



Trade Union
Advisory Committee
to the OECD
*Commission
syndicale consultative
auprès de l'OCDE*

TUAC STATEMENT ON *Youth*

**OECD MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETING
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Youth unemployment rose in all OECD countries during the crisis. Many existing challenges faced by young people are being exacerbated during this time including: Education quality and costs—including student debt; Lack of income to cover housing and food costs becoming dependent on food banks and other solidarity measures to survive; Social safety net cracks putting social justice and inter-generational solidarity into question; Ever-growing qualification requirements in the face of worse employment and wage prospects; and pre-existing precariousness marked by a substantial lack of quality jobs.



Young people want certainty and security when starting their professional education and entering labour markets. There should be no exemptions to established rights: the equality in treatment is the basis to prevent any cases of discrimination on the ground of age—pertinent for wages, social protection and working conditions. Policies need to combat social exclusion and promote youth well-being beyond economic outcomes. To this end, policies cannot go back to normal and need to be more targeted with a youth lens to recovery plans. The TUAC and its Youth Network outline the following priorities for OECD policy makers:

MORE SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND YOUNG VOICES IN POLICY MAKING

Young people want to have a voice in policymaking, including in the workplace. After years of slashing union density and collective bargaining coverage in favour of labour market reforms and supply-led growth, it is time to expand freedom of association and collective bargaining coverage to all forms of work (by reviewing employment relationships and competition law) and enshrine collective bargaining obligations in laws and policies on training including apprenticeships, jobs, wages and equality matters, as well as working conditions. Other means to this end are making social dialogue a condition for public procurement, tax incentives and other forms of business support alongside environmental, social and labour standards and objectives (including quality job creation and retention).

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR INCOME SUPPORT AND ADDRESS RUNNING COST ISSUES

Young people face enormous financial instability. Access to income support for anyone outside of school systems needs to be guaranteed for an expanded age bracket (e.g. 18-30). Eligibility criteria should be tied to individual situations and the context. It is essential to introduce a right to decent housing and policies capping rents and limiting property market speculation. Rents have to be reviewed against income levels and local contexts to enable more sustainable and secure housing. To make digital learning accessible to all, support needs to go towards equipment and broadband costs

for young people with lower incomes, whilst public investments should go into digital infrastructure and connectivity. Regional and urban policy makers need to consider improving public transportation networks to increase mobility.

ACCESSIBILITY TO HEALTH SERVICES, UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION AND TO PENSION RIGHTS

Social protection should be accessible to all, irrespective of the employment situation or age under the principle of equality of treatment. Universal health insurance should be available and affordable for all. There should also be parity between physical and mental health coverage. Policies need to redress long-term negative consequences on pension levels, rights and inter-generational solidarity coming from regressive reforms that diminished pension rights, youth un- and underemployment, precarious and informal work, and significantly lower wages and employer contributions compared to previous generations.

TUAC Youth Network

In response to the detrimental effects on young people during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) has created a Youth Network in May 2021. This group of young union activists, economists and coordinators since convened a public webinar and released a statement to the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in October. The Network has a double function:

- Exchanging amongst one another & help shaping TUAC's policy positions
- Input into OECD work & make their voices heard.

As a bottom line, young people want certainty and security when starting their education and entering labour markets. Policies need to combat social exclusion and promote youth well-being beyond economic outcomes.

A NEW APPROACH TO FINANCING OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING

Young people tend to drop out of secondary and further education if they do not have enough guidance, choice or face financial constraints. Child and youth guarantees could help redressing that. It is time for adequate support systems rather based on grants, not loans—contingent on individual situations, not parents' incomes. In some OECD countries, there should be a thorough revision of study fee levels both in public and private education, and student debt forgiveness should be considered if levels become disproportionate to income.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GET AND TRANSITION INTO QUALITY JOBS

The structure of labour markets needs to change. Unpaid internships, student jobs and entry jobs below living wage levels should be constrained. Youth employed in entry-level jobs have to be protected and have guaranteed their fundamental rights at work. There need to be adequate minimum wages in all sectors and across all employment types. There should be a floor that can be set by law or by collective agreement. Future labour market reforms have to increase standards on employment security and curtail precarious work through stricter regulation (specifically to avoid high turn-over, unpaid over-time, false self- and informal employment). Career guidance should be free via expanded and accessible public employment services to all—not only unemployed and at-risk populations. These services need sufficient funding to help young people in transition to the world of work during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to prevent longer exclusion from the labour market.

Young workers should have access to training and career development opportunities within their workplaces and profit from fair job mobility—also across borders. Public investments should always consider quality job creation and retention as a target including via just transition frameworks for the green and digital transformations. Governments and local authorities should adopt youth employment policies for green jobs in line with the industrial strategy outlined in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

EQUAL TREATMENT IN ANY TYPE OF JOB

Regulation has to curtail non-standard forms of work including by enhancing oversight on informal work and online platforms gigs that leave young workers with insecure income, inadequate protections and no possibility to organise, join or form a union. A presumption of employment is key and should be applied and reinforced via existing labour law including against bogus self-employment, so are higher obligations on firms including contributions to social protection and fiscal systems. There is no need for third workers categories. Racial, ethnic and gender justice have to take centre stage in policy responses. Migrant labour rights have to be enforced better and unaccompanied minors have to enjoy greater protections and support. Regulations and mechanisms such as labour inspectorates and involving trade unions have to be put in place to fight discrimination and bias in the world of work in both human-led and algorithmic management.



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