

## SKILLS LAB NETWORK OF EXPERTS

### Webinar - “How to create and use evidence for youth and gender inclusive labour markets?”

#### Event summary and conclusions - 23 February 2023

On 23 February 2023, the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts held a webinar on “How to create and use evidence for youth and gender inclusive labour markets?”. The event presented novel methodological approaches and research results that contribute to more inclusive labour market and skills policies, focusing on the creation and use of evidence for youth and gender-responsive skills development and matching policies.

#### Session 1 – Framing the discussion - Recent evidence from ETF studies

After the opening remarks, **Cristina Mereuta** and **Outi Kärkkäinen** from the ETF presented some insights concerning young people and women based on joint research by ETF and Eurofound. This research has highlighted that, though making ends meet is a widespread problem across all countries, exposure to poverty and housing insecurity levels are higher in EU neighbouring countries. Young people in these countries also have lower levels of life satisfaction due to limited opportunities, leading to feelings of social exclusion and higher risks of depression.

As regards the gender gap, women tend to work fewer hours than men but spend considerably more time in non-paid household and care work, resulting in about 35 hours more work per week on average for women in the Neighbourhood countries and 16 hours in the EU. Women with children also work more from home while the contrary is true for men, and they tend to be more active in undertaking further training, including on-line training.

The key findings of this research are that there are widespread feelings of social exclusion among younger respondents, with many expressing fears about their financial and job situation. Health and mental well-being are also a major concern across all countries, with 75% of those aged between 18 and 44 at risk of depression in the EU neighbouring countries.

Strong measures are needed to prevent families from becoming homeless, including improved childcare facilities and access to quality health services, including mental care. Gender-responsive active labour market measures should also be introduced, targeting women and integrated employment, skills and social support to youth. Educational and training systems should be developed to offer genuine upskilling and reskilling opportunities for job seekers, people with lower skills and inactive people.

In the second presentation, **Iwona Ganko** from the ETF shared some evidence on the impact of digitalisation on youth and women’s employment, and the policy implications of new working and learning patterns. The ETF’s research in this regard has focused on analysing the gender dimension in education and labour markets, as well as youth transitions and the employment situation for young people. This involves investigating changing patterns of work triggered by digitalisation and implications for employment and skills development policies.

After discussing some new economic and labour market trends, including geopolitics and the impact of technology, the presentation analysed the impact of these trends on work for women and young people. These effects include an increase in self-employment, freelancing, remote work and platform work, with mostly young, educated males from capitals and other larger cities. A strong gender segmentation can be noted here, which can be explained by the type

of occupations and skills demands, which favour men.

The presentation underlined the importance of recognising new work patterns and diverse forms of work (e.g. platform work) in increasingly digitalised economies. Connectivity and digitalisation should also be enhanced as crucial preconditions for fostering the expansion of new online business models, but also access and affordability for youth, women, migrants, persons with disabilities, minorities. Skills development for women – digital skills and STEM in particular – were pinpointed as a crucial topic to improve their labour market inclusion, as was the need to improve social security systems and the impact of public employment services to improve labour market outcomes and give opportunities for young people to profit from new forms of work.

## **Session 2 – Policies for young people – Insights from ETF partner countries**

The second session started with a presentation by **Vladimír Hlásny** from the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The presentation focused on the notoriously precarious employment prospects of young people in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region face. Youth unemployment rates here are the highest in the world, at 29% for the region on average. Youth unemployment is as high as 40% for male youth and over 60% for female youth, in some countries in the region. Moreover, youth often accept employment in informal, unsafe and unstable jobs, or are forced to migrate to find good jobs.

Youth in Egypt, Jordan & Tunisia are severely disadvantaged compared to older workers in terms of employment outcomes, with most young ending up in vulnerable jobs such as being self-employed, an unpaid family worker, an irregular wage worker or in the informal private sector. Family wealth and father's education were pinpointed as important determinants of employment outcomes, with these associations persisting even after long periods of work experience. The research also shows that workers' prospects of landing formal jobs has fallen, and those of remaining out of the labour force has increased over time, pointing to deteriorating labour market conditions in the region.

The final presentation, by **Mircea Badescu** (ETF), focused on the Youth Transition in ETF partner countries. The presentation started by detailing the differences that can be seen between NEETs when analysed by age, gender or labour status. The focus then moved onto to the long-term effects of the Youth Guarantee, showing that upper secondary education has become the 'entry ticket' to the knowledge society, while also showing that holding a university degree is no longer a guarantee of finding a quality job. The effects of the pandemic were also discussed, with increases in the NEET rate of up to 5 percentage points in some countries. The transition from work has also become more prolonged, unstable, and less predictable, with increased challenges in entering the labour market and many young people trapped in low-skilled and low-paid jobs.

All presentations and materials presented at the event can be found at:

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/events/webinar-how-create-and-use-evidence-youth-and-gender-inclusive-labour-markets-0>