



Office of the
**Secretary-General's
Envoy on Youth**



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International
Labour
Organization



Skills for a Resilient Youth in the Era of COVID 19 and Beyond

**Virtual Event
15 July 2020**

Background

In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly declared 15 July as World Youth Skills Day, to celebrate the strategic importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. Since then, World Youth Skills Day events have provided a unique opportunity for dialogue between young people, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, policy makers and development partners. Participants have highlighted the ever-increasing significance of skills as the world is embarking on a transition towards a sustainable model of development.

The World Youth Skills Day 2020 will be celebrated under the theme "Skills for a Resilient Youth".

Its observance will take place in a challenging context. First, the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures have led to the worldwide disruption of education and closure of TVET institutions and firms, threatening the continuity of skills development, including apprenticeships and internships. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that nearly three-quarters of the world's learners were affected by school closures across education levels by early May. The findings from the global survey of enterprises, initiated by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and supported by 10 development partners, indicate that more than 80% of the enterprises have stopped apprenticeship training, 36% have stopped payment of wages or stipends and 52% are planning to reduce expenditure on staff training after the pandemic is over. Respondents to a survey of TVET institutions jointly collected by UNESCO, the ILO and the World Bank reported that distance training had become the most common way of imparting skills, with considerable difficulties regarding, among others, curricula adaptation, trainee and trainer preparedness, connectivity, or assessment and certification processes, especially in developing countries.

Second, the economic recession that has resulted from the COVID-19 crisis is causing a massive rise in un- and underemployment, as over one in six young people have stopped working since

the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, according to the ILO's estimates. The socio-economic impact can have a long-lasting impact on incomes and livelihoods. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the world economy to contract by 3 per cent in 2020. The ILO has warned that work hours equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs risk being lost during the second quarter of the years. The World Bank fears that 49 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty.

Young people aged 15-24 were already facing a challenging transition into the labour market before the COVID-19 crisis, and were two to three times more likely than adults to be un- or underemployed. Even before the crisis, more than 267 million young people were not in employment, education or training (NEET), including almost 68 million unemployed young people. Among those who are employed, many are in informal employment. The changing world of work, including technical changes and digitization, is offering both challenges and opportunities. Even after the pandemic itself is over and lockdown measures are lifted, the impact of the economic recession will be felt, and the environmental crisis will become ever more tangible. Young women, youth living with disabilities, youth in developing countries, and all those in informal or self-employment will have to confront the greatest challenges.

Skills development has a key part to play in fostering the resilience of young people. It is crucial for all stakeholders to ensure the continuity of skills development, especially through distance and blended learning, to guarantee the safety of staff in the education and training workforce and provide continuity to all learners including apprentices and interns and those wishing to upskill and reskill.

As the economy restarts, recovery plans need to guarantee funding for skills development, including subsidies and incentives for apprenticeships, and to develop apprenticeship and other training programmes for young people training for or employed in the most severely affected sectors. But skills development stakeholders also need to anticipate on shifts in the demand for skills in the labour market that may occur as the economic crisis unfolds. The COVID-19 crisis has already demonstrated how important the ability is to deal with unpredictable situations and striving in an economy that can change overnight.

Objectives

The World Youth Skills Day 2020 will take stock of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on skills development and explore how the sector can respond to the unfolding economic crisis. The focus will be on resilience. In the short term, this implies making young people resilient to rapid changes in prospects for employment and entrepreneurship in the sectors that are hardest hit by the crisis, namely wholesale and retail trade, autorepair, manufacturing, real estate, administrative activities, accommodation and food services.. In the longer term, this implies helping skills development systems adapt to changes in the world economy that the pandemic and recession will bring.

The objectives of the World Youth Skills Day 2020 are to:

- Assess the situation of young people regarding skills required for work during and after the health and socio-economic crises brought by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Learn how young people have been living through the crisis and mobilized; and highlight success stories of youth innovation and resilience;
- Share lessons learnt by TVET institutions and firms since the beginning of the crisis; this will include best practices in protecting apprentices, trainees and trainers and ensuring the continuity of training, and preparedness for further outbreaks of COVID-19 or other new diseases;
- Share experience in distance training, including no-tech, low-tech and high-tech solutions (use of mobile phone, TV, radio, offline and online devices, disruptive technologies such as using artificial intelligence, block chain technologies, big data analytics, drones, 3D printing, fab labs, smart agriculture, smart manufacturing, fintech, internet of Things, etc.), and reflect on the use of distance training after the pandemic is over;
- Review prospects for skills development including apprenticeships as the economic crisis unfolds, and on the effectiveness of national recovery plans and support from development partners;
- Reflect on how skills development can help reconcile the short-term need for economic recovery with the urgent need for accelerating the transition to sustainable development;
- Launch the ILO *Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships Volume II* for practitioners to improve the design and implementation of apprenticeship programmes; and
- Announce the winner of the ILO Innovation Skills Challenge Innovation Call, a global competition to identify innovative approaches to address skills mismatch.

Organizers

The World Youth Skills Days is co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Portugal and Sri Lanka to the United Nations, together with UNESCO, ILO and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Format

Owing to the COVID-19 situation, the celebrations of the World Youth Skills Day 2020 will have a virtual format. A panel discussion will bring together multiple stakeholders in skills development including young people, member States, TVET institutions, the private sector, workers' organizations, policy makers and development partners. An online discussion with the audience will follow.

Resources

- UN Secretary-General's report, 'Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19': <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/SG-Report-Socio-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19.pdf>
- United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD): <https://www.unmgcy.org/un-iany-d-statement-on-youth-and-covid-19>
- TVET peer support in response to COVID-19: <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/COVID-19+disruptions>
- ILO-UNESCO-WBG Survey for TVET providers, policy-makers and social partners on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic: https://www.ilo.org/skills/Whatsnew/WCMS_740668/lang--en/index.htm
- TVET and skills development in the time of Covid-19 (Paul Comyn, Senior Skills Specialist, ILO, World Education Blog): <https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2020/04/28/tvet-and-skills-development-in-the-time-of-covid-19/#more-12897>
- ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Fourth edition: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf
- ILO Skills Challenge Innovation Call - Finding solutions to skills mismatch: https://ilo.org/skills/projects/innovation-facility/WCMS_733982/lang--en/index.htm
- UNESCO COVID-19 Education issue note 5.2 'TVET systems and labour markets': <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373274>
- UNESCO paper 'Monitoring the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on TVET systems and labour market'
- Decent Jobs for Youth "Global Survey on Youth & Covid-19": <https://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/campaign/COVID19-survey>
- WorldSkills website: <https://worldskills.org/>
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). 'New World. New Skills.': <https://www.pwc.com/upskilling>
- AIESEC website: <https://aiesec.org/>