secretariat within the parliamentary Group's Strategy Unit in September 2021.

We thank all the entrants for taking part in the competition and sharing their insights into the European debate and wish them every success in their future career endeavours and continued writing.

Manfred Weber

Chairman of the EPP Group
in the European Parliament



TOO YOUNG AND TOO EDUCATED FOR RESKILLING

Tommaso Furio Clerici
Age: 24, Italian

Abstract

Youth unemployment has been mostly treated as an education issue at the European level. The line of reasoning has always been: more education, less unemployment. In this paper, I am not arguing that we should give up with our education, training, skill programs because youth unemployment has not yet been defeated. They are a valuable aid and they have helped financing several effective national and regional schemes. However, I suggest to broaden our understanding of youth unemployment and go beyond the simplistic idea that education alone means more jobs. By highlighting three concepts, I argue that framing youth unemployment as a growth issue can be a driver for more achievements in pursuing a competitive and fair economy.

Introduction

At its core, youth unemployment has two determinants: a decline in economic activity and a set of deeply rooted factors that depend on the socio-economic fabric of a country. Youth unemployment has surged in most European countries

after the financial crisis, but its reactivity and growth rate are different in each of them. This means that youth unemployment has to be dealt with at the national level. On the other hand, the EU can support this effort not only by coordinating the Member States' policies but also by framing youth unemployment as one of the most serious obstacles to both Europeans' welfare and the stability of the Union. Indeed, youth unemployment can trigger a cascading effect that undermines the very foundations of the Union. The EU can avoid this avalanche that risks eroding the support of young generations to the European project, but it needs to broaden its understanding of youth unemployment.

I argue that how the Union frames its action is strictly dependent on how the Union thinks about youth unemployment. An overview of the EU strategies suggests that the Union understands youth unemployment as an education issue¹. The line of reasoning is that more education will result in less unemployment. Yet, statistics always place the Union at the top for the general level of education of its citizens. On the other hand, youth unemployment is still twice as high as general unemployment and it rockets

during crises. Even if education policies are crucial to equip young people with the tools to thrive in their careers, the fallacy of this equation consists in confusing the distribution of jobs with the job market. As Henry M. Levin has written in its seminal article *Youth Unemployment and Its Educational Consequences*:

Although a person with more education is less likely to be unemployed, it does not follow that a high-enough level of education for all youth will eliminate unemployment².

Alongside education, this paper suggests framing youth unemployment as a problem that involves growth, entrepreneurship, and labour productivity. Thinking about EU policies beyond the education bias can help the Union to develop more tools to assist the Member States and their citizens. I am not advocating for specific policies, but for a broader framing of youth unemployment in the political discourse that can make sense of the biggest elephant in the room: we have a generation of highly skilled graduates that struggle to enter (and possibly stay) in the labour market.

Growth

Even if there is no silver bullet to fight against youth unemployment, it is clear that growth is key. Youth unemployment has different roots for different countries, levels of education and business sectors. Different tools should be used to fight these country-specific problems. The European Union can be an advisor, a financier, and a supervisor for different programs handled by the Regions and the Member States. The policies of the EU have proven effective to mitigate youth unemployment in different cases. I am well aware of the achievements of the Youth Guarantee in helping NEETS.

Yet, I argue here that the most important contribution that the European Union can give in this fight is fostering growth through investments during a crisis. Youth unemployment is strong evidence against austerity because it is on average³ times more sensitive to changes in economic activity than adult unemployment. Since young Europeans are more likely to have temporary contracts in cyclically sensitive sectors, they benefit from sustained growth.

The Union should not forget that the generations that are now in their thirties have suffered two crisis in a decade. This peculiar condition has an obvious impact on how young Europeans see the future. They see it gloomy⁴. If we do not want to lose the prosperity that we have built together since the establishment of the European Community of Coal and Steel, we need to change this vision.

I expect the European Union to speak the language of growth not just during the pandemic or in its immediate aftermath which I hope we will soon reach, but in the next years. The Next Gen EU does not only finance part of the recovery, it is also about setting the pace for future investments. The Union is sending a message that encourages ambitious and implementable actions. The Member States are listening. The debate, serious and chaotic (in politics it is not an oxymoron), which in many countries has animated the decisions around the national recovery and resilience plans to be presented to the European Commission signals the feeling of opportunity.

The Commission's clear stand for green and digital cannot be successful in the short run. As President Von der Leyen says we are running a marathon, not a sprint race. Younger generations have been doing their part as anyone else

during the pandemic, but they risk suffering the most if the recovery will not be accompanied by private and public investments. Do not betray them.

Entrepreneurship

The paragraph on growth directly brings us to the second point: entrepreneurship. The contribution of SMEs to the European economy is around 56 per cent of the GDP and they employ approximately 70 percent of the workforce. The prosperity of the Union deeply depends on the work of our entrepreneurs. If Chairman Weber is right and data confirms it, I expect this generation to be the one that bridges the gap between research centres and SMEs. Since this generation is the best educated ever, I expect our young entrepreneurs to finally bring small businesses into the digital era. Furthermore, these possible future entrepreneurs have a much higher environmental sensibility than their predecessors.

Yet, only 6.5% of working youth (20-29) in the European Union were self-employed in 2018.⁵ We should work to eliminate the barriers that stop young people to become entrepreneurs.

Young people have to deal with the same problems that affect adult entrepreneurs. Yet they have to do it with less access to credit and less experience. On the other hand, they tend to be more innovative and export more than their adult counterparts. This means that they are the ones that really needs the Single Market to become even more integrated to thrive in their business. I am arguing here that cutting the red tape by promoting Smart Regulation and quickly setting a legal framework for the Union Single Digital Market is crucial to encour-

aging young entrepreneurs.

The Union has a generation of possible, highly-educated entrepreneurs that are not asking for vocational training, but who need a business-friendly environment that allows them to regain the confidence in their self lost during two global crisis.

Productivity

Every now and then, a European leader comes up with the assumption that young people are too choosy and they are not ready to make the sacrifices that their parents made to thrive in the labour market. Even if this line of reasoning is at least questionable, I will assume that young people are not ready to work the number of hours worked by the previous generations. I will make no excuses and voluntarily ignore the lower wages and the less promising social advancements. Instead, I argue that this line of reasoning should become a driver for discussing enhanced labour productivity. Statistics show us that in several sectors we work more than other countries to produce less.⁶

Indeed, I argue that labour utilization should not be seen in opposition to labour productivity. States are no longer in the condition to independently decide the level of their technological exposure. In the long run, it makes no sense to advocate strict protectionism against technology only to preserve outpassed jobs in the middle of a tech revolution. It is much wiser to start a serious discussion on how to enhance productivity in a fair and just way.

The NextGen EU has been a great accelerator for the digitalization of Europe. Independently from their particular

strategies, all Member States have committed to increasing their productivity through technology. This is the right moment to link this commitment to the goal of achieving a more productive Europe that can be at the same time more competitive and capable to foster a healthy work-life balance. To realize this goal, the EU needs to act as a forum to facilitate the creation of a shared view and the circulation of best practices. In the labour market, the EU can be a powerful aggregator of ideas as it has done by promoting flexicurity in the first years of this century.

New technologies are not only meant to be used but they are supposed to be used in innovative ways that serve human beings. Alongside its attempt to secure existing jobs, the EU should take advantage of the digitalization to move towards a more productive economy that is well suited to meet the demands of young educated people who understand that it is not by working too much that they will thrive in their careers, but by mastering the processes and using the technologies at their disposal.

Conclusions

This position paper has identified three ideas that can better frame the discourse about youth unemployment in the European Union. The basic idea that informs this paper is that young people are sufficiently educated to master the job market in different sectors. The European focus should not be only on education and training. Jobs are not a byproduct of education. The best way to tackle unemployment at the supranational level is by fostering growth in innovative ways. Paving the way for young entrepreneurs and fostering labour productivity are just two of them.

¹ To have a quick overview of what I mean, it is sufficient to look at the sixth pillar of the regulation establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility. This pillar provides the guidelines to use European loans and grants to support young people. Bluntly, the word youth is always followed by “education and skills”. If one wants to better understand my point, I suggest to read the documents published in “Youth employment support” in the Commission website: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1036&moreDocuments=yes>.

² Levin, H. M. (1983). Youth unemployment and its educational consequences. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 5(2), 231-247, p. 238.

³ This data is confirmed by several studies conducted by the IMF such as Banerji, A., Saksonovs, S., Lin, H. H., Blavy, R., & Thomsen, P. M. (2014). Youth Unemployment in Advanced Economies in Europe: Searching for Solutions: Searching for Solutions. Staff Discussion Notes, 2014(011).

⁴ “More than half of young people in Europe have the impression that, in their country, the young have been marginalised and excluded from economic and social life by the crisis (57%)”. Eurobarometer, European Youth in 2016, Special Eurobarometer of the European Parliament, available at <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/it/be-heard/eurobarometer/european-youth-in-2016> [consulted on the 12/06/2021].

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Youth self-employment and entrepreneurship activities, available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/3ec10f3b-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/3ec10f3b-en#> [consulted on the 12/06/2021].

⁶ OECD (2019), OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators 2019, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/b2774f97_en.

A portrait of Lars Vrignon, a young man with reddish-brown hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue blazer over a light-colored patterned shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background behind him is a green and white geometric pattern of nested chevrons.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Lars Vrignon
Age: 26, French

As a French, Polish and German European, studying entrepreneurship in new technologies and intending to devote all my life to the unification of my peoples, I feel well placed to make proposals and answer these enthralling questions about employment in European Union.

For 30 years, we have entered with the digital revolution at a turning point which is transforming not only our economies and societies but also the structure of our mind in a far deeper way than the industrial revolution did before. To some extent, it is worth comparing this new revolution with the Neolithic revolution that transformed nomadic hunter-gatherers into sedentary farmers and herders.

Moving from a routine life, favouring stability in large companies requiring more executive skills and organised in a transcendental manner, we millennials, passed with digital and the transformation of communication means to a more creative way-of-life in constant search of novelty and meaning to our actions. It is therefore urgent to completely and thoroughly review the paradigms that structure our analysis of the economy and, above all, determine all the public policies that have to be put in place for over a decade.

Economic strategy and spatial planning

One of the most fundamental notions that is being turned upside down by this digital revolution is the notion of work. Once a key factor in measuring the added value produced in a territory, it has been relegated to second place thanks to automation, in favour of knowledge. It is for a region of the world as developed as our continent greatly, in my opinion, the lack of understanding of this shift towards a knowledge economy that explains the failure of most of our employment policies and our inability to overcome this economic and social impasse.

The European Union must, just like the Nation-States, in order to respond to the various economic, ecological and financial challenges, no longer think in terms of their policies according to the old ways of thinking. It should think strategically by focusing its attention on industrial and scientific production which alone creates gross wealth backed by a genuine spatial planning policy.

A spatial planning policy is fundamental for the economic development of our continent and the political strengthening

of our Union. It allows not only to optimise the economic potential of each of our territories but also to balance the distribution of the value produced on a continental scale between our regions. It is then up to them to adapt their labour policy to their own characteristics and the needs structuring their social fabric. The optimisation of wealth production is indissociable from a high mobility of the professional skills and the labour factor. As we Europeans, unlike the American population, are very rooted in our territories this long-term mobility has always proved difficult. It prevents us from unifying our labour market in depth and leads some of our companies and national social systems into a dead end. This problematic can however in the next decade in several sectors easily be solved by relying, as much as possible, on new methods of project management and dematerialisation of tasks. It would not only allow for the merging of labour markets at European scale but also for a better geographical distribution of the wealth generated by labour.

Full employment and digital revolution

The time of full employment based on a liberal labour market system is coming to an end these three next decades. Our current system will not only be structurally unsustainable but also on psycho-sanitary and cultural terms.

Forced competition between workers has allowed us to achieve the very high levels of economic growth that distinguish liberal economies from socialist ones. It has also, however, led people to alienation from work, health problems with considerable costs to our economy and to dehumanisation of social and family relations. The very foundation of society has been undermined. This must

cease and a new system must be initiated to compensate for the deleterious effects of the current one without constraining our production capacities and future investments.

To achieve this, we must completely revise our social national systems based on the taxation of labour. It should only consider the added value assessed on the profits of companies when they create jobs that are not or only slightly relocatable and on VAT when it comes to the globalized market. Charging taxes to an employer for hiring is totally beyond comprehension.

At the same time, as the creation of wealth is no longer proportionally correlated to the number of hours worked by the population, it is now morally, health-wise and economically essential to automate all the tasks that progress has yet made possible to do; decrease not only the time spent at work but also reduce the economic barriers of companies to hiring and maintaining the payroll.

In the other hand, it is vital for EU to coordinate a new industrial policy leading to the relocation of our consumption of industrial products by relying on the strengths of each of our regions, particularly in Eastern and Southern Europe for low and medium cost products and west for higher margin rate.

Society and Education

This type of profound overhaul of our economy will obviously not be without consequences for society as a whole and especially for young people and others with limited abilities for adaptation. It can only be conceived in parallel with a very ambitious psycho-educational policy and a revolution in our social policies.

Such a reorganisation of our productive system would lead to a very significant contraction of the labour market, which would be as detrimental to young people as to older. The competition that each age group exerts on the market, amplified by the lengthening of life expectancy and the merging of national labour markets, is likely to oblige the public authorities to develop serious strategies to accompany this transition period.

It obviously requires a more efficient education system focusing on the appropriation of a multicultural dimension but also on the acquisition of fundamental values and skills related to their personal and collective development. The ability to adapt to this new society heralding the third millennium will depend on this.

An efficient educational and behavioural policy will only be possible through the massive development of educational technologies. It will require the exploitation of the potential of new technologies such as augmented reality and artificial intelligence for the development of a personalised and perfecting pedagogy. It should then be completed by a final year integrated into the secondary education cycle taking the form of a European military service designed to mingle European youth and reinforce values such as solidarity and living together.

Such a technological development in cognitive and health sciences will also enable accompaniment of other age groups in their professional retraining at a lower cost. This will result in an increase of cognitive performances of individuals currently intellectually unsuited to our mature economy and a better understanding of people with high intellectual potential who often find themselves neglected and misguided by the standardisation of our school and university systems.

The revival of new activities and interests

Finally, such a reorganisation of our productive apparatus would be conducive to the development of activities that are certainly not materially essential to our society but no less vital for its well-being and development. It would allow a reorientation of the value produced by industry and digital sector in support of crafts and “fine arts”. Although they are not specifically wealth-creating, they are nonetheless one of the most important parts of our cultural heritage at the very basis of our European identity and civilisation.

The decrease in the global number of working hours linked to production in favour of abstraction, coupled with the reappropriation of nature and the new cerebral organisation of the new generations will lead to the development of new forms of spirituality and ideologies. This is demonstrated by the political movements that have emerged over the last two decades among the urban middle-class globalized populations. It is therefore vital for the European community to take this issue on board and to reinvest heavily in this area in order to channel this energy in a positive direction.

The future of our civilisation and the European project as intended by our founding fathers are at stake. Such negligence would be extremely harmful to us and would make it possible for extremist drifts with totalitarian impulses to take hold, as our forebears experienced in the last century. This awareness therefore implies strong investments in the fields of spirituality, psychology, family, nutrition as well as tangible and intangible cultural heritage. These are the only ones that can give to individuals and the

masses a framework for evolving and a meaning to their existence. These investments would be a very strong source of employment.

Conclusion

The jobs of tomorrow will therefore be, mainly, in non or partially productive fields. They will be centered on humanity, nature, scientific progress, space exploration and spirituality, supported by a highly automated production of material wealth that will progressively release Mankind from its alienation to work. They will allow humans to regain the natural balance that accompanied it during the previous millennia before being broken by the industrial revolution.

The digital revolution does not lead to a perpetuation of the previous socio-economic reasoning of the industrial revolution; it leads to a total disruption of our system of thought and to a profound revision of our intellectual corpus. This requirement has now become an imperative for the design of future viable policies and vital for the future of our peoples and the place of the European Union in the world.

THE TRAP OF INDUSTRY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT



Marcelli Hazla
Age: 23, Polish

Introduction

Since the financial crisis in 2007-2009, a worrying phenomenon has been observed in Europe. On one hand, EU countries experienced consecutive successes in terms of their educational goals - in 2019, already 81% of working-aged people were high school graduates, and up to 40% of people aged 30-34 had a university degree, which was the highest figure ever (Eurostat, 2021). On the other hand, the unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds across the EU rose from 16% in 2007 to 16.9% in 2020, and has been hovering around 20% for most of the post-crisis decade (OECD Stat). For many young people, this pattern was at odds with the ethos passed down from older generations – of education and knowledge being the key to their professional successes, which left many of them feeling anxious and uncertain about their future. It is therefore worth considering whether the EU's youth unemployment problems might go deeper than just education-related issues. This essay will therefore take the following approach: it will go back to the beginnings of European integration and the post-war order stabilised by the Bretton Woods system to characterise the most impor-

tant factors for the success of post-war European economies, trying to identify the moment when the situation started to deteriorate, which will hopefully help draw conclusions about the possibilities of improving it in the present.

Root-cause analysis

The brutal reset of the world economy that followed the world wars laid the foundations for Europe's unprecedented development. It was linked to the simultaneous presence of several factors stabilising the world economy, forming an institutional warp - the most important of which were the American aid to Europe under the Marshall Plan, the start of the process of European integration and the establishment of the Bretton Woods monetary system (Tarnoff, 2018). The resulting order enabled a stable development of world trade throughout the post-war decades, as a result of which (except for the turbulence in the 1980s caused by the oil crisis and rising inflation) until the occurrence of the global financial crisis, the share of exports in world's GDP grew regularly, as can be observed in *Figure 1*. The basis for growing trade was primarily industrial devel-

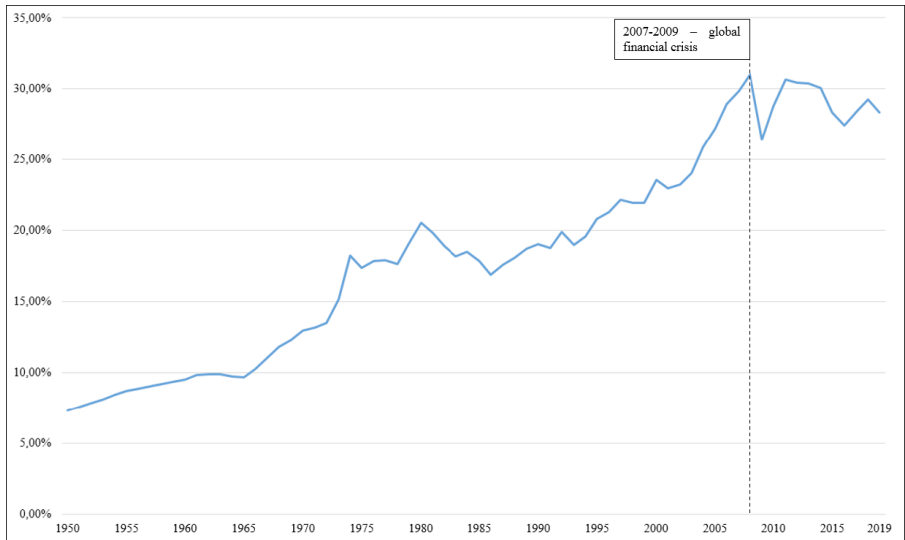


Figure 1: Exports as % of world's GDP, 1950-2019

Source: author's own elaboration based on: OECD 2006; Statista 2021; World Bank Open Data

opment - throughout the Bretton Woods system, the G7 countries increased their share of the world's industrial production as well as the world's GDP (Baldwin, 2019). This trend was reversed by a rev-

olution in economic thinking initiated by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom. Neoliberalism promoted a focus on short-term efficiency and profit, caus-

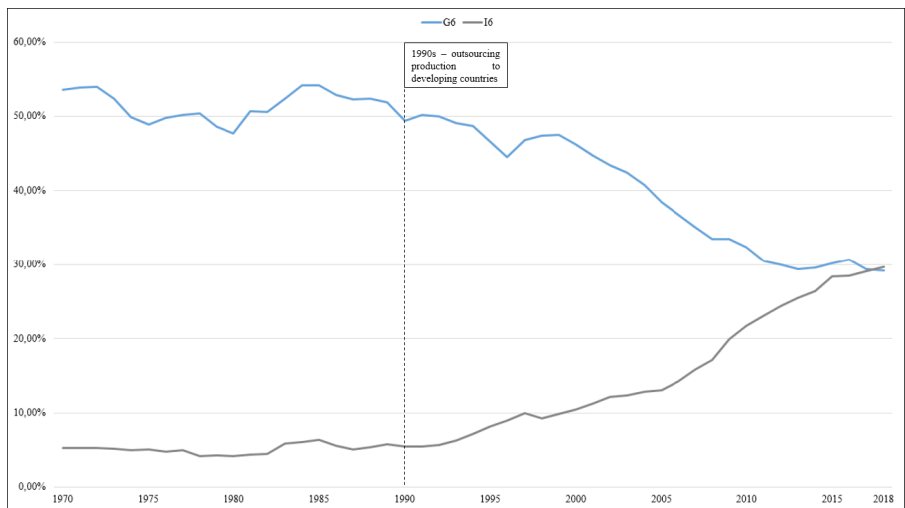


Figure 2: G6 and I6 share in world's manufacturing, 1950-2018

Source: author's own elaboration based on: STAN Industrial Analysis 2020 database, World Bank Open Data, World Development Indicators database, OECD 2006, UN 1976, UN 1981, UN 1990

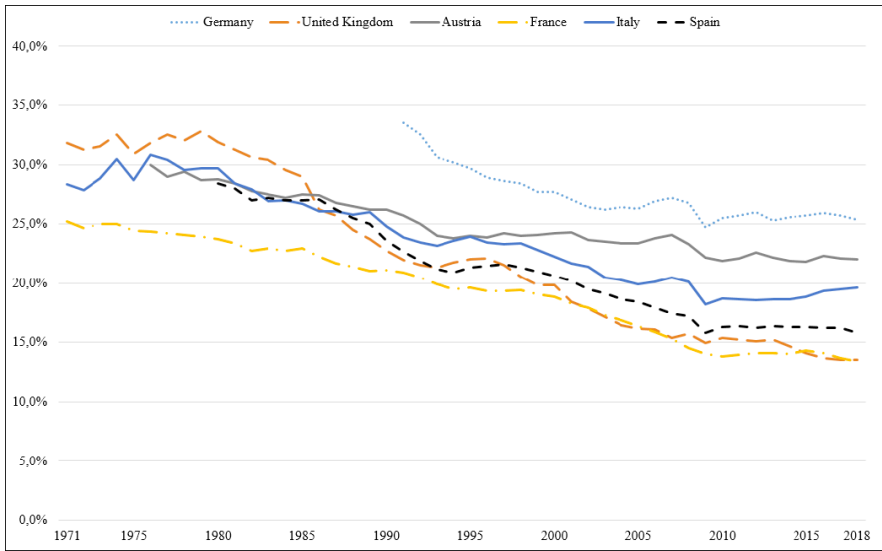


Figure 3: Share of industry in total value added of selected developed European countries, 1971-2018

Source: author's own elaboration based on: STAN Industrial Analysis 2020 database; World Development Indicators database

ing companies from developed countries to make heavy use of outsourcing in developing countries, focusing on the end links of value chains (Eichengreen, 2006).

As a result, since the 1990s, an increased shift of production from developed to developing countries could be observed. Figure 2 shows the share in total world industrial production of two groups of

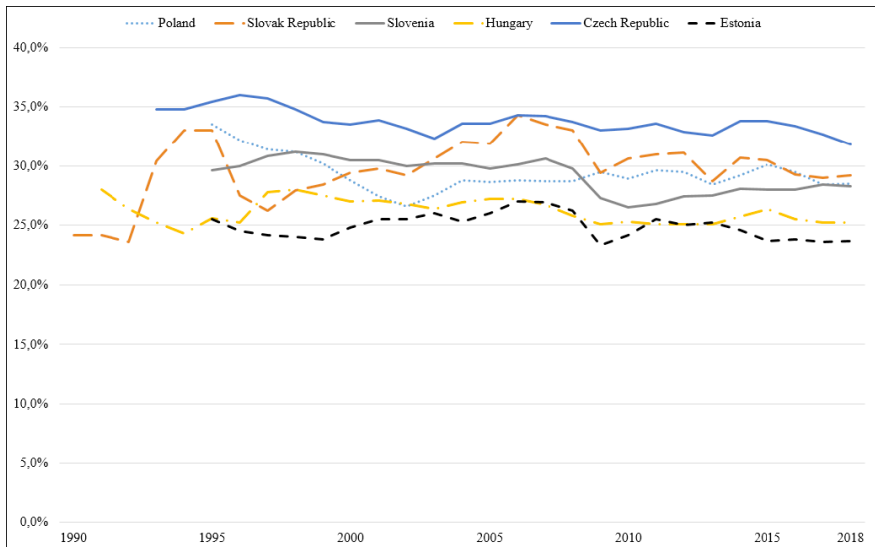


Figure 4: Share of industry in total value added of selected catching-up European countries, 1971-2018

Source: author's own elaboration based on: STAN Industrial Analysis 2020 database; World Development Indicators database

countries: G6 (i.e. the G7 minus Canada, due to lack of data availability; the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Japan) and I6, the “Industrialising Six”. Its constituent countries, namely China, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Poland, have benefited most from the relocation of industrial production from developed countries.

Thus, since the 1990s, a clear trend of industrialisation of I6 countries at the expense of deindustrialisation of G6 countries could be observed. This pattern has taken place throughout the world, including Europe.

In *Figure 3* the declining share of industry in total value added - of selected developed countries of the European Union since the 1970s - can be observed, a process that has accelerated since the 1990s. Germany, which since the beginning of the Bretton Woods system was intended by US policy makers to be the

main economy stabilising the region, basing its development on industrial production and exports, has been the least affected by the deindustrialisation process (Varoufakis, 2013).

The other side of the coin are, of course, the economies to which industrial production has been relocated - *Figure 4* shows selected “catching-up” countries in the European Union that have experienced rapid economic growth since the 1990s. Although the share of industry in their value added has remained constant, given their rapid development the value of their industry has soared in absolute terms.

These rapid changes meant huge shifts in the structure of employment. From the 1970s to the early 2000s, the share of industry in total employment fell by about 15% in most OECD countries (Debande, 2006). As the importance and use of tertiary education was much lower in industrial-based economies than

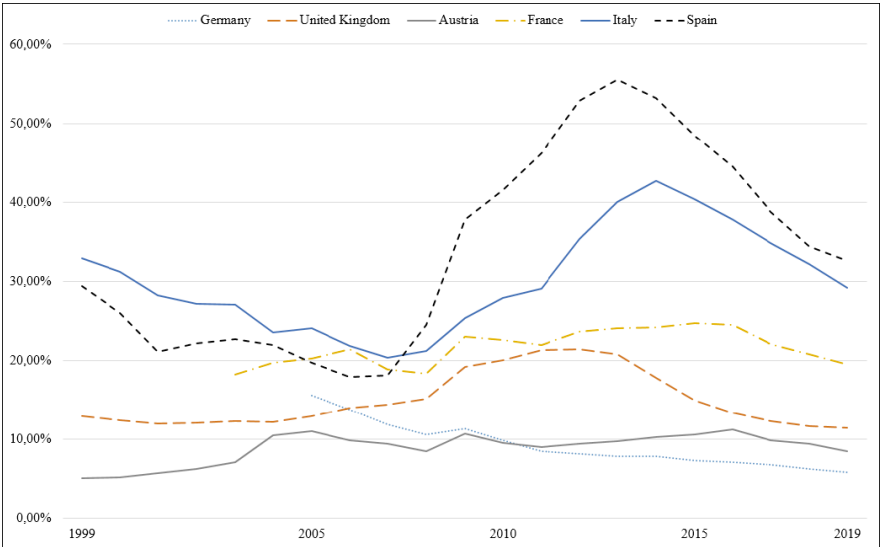


Figure 5: Unemployment for all persons aged 15-24 in selected developed European countries, 1999-2019
Source: author's own elaboration based on OECD Stat database

nowadays, most manufacturing workers were graduates of primary or secondary schools. As they began to lose the opportunity to find stable employment due to the progressive deindustrialisation of developed countries, their situation deteriorated drastically due to the reduced competitiveness of skills that were no longer suited to the realities of the new economy (Phelps, 1999). Nevertheless, a large proportion of industrial workers were eventually able to find employment in the service sector due to their longer tenure and greater experience. Therefore, one could observe the effect of pushing young employees out of the market, as the majority of service companies (we are talking mainly about “office” jobs, specialised services e.g. medical are an exception here), will choose to employ a specialist from the industrial sector instead of an educated but inexperienced employee. The often-too-theoretical profile of many universities, which in many EU countries still follow a classical teaching approach instead of

preparing students for lifelong learning and offering more internships, does not help here either. All these trends add up to relatively high youth unemployment rates in developed countries, as shown in Figure 5.

It is worth noting that among the aforementioned countries two distinct groups can be distinguished: in one of them youth unemployment oscillates between 20-30%, while in the other the situation is better and youth unemployment hovers around 10%. The former group includes, among others, Spain, Italy and to some extent France, while the latter includes Germany, the United Kingdom and Austria. This suggests that deindustrialisation is not the only variable in this equation. Nevertheless, for the catching-up countries where industrialisation has occurred since the 1990s, youth unemployment has fallen in each of them during the examined period. Thus, although the share of industry in value added does not fully explain the situation of developed coun-

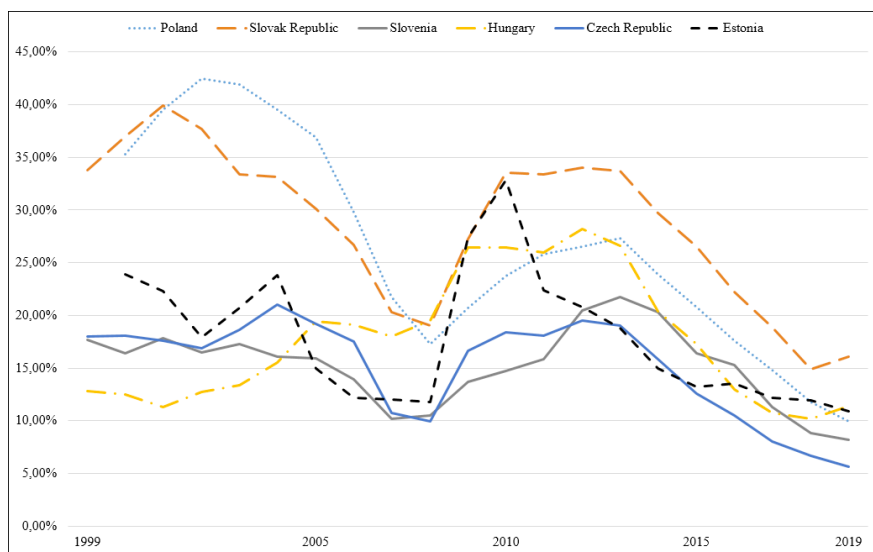


Figure 6: Unemployment for all persons aged 15-24 in selected catching-up European countries, 1999-2019
Source: author's own elaboration based on OECD Stat database

tries, it is a good indicator of the situation of catching-up countries in terms of youth unemployment.

To explain the disparities among developed countries, it is worth mentioning the changes that have occurred since the 1990s. In this period in the United States (which with time spilled over to the rest of the developed world due to the globalisation processes), the so-called “New Economy” has emerged, in which for the first time the emphasis began to be placed on intangibles, human capital and services (Weller, 2002). It has also become closely linked to the development of ICTs and technology-intensive products. Therefore, one possible measure of the degree to which the characteristics of the new economy have been taken into account in developed countries is the share of high-tech in goods exports.

Figure 7 shows this measure for developed European countries - some like France, the UK and to some extent Ger-

many have a high share of high-tech exports, while for Italy and Spain the ratio is less than 10%.

In contrast, for most catching-up countries (except the Czech Republic and Hungary), the share of high-tech in exports does not exceed 10%, as can be observed in Figure 8.

Together, these two measures, intended to represent the most important issues related to the Old and New Economies, seem to explain youth unemployment quite well. The catching-up countries, as long as they are able to develop their industries, are capable of providing enough jobs so that youth unemployment is not an acute problem there. Their problems will begin as industrial production shifts to developing economies such as those in East Asia and Africa. Meanwhile, developed countries, due to the progressive de-industrialisation of their economies, are forced to transform themselves into more high-tech-and-service-based economies

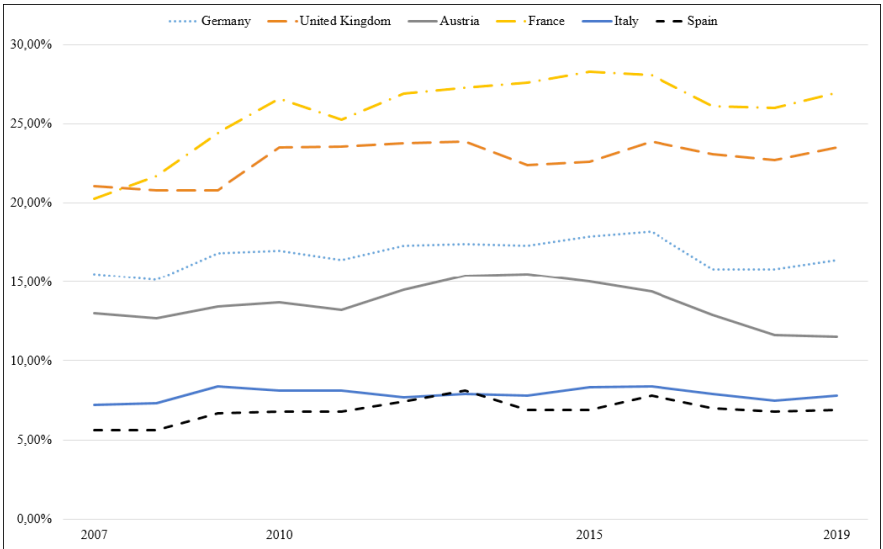


Figure 7: High-tech exports share in total manufactured exports of selected developed European countries, 2007-2019
Source: author's own elaboration based on World Bank Open Data

Figure 9 shows the possible position of European countries on the matrix of Old and New Globalisation, depending on their progress in the Old and New Economies. The potential problem for most of the analysed EU countries is to fall into the “Industry-driven development trap”. With the outflow of industrial production to economies with lower labour costs, they already are or will be in a problematic situation in future. Italy, Spain and most of the catching-up countries can thus be included here. The “Winners of globalisation” group includes the United Kingdom, Germany, which have successfully transformed their economies, as well as, in all likelihood, the Czech Republic and Hungary, provided they are able to maintain the direction of the transformation of their economies.

Suggested solutions

Historically, one way of dealing with technological change has been to des-

perately protect jobs that were becoming redundant (as was the case with luddites, for example). However, nowadays, the aim of politicians should be to protect the people affected by the problems caused by technological change, rather than protecting unnecessary jobs (Baldwin, 2018). As shown in the essay, the biggest challenge for countries will first of all be to prepare the whole economy for the transition to a New, high-tech-and-services-based, Economy. Only then will it be possible to introduce specific solutions aimed at reducing youth unemployment. Based on the regularities cited in this essay, the following solutions can be proposed to help the EU member countries achieve this goal:

- Schools and universities should prepare students for lifelong learning and awaken in them an interest in constant improvement of their qualifications - the paradigm in which one obtains a job for life after graduation no longer holds true

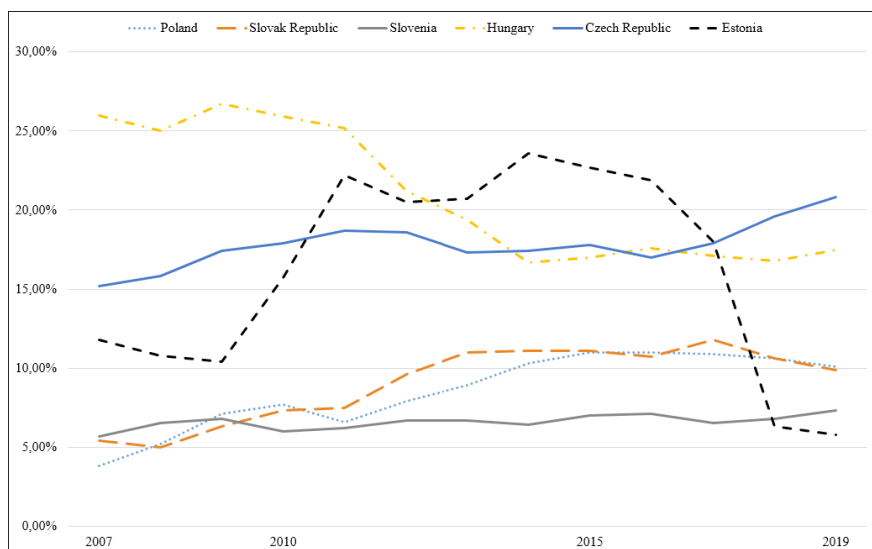


Figure 8: High-tech exports share in total manufactured exports of selected catching-up European countries, 2007-2019
Source: author's own elaboration based on World Bank Open Data

in reality. No knowledge will be useful for the rest of their lives.

- Governments should create opportunities to change careers - for example, by offering free courses to prepare for studies related to new technologies.

- Governments should actively encourage people to study courses related to new technologies and the New Economy - in the coming future practically everyone will have to operate fluently among an increasing number of technologies. An example of an incentive could be scholarships or guaranteed employment in public sector for the best graduates.

- In a world where experience plays an increasingly important role and education is simply a standard that everyone expects, more and more emphasis should be placed on paid internships for students, allowing them to acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge. Universities should create more dual courses (study + work), and governments

should consider introducing more tax breaks for companies that employ interns (or directly subsidise their salaries) – all to maximise the opportunities for gaining work experience already during studies.

The aforementioned solutions do not constitute a comprehensive list, but they do indicate a certain direction which should be followed by the EU countries in the 21st century in order to reduce youth unemployment. To a large extent, it results from deeper, structural problems, which manifest themselves especially in crisis situations, when companies first reduce employment of people with little tenure and work experience.

„New globalisation” since the 1990s – services-and-high-tech-driven		
„Old globalisation” up to the 1990s – industry-driven	Progress	Stagnation
	<p>„Winners of globalisation”</p> <p>Countries, which successfully transformed their economies – like United Kingdom or Germany</p>	<p>„Industry-driven development trap”</p> <p>Countries, which made their development dependant on industrial production – many of the analysed European countries</p>
	Stagnation	
	<p>„Advantage of backwardness”</p> <p>Countries, which mostly skipped the industrialisation phase and can pursue services-based development – for instance India</p>	<p>„Losers of globalisation”</p> <p>Many developing countries, which neither industrialised nor developed their services sectors – like Chile or Zambia</p>

Figure 9: New and Old Globalisation Matrix
Source: author's own elaboration

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A portrait of a young Black man with short hair and glasses, wearing a blue blazer over a tan turtleneck. He is smiling slightly. The background is a vibrant pink with a geometric, zigzag pattern. A white speech bubble is positioned behind his head, containing the text 'UNITED IN DIVERSITY'.

UNITED IN DIVERSITY

Cyriaque Gaborieau
Age: 22, French

Between December 2019 to December 2020, the youth unemployment rate in the EU increased from 14.8% to 17.8% (Euroindicators)¹. This is significantly higher than the overall EU unemployment rate, which rose from 6.5% to 7.5% in the same year². Why are these young people so affected by unemployment? According to the professor, Carol Allain³, these young people come from generations Y and Z defined as more educated than previous generations because of their ability to adapt and the development of digital technology⁴. It is also demonstrated that the new Alpha⁵ will be the best ever because it will benefit from an excellent pedagogical base coming from the Z generation. Nevertheless, this correlation problem is due to three factors: the difficulties of adapting to globalization, the disunity of nations to establish a common future project and the health crisis linked to COVID-19.

First of all, the difficulty of access to the labor market for young people is explained by an EU that is struggling to adapt to globalization, which is constantly evolving and, in particular, to cope with the rise in power of Asian countries. Indeed, according to Nadia Terfous⁶: specialization, trade intensity and technical

progress are theories affecting globalization and the labor market. These areas are now dominated by China. The latter is imposing itself thanks to its alliances such as through Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) and more recently the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) corresponding to the largest free trade agreement representing 30% of the world's GDP, which largely competes with the EU's 18.5%⁷. Moreover, the EU remains on the sidelines in future sectors such as digital technology, which is considered fundamental for economic growth. This market is dominated by the USA through the GAFAMs and China is trying to impose itself through its companies, involving conflicts reflected by the Huawei case and its 5G network⁸. Although in 2021 the European Commission proposed a new loan partnership of 10 billion euros in the ecological and digital transition to 2030⁹, this decision is too late. Indeed, China has already exceeded \$15 billion in digital investment in 2014¹⁰. Therefore, it is the young people who are the most affected because on the one hand they are not experienced enough to adapt to the transformations of the market due to these late investments. On the other hand, they have to make a place

for themselves in sectors already largely dominated by foreign countries.

Then, if young people are impacted by unemployment, one of the factors comes from a lack of cohesion of the European States which does not help our youth to share a common vision of the future. Indeed, according to the Euro MP and philosopher, François Xavier Bellamy, education must allow the transmission of knowledge and our heritage to become essential if we want to build a common society¹¹. In short, sharing a common goal promotes cohesion in order to build a strong economy and, at the same time, employment. But to achieve this, it is necessary to give meaning to democratic values and to remember that the EU built on a continent in ruins, putting an end to Nazism and restoring peace. Today, the anti-European movements illustrating themselves until the Brexit demonstrate our inability to convey this message of union.

Finally, young people have been very affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which has demonstrated the flaws in the support dedicated to youth in the labor market. To explain this reasoning, it should be remembered that with the pandemic, the EU proved to be too dependent on China, affecting its labor market, because it did not know how to form a common block. As an example, the risks related to food have been affected by the closure of borders because our European agricultural policy, which is a pillar that the EU is trying to protect, does not allow us to easily provide for all European citizens. Then, in the medical field, the search for a vaccine and today the vaccination is done in an unequal way within the EU countries¹². In addition, according to a WTO report in 2020 on the situation of nurses, the most represented in the medical field, European governments

are accused of not supporting them properly. It is called for them to invest in education and training defined as essential during the pandemic¹³. Another problem, distance learning and telework has weakened a youth who felt left to their own fate because of isolation, the difficulty to follow courses at a distance, to find an internship or a job.

Consequently, these three major problems allow to heartfelt and reasoned appeal to the EU to come to the aid of the youth to fight effectively against unemployment.

The Youth Employment Support¹⁴ proposed by the Commission is an excellent basis to address these difficulties. Of course, the competences related to education are specific to each State and this principle of subsidiarity must be preserved. Also, as the European researcher, Pierre Hériard, reminded us, the Boulogne process, the Commission's proposal "new EU strategy for higher education" in 2017 and the Parliament's resolutions constitute a solid basis for the youth to pursue, in the field of higher education. Personally, what I expect from the EU is:

- Against the globalization: to increase the highly qualified human capital by investing in research programs especially in the environment and digital.
- Against the disunity: we must allow these young people to meet and define a common future together.
- Increase academic exchanges under Erasmus by allowing a wider choice of schools and students
- Encourage the recognition of diplomas but also volunteer work and internships in EU member countries
- Involve young people in public stud-

ies to enable them to design the Europe of tomorrow

- Encourage the learning of a language of an Eastern country to integrate this youth with the Western one

Faced with the consequences of the pandemic, the dropout of students and the difficulties to access the labor market, it is necessary to invest in learning and in inclusion policies.

- Investing in learning that must be done throughout life. That is to say, allow people who are working to return to university to develop their training

- Investing in a policy of inclusion, i.e. allowing people with disabilities to access a lot of possible jobs

To sum up, in order to offer a bright future to our youth, we must understand that youth is the future. That is to say, we must put all the necessary means to accompany them, harmonize them and develop their capacities.

“United in diversity” highlights the challenge of coming together to live in peace and make progress while also being a source of employment.

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THE EUROPEAN UNION CAN AVOID A LOST GENERATION

A MORE INCLUSIVE, EFFECTIVE AND
ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH

Helena Martin Herero
Age: 21, Spanish

Executive summary

The pandemic is having a devastating and disproportionate impact on youth employment. This effect is further exacerbated when it comes to young people with disabilities. The European Union is equipped with two potentially useful instruments that can improve this situation: the Reinforced Youth Guarantee and the Recovery and Resilience Facility. However, both instruments present weaknesses that should be addressed in order to get the most out of them.

First, more funds should be invested in the Reinforced Youth Guarantee. In addition, it should be more inclusive, better advertised and the monitoring mechanism should be improved. Second, the European Union should establish a percentage in the Recovery and Resilience Facility to be used to improve the employability and training of young people. Specifically, it could encourage programs that teach the culture of entrepreneurship. A percentage should also be set to address the unemployment of people with disabilities, for example through the establishment of specialized agencies which provide job coaching.

Introduction

Young people are much more exposed to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic due to their insecure working conditions, which affect their work activities, income levels and financial stability¹. Young individuals have been the most likely to lose working hours or their jobs altogether during economic downturns, since young workers are frequently the first to be laid off². In addition, COVID-19 caught many young people in the school to work transition, which has been considerably hindered by the crisis³.

Youth unemployment in Europe was already 15% in 2019. Now, after the pandemic, it is almost 18% (17.8%)⁴. That means that 3.1 million young people aged 15 to 24 and 4.7 million from 15 to 29 years old are out of work. Moreover, if we also count all the unemployed, who neither work, nor study, nor receive training, the “NEETs”, the figure increases to almost 10 million young people (9.7 million from 15 to 29)⁵.

Furthermore, youth with disabilities have greater unemployment rates than the rest of the youth population in every society⁶. People with disabilities entered the crisis

facing exclusion from all aspects of the labor market. Individuals with disabilities were already less likely to be employed in Europe than non-disabled people. In fact, compared to 75% of those without disabilities, 50% of people with impairments were employed⁷. The COVID-19 and the economic crisis have worsened these figures, since people with disabilities are more likely to be laid off and find it more difficult to get back into the workforce⁸.

Problem Description

The Reinforced Youth Guarantee

In order to tackle youth unemployment, the European Commission presented the “Youth Employment Support: A Bridge to Jobs” package which includes a proposal for a Reinforced Youth Guarantee, a program that was first introduced in 2013. Although it is an ambitious plan with attractive objectives, many of the weaknesses of the previous Youth Guarantee have not been addressed.

First, the proposed new EU budget for 2021-2027 only allocates roughly €8 billion to young employment, leaving Member States with a lot of flexibility in determining their own financial priorities⁹. This appears to be insufficient to address young unemployment in the EU, and it is well below the €21 billion per year necessary for an effective Youth Guarantee, according to the International Labor Organization¹⁰.

Second, compared to the large number of unemployed youth, the number of registrations in the Youth Guarantee was limited¹¹. This may be because the program was not adequately publicized, and many unemployed young people may not have been aware of its existence. In addition, young people may not

have been adequately informed of its advantages.

Third, regarding inclusiveness, young people often have to give up their disability entitlements in order to participate in the Youth Guarantee¹². Disability benefits are critical for securing a basic income and covering the additional costs of life that come with having a disability in a society that is not always adapted to disable people¹³. Without these, the young person runs the risk of not being able to fulfill their basic necessities with their wage alone and losing their whole financial safety net in the event of job loss.

The fourth issue is the lack of data to monitor the success of the program. According to the report published by the European Court of Auditors, data from many countries was transferred to the Youth Guarantee very late, and each country started at a different time¹⁴.

Moreover, in order to know whether the program has worked, it is essential to follow up with those who have dropped out to see if they have found a job. In many countries, people who were not working or studying before participating in the Youth Guarantee were lost from sight¹⁵.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility

In February 2021, the European Commission presented “The Recovery and Resilience Facility”. The program’s major goal is to reduce the economic and social consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, as well as to make European economies and societies more sustainable, resilient, and better equipped for the challenges and possibilities of the green and digital revolutions¹⁶. Member States are the ones in charge of

preparing their recovery and resilience plans that set out a coherent package of reforms and public investment projects. Nevertheless, the European Union has established some guidelines, such as a minimum legal percentage of mandatory investment for the green transition (37%) and for the digital transformation (20%). However, no percentage has been set for improving youth employability and skills or for enhancing the employability of young people with disabilities, one of today's greatest challenges.

Policy Options

The Reinforced Youth Guarantee

First, funds earmarked for youth unemployment should be considerably increased. The reason behind this is that the benefits of a national Youth Guarantee system are much greater than the costs, according to studies. The International Labor Organization points out that young people who neither work nor study, nor follow any training - the so-called NEETs - cost the EU a total of 153 billion a year, which rises to 1.21% of GDP due to subsidies, uncollected income and unpaid taxes¹⁷. Therefore, an increase in funding is feasible and necessary.

Second, it is essential to advertise the program in a way that reaches more young people who can benefit from it. Consequently, advertising channels that are tailored to young people should be used. For example, social media accounts focused on this program could be created and managed for each European country. These accounts could explain in an interactive way the benefits of this program or how to enroll. On these accounts, other young people who have benefited from the program in the past could

share their success stories and answer questions from any other interested people. These accounts should be inclusive and include features such as subtitles in the videos or Alt text (alternative text) for posts, among others¹⁸.

Third, in order to increase the inclusiveness of the program, it is crucial to enhance compatibility between disability entitlements and the Youth Guarantee or to establish alternative assistance. This is important in order to give young people with disabilities the confidence and security to enter the labor market. In the existent system, young people with disabilities are in danger of in-work poverty and losing their safety net¹⁹.

Fourth, progress will remain slow in the absence of precise data to track the efforts made by member states. In the Reinforced Youth Guarantee recommendation, the Council only addressed vaguely the necessity to improve the quantitative mechanisms. However, the European Union must act more firmly and require member countries to transmit data in a timely and coordinated manner. Moreover, in order to assess the progress, a proper qualitative evaluation mechanism is also needed. The qualitative mechanism could include first-hand testimonials and recommendations from people who have benefited from the program.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility

Regarding the Recovery and Resilience Facility, in addition to the established percentage for the green and digital transition, a share of the funds should also be earmarked for youth employability policies and a percentage destined solely for the employability of young people with disabilities.

In particular, this money could also be used to promote an “entrepreneurial culture” in school curricula. Entrepreneurship has long been a great manner of stimulating innovation throughout the business spectrum, as well as an extraordinary form of employment²⁰. Most of the times youth who desire to start their own businesses are hindered by bureaucratic impediments and they are not taught the fundamentals of how to act successfully in a business environment²¹. As a result, entrepreneurship training should be promoted, and resources other than funding, such as offices or consulting services, should be made accessible to make the process of beginning a business easier.

In addition, this facility could allocate funds for young people to get guidance to prepare their CV or to prepare for job interviews. Moreover, people with a disability could get additional personalized support. Specialized agencies for people with a disability could help with pre-employment training, career counseling, and job placement throughout their whole carrier.

Concluding recommendations

In light of the weaknesses of the Reinforced Youth Guarantee, I recommend the European Union to carry out four main initiatives. First, it should increase the budget earmarked to youth unemployment in the framework of the youth guarantee. Second, the advertisement of the program should be improved to reach more young people, but in an inclusive manner that also adapts to new generations, such as social media. Third, it should enhance the compatibility between this program and the disability allowances or put in place alternative assistance. Fourth, a reliable monitoring

mechanism should be established to monitor properly the failures and successes, including a qualitative evaluation.

Moreover, regarding the Recovery and Resilience Facility, I recommend establishing a percentage of funding to improve the employability and training of young people. In addition, a share should also be earmarked exclusively for the employability of young people with disabilities. In particular, this money could be used to promote entrepreneurial culture and to prepare students for the workplace. People with a disability should get additional personalized support from agencies that could offer job coaching or employment training.

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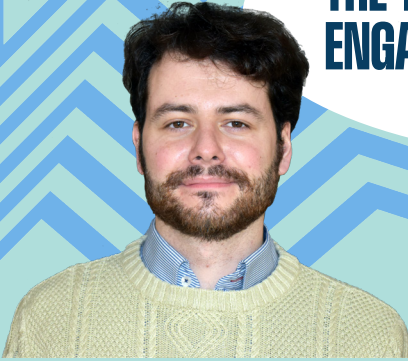
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THE YOUTH OF EUROPE NEED TO BE ENGAGED AND ENGAGE IN RETURN



Jordan Cole
Age: 25, Irish

The EU Commission provides support to member states for youth unemployment and has done so since the last crisis of the great recession. While billions flow into states to create schemes to soothe or solve unemployment issues and our generation is the most educated, yet the most susceptible to the business cycle, what can the EU do?

Billions of euros are being expended to help member states, particularly those in the south who have suffered more inequality with youth unemployment. Still, at the same time, former EU member Great Britain was recording rising youth unemployment and a growing disparity in the real economic value of the wages in their pockets. While countries like France have nearly 20% youth unemployment and my nation, Ireland has under 14%; a real emphasis must land on the value of real incomes.

In Ireland, the Economic and Social Research Institute has published peer-review literature displaying evidence that, for the first time, the younger generation are financially speaking, worse off in terms of real income than the previous generation. And as more youthful gener-

ations, all the same, are set to inherit their parent's wealth in an excellent transfer, the problem of waiting to get wealthy or enjoy prosperity off the previous shows an economic crisis and market failures.

One would think the most educated would not be vulnerable to a labour market that places importance on education and skills?

But alas, education standards have changed over the decades. Where a secondary education was desirable and later on a university education was desirable, there has been an inflation of education. A bachelors degree is, in the labour market at least-comparatively speaking, nearly equivalent to secondary education.

The pressure to increase the opportunities of securing a well-paying job requires, more so now than before, additional education. Resulting in barriers to the labour market. Often, to pursue an income that will afford a living standard that can afford the rising costs of living. That has placed enormous pressures on property markets throughout Europe, causing a disparity in work being more

centralised for higher wages. The lower price of property often equates to a further distance from work and fewer services nearby and, in turn, lower property value and growth potential.

In my country of Ireland, youth unemployment, economic shocks, and high living costs pose a significant threat to young people and the country demographically speaking. As before, a high amount of youth affected unemployment resulted in emigration. Before in the late 80s, Ireland experienced a 'brain drain' where the most educated began to leave, causing a decline in the availability of a highly educated workforce. This cannot happen again, and to a point made earlier, the capital costs of repeating such a move are high. Younger generations lack the capital to emigrate in search of labour, searching for accommodation and a labour market that is saturated and hard to satisfy the needs of.

Additionally, it can be difficult to align the education skills with the requirements of the job market. When has education's primary goal has been considered as a primary job creator?

The role of an educational institution is to either create future employment opportunities or provide an education that can be utilised in one's pursuit of a career. This has been demonstrated in Europe, where knowledge has become the new driver of wealth creation over time. However, if there is no market demand for the skills being taught, the return on educational investment may take longer to materialise.

Apprenticeships can provide a reprieve to some of the unemployment problems, affording those who wish to pursue other forms of education a more practical experience and job skills at

the same time. While they do receive a fair share of criticism, as does any form of work placement of internships that focus on short term solutions, they can-like education be guided towards trends, such as green jobs.

Throughout Europe, however, there is a varying degree of importance placed on apprenticeships; in my country, they have started an aggressive campaign to bring the concept back to life after a drastic fall and near collapse in uptakes following the crisis of 2008 till 2012.

With the pandemic, many service forms of employment were disrupted. Young people's jobs, from those in full-time work to those balancing education and work, and those who were unemployed were all at once out of work. All are receiving varying degrees of support throughout, but the future is uncertain. While many Governments champion their vaccine rollout, and rightly so, it is left to wonder about the economic toll the pandemic has taken and what it means for the future. Many fears of an economic downturn and high debt could mean a fabled crack up-boom or austerity; all limit the current and future investment in the future of Europe.

With many issues stated above, what is my proposal for the EU can do? And do better? My above concerns can be listed and categorised as:

- Falling real income
- Role of education In the labour market
- Apprenticeships
- Future investment

I firstly propose a new form of Entrepreneurship program throughout the EU. By encouraging entrepreneurship among the European Youth from brick and mortar, e-commerce, B2B finance

and support, traders and many more. Providing information and funding for varying degrees of entrepreneurship to tackle the issue of oversupply by firstly expanding demand, by becoming self-employed and hopefully after that, employ additional persons. Additionally, support for start-ups to trade within their own country and support export goods and services in select European towns and cities. Akin to a sister-start-up company.

Focusing on support both financially and informative can give young Europeans the knowledge and support to start their ventures. Moreover, the funding should be flexible and be the least bureaucratic that it can be. To battle the unemployment among education, our institutions need to be more supportive by asking for less and giving more. Arrangements over intellectual property take too long, equity stakes make it unprofitable for start-ups to advance, and royalties levies too high. It is resulting in the minds and youth behind these projects becoming minority shareholders. This needs to be changed to be more flexible and to reward the actual entrepreneur and reward the result of our education. A lower percentage levy, stake and exit option would all have to offer.

What the EU can do is to legislate to enshrine the rights of entrepreneurs when using University incubators and protect their stake in their own initiative.

An EU-wide fund that helps SMEs and youth start-ups to connect with European markets for competition and cooperation. Allowing youth enterprises to trail exporting in selected areas and cooperate with similar or complementary youth enterprises across the continent.

To the point of apprenticeships, there

may be the opportunity to trial a form of apprenticeships with non-technical or mechanical work, such as, for example, an education semester of work placement. Where one studying a course of finance will be given the opportunity to work and learn at the same time, moreover this should be aimed at technicians in finance, admin clerks and paralegal. For a trial, at least that can be partly funded and supported under an EU youth initiative.

The youth of Europe need to be engaged and engage in return, with European values and our shared single market. A failure to act could result in disenfranchisement with European values and the idea of a European Union. It is paramount that the EU invests and protects those in education who seek to bring forth innovation and entrepreneurship to the areas of pharmaceuticals, biotech, digitalisation, and the broader sciences. The youth have the potential to create a Silicon Valley effect in the EU, but only if the EU will allow them to.

Source for FT Story

"Universities in the UK and Europe have a start-up problem".
<https://www.ft.com/content/fd038300-f09a-4afc-9f7d-c0e3d6965243>

THE EU HAS RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES THAT FAR SURPASS NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN SOLVING IT



Alexandros Philippou
Age: 23, Cypriot

Introduction

Mandela himself has stated that ‘the youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow’, and indeed, he is right in that a country is only as good as its youth, and this quote also applies to the whole of the EU itself. Unfortunately, many members of the European youth today have also paid a big price in the fight against the pandemic, at the cost of their employment, their mental health, or opportunities, with some calling them a ‘lost generation’. According to data, there are 3.1 million young people (15-24) unable to find a job (Lloyd, 2021), with youth unemployment generally being twice as high as general unemployment. Indeed, although as of 2018. Although the EU had 17.5 million tertiary education students (Anon., 2020), being the most educated ever, the EU has to make sure that such students will graduate with the opportunity to prove their knowledge and skills, by using its financial and political resources, as well as its capabilities to provide support that surpasses borders and national governments. This essay will explore and provide solutions three issues in youth unemployment, the first being the concern of the lack of oppor-

tunities for training and internships with the pandemic, the second being the issue of brain drain among scientific research students, and the third being the lack of opportunities among the members of the youth with cultural capabilities, especially among the film industry.

Skill training and opportunities

The first issue to explore is the lack of opportunities in skill-building for the youth brought by the pandemic. Although there is a strong focus that today's youth that is more educated, yet struggling to find employment, it should be remembered that ‘a child only educated at school, is an uneducated child’. Indeed, although the acquirement of a degree provides opportunities and education to an individual, an individual also needs opportunities for training, internships, and networking. With COVID-19 and the lockdown measures, many members of the youth were restricted from such opportunities, leaving them without experience and without adequate skills to be competitive in the job market, as well as placing great stress on students to seek to be competitive only by virtue of their grades. The EU Commissioner for

Employment and Social Rights, Nicholas Schmidt, is right in saying ‘education profiles do not match with the requirements of these jobs and therefore we have to react rapidly...we have to give these young people perhaps some additional training, additional education, reorientation for the jobs which exist’ (Lloyd, 2021). Although the plan to provide \$22 billion for tackling youth unemployment is generous, it is uncertain whether the amount will benefit the youth, as it is up to the national governments to use them as they see fit, and there is more depth needed in dealing with the issue, as Schmidt admits.

However, what can the EU do in tackling this issue? One probable solution, as supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is the implementation of a dual system in schools and universities as used in Japan and Germany, linking education with training and ensuring a smooth transition between school/university and work-life, with any skills obtained to be recognized and officially certified (OECD, 2006) (Coenjaerts, 2009). Similarly, active labour market policies can also be implemented in EU level, encouraging traineeships and internships, with the OECD arguing that participation in such programs should be compulsory to be effective. Indeed, the EU can encourage and even put legal obligation on universities and schools alike to provide such programs to their students, and obligate businesses to hire or train a certain number of graduates who graduated in the midst of the pandemic, providing them any experiences or skills they might have missed out on during lockdown, and help them gain confidence after studying in isolation, making them more competitive and ready for the job market. However, the EU should evaluate such policies, as such policies require

rigorous studies in the current job market and constant updating to keep up with any trends which may prove costly. In addition, legislations which force students to undertake internship, and businesses to provide them, may prove unpopular with some unwilling students, and businesses alike which must accept them. Nevertheless, the issue of the training of the future workforce should be of great importance for the EU in the post-pandemic period.

Brain-drain in scientific research

The second issue to explore is the sector of the unemployed youth that could use help and action from the EU is the sector educated in the sciences and medicine. The lack of union of the EU in the field of science was proven in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, where EU companies were outperformed and outshone by non-EU based companies, such as American Pfizer, the British AstraZeneca, and the Russian Sputnik vaccines. The Times Newspaper called the EU a ‘customer’ when it came to vaccines, simply shopping and looking for companies to make contracts, whilst being on the sidelines when it came to production or facilitating in the access to raw materials. It is unfortunate, as it would otherwise provide a good chance for the EU to unite all its member states and demonstrate its productive and scientific capabilities when all its member-states are united.

However, what is the link with unemployment? It should be noted that the CEO of Pfizer who overlooked the production and distribution of the vaccines is Dr Albert Bourla, a Greek scientist, is an EU citizen who could have easily contributed his skills and expertise in the EU in more appropriate or more suitable circumstances. Indeed, there is a significant

issue of brain drain from scientists and researchers who flee to the USA upon completing their doctoral studies, with concerns being echoed as far back as in 2003, in which it was found that 87,500 US employees working in Science & Technology were EU Nationals, with 73% of lost human capital as of 2000 (Politico, 2003). The issue of brain drain is not only of concern when it comes to knowledgeable groups migrating from the EU to the USA or the UK, but also exists within the EU, with Eastern Europeans moving to West Europe after obtaining degrees, to find employment and opportunities, with Bulgaria having 22% fewer people in 2018 than in 1990 (Die Welt, 2018).

Why and how should the EU deal with this problem? The reason why the EU should deal with this problem was proven in the vaccine rollout crisis, where the EU had more trust and investment in companies external to the EU such as Pfizer and AstraZeneca, showing a lack of attention or investment in EU pharmaceutical companies that are independent and not reliant on partnerships from non-EU companies. Indeed, the EU should invest more in scientific facilities and in Research & Development to ensure employment of the youth educated in the sciences, to ensure self-sufficiency of the EU in pharmaceuticals and medical goods, and to establish the EU as a power in scientific research and productivity. Paquet recommended as a solution to improve the networking and to spread the attractiveness of research and development across Europe to retain knowledgeable European citizens in their countries and reduce brain drain, within and outside of Europe, referring to the Erasmus program as a successful model of European knowledge integration (Paquet & Rech, 2020). Especially with Brexit and a 40% drop of EU applicants in UK universities (Read, 2021) and

the return of EU academics (Democrats, 2019), the EU can take this opportunity to invest in its own universities throughout Europe and invest in their scientific research capabilities, ensuring employment and opportunity in bright European minds right in their own European home, and the creation of knowledge that can be used to improve medical standards and goods to ensure a higher living standard throughout Europe.

The European Film Industry

Whilst talking of the phenomenon of unemployment of the educated youth, it is important not to dismiss the members of youth educated in the arts and culture, given the rich cultural legacy of Europe. The culture sector of the EU has been particularly hit with the COVID-19 pandemic, suffering a 31.2% fall in revenue in 2020 (Henley, 2021). This essay will particularly focus on the European film industry, its current problems, and their solutions. Before presenting the problems and the solutions, it should be asked how important the film industry is in solving youth unemployment. Apparently, film production does not only offer employment to writers, directors, and actors, but also to costume designers, technicians, light specialists, graphic designers, and many more, being a major industry that combines many that are skilled in artistic and technical fields. In addition, film production also brings revenue to local economies during filming, and after filming via tourism, being an industry with many benefits, and provides a valuable input of culture to European audiences and mends the divide between member-states with linguistic differences via film. The language barrier is also an asset in bringing employment to voice actors and subtitle editors, and in encouraging European citizens to learn more languages.

Firstly, what are the problems of the European film industry that the European Union should address. It seems that the main problem is competition from Hollywood. As of 2019, 68.7% of the movies being distributed in the EU were US productions, whilst 28.9% were European productions, 3.2% of them receiving US investment (Statista, 2021). The European film industry has been particularly vulnerable to Hollywood, with Hollywood being able to commit significant amounts of resources to production and marketing whilst spreading risks over different films, essentially raising the barriers to entry for EU film companies. In addition, there are many internal problems in the European film industry. One limiting factor is the fact that the European film industry is composed of many micro-enterprises that are nationally based, meaning the European film industry produces films of different languages that target national audiences, not the broader global or even European audience. Small enterprises are also less willing to spend great amounts or undertake riskier projects that could otherwise be profitable, given their little revenue. In addition, although governments or regional bodies may support or fund national film production, not much is spent on marketing and distribution, or in studying the broader European audience and their tastes when watching film (Katsarova, 2014).

Now, why and how should the EU be the one to solve unemployment by investing in the film industry. Firstly, only the EU has the financial and physical resources to elevate the European film industry to the extent of Hollywood. Indeed, the EU can provide better subsidies for film production than national governments, allowing film production companies to undertake riskier and more costly projects, which can ensure the employment of more employees and crew-members, as

well as more profitability. Secondly, the supranational nature of the EU can also help. By surpassing borders, the EU can help in distributing European productions in all member countries, provide marketing, and can even aid production companies by connecting them via networks that surpass borders, fostering healthier competition and even cooperation among European film producers, with EU agencies assisting film producers in giving them access to professionals, companies, or crews in certain fields from other EU member countries to help them produce or market a movie.

Conclusion

In conclusion, youth unemployment is an issue that should greatly interest the EU, as the EU has resources and capabilities that far surpass national governments in solving it, including, and not restricted to monetary, political, and cultural. Whilst the pandemic and surrounding issues have brought problems and issues for the youth, they also provide opportunities, as the EU can take advantage of Brexit to attract back EU intellectuals and academics and invest in its universities, the pandemic can provide a chance to change EU education systems to include more training and skill-teaching, and the cultural differences and diversity provide a good opportunity for the EU to invest in cinema and culture in general to celebrate and distribute cultural diversity. It should be reminded though that youth unemployment does not only include degree-holders, as every European citizen deserves the right to employment and the opportunity to prove him/herself to European society and contribute to it, of which the EU must address..

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YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY CLAIM THE VALUE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Natalia Galán Díaz
Age: 22, Spanish

Europe is much more than geography, it is also a worldview, it is culture, we are a set of shared values, a shared history and cultural connections, among other things. So identifying Europe is much more complex than looking at a map. How Europe is defined will have a significant impact on how Europe's security is perceived and its relations with the outside world, as well as with its various policies.

Europe's future depends on its youth, which is why this topic has become a social priority in the EU. However, today there is a great deal of disappointment because many believe that they do not have opportunities, and therefore establishing a common strategy by Member States for future policies in the youth field, has become fundamental. To achieve this, the European Commission implemented measures, including a new Youth Strategy for the period 2019-2027, with the aim of empowering European youth and give it more weight in EU policy making, reflecting the importance the Commission attaches to investing in young people and their future.

Nevertheless, to this day, youth unemployment remains very high in the EU, es-

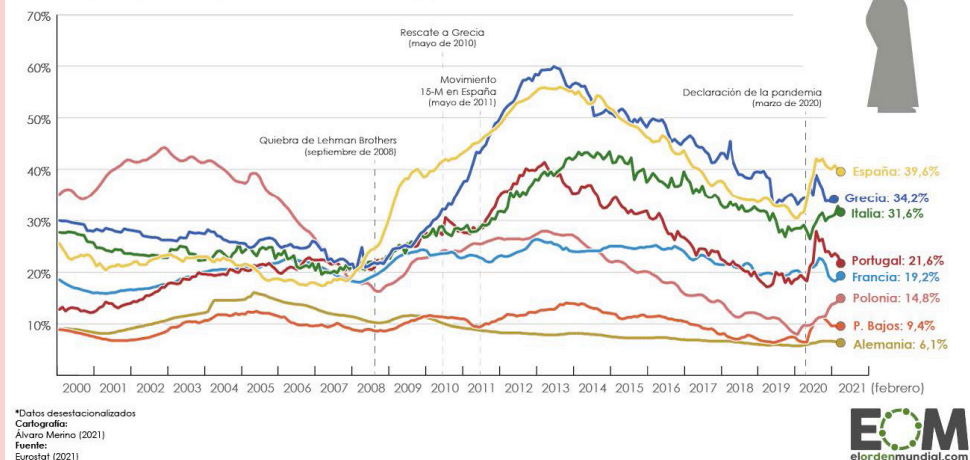
pecially after the declaration of the pandemic in March 2020, when the number of young people under the age of 25 out of work soared in many member states. Therefore, throughout this essay, we will answer the questions posed by Manfred Weber: "If today's generation is the best educated ever, but currently the biggest problem is unemployment, what is going wrong? What are you expecting from the EU to provide a good future for the younger generation?"

We, the young Europeans of today, are the best educated generation with the best opportunities, and yet it is becoming more difficult for us to find work and a certain stability, but why is this happening? It is clear that this is not happening in the same way in all Member States, there is the case of Germany where youth unemployment in 2021 has been approximately 6.1% and on the other hand, the case of Spain where it is currently 39%.

The first thing we could say that is not going well is the difference between what is studied and what is demanded in the market, often because the market is moving at a much faster pace than the syllabus of the different European uni-

Los jóvenes europeos, de crisis en crisis

Desempleo juvenil (menos de 25 años) por mes en la UE*



This graph shows the evolution of youth unemployment in the EU under the age of 25. This data also reflects information on their educational, productive and even political systems.

versities. Little by little, universities are becoming aware of this problem and are trying to create programmes focused on labour market insertion. Likewise, companies themselves are also training their workers in specific skills according to their needs. Those known as “millennials” must be in continuous training, especially in the field of digital technologies, sustainability, creativity and teamwork skills. On the other hand, in relation to the first problem regarding education, the phenomenon of overqualification stands out, which means that young people have a higher level of training than the jobs on offer in the labour market, which is why many of them give up working in these jobs in the hope of finding a job in line with their studies, which may not come.

On the other hand, another problem is from a more political point of view. Countries such as Spain, Greece or Italy with high youth unemployment indicate

a productive structure that has reached its peak in labour demand and is unable to expand further, so they do not create more jobs, or at least not those commensurate with the training and experience of young people. This results in an increasing number of young people who neither study nor work, and who also have little hope. On the other hand, it has also given rise to what is known as the brain drain, where highly trained and qualified people decide to emigrate to other countries where they believe they have better job and economic opportunities.

Since the pandemic, therefore, there are fewer job opportunities and young people are competing with the unemployed, recently laid off, which many of whom are more experienced.

Therefore, the EU has a key role to play in providing a good future for the younger generation, it is time to demonstrate

the values that have made it grow and advance and to create new policies with these future generations in mind. And as former Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said, “the European Union has decades of experience in overcoming crises and has always emerged stronger after”. I would therefore like to mention a few things that I would expect from the EU to improve the future of young people:

One of the problems we have mentioned is the lack of skills and knowledge demanded by companies. Therefore, it would be opportune to implement policies to modernise the syllabus in order to improve the training of young people.

On the other hand, degrees can often become very theoretical, so encouraging practical teaching and, above all, several periods of work experience in different areas can help young people to gain experience, and can also help them to find out what they want to be or what areas they like best and be able to better orientate their professional future.

Furthermore, as the McKinsey Institute states, students do not develop general skills such as oral communication or ethical principles during their university years. A fact that adds to the main fear and problem of recent graduates: the transition from studies to work.

Another thing the EU could do is to implement what is known as the “Austrian rucksack” in all EU countries. This system has been implemented in some European countries and is giving very positive results, and it would also be a way to reduce the cost of severance pay, and therefore encourage the hiring of productive and young people.

Finally, and although it seems a rather

strange measure, it seems to me that the EU should have more programmes to teach that failure in a particular thing is not a bad thing, but that we should learn from it.

To conclude I would like to say, that young people today claim the value of the European Union in tackling major challenges, as it has an undeniable role to play. As a consequence, the Union has a duty to be committed to helping Member States address the needs and aspirations of young people through a common and effective youth strategy.

WE ARE THE BEST EXAMPLE FOR ALMOST EVERY DIMENSION OF WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE GOOD IN THE FREE WORLD



Francisco Javier Herrero de las Heras
Age: 21, Spanish

As a Spanish BSc Student in Economics, my aim is to try to give an explanation for the question risen, as well as to propose, according to my humble and young opinion, what could be understood as the starting point for a solution to a complex problem that deeply concerns the future of our Union.

Lately, data for youth unemployment which has been released has caught attention due to the circumstances under which young people are suffering from unseen unemployability rates. The situation worsens in countries such as mine, where the rates ultimately reached an almost 50% of all the young active population in Spain.

The reasons behind are diverse, but could be tracked down from the 2008 crisis to our days. The labour market found itself systematically contracted and the reallocation of its resources was then an enigma. Today, we know that jobs flew away from stability and installed themselves in a constant uncertainty status, where seasons play the big role as it used to be in the agriculture-based pre-industrial world. Besides, being aware of the current market economy where we stand, the highest productivity and the

lowest costly resources are desirable for a company to be successful. Nonetheless, this logic led to a movement of the lowskilled labour to some parts within the Union that offered lower wages to its workers, promoting a stagnation of those same wages that, so as to maintain their attractiveness, did not and do not increase as they would have naturally done due to the growing economic activity. Furthermore, following the latest FTA entry into force, the same situation is given but, this time, with jobs moving to some countries overseas. Be that as it may, some parts of Europe, amongst which we can count France, Italy and Spain more precisely, where seen as less competitive due to the rise of their mean and minimum salary; circumstance that left many of these countries with traditionally industrialised or manufacturing hubs to their choices and behind.

There is however, nothing wrong with evolution and deindustrialisation. It is expectable and usual for a country to develop in new expertises and it is part of the R&D spirit that characterises us Europeans. The problem comes when the people that used to work or planned to work there, are simply offered to "re-cycle" themselves and devote their pro-

fessional lives to other jobs without real alternatives on the table. You cannot force a 18-old young man to become a lawyer, a biologist or an entrepreneur when, what he does well concerns his hands and his passion for, e.g., working on his local car industry components manufacture.

The job market is broken for the youth because of the lower-expenses rise-revenues logic that does not take into account that, the poorer the employees are, the poorer the consumer will become. It is nonsensical to lower the price to become more competitive when there is less and less consumers willing to buy your product or service because they have more important costs to cover.

On the other hand, we have another considerable problem on European big and median cities. The purchase and/or rent price for a flat in Munich, Paris, Milan, Madrid, Brussels or Amsterdam; cities where most job opportunities are found in Western Europe, is unbearable by our recent graduates who found their first, second and third job. In Spain, more than half of the net first salary goes on covering exclusively the housing expenses; without including Wi-Fi, mobility, and food among other basic expenses. How is our youth going to save or expend their money then? The few that are employed, cannot own a single good and service.

Paradoxically, we do not even own audiovisual content, which was a symbol for the first EU-generations that commenced to live in peace and brotherhood between radio-cassettes and Eurovision songs on the background, since we now pay a monthly fee for Netflix and Spotify that, once we stop paying, we no longer have access to anything but our parent's house in the best of the cases...

We don't have jobs, we don't have houses, we don't have cars, we don't have films and music,... but there is more money than ever currently circulating in the EU.

So, what has happened?

3 main things: the complete dismantlement without alternative of most of our industries except in Germany, some parts of France and some Eastern-enlargement countries; the reallocation of some of our companies overseas, mainly in China, which, undoubtedly, is not an ally at all and that has took advantage of our technologies and patents to grow richer without expending a penny; and the misunderstanding of our market-oriented economy that does not take into consideration people's future perspective and tries to turn Venice into Disneyland, Paris into an Instagram playground and most of our cities into more expensive, inhabitable and insecure places that do not promote youth employment to be honest.

In spite of this all, and may you excuse me if I sound catastrophic, there are big reasons for hope. I am a big fan of the European Union not only for the Erasmus opportunity it has given me, or the chance to travel and cross borders freely that supposes to a normal citizen of Europe. I am a big fan for the best legacy of the 20th century because it brought peace to our land of sorrow, because it brought prosperity when there was misery, because it gathered generals and presidents under the same ceiling in the same parliament instead of solving our differences on the battlefield or through trade wars and tariffs.

Europe has an amazing and unprecedented history, and it deserves to be considered as such. In order for the Eu-

ropean Union to offer better conditions for its youth, we need to have a single and strong representative wherever the international interests are. I cannot stand hearing: the future is China, the future is India, the future is Africa, the future is Brazil, the future is US..., and never listening in a single international forum: the future is the European Union.

We are the best example for almost every dimension of what is considered to be good in the free world. What has been achieved to date was, decades ago, unimaginable. And we, in spite of all these virtues, still don't find an answer for our youth to have a job, buy a house and make it a home.

Well, as I am still young and hopeful, what I would do to boost our youth employment are three main actions again:

1. I would promote, through the current Green Deal, rural employment in Europe that does not imply environmental damage and that, in addition, becomes carbon neutral or negative. This can include the food industry, reforestation of the land, revitalization of rural activities through the circular economy model and the reallocation of industries that must become carbon neutral in rural soil. It is very important to take care of the rural spaces in Europe, as they are suffering from depopulation and the abandonment of these territories raises new problems to add to the current we have. Climate change is one of our main priorities, and the rural world offers a durable and sustainable way of reducing emissions and becoming more green, as well as it protects our culture and heritage that persists within those areas. Besides, the model of tourism has to change urgently;

the cruise ship tourism-model and mass tourism in general, apart from polluting, is damaging the way of life of the locals in those areas. Examples such as Venice, Mallorca or any other masstouristic cities let us know that this set of circumstances cannot continue over time.

2. I would reform the university system, prioritising excellence above "compatibility" of our universities. We have to demonstrate that our universities are good and competent, not that they are compatible with one another. It will depend on companies, institutions and employers in general to decide whether our students were successful on their education goals or not. This would push our university students to demonstrate they really deserve credit for their effort; and if it is not the case, it means there must be another path to follow. Next, we also need to restructure vocational training in the EU. It is unacceptable to consider that people are less valuable due to their education. All people are equally-valuable regardless of their degree and condition. If you are not a university student it is because you have other capabilities that you can develop. The ideal would be, not to offer everything to everyone, but to offer to each what fits them the most according to their preferences, and considering him/her in human terms, not exclusively in academic or professional ones. The goal would be to have the best and most productive workers in the world, so that wages are not an issue for our companies.
3. I would favour the transatlantic alliance and require more conditions for China to enter our market. It is

unacceptable to collaborate with a country that is hostile to our way of living and that actively infringes the most basic human rights day in and day out. They might offer good prices, but soon they will offer also good opposition to democracy, freedom and human rights. We have to foster trade with the countries with whom we hold a friendly relationship with, and restrict it with the countries that go against our values. We are a very powerful market and we should be able to exercise the appropriate pressure. However, without becoming hostile, as we must also be a world player that aims for peace and prosperity everywhere on the planet. Those are my main proposals of the many I have in mind for the Europe to come in the next years. They do not forcibly focus on the youth only because, I believe, we should aim for the greatest good for the greatest number. Not for the youth, nor for the adults; but for all our dear Europeans that inhabit this beautiful land from Lisbon to Vilnius and from Rome to Stockholm.

Thank you.

THE EU NEEDS TO ACT FAST



Nora Strømme
Age: 24, French

Despite the fact that today's generation is seen as the best educated ever, the youth unemployment is increasing. As a matter of fact, in March 2021 the youth unemployment rate in Europe was at 17.1%. The youth unemployment reason and rates vary from country to country, in Germany the rate is at 5% while in Greece it is at 31% (Lloyd & Garret, 2021). It is, therefore, difficult to pinpoint one solution that would solve the problem for every country.

In this essay I will discuss the reason why the youth unemployment rate is increasing and offer solutions to be implemented on a European level.

Due to the pandemic, schools were forced to close and offer a digital solution. However, many schools and universities were slow to digitalise despite being forced to do it. For instance, more than half of the universities in Germany were unable to put in place proper online teaching systems (Wolff, 2020). Despite this, many are applying for high education. As a matter of fact, Norway broke records in 2021 with the amount of people applying for higher education as 154 000 applied (Regjeringen). The fact that so many ap-

plied may reflect the difficulty getting a job and that many see a need to reorientate in order to get a job.

When the pandemic hit Europe, many lost their jobs due to the different lockdown measures countries implemented. This meant that in addition to the many students who already were in the labour market, students who were about to join the labour market suddenly had nothing because opportunities were cancelled. Suddenly there were fewer work opportunities and young people were competing with unemployed people with more experience (Lloyd & Garret, 2021). This resulted in a big pressure to find a job, and many gave up trying to find a job that was relevant to their education. As a matter of fact, approximately 800 people applied for one summer job at McDonalds in Norway (Rydne, 2021).

The EU has established the 2020 youth employment support package, which is financed by the European Social Fund+ and other EU funds includes a guarantee that all those who sign up will receive an offer of a job or an apprenticeship within four months (Europa). However, Guntram Wolff, an economist, thinks that this is not enough (Lloyd & Garret,

2021). He compares this pandemic with the financial crisis of 2008, where it took between 5 to 10 years to get back the level of youth unemployment. One solution he proposes would be the creation of jobs and bring the youth into these jobs. Although many students decide to work in order to finance their education, their jobs may not be relevant for the job they want later in life.

Meaning that, when applying for a job, they may not always have the right experience, despite having the right education and the right mindset. The EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights stated that despite there being jobs in the EU, education profiles do not always match with the requirements of these jobs. Multiple countries such as Germany and the Netherlands have implemented dual vocational education and training. This has proven to lower the youth unemployment rate by international standards as it facilitates the transition into the workplace (Study International, 2019).

In conclusion, in order for the youth unemployment rate to decrease, drastic measures need to be established by the EU and member states. This can be to offer additional training or to regard extracurricular activities as work experience. In addition to this, universities should try to implement trainee or internship programmes in their curriculum. Not only is the youth unemployment creating a gap between opportunities and expectations, it is also affecting their mental health as their long-awaited independence is delayed. This means that the EU needs to act fast in order to save the youths generation from becoming a 'lost generation'.

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