



# **POLICY PAPER**

# **THE FUTURE OF WORK**

COUNCIL OF MEMBERS // EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
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# Explanatory note

## **The future of work in the European Youth Forum**

Youth employment and social inclusion are of vital importance to young people in Europe, particularly since the economic crisis and its severe consequences for youth. They form key areas of work for the European Youth Forum. Within this context, the Youth Forum developed a number of policy documents linked to social and economic rights including the [Policy Paper on Youth Employment](#) (2013) and [Resolution on Youth Autonomy and Inclusion](#) (2016).

Four global megatrends are beginning to transform the world of work and shift its role and value in our lives: globalisation, the climate crisis, demographic changes and technological advancements. These changes bring with them new challenges and emerging questions on topics such as social protection, labour rights and the organisation of work in society that require analysis by the Youth Forum and policy demands for decision-makers.

The Youth Forum undertook research in 2018 and launched a publication, "[The Future of Work and Youth](#)", to better understand the gaps and emerging issues being brought to light by the changing nature of work. On the basis of the report, this Policy Paper seeks to fill the gaps in the platform's existing policy positions and outline what is needed to achieve the kind of future of work that young people want.

## **Development of the policy paper**

This policy paper is a result of the findings outlined in the "Future of Work and Youth" report, as well as discussions with Member Organisations of the European Youth Forum. Over the course of its development, three separate consultations were organised to gather input. A Policy Commission was held during the Council of Members in April 2019 to introduce the findings of our publication on the future of work to Member Organisations and to gain an understanding of what kind of work youth organisations are already undertaking on this topic. A face-to-face consultation on the Policy Paper then took place on 27 to 28 June 2019<sup>1</sup> and an online consultation was held from 11 July to 15 August 2019<sup>2</sup>. The outcomes of these consultations have been incorporated into the final draft of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> Member Organisations participating: DBJR for DNK, ETUC Youth, FYEG, KNZ, NCYOG, TEJO, VJR, YWCA.

<sup>2</sup> Member Organisations participating: Allianssi, CNAJEP, CNJ, DBJR for DNK, DUF, VJR, DNYC, EEE-YFU, EGEA, ETUC-Youth, FYEG, IFLRY, LYMEC, LIJOT, MSS, OJV, VJR, WOSM.

## **Aims and scope of the policy paper**

The primary objective of the policy paper is to outline the Youth Forum's political demands to ensure a future of work where all young people's social and economic rights are met. The future of work is a growing topic in the discourse on employment and social rights in Europe and is a growing concern among governments and institutions, employers and workers alike. Yet as noted in our report on the future of work, the youth perspective is extremely limited in the current discourse. Where it does exist, it is often reflected in areas traditionally linked to youth such as education and skills. By developing this Policy Paper now, we intend to fill this gap and ensure that the realities of young people are reflected in the discussions. This will further the goal of mainstreaming youth across policy areas and ensure a rights-based future of work where no young person is left behind.

# Executive Summary

This Policy Paper outlines the European Youth Forum's political demands for a future of work where all young people's social and economic rights are met. Policy-makers have been too slow to respond to emerging challenges as a result of the changing world of work. Yet it is policies that shape our labour markets and inaction risks negatively impacting the rights of current and future generations. To shape a future of work that is sustainable, just, and inclusive of all, including youth, governments and institutions must begin to address these challenges today.

Young people in Europe already face significant challenges in relation to work today. However they are rarely included in discussions on the future of work, despite their vulnerable position in the labour market. As four global megatrends affect the future of work - globalisation, the climate crisis, demographic changes and technological advancements - these challenges risk being exacerbated while new challenges, as well as opportunities to be seized, may emerge. To adequately prepare for the changing world of work, governments and institutions must consider the impacts of each of the megatrends.

Youth-specific, inclusive and forward-looking policy interventions are crucial to ensure that young people are not left behind. Policies must consider the changing role and value of work in our lives and what young people want these to be. Young people's vision for work is underpinned by certain key values such as the right of every person to an income, the importance of work-life balance, having a fulfilling job, and the ability to contribute to society in ways other than through employment.

Based on these considerations, this Policy Paper touches on how to address challenges and maximise opportunities related to skills, welfare reform, workers' rights, a youth-friendly labour market, and investment in a new economy. It provides the following recommendations for a forward-looking approach by governments and institutions and to ensure a youth-inclusive and rights-based future of work.

## Recommendations:

### **Invest in young people's skills**

- Establish paid educational leave policies in line with the ILO Paid Educational Leave Convention that allow young workers to attend training programmes during work hours and at no personal cost.
- Ensure the availability of financial, human and other resources necessary for the development of skills for the future, such as digital skills, soft skills and cognitive skills.
- Invest in skills related to climate adaptability and mitigation, as well as sustainable consumption and production, and integrate these into formal

curricula whilst supporting and recognising non-formal educators, to support more sustainable labour markets.

- Improve outreach towards young women and girls, young people with disabilities, rural youth, and young people living in poverty for education in STEM subjects and the development of digital skills.
- Invest in wellbeing and health education, with a focus on managing the impacts of digitalisation and constant connectivity on young people's social skills and their mental health.
- Invest in continuous 'skills forecasting', with the aim of understanding the skills that young people will need in the long term and based on new trends.

### **Reform welfare systems and labour legislation**

- End age-based discrimination in access to social assistance to ensure better coverage for youth, particularly among those most vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty.
- Ensure adequate social protection coverage for all workers and the self-employed to ensure a decent level of income, taking into consideration the national framework.
- Work with public employment services and education providers, including youth organisations, to provide young people with free, accessible and youth-friendly information about their entitlements to social security and contributions to pensions based on different contract types.
- Recognise informal care work, internships and volunteering that young people undertake as contributions allowing access to social protection.
- Allow greater flexibility in accessing social protection when it comes to pauses in work to ensure coverage for young people searching for their first job or involuntarily stuck in a cycle of temporary work.
- Allocate more financial and human resources towards the enforcement and monitoring of labour legislation.
- Update labour legislation to regulate new and non-standard forms of work and ensure that legislation can be adjusted to regulate other new forms of work that may emerge in the future to safeguard workers' rights.
- Invest in pilot projects and further research into new solutions and non-contributory forms of social security, such as a universal basic income, to improve access to welfare in light of the changing role and value of work.
- Combat tax avoidance and reform taxation policies to target digital technology companies and digital capital as well as high polluters to raise funds for stronger, reformed welfare systems.

### **Safeguard workers' rights and wellbeing**

- Fully adopt and implement the eight fundamental Conventions of the ILO and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to ensure workers' rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in the context of the changing nature of work.
- Work towards a progressive reduction of the working week within full-time contracts.

- Adopt policies promoting flexible work arrangements to allow workers to have real sovereignty over their work hours and enhance inclusivity in the work environment, without a decrease in the standard of living or job quality.
- Collect more data on the social and economic value of informal care work and volunteering to contribute to their recognition as important productive activities and to promote gender equality.
- Explore the adoption of policies introducing the “right to disconnect” that ensure that workers can switch off from work and safeguard their wellbeing.
- Regulate emerging technologies that monitor and surveil employees, respecting the right to privacy of workers and giving them ownership over the data that they create at work.
- Fully safeguard the right to collective bargaining of all workers, including those in new forms of work, by revising any existing rules that prevent collective bargaining by the self-employed.

### **Create a youth-friendly labour market**

- Invest in entry-level job creation to provide young people with their first employment opportunities in the changing world of work.
- Raise companies' awareness of the fight against discrimination.
- Help and support young people from migrant backgrounds in their search for an apprenticeship.
- Provide incentives for companies to invest in long-term or permanent contracts for youth rather than temporary or precarious contracts.
- Adopt minimum wage policies that are in line with the cost of living and abolish youth minimum wages to end age-based discrimination in wage policies.
- Invest in quality and inclusive apprenticeships that aim to develop the skills necessary for the future of work.
- Implement and expand anti-discrimination policies in order to close the gender pay gap.
- Invest in public employment services to provide more youth-friendly services, such as in lifelong career guidance to support young people as they enter and continue to navigate the labour market.
- End activation policies based on the ‘any job is better than no job’ mentality and focus instead on empowering young people to select jobs that are of quality and meet their personal aspirations, to protecting their right to live with dignity.
- Ensure the presence of young people and youth organisations in social and civil dialogue in relation to the future of work.

### **Invest in a new economy**

- Adopt policies, created together with the young people that work in the fields considered to be barriers, supporting the growth of alternative business models that put sustainability at the heart of their business model, such as cooperatives.
- Support education for young people about alternative business models and alternative forms of organisation for an economy which prioritises human and planetary wellbeing.

- Support youth entrepreneurship in the new economy through access to financing and administrative support, and protection from risk.
- Promote a just transition, including by investing in the green economy, while providing support such as unemployment benefits, access to training and career guidance for the groups of young people who are likely to be more severely impacted by the transition.

## 1. Introduction

This Policy Paper outlines the European Youth Forum's political demands for a future of work where all young people's social and economic rights are met. Too often the future of work is spoken about as a phenomenon that is outside of society's control. Yet, it is ultimately policies that shape labour markets. The future of work brings with it many challenges as highlighted in our report, [The Future of Work and Youth](#). With the right policies in place and early action from governments and institutions, however, it is possible to create a future of work that is youth inclusive.

Young people in Europe already face significant challenges in relation to work. They are more likely to be unemployed than other age groups<sup>3</sup>, experience a difficult transition from education to employment and face a rise in low quality, precarious employment.<sup>4</sup> Young people can also experience youth minimum wages and age or contribution based restrictions that make social protection inaccessible to those looking for their first job or caught up in temporary contracts. This age-based discrimination violates their rights to equal remuneration for work of equal value and to social security.

Despite these challenges, young people are rarely included in the discussions on the future of work. Decision-makers are failing to recognise youth as a vulnerable group in spite of the barriers they face today and the new challenges the future will bring. As right-holders, young people are entitled to take part in this debate. Moreover, as the group that will be the most affected by changes in the labour market and welfare systems, it is vital for young people to be included in decision-making processes. It is for this reason that the European Youth Forum seeks to provide youth-specific policy recommendations on the future of work in this Policy Paper.

Four global megatrends will affect the future of work: globalisation, the climate crisis, demographic changes and technological advancements. Questions around the role and value of work in society, and how this is changing, will also have an impact. Decision-makers need to consider all four megatrends and the place of work in society to understand and respond to the future of work.

Drawing on the interconnected impacts of these trends, it will be vital to focus not just on jobs and young people's right to employment, but to consider the broader

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<sup>3</sup> Data from 2018. Eurostat, (2019). "Unemployment statistics". [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment\\_statistics#Youth\\_unemployment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment)

<sup>4</sup> European Youth Forum, (2016). Excluding Youth: A Threat to Our Future.

implications for the realisation of all their social and economic rights and the health of the planet. This Policy Paper provides forward-looking, holistic recommendations regarding skills, welfare reform, workers' rights, youth-friendly labour market, and investment in a new economy to ensure that no young person is left behind in the changing world of work.

## 2. Factors influencing the future of work

### 2.1. Megatrends affecting the future of work

The following four global megatrends are set to affect the future of work:

- 1) Globalisation: Globalisation is an on-going process through which local markets are able to integrate into the global economy. While it has contributed to the reduction of poverty across the world, the increased competition it brings has also led to job insecurity, the proliferation of poor working conditions and the lowering of wages<sup>5</sup>. Many young people struggle to find work today as a result and this phenomenon is set to continue for the foreseeable future.
- 2) The climate crisis: the current climate crisis has negative social, economic and environmental consequences. It is already impacting workers' health, labour markets and economies<sup>6</sup>. In future, inequality is likely to rise as the consequences of the climate crisis negatively impact the livelihoods of vulnerable groups<sup>7</sup>. This will have consequences for current and future generations and for the future of work.
- 3) Demographic changes: Europe is experiencing an ageing population, with the proportion of those over 65 years of age growing rapidly. Meanwhile its working age population is expected to decline by nearly 45 million by 2080<sup>8</sup>. Demand for pensions and healthcare services will grow, while fewer people of working age are contributing towards them. This raises serious concerns about the sustainability of European pension models and public finances.
- 4) Technological advancements: Advancements in digitalisation, robotisation, and automation are taking place at an unprecedented rate, leading to a "Fourth Industrial Revolution". As technology begins to replace humans in performing

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<sup>5</sup> OECD, (2017). Future of Work and Skills.

<sup>6</sup> It is estimated that on average, natural disasters alone result in an average annual economic loss of up to US\$300bn. FAO, (2015). The impact of disasters on agriculture and food security.

<sup>7</sup> ILO, (2018). Greening with Jobs: World Employment and Social Outlook 2018; ILO, (2017). Few countries combine an environmentally sustainable footprint with decent work.

[https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/trends/WCMS\\_549356/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/trends/WCMS_549356/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Eurostat, (2017). People in the EU - population projections.

certain tasks, millions of jobs risk disappearing. It is currently unclear whether new technology will create as many new jobs as it will destroy. It is estimated that 20-40% of jobs specifically undertaken by young people will no longer be performed by humans in the future<sup>9</sup>. Therefore job scarcity and worker displacement are likely to grow, particularly among youth, while competition over a limited set of jobs and poorer working conditions increases.

Despite these four megatrends, current discussions on the future of work tend to be limited in scope. The future of work has become synonymous with technological advancement, with the discourse focusing on digital skills for the future or current challenges related to platform work. By failing to consider the impacts of all four megatrends, which often work together in interconnected ways, governments and institutions risk being inadequately prepared to address the challenges that the future of work brings for the social and economic rights of young people.

## 2.2. The future role and value of work in society

As the four global megatrends begin to fundamentally change the nature of work, the role and value of work in our lives will shift. This will influence the future of work.

Work is currently the means through which people generate income. It has also become valuable in our societies because it can provide a sense of purpose and of self-realisation<sup>10</sup>. In short, work is currently the primary means through which we achieve social and economic inclusion in society. Yet too often, it does not provide self-realisation or ensure young people's financial stability and security.

Young people are already seeking a new role and value for work in their lives that better meets their needs and life aspirations. This new vision for work is underpinned by the following values:

- Discrimination in every form and on every ground should have no place in the labour market, neither in the application process, nor on the work floor itself.
- Every young person, regardless of their employment status, should have the right to secure, regular and sufficient income that provides them a decent standard of living.
- Young people should be able to receive income through quality employment.
- Job quality and job satisfaction should be prioritised in responding to the future of work. Quality and rewarding jobs enable young people to contribute positively to their communities and help reinforce their rights.

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<sup>9</sup> PwC, (2017). The \$1.2 trillion prize from empowering young workers to succeed in an age of automation. Young Workers Index, October 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Méda, Dominique, (2016). The Future of work: The meaning and value of work in Europe. ILO Research Paper No. 18.

- Work goes beyond material needs and should offer a sense of self-realisation or purpose. This right to pursue “spiritual development” through employment is highlighted in the ILO Constitution<sup>11</sup>.
- Every young person should have equal access to volunteerism and activism regardless of their economical, social, health and locational situation.
- Volunteerism and activism should be recognised as having high value to society. They contribute to self-realisation and the development of citizenship and employability skills among youth<sup>12</sup>.
- Work-life balance should be fundamental and the right to rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours better respected. Young people increasingly want a better balance between their professional and personal lives in order to pursue other interests outside of work<sup>13</sup>.

## 3. Solutions for a youth-inclusive future of work

The future of work brings many challenges. Governments and institutions at all levels have a role to play in addressing these and managing their impact on young people's lives and their rights. By putting into practice policies based on young people's values and the European Youth Forum's policy recommendations, policy-makers at the appropriate level of government and institutions can achieve a youth-inclusive and rights-based future of work.

### 3.1. Invest in young people's skills

Investing in young people's skills is vital to allow them to thrive in the future of work. Lifelong learning will play a crucial role as work continues to change. Education is a fundamental human right enshrined at national, European and global level and access to lifelong learning should be recognised as a core element of fulfilling this right.

To ensure that all young people can benefit from lifelong learning, governments and institutions must invest in quality and inclusive education systems, that are adapted to individual interests and needs<sup>14</sup>. Without this investment, inequality as a result of gaps in

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<sup>11</sup> ILO Declaration of Philadelphia, Articles II (a) and III (b).

<sup>12</sup> See European Youth Forum, (2012). Study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability

<sup>13</sup> OECD, (2017). Future of Work and Skills.

<sup>14</sup> See European Youth Forum, (2018). Position on Inclusive Education, <https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/Pos%20on%20Inc%20Education%20paper%20ENG.pdf> and European Youth Forum, (2013). Policy Paper on Quality Education, [https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0317-13\\_POLICY\\_PAPER\\_QUALITY\\_EDUCATION\\_FINAL\\_withExSum11\\_0.pdf](https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0317-13_POLICY_PAPER_QUALITY_EDUCATION_FINAL_withExSum11_0.pdf) for further details of our calls for quality and inclusive education systems.

educational attainment and poor social mobility risks growing in the face of the challenges of the future<sup>15</sup>.

For learning that caters to individual needs and expectations, engaging young people and youth organisations in shaping the education system is key. Non-formal education providers, such as youth organisations, already play an important complementary role in providing a more individualised space of learning compared to formal education, often also reaching those that formal educators may not. This includes young people from marginalised groups and vulnerable groups, who are at greatest risk of being left behind by the changing world of work. Non-formal education providers can thus play an important role in reducing inequality of opportunities for the future, as well as sharing knowledge and best practices with formal education providers.

Vocational education, training and apprenticeships can also be great opportunities to help young people acquire new skills for the changing world of work. They allow a space for practical learning and can help young people increase their employability. This is important given that many of the first jobs young people do today are likely to be automated in the future<sup>16</sup>. Currently, however, vocational education and training is still too often stigmatised and lacks the same recognition as education in upper secondary schools and higher education institutions. Moreover, apprenticeship programmes often lack quality. Stronger frameworks are therefore needed to protect young people's rights<sup>17</sup>.

To avoid young people's skills becoming obsolete once they are in the labour market, lifelong learning at work will be of significant value. Access to training is increasingly provided by employers and some countries in Europe offer specific "education leave days" for continuous skills development for those already in the labour market. However, only 40% of workers in the OECD participated in job-related training<sup>18</sup> in 2018 and participation was significantly lower for those in jobs at greater risk of disappearing<sup>19</sup>. This can be due to a number of factors such as a heavy workload, responsibilities outside of work, and a work environment where attending training is not actively encouraged by the employer. Some young people may also struggle to afford the cost of training, which can include hidden costs such as transportation, materials or meals. These issues need to be addressed to ensure that workers are developing key skills and that all can benefit equally from lifelong learning in the future.

Employee training throughout the lifecycle is valuable to both employees and employers. It can contribute to the creation of a better working environment, with

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<sup>15</sup> PwC, (2017). The \$1.2 trillion prize from empowering young workers to succeed in an age of automation. Young Workers Index, October 2017.

<sup>16</sup> OECD, (2018). Putting faces to the jobs at risk of automation. Policy Brief on the Future of Work.

<sup>17</sup> See European Youth Forum, (2018). Position on Quality Apprenticeships, (2018).

<https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0107-18%20-%20Position%20on%20Quality%20Apprenticeships.pdf> for further details of our demands for Quality Apprenticeships.

<sup>18</sup> Most of these training opportunities represent just a few hours a year.

<sup>19</sup> OECD, (2018). "Putting faces to the jobs at risk of automation." Policy Brief on the Future of Work, March 2018.

greater employee satisfaction and increased wellbeing at work, and contributes to professional development<sup>20</sup>. In turn, employers benefit from the enhanced motivation, productivity and overall business performance<sup>21</sup>. Employers thus have a strong incentive to facilitate the skills development of workers. As continuous skills development becomes even more necessary as a result of the impacts of the four megatrends, they will need to invest further in training opportunities and ensure that workers can take up training during work hours.

Young people will need to develop critical thinking, creativity, adaptability and other important cognitive skills for the future of work<sup>22</sup>. Skills related to climate adaptation and sustainable production will also be important to mitigate and manage the risks resulting from the climate crisis, as well as contribute to a just transition. Given the growth of the green economy and its potential benefits for young people, skills development in these areas will be vital.

Young people will need digital skills to thrive in the future of work. Young people are often assumed to be at an advantage because they are "digital natives", having grown up during the widespread use of digital technology. However this is a myth which fails to reflect that not all young people or their families can afford access to technology. Furthermore, using digital technology does not mean that young people are developing the right skills for the future work environment. In fact, according to 2018 research, only 18% of young people feel they have the skills necessary to thrive in the digital economy<sup>23</sup>.

Young women are less likely to report confidence in their digital skills, and are less likely to take up studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, despite the projected importance of these subjects for the future of work.<sup>24</sup> Young people with disabilities are also particularly vulnerable: they represent over half of those who have never used the internet. Those who lack access to ICT are disproportionately likely to be poor, rural, and/or female<sup>25</sup>. As such, digital skills programmes should in particular focus on targeting girls and young women, young people with disabilities, rural youth, and those living in poverty. In addition, the development of gender-related career and educational fields having many underrepresented groups should be reviewed.

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<sup>20</sup> Invest Northern Ireland, (2019). "Staff training and development".

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/advantages-staff-training>

<sup>21</sup> 20/20 Business Insight, (2019). "The Importance of Training and Development in the Workplace".

<https://2020projectmanagement.com/resources/project-management-training-and-qualifications/the-importance-of-training-and-development-in-the-workplace>

<sup>22</sup> World Economic Forum, (2016). The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Global Challenge Insight Report.

<sup>23</sup> YouGov, (2018). Vodafone Study: The State of iGen.

<https://yougov.co.uk/find-solutions/omnibus/international/vodafone-study-igen/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, (2017). A/HRC/35/9. Promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet: ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Increased use of technology is changing the way people develop important soft skills that are very important to society, such as social and communication skills<sup>26</sup>. It is vital that young people receive education about the healthy usage of technology from an early age. Formal education providers should ensure that young people can develop these important life skills to equip them to be active members of society. Additionally, youth organisations and non-formal education providers should be recognised for the work they already do in developing young people's life skills.<sup>27</sup>

Technical skills that are today considered necessary for the future may become obsolete quickly in a rapidly changing world of work. It will be necessary for governments and institutions to invest in 'skills forecasting' to understand new trends in demand for skills. Education providers, including youth organisations, will need to support young people in understanding the trends and developing the necessary skills.

### **Recommendations for governments and institutions:**

- Establish paid educational leave policies in line with the ILO Paid Educational Leave Convention<sup>28</sup> that allow young workers to attend training programmes during work hours and at no personal cost.
- Ensure the availability of financial, human and other resources necessary for the development of skills for the future, such as digital skills, soft skills and cognitive skills.
- Invest in skills related to climate adaptability and mitigation, as well as sustainable consumption and production, and integrate these into formal curricula whilst supporting and recognising non-formal educators, to support more sustainable labour markets.
- Improve outreach towards young women and girls, young people with disabilities, rural youth, and young people living in poverty for education in STEM subjects and the development of digital skills.
- Invest in wellbeing and health education, with a focus on managing the impacts of digitalisation and constant connectivity on young people's social skills and their mental health.
- Invest in continuous 'skills forecasting', with the aim of understanding the skills that young people will need in the long term and based on new trends.

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<sup>26</sup> Lin, Judy, (2008). Research shows that internet is rewiring our brains. UCLA Newsroom. [http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/081015\\_gary-small-ibrain](http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/081015_gary-small-ibrain).

<sup>27</sup> European Youth Forum, (2013). Executive Summary: Study on the impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability. <https://www.youthforum.org/executive-summary-study-impact-non-formal-education-youth-or-organisations-young-peoples-employability>

<sup>28</sup> ILO, (1974). Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974. No. 140.

## 3.2. Reform welfare systems and labour legislation

New and non-standard forms of work<sup>29</sup>, primarily taken on by youth, have highlighted the need for welfare systems and labour legislation to be updated. Social protection is key to combating poverty and countries that spend the most on social protection have a lower risk of poverty and social exclusion<sup>30</sup>. However, new forms of employment and the growing trend towards forced self-employment are jeopardising access to social security. Young workers do not always meet the eligibility requirements to allow them access to insurance-based benefits or even any form of social security, such as working enough hours, making enough income or providing enough contributions.

Unemployment benefits, based on a contributory model, are often inaccessible for young people looking for their first job, or who have only completed internships or short-term contracts<sup>31</sup>. This creates a cycle where young people must take on precarious work to make an income, but this type of work continues to exclude them from eligibility for social assistance. Access to social protection in new employment relationships is a particular problem for young people who are often not made aware of the implications of different work statuses and contracts for their rights. Social welfare systems no longer reflect the reality of the changing nature of work and in particular that experienced by Europe's youth.

This has consequences not only for young people's right to live with dignity in the present, but also for poverty later in life. Being caught up in unstable, short-term employment means young people are not able to contribute to statutory pensions systems or be enrolled in pensions schemes<sup>32</sup>. If this trend persists, income insecurity is likely to be a challenge for the current generation of Europe's youth in the future.<sup>33</sup>

To combat this, labour legislation needs to be adapted to better regulate new forms of work and the types of work that young people do, including internships and unpaid experiences. The rapid development of new forms of work also means that legislation needs to be adaptable and dynamic, regulating new forms of work more quickly as they develop. Social welfare systems in Europe must become better adapted to the reality of young people's employment trajectories, providing better protection for young people caught up in cycles of temporary work, who might otherwise lose their eligibility due to pauses in work.

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<sup>29</sup> New forms of work refers to employment that involves new employment relationships such as platform work. Non-standard forms of work refers to employment arrangements that deviate from standard, full-time employment. This includes temporary, part-time or zero-hour contract work.

<sup>30</sup> Crepaldi, C., Da Roit, B., Castagnaro, C. and Pasquinelli, S., (2017). Minimum Income Policies in EU Member States, Study for the EMPL Committee, European Parliament, IP/A/EMPL/2016-22

<sup>31</sup> European Youth Forum, (2016). Excluding Youth: A Threat to Our Future.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> ILO, (2017). World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The future of work is likely to result in significant worker displacement and potential job scarcity. Welfare systems based on contributions will no longer be viable if large amounts of the population are unemployed or in forms of work that do not allow contributions. This will require reform of welfare systems in Europe.

Better coverage will be necessary for those who cannot work, such as those who are ill or who need to care for others, who must also be provided with adequate means to live in dignity. Demographic changes in Europe mean young people will increasingly be relied on to prop up the welfare system to fund the increasing cost of pensions and healthcare of the ageing population<sup>34</sup>. Yet this will be difficult when many young people, especially those in new and non-standard forms of work, are not able to contribute to or to access social protection.

The future of work requires shifting away from a welfare system focused on tackling unemployment and instead creating one focused on tackling poverty and social exclusion. Basic income schemes, that decouple income from employment, are one possible solution that could be further explored. To fund welfare reforms, adequate taxation is key. This can partly be achieved by redistributing wealth from those who contribute to unsustainable consumption and production practices to support fairer and more forward-looking welfare systems<sup>35</sup>. Tax justice would not only help raise the necessary resources to better protect people through social security systems, but will be fundamental to contribute to a fairer society.

#### **Recommendations for governments and institutions:**

- End age-based discrimination in access to social assistance to ensure better coverage for youth, particularly among those most vulnerable to social exclusion and poverty.
- Ensure adequate social protection coverage for all workers and the self-employed to ensure a decent level of income, taking into consideration the national framework.
- Work with public employment services and education providers, including youth organisations, to provide young people with free, accessible and youth-friendly information about their entitlements to social security and contributions to pensions based on different contract types.
- Recognise informal care work, internships and volunteering that young people undertake as contributions allowing access to social protection.
- Allow greater flexibility in accessing social protection when it comes to pauses in work to ensure coverage for young people searching for their first job or involuntarily stuck in a cycle of temporary work.
- Allocate more financial and human resources towards the enforcement and monitoring of labour legislation.

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<sup>34</sup> Bruegel, (2015). The Growing Intergenerational Divide in Europe. Bruegel Policy Contribution Issue 2015/17.

<sup>35</sup> European Youth Forum, (2018). The Future of Work and Youth.

- Update labour legislation to regulate new and non-standard forms of work and ensure that legislation can be adjusted to regulate other new forms of work that may emerge in the future to safeguard workers' rights.
- Invest in pilot projects and further research into new solutions and non-contributory forms of social security, such as a universal basic income, to improve access to welfare in light of the changing role and value of work.
- Combat tax avoidance and reform taxation policies to target digital technology companies and digital capital as well as high polluters to raise funds for stronger, reformed welfare systems.

### 3.3. Safeguard workers' rights and wellbeing

Work-life balance is a top priority for young people, who are increasingly seeking jobs that offer a good balance between their personal and professional lives<sup>36</sup>. It is an issue that will increasingly gain importance as a result of the demographic challenges in Europe. Employers will need to adapt to better a low young people to balance their working lives with caring for older family members. This would have particular consequences for gender equality in the future workplace given that women are more likely to bear care responsibilities. Yet, very few countries currently make the necessary arrangements that enable carers to meet their personal commitments and remain in employment<sup>37</sup>.

Technology offers the opportunity to improve work-life balance through allowing people to define their own work hours or to perform telework. As such it can be a particularly useful tool to enhance inclusivity in the labour market, by allowing, for example, young parents and carers or young people with disabilities to work from home. Not all technological advancements, however, contribute to work-life balance. Young people who are caught up in precarious work often have no real sovereignty over their working hours. Online platforms, for example, advertise greater freedom, control and flexibility, but in reality, platform workers report having very little control over their work schedules. This is in addition to precarious working conditions, a lack of basic workers' rights such as paid sick leave, paid leave, or health and safety protections. The lack of right to maternity, paternity or parental leave also means that young women are de-facto discriminated against. The gender-related problem with usage and availability of parental leave has the effect of placing young parents in an unequal position.

Increased use of technology for work progressively blurs the line between private and working time. Constant connectivity has resulted in workers never being able to disconnect from work. This leads to tiredness, reduction in productivity, and mental

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<sup>36</sup> Comparably, (2018). Millennials Rank Career Advancement Just as High as Work-Life Balance.

<sup>37</sup> European Commission, (2016). Work-life balance measures for persons of working age with dependent relatives in Europe: A study of national policies.

distress<sup>38</sup>. Pressures from employers and competitiveness make workers feel obliged to stay connected and be available outside of their work hours. Given their vulnerable place in the labour market, young people may feel particularly pressured to be available to their employer. This will need to be addressed as the use of technology increases further to safeguard workers' wellbeing.

Job quality is also a demonstrated risk factor for mental illness for young workers: the unpredictability of precarious work is leading to high levels of distress among young people, especially those who struggle to make an adequate or regular income to pay their living costs<sup>39</sup>. Many young people also juggle multiple jobs at the same time, due to a lack of full-time or quality jobs, adding to the stress and inability to enjoy time to rest. The future of work needs to be one that offers young people genuine opportunities for flexibility, mutually agreed between employers and employees, rather than imposed on workers.

Increased use of technology in the workplace raises concerns about the production of data, the ownership of this data, and young workers' right to privacy. Technology that tracks the productivity of employees can be used unjustly and violate their rights. Legislation is lagging behind when it comes to addressing new ways that employers monitor and surveil their employees at work.

The rise in new challenges for workers' rights is further compounded by the fact that the climate for collective bargaining has become increasingly challenging. Furthermore, young people are not joining trade unions<sup>40</sup>, despite trade union membership being a key determinant of job quality for young workers<sup>41</sup>. Many young people feel that trade unions do not reflect their interests due to a lack of proactivity by some trade unions in recruiting young members and in including young people in their decision-making structures. Trade unions will need to address these challenges to ensure that young workers' rights are safeguarded in the future of work. This could be done through ensuring the representation of young workers in trade union structures and working with youth organisations, for example.

Trade unions face a further challenge with new forms of work also making it challenging to identify bargaining counterparts, as they often involve non-traditional, triangular relationship where it is difficult to identify the employer<sup>42</sup>. Additionally, non-standard workers might be explicitly or implicitly excluded from the right to bargain collectively

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<sup>38</sup> Belkin, Liuba Y., et al, (2017). Exhausted, but Unable to Disconnect: The impact of Email-related Organizational Expectations on Work-family Balance and Identification. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Vol. 2016, No. 1.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see: Moscone, F., et al, (2016). The impact of precarious employment on mental health: the case of Italy. *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 158, pp 86-95.

<sup>40</sup> ETUC, (2014). *Organising and Trade Union Recruitment: The Future of Trade Unions in Danger*.

<sup>41</sup> ETUC, (2018). *Youth Friendliness Indicator: A critical assessment of the situation of young workers in European labour markets*.

<sup>42</sup> ILO, (2018). *Organizing on-demand: Representation, voice, and collective bargaining in the gig economy*.

due, for example, to the isolated nature of their jobs, or because they are technically self-employed, when in reality they may work primarily for one employer.

### **Recommendations for governments and institutions:**

- Fully adopt and implement the eight fundamental Conventions of the ILO<sup>43</sup> and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>44</sup> to ensure workers' rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in the context of the changing nature of work.
- Work towards a progressive reduction of the working week within full-time contracts<sup>45</sup>.
- Adopt policies promoting flexible work arrangements to allow workers to have real sovereignty over their work hours and enhance inclusivity in the work environment, without a decrease in the standard of living or job quality.
- Collect more data on the social and economic value of informal care work and volunteering to contribute to their recognition as important productive activities and to promote gender equality.
- Explore the adoption of policies introducing the "right to disconnect" that ensure that workers can switch off from work and safeguard their wellbeing.
- Regulate emerging technologies that monitor and surveil employees, respecting the right to privacy of workers and giving them ownership over the data that they create at work.
- Fully safeguard the right to collective bargaining of all workers, including those in new forms of work, by revising any existing rules that prevent collective bargaining by the self-employed<sup>46</sup>.

## 3.4. Create a youth-friendly labour market

Although decreasing, the youth unemployment rate was still more than double that of the general population in 2018.<sup>47</sup> These high levels of youth unemployment illustrate that current labour market policies have failed to be inclusive of youth. Given the challenges associated with the future of work, this number risks rising if youth-inclusive labour market policies are not put in place.

In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, employers became more reluctant to offer long-term employment contracts in part as a result of economic uncertainty and

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<sup>43</sup> For more information on the fundamental Conventions see:

<https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

<sup>45</sup> In line with Article 2.1 of the European Social Charter (Revised).

<sup>46</sup> For more information:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/614184/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)614184\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/614184/IPOL_STU(2017)614184_EN.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Data from 2018. Eurostat, (2019). "Unemployment statistics".

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment\\_statistics#Youth\\_unemployment](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment)

accelerated global competition<sup>48</sup>. Employers must be encouraged to invest in entry-level jobs for young people, thereby investing in the development of their own future workforce.

Young people face having to take on internships, apprenticeships and unpaid experiences as necessary pathways towards long-term employment. While offering young people initial opportunities for experiencing the world of work is important, today many young people are caught up in a continuous cycle of low-quality training opportunities because of a lack of clear regulation for quality internships and apprenticeships.

Governments and employers have a responsibility to strengthen the quality of on-the-job learning experiences to improve their educational value and ensure that young people can fully enjoy their social and economic rights. This is particularly vital in the context of the future of work, where young people will need to be adaptable and continuously update their skills as the work environment develops.

In 2018 a staggering 67% of young people said that they had received no or insufficient career advice during or after education.<sup>49</sup> To ensure a future of work that is more youth-inclusive, public employment services need to provide better support to young people entering or navigating the labour market. Many young people enter into new forms of work unaware of the impacts of non-standard employment on their rights as workers, such as the right to paid holidays or paid sick leave, or on their ability to access social protection. Young people need to be provided with access to free, youth-friendly information on different employment statuses to make informed choices about their employment.

While non-standard forms of work represent a small portion of all work types today, they continue to increase, especially among youth. Governments must develop minimum quality standards for the employment, education and training of youth, including apprenticeships and internships, to ensure that young people's rights are respected. Current policies, based on an 'any job is better than no job' mentality, not only fail to be in line with young people's desire for self-actualisation through work, but also fail to lead to jobs that are sustainable and of quality for the individual and society.

### **Recommendations for governments and institutions:**

- Invest in entry-level job creation to provide young people with their first employment opportunities in the changing world of work.
- Raise companies' awareness of the fight against discrimination.
- Help and support young people from migrant backgrounds in their search for an apprenticeship.
- Provide incentives for companies to invest in long-term or permanent contracts for youth rather than temporary or precarious contracts.

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<sup>48</sup> EPSC, (2016). The Future of Work: Skills and Resilience for a World of Change. Issue 13.

<sup>49</sup> YouGov, (2018). Vodafone Study: The State of iGen.

<https://yougov.co.uk/find-solutions/omnibus/international/vodafone-study-igen/>

- Adopt minimum wage policies that are in line with the cost of living and abolish youth minimum wages to end age-based discrimination in wage policies.
- Invest in quality and inclusive apprenticeships that aim to develop the skills necessary for the future of work.
- Implement and expand anti-discrimination policies in order to close the gender pay gap.
- Invest in public employment services to provide more youth-friendly services, such as in lifelong career guidance to support young people as they enter and continue to navigate the labour market.
- End activation policies based on the 'any job is better than no job' mentality and focus instead on empowering young people to select jobs that are of quality and meet their personal aspirations, to protecting their right to live with dignity.
- Ensure the presence of young people and youth organisations in social and civil dialogue in relation to the future of work.

### 3.5. Invest in a new economy

Many of the challenges we face as a society today are the result of an economic system rooted in maximisation of short-term profit. Yet this system is unsustainable and risks only exacerbating inequalities in the future<sup>50</sup>. To combat this, alternative business models that support human and planetary wellbeing are on the rise. These models offer young people a 'socially responsible' job and, as they are based on democracy, participation and empowerment, they can also be important places of learning for young people. These types of businesses are often closer to local communities than other kinds of companies. This allows for greater integration of youth from all types of backgrounds, including those normally furthest away from the labour market.

Alternative businesses already play an important role in formalising the new forms of work that young people undertake. The establishment of cooperatives by young freelancers and those in forced self-employment in the platform economy, for example, has allowed these workers to better access social protection<sup>51</sup> and their rights by organising and increasing their negotiating power<sup>52</sup>.

Young entrepreneurs should be encouraged to start businesses that are sustainable, based on these or other innovative models that arise as the future of work develops. For that, access to funding for young entrepreneurs is key. Governments should also support young people's ability to become entrepreneurs by minimising risk in the event that a business is unsuccessful. Programmes for youth entrepreneurship should target those who wish to express the entrepreneurial spirit and should not be viewed as a widespread solution to tackling high levels of youth unemployment.

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<sup>50</sup> European Youth Forum, (2018). Policy Paper on Sustainable Development.

<sup>51</sup> CICOPA, (2018). Global Study on Youth Cooperative Entrepreneurship.

<sup>52</sup> ILO, (2016). Cooperation in a changing world of work: Exploring the role of cooperatives in the future of work. Cooperatives and the World of Work, No. 6.

Current production and consumption practices within a linear economic model are leading to the over-exploitation of natural resources, the loss of biodiversity, and one of the largest and fastest climate changes in Earth's history. There needs to be a transition towards a greener economy. Over half of the global workforce will be affected by this transition, which on the one hand will result in the destruction of jobs in fields considered to be barriers to combating the climate crisis, and on the other could create many new jobs as a circular economy model is adopted<sup>53</sup>.

The growth of the green economy could be an opportunity to promote a 'just transition', where the approach to the climate crisis would be to create quality jobs that help drive decarbonisation. As evidenced by the global climate marches organised by youth as well as the results of the 2018 Eurobarometer on European youth<sup>54</sup>, climate change is a top concern among youth. Young people fear for their existence and their message to policy-makers is clear: there are no jobs on a dead planet. It is therefore vital that governments and employers alike take action to invest in renewable energy sources and that the legislative environment actively encourages the growth of green jobs.

Investment in a new economy that puts the needs of people and the planet at its core is needed. This new economy must be one that is free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination and encourages instead the integration of young people from all backgrounds, such as young people with disabilities, young refugees and migrants, young people from minority ethnic communities, young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ youth, and rural youth. It must be one that actively seeks to reverse inequalities within and between countries and safeguards social dialogue. The new economy should also be democratic and inclusive of youth. This means that young people and youth organisations need to contribute to the transition and governments must ensure that they are included in a meaningful way.

#### **Recommendations for governments and institutions:**

- Adopt policies, created together with the young people that work in the fields considered to be barriers, supporting the growth of alternative business models that put sustainability at the heart of their business model, such as cooperatives.
- Support education for young people about alternative business models and alternative forms of organisation for an economy which prioritises human and planetary wellbeing.
- Support youth entrepreneurship in the new economy through access to financing and administrative support, and protection from risk.
- Promote a just transition, including by investing in the green economy, while providing support such as unemployment benefits, access to training and career guidance for the groups of young people who are likely to be more severely impacted by the transition.

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<sup>53</sup> ILO, (2018). Greening with Jobs: World Employment and Social Outlook 2018.

<sup>54</sup> European Commission, (2018). Flash Eurobarometer 455 Report: European Youth.

## 4. Conclusion

The future of work will bring significant challenges, but managing them is not impossible. Young people's current experiences in the labour market demonstrate that labour legislation and welfare systems have so far been too slow to adjust to and regulate new forms of work.

Policy-makers must heed the lessons of current labour market challenges and adopt a more pre-emptive, future-proof approach to the changing nature of work. This must start today.

The current view that the future of work is something that will happen to us, rather than something we can shape puts our rights at risk. Policy-makers must stop focusing on what the future of work *might* look like, and must focus instead on what people *want* it to look like. This vision needs to include the perspective of youth.

Young people in Europe are calling for a new kind of labour market and a new role for work in our lives. The European Youth Forum commits to continue to advocate for an inclusive, just and sustainable future of work for youth in line with young people's vision of work.

To create a youth-inclusive future of work, youth organisations have a vital role to play. It is important that youth organisations develop their understanding of the future of work. They should consider how they can support young people entering the future labour market and empower young people to call for and co-create their vision for the future of work.. This is particularly key in terms of reaching those young people who are most vulnerable and marginalised.

Together, the European Youth Forum, formal and non-formal education providers, trade unions, governments and institutions at the appropriate level can and should work to elevate young people's perspectives and ideas about their own future. We must ensure that young people are equipped to thrive and, most importantly, to create the kind of future of work that they want.