

AForum: Youth Assembly - Action Paper 2

Issue: Strategies to tackle the challenges of global youth unemployment

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INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment is a pressing global issue that affects approximately 73 million individuals. The demographic group faces significant challenges entering the labor market, leading to economic instability and social discontent. During the times of uncertainty caused by the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant lockdowns on the economy and the challenge overpopulation poses on the labor market, addressing the global youth unemployment crisis requires a multidimensional approach, in order to include all the factors that have contributed to youth unemployment.

More specifically, the global youth unemployment problem is currently more urgent than ever before, since it is now being affected by multiple new factors, including the displacement of employees due to the rise of automation, the necessity for continuous up-skilling and re-skilling and the reduction of entry-level job positions — which are some of the numerous effects of AI on the employment of the youth. Moreover, the prolonged disruption of education, the closure of businesses and the economic downturns caused by the COVID-19 lockdowns further diminish the youth's opportunities in the labor market.

Besides these newly occurred issues, youth employment is also affected by the preference of employers for experienced employees, which creates a disadvantage for younger jobseekers. A lack of internships and apprenticeships, which limit young people's experience on practical work, the economic recessions, during which companies limit hiring new employees, and the high turnover rates for the young workers, who tend to change jobs more frequently and consequently face difficulties in securing stable positions, also play a crucial role on the issue of youth unemployment.

In general, unemployment significantly impacts both individuals and nations, economically as well as socially. For individuals, joblessness can lead to loss of income, increased stress and mental health issues, affecting their overall-wellbeing and productivity, while families suffer from reduced purchasing power, which can create cycles of poverty and limit future opportunities for the next generation. On a national level, high unemployment rates indicate economic weakness, leading to decreased consumer spending, which can hinder economic growth and result in lower tax revenues and increased government spending on social support programs, further straining public resources.

Furthermore, the contrast between the general unemployment rate highlights the fact that society might be failing to aid the younger generation by not providing them with opportunities to contribute to their communities. Thus, tackling youth unemployment requires a multifaceted approach: governments, educational institutions, businesses and civil society must collaborate in order to create pathways from education to employment, in order to ensure sustainable economic growth and a stable and productive society for future generations.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Unemployment¹

Unemployment is the condition of one who is capable of working, actively seeking work, but unable to find any. It should be noted that in order to be considered unemployed a person must be an active member of the labor force and in search of paid work.

Youth unemployment

Youth unemployment refers to people aged 15 to 24 years who are unemployed.

Labor force²

All the people in a particular country who are of the right age to work, or all the people who work for a particular company.

Underemployment

Underemployment occurs when a person does not work full time or takes a job that does not reflect their actual training and financial needs³. That is, their job doesn't use all their skills and education, or provides less than full time work.⁴

Economic recession⁵

A recession is a significant, widespread and prolonged downturn in economic activity.

Inflation

Inflation measures how much more expensive a set of goods and services has become over a certain period, usually a year⁶. Inflation can occur when prices rise due to increases in production costs, such as raw materials and wages⁷. A surge in demand for products and services can cause inflation as consumers are willing to pay more for the product⁸.

¹ Stack Exchange. "unemployment" Tag Wiki." *Economics Stack Exchange*, economics.stackexchange.com/tags/unemployment/info.

² Cambridge University Press. "Labour Force." *Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/labour-force.

³ Quizlet. "Supply and Demand." Quizlet.com, quizlet.com/796431667/study-guide-flash-cards.

⁴ CFI Team. "Underemployment." *Corporate Finance Institute*, 18 Oct. 2023, corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/economics/underemployment/.

⁵ Hubler, Fred. "Top Alt Strategies For A Recession." *Forbes*, 19 Feb. 2024, www.forbes.com/sites/fredhubler/2024/02/06/top-alt-strategies-for-a-recession/.

⁶ Oner, Ceyda. "Inflation: Prices on the Rise." *International Monetary Fund*, 2017, www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/Inflation/.

⁷ Investopedia, and Michael J. Boyle. "What Causes Inflation?" *Investopedia*, 2 July 2024, www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/111314/what-causes-inflation-and-does-anyone-gain-it.asp.

⁸ Investopedia, and Michael J. Boyle. "What Causes Inflation?" *Investopedia*, 2 July 2024, www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/111314/what-causes-inflation-and-does-anyone-gain-it.asp.

Minimum wage

Minimum wages have been defined as the minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay the employees for the work performed during a given period⁹, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract¹⁰.

Apprentice¹¹

Someone who has agreed to work for a skilled person for a particular period of time and often for low payment, in order to learn that person's skills.

Public employment service

Public employment services (PES) are the authorities that connect job-seekers with employers¹². Although structured differently in each country, all PES help match supply and demand on the labor market through information, placement and active support services at local, national and international level.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The evolution of Artificial Intelligence

The history and evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) began in the mid-20th century, with early developments focused on problem-solving. As technology advanced, AI started to integrate into various sectors, transforming industries and labor markets. While AI has created new job opportunities, it has also led to significant displacement of workers, particularly among youth.

On the one hand, the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses significant threats to youth employment, primarily through the automation of jobs traditionally held by young workers, such as manual ones. As AI technology advances, many entry-level positions are at risk of being replaced by machines, leading to a decrease in available opportunities for young job seekers. Not only does this increase the existing unemployment rates, but it also creates a misalignment between the required skills for a job position and the skills young employees have, due to the requirement of higher levels of technical expertise. Without proper measures, the integration of AI into the work force could lead to long-term unemployment among youth, undermining their future prospects and economic stability.

On the other hand, although it is often seen as a hazard to youth employment and mainly to manual job positions, AI can ameliorate the current youth unemployment crisis. The benefits of AI for the labor market and young job-seekers include, firstly, the job matching and career guidance it can offer, by analyzing a person's resume, skills, experiences and interests and finding

⁹ International Labour Organization. "Chapter 1: What is a minimum wage - 1.1 Definition and Purpose." *International Labour Organization*, 1 Feb. 2024, www.ilo.org/resource/11-definition-and-purpose.

¹⁰ International Labour Organization. "How to Define a Minimum Wage?" *International Labour Organization*, 28 Jan. 2024, www.ilo.org/topics/wages/minimum-wages/how-define-minimum-wage.

¹¹ Cambridge University Press. "Apprentice." *Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus*, dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/apprentice.

¹² Brewer, Laura. "Enhancing youth employability: What? Why? and How? Guide to core work skills." *International Labour Organization*, 2013, www.ilo.org/media/455766/download.

a job position suitable for them. AI can help with the automation of routine tasks, such as resume screening and interview scheduling, and make them more efficient.

Moreover, AI-driven platforms can provide personalized education and training programs in order to help young people develop relevant skills for the job market, as well as assist young entrepreneurs. In the Middle East, for example, the youth unemployment rates of which are among the highest in the globe, Egypt has developed an AI-based strategy to use technology for the country's advancement, but the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation is still necessary. More specifically, Egypt's National Council for Artificial Intelligence has created the aforementioned strategy, which focuses on integrating AI across agriculture, healthcare and finance, in order to enhance efficiency and promote innovation.

The governments of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have to face the current obstacles to the region's digital transformation, such as expenses associated with broadband plans and hardware, as well as outdated, inefficient and occasionally nonexistent infrastructure in rural areas. To guarantee internet accessibility and open the door for an AI revolution in the area, deliberate investment is essential.

The COVID-19 pandemic

With the strain it placed on the global economy, due to the recession, the disruption of global trade, and the limitation of tourism it caused, the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant lockdowns had on youth employment is well-known. More specifically, the pandemic led to the loss of numerous jobs and placed difficulties for the youth entering the labor market due to the financial downturn it caused. Furthermore, it resulted in the reduction of working hours for multiple experienced workers due to the continuous lockdowns, resulting in decreased incomes and increased job insecurity.

On top of that, the pandemic led to significant disruptions to education and training programs, with many young people being forced to interrupt their studies or training and hence facing more challenges in their transition into the labor market.

The COVID-19 pandemic also negatively affected employment sectors such as tourism and retail, which are known to employ a large number of young people. Besides that, the aforementioned job losses, reduced income and disruptions to education and training negatively impacted the mental health of the youth, reducing its ability to find and maintain employment.

Overpopulation

With the world population rate standing at an average of 1,1% per year, which equals to around 83 million people annually, the challenges overpopulation poses on the issue of youth employment are numerous. Firstly, it can strain the education and training systems due to the lack of sufficient facilities, the inadequate funding for education, the shortage of supplies and higher student-teacher ratio. Thus, it can lead to insufficient resources and opportunities for the youth to obtain the necessary knowledge and qualification in order to enter the job market, resulting in an incompatibility between the abilities of the work force and the needs of the employers.

With a larger number of young people entering the labor market, overpopulation can also increase the competition for the available positions, which can increase youth unemployment and underemployment rates. More specifically, in a highly competitive labor market, employers can increase their requirements for job qualifications, making it harder for young people with less experience to secure job positions. Moreover, overpopulation can put significant strain on financial resources and thus reduce the economic growth pace and the creation of job opportunities.

Population, 1950 to 2023

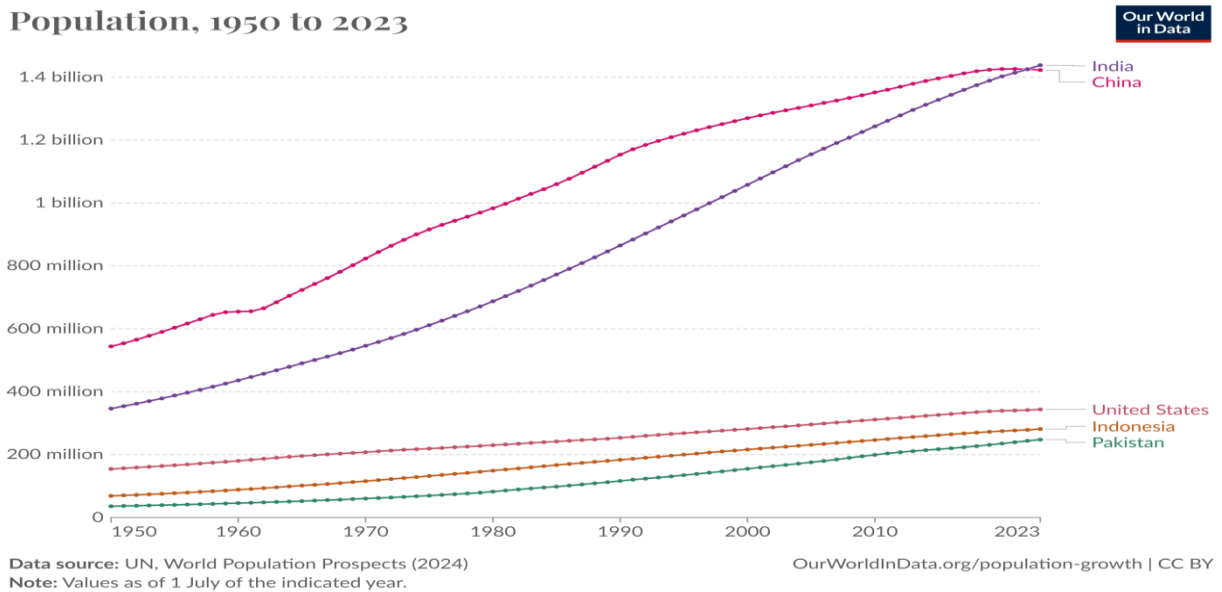


Fig. 1: Graph outlining the population growth of different nations from 1950 to 2023¹³

The Consequences of Youth Unemployment

Economic consequences

Youth unemployment has profound consequences for the economy, affecting its current performance, as well as its future growth. High levels of youth unemployment led to lost earning and reduced consumer spending, which can hinder economic growth.

Moreover, prolonged unemployment can cause the deterioration of a young person's skills, limiting their contribution to the economy, but also creating an overall less skilled work force. In addition, youth unemployment puts a lot of strain in public resources, due to the increased government spending on social welfare programs, such as unemployment benefits.

Social consequences

On a societal scale, unemployment can cause young people having a reduced sense of belonging. Furthermore, youth unemployment has been associated with substance abuse and criminal activity, as individuals seek coping mechanisms to their frustrations. In addition, it influences political stability by creating the aforementioned conditions, which can lead to protests, riots or even violence, due to the diminished trust in governmental institutions.

Personal consequences

On a personal level, youth unemployment has been associated with lower self-esteem mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, which can reduce their general well-being. Moreover, periods of unemployment early in a young person's career can lead to lower lifetime earnings and limited opportunities for advancement, creating a cycle of poverty that can take generations to break.

¹³ UN, World Population Prospects. "Population Growth." *Our World in Data*, United Nations, 1 July 2024, ourworldindata.org/population-growth.



Fig 2: Graph modelling the number of employed youths, in relation to the annual change rate¹⁴

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

The World Bank

As an international organization which strives to eliminate poverty by lending money to Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), the World Bank plays an important role in the attempts to eliminate youth unemployment. More specifically, it approaches the issue by providing financial resources to countries in order to apply youth employment initiatives, investing in educational programs such as apprenticeships and by supporting programs that create job opportunities for the youth, including public work programs and entrepreneurship support.

International Labour Organization

Since its establishment by the United Nations (UN) in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been collaborating with the employers and employees of its 187 Member States in order to set labor standards, develop policies and create programs promoting decent work conditions for every worker. This way, the ILO creates a more equitable labor market that encourages job creation. In addition, the ILO has launched numerous programs aiming to support young people in securing decent work, such as the 2005 and 2012 resolutions on youth unemployment, as well as the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth in 2016.

Spain

The rate of youth unemployment in Spain is one of the highest in the world and the highest in Europe (28,4%). Having been affected by the global financial crisis in 2008, as well as the European debt crisis, the Spanish economy struggled to recover, leading to high unemployment rates, especially among young people.

¹⁴ Macrotrends. "World Youth Unemployment Rate 1960-2024." Macrotrends | The Long Term Perspective on Markets, www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/WLD/world/youth-unemployment-rate.

Moreover, the high number of temporary work contracts, the lack of alignment between the qualifications of young people and the available job opportunities and the COVID-19 pandemic have acted as catalysts in the creation of high unemployment rates in Spain.

India

In India, the labor market of which millions of young people are entering each year, youth unemployment poses a massive challenge. Despite the government's attempts to boost the economy and create jobs by investing in the creation of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, the youth unemployment rate remains at 16% according to government data. It should also be noted that private agencies, such as the Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), claim the youth unemployment rate to stand as high as 45,4%, mainly due to contrasting methodologies and interpretations of data. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the unemployment rate for graduates is almost nine times the jobless rate for the illiterate (29,1% and 3,4% respectively).

Brazil

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest challenges Brazil faces. ILO's data shows that one out of four young people is currently unemployed, while the youth of Brazil is getting increasingly discouraged by their unsuccessful attempts to find a job, leading them to long-term unemployment. One of the main reasons behind Brazil's youth unemployment problem is the fact that the Brazilian youth tends to occupy lower-skilled jobs, which tend to disappear over time, especially due to the rapid evolution of technology and AI. In the years following 2014, a period during which Brazil experienced a severe recession, the youth unemployment rate of the country has been increasing rapidly. In order to eliminate youth unemployment in Brazil, ILO has suggested that the apprenticeship system as well as the quality of the public employment service be revised and improved.

France

Since 2019, when 20,8% of the country's youth was unemployed, there has been a notable improvement in France's youth unemployment rate, which currently stands at 17,5%, mainly due to the high number of apprenticeships in 2023 (almost 1 million). However, the situation of the youth that is not in education, employment or training (NEET) has not significantly changed, with NEET unemployment standing at 12,5%. Furthermore, young workers' access into the labor market is being additionally disturbed due to the difficulty in accessing housing. Despite the government's attempts to resolve the issue, which include the reform and simplification of the apprenticeship system, the efforts to align the educational system with the needs of labor market and the launch of the "One Young Person, One Solution (1 Jeune, 1 Solution)" initiative, to which the French government has dedicated 6,7 billion EUR and which has helped over 2 million people since its launch in August 2022, youth unemployment remains one of the major issues of the country.

South Africa

In South Africa, the youth unemployment rate currently stands at 45,5%, while the national average is 32,9%. Limited educational attainment, as well as social and economic disadvantages, resulting in limited access to education for those from rural and less advantaged backgrounds, are the primary factors causing the elevated rates of unemployment and the significant amount of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET). Additionally, the escalated levels of

crime and violence, as well as the substance abuse problems among youth, pose further barriers to their chances of being employed.

China

After hitting the record-high of 21,3% in 2023, the youth unemployment in China has been diminished to 14,2% — although this reduction is probably the result of the new statistical methodology, which has stopped including university students in the youth unemployment rate. Despite this decline, the youth unemployment rate in China still is almost three times higher than the general unemployment rate (5,1%), which underlines the difficulties the youth is facing in the labor market. These include cultural exclusions, since the current system restricts rural youth from accessing urban job opportunities, as well as the underemployment of many educated young people in low-paying job positions. The deceleration of the economic growth in China, which has led to the reduction of job creation, the rise of automation that has reduced the need for certain types of jobs and the impact of COVID-19 are some of the factors that have contributed to the creation of this issue.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
March 13, 1995	Adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution 50/81, which recognizes young people as vital human resources and outlines strategies to tackle their issues, such as employment, education and health.
October 1, 1996	Establishment of ILO's Action Programme on Youth Unemployment, which suggested the development of National Action Plans for youth employment, as well as the collaboration of educational institutions, employers and youth organizations.
August 2001	Establishment of the Youth Employment Network (YEN) by ILO, the UN and the World Bank, which encouraged the creation of National Action Plans and provided technical support to countries in preparing them, such as Brazil, Indonesia and Azerbaijan.
December 22, 2003	Adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution 58/133, which encourages member states to implement policies that support youth education and employment.

June 17, 2004	Adoption of the Resolution on Decent Work for Youth in Africa, which promotes productive and freely-chosen employment as a fundamental component of sustainable development.
July 2, 2006	Adoption of the African Youth Charter by the African Union, the aim of which was to empower young people through meaningful youth participation and equal partnership in implementing Africa's development agenda.
June 10, 2008	Launch of ILO's Decent Work Agenda, which focuses on creating jobs, ensuring work rights, extending social protection and promoting social dialogue.
June 19, 2012	Adoption of the Resolution on the Youth Employment Crisis: A Call for Action, which aimed to address the youth unemployment crisis exacerbated by the global economic downturn.
July 19, 2013	G20 Initiative on Youth Employment, which aimed to create sustainable job opportunities and enhance skills development for the youth in LEDCs.
June 9, 2016	Adoption of the "Skills Policies for Fighting Youth Unemployment" resolution by the European Union (EU), which focused on improving the transition from education to employment.
June 21, 2019	Launch of ILO's Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, which focused on a human-centered approach on the future of work.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Policies and Programmes Involving Youth (A/RES/58/133)¹⁵

Having been adopted in 2004, the resolution listed above stresses the importance of applying youth employment strategies into national development plans and urges the Member States to implement policies that encourage youth entrepreneurship. Its effectiveness can be seen in the establishment of frameworks for youth employment initiatives. However, although many countries developed action plans, its impact and results varied.

¹⁵ United Nations. "Policies and programmes involving youth." *Official Document System - UN*, 26 Jan. 2004, documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n03/502/56/pdf/n0350256.pdf.

Policies and Programmes Involving Youth (A/RES/ 62/126)¹⁶

This resolution, which was adopted in 2008, emphasizes the necessity of youth participation in the global economy, as well as the need to address obstacles to youth employment, such as lack of education and training.

Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)¹⁷

The aforementioned resolution, which was adopted in 2015, promotes the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes numerous goals related to youth employment, such as goal number 8, which stresses the importance of decent work and economic growth. More specifically, it established 17 sustainable development goals in order to address various global challenges, including poverty, inequality and climate change.

Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹⁸

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to limit poverty and achieve sustainable development, while emphasizing the need for respect for human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of vulnerable groups, through social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The Youth Guarantee

Even though youth unemployment remains a major global issue, multiple attempts have been made in the past in order to resolve this issue. An example of those attempts is the Youth Guarantee, which was implemented by the European Union in 2013 in order to ensure that all young people have access to a continued education, a job of quality or an apprenticeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Each EU member state developed a National Implementation Plan in order to implement the measures proposed by the Youth Guarantee. This innovation has played an important role in the elimination of youth unemployment in numerous countries and by 2020, the NEET population in the European Union contained approximately 1,7 million less young people than it used to before 2013.

Youth Employment Services Program

The Youth Employment Services Program, funded by the Canadian government, provides unemployed or underemployed young people assistance and guidance in job searching, career planning and skill development opportunities. With this program, numerous Canadians have been

¹⁶ United Nations. "Policies and Programmes Involving Youth: "Youth in the Global Economy"- Promoting Youth Participation in Social and Economic Development." *United Nations Official Document System*, 18 Aug. 2007, www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/Publications/adv_a_res_62_126.pdf.

¹⁷ United Nations. "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – A/RES/70/1." *United Nations*, 21 Oct. 2015, www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

¹⁸ United Nations. "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs." *Sustainable Development*, 21 Oct. 2015, sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

supported in finding employment and gaining valuable skills and the YES Program claims an 88% success rate in job placements.

Decent Jobs for Youth Program

The Decent Jobs for Youth Program is a comprehensive global initiative led by the ILO. Its aspects include thematic priorities, as it focuses on areas such as digital skills, quality apprenticeships and green jobs. This program focuses on scaling up action and impact at a national and regional level, in alignment to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In conclusion, although the issue of youth unemployment is yet to be resolved on a global scale, the aforementioned programs have contributed to the reduction of the youth unemployment rates in the region they were implemented in.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Investing in education and training

In order to resolve the issue of youth unemployment, it is necessary to tackle one of the main causes of this issue, that being the lack of access to education for approximately 250 million children and young people. Not only does education improve the chances of finding employment, but the school system is also able to inform students and future jobseekers about the needs and the demands of the labor market, as well as bring them in contact with apprenticeship providers, by organizing workshops and mentorship programs. Moreover, students should also be provided with guidance by their schools regarding their choice of studies and the needs of the labor market, in order to ensure their alignment. Thus, investing in an up-to-date educational system and ensuring its alignment with the needs of the labor market is the first necessary step to eliminate youth unemployment.

Supporting entrepreneurship

Another way to limit youth unemployment is by encouraging entrepreneurship, since it would lead to the creation of numerous new job positions, economic growth and market expansion. By collaborating with international financial institutions and governments, the UN could establish a global youth entrepreneurship fund, while also setting up a supervisory board with representatives from participating countries in order to ensure transparent and effective allocation of funds. Moreover, a youth entrepreneurship training and mentorship program could be launched as well, in order to equip young people with essential business knowledge and skills and bring them in contact with experienced mentors. This could be implemented with the creation of an international volunteering network for mentors coming from various industries to offer guidance and support to the youth.

Enhancing social protections

Despite the alarming global youth unemployment rates, the majority of the youth is employed. However, the loss of employment is not rare at all, and, in fact, most young people have to face this challenge at some point in their career. Thus, the creation of a “safety net” for the unemployed youth is necessary and can be done by providing unemployed benefits, in order to ensure that young people can support themselves financially while searching for a job. This measure could reduce the pressure to accept unsuitable or even dangerous work positions and allow unemployed young people to seek positions that match their skills and aspirations.

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