

Introduction

This paper is a collaborative effort on the part of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) and the Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU).

The aim of the paper is to help shape a more coherent policy response to the jobs crisis that confronts younger people.

It is widely acknowledged that young people in Ireland have been hit particularly by the financial and economic crises, which in turn has led to a series of other crises: from mental health issues, to difficulties within the education system and what amounts to 'forced' emigration.

Although this paper cannot address all of these issues, we hope to outline a coherent set of deliverable policy proposals which can help ensure that young people make a smoother transition from education to employment, gain real and worthwhile learning opportunities through work placements and, on entering the labour market, enjoy conditions that will provide them with a decent standard of living and enable them to reach their potential as fully participative citizens.

Any policy response must aim to prevent young people from becoming disengaged and disconnected from education or employment, whilst also improving access to workplace opportunities to enhance overall skills and employability.

We must see a reduction in the incidence of unemployment among young people under 30 and a greater focus on those with no/low qualifications and skills and from disadvantaged groups.

It is critical that we highlight the under-performance of young people in education, and identify the different reasons for this amongst young men and amongst young women.

We believe these goals can be best achieved by focusing on a number of key underlying principles, namely:

- **ADOPTION** of a rights-based approach to youth policy;
- **PROMOTION** of secure access to decent work for young people;
- **ENSURING** all work-related initiatives entail real learning opportunities in the workplace and do not undermine current working conditions and protections;
- **LOBBY** for effective collective bargaining legislation.

Summary of Recommendations

Confronting the crisis facing young people – whether they are in education, attempting to enter the workforce or at work – requires decisive action on a number of fronts.

This is central to the overarching policy response proposed by this paper.

In response to these multiple crises, it is clear that a **National Jobs Strategy for Young People** must be drawn up as a matter of urgency. This will bring a greater coherence to policy affecting young people – in education, at work, or unemployed – and facilitate a more targeted response to the problems they face.

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A key element of any such strategy would be **investment in job creation** and a stimulus programme to boost domestic demand and spur growth.

In terms of **second level education**, we believe it is essential that greater numbers of students are encouraged to engage in more practical and vocational courses through enhanced course development and the creation of more **structured work experience** schemes to ensure better outcomes for participants. In addition, it is clear that greater recognition could be afforded to **volunteering** and wider civic engagement by students.

With regard to the ‘skills agenda’, we are calling for the establishment of a wholly **new skills agency**, as part of a greater investment in skills development at a national level. The new agency would provide courses based on EU best practice and targeted at strategic areas of the economy.

Ensuring a smoother transition into the labour force for younger people is critical and this process would be immeasurably strengthened by the establishment of a **Youth Guarantee** that would ensure a job, an apprenticeship or a guaranteed study placement for every young person, within **four months** of he/she becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

Complementary to the Youth Guarantee would be policies that support the highest possible number of young people staying on in education, through the provision of **tailored career guidance** and advice and also better preparation for third level.

In this context, we are proposing the creation of a new **Career Information Service** that would provide strategic advice to students on existing skill needs and likely skill shortages in the future. This should involve the education sector, industry and the trade union movement working in close cooperation.

A **National Skills Map** – which identified shortages in different sectors and locations – could be correlated with areas of high youth unemployment and used to create more sustainable skills training and job creation.

In terms of those who do become unemployed, it is critical that they benefit from an **early intervention and assessment** and are given opportunities to retrain and upskill.

The crucial issue of **teacher supply** is also an issue that must be tackled as part of any coherent policy response, as teachers are finding it increasingly difficult to find work following graduation.

The International Review Panel on the structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland 2012 recommended that an effective model of supply and demand for new teachers should be developed as a matter of urgency, in order to maintain an adequate supply of high calibre entrants to the profession.

Target Groups

Whilst this paper focuses on young people in general, it is particularly concerned about those groups which are more vulnerable or prone to exclusion:

- Young people not in education, employment or training;
- Early school-leavers, particularly those with no national qualification who may have worked in industries which have since collapsed such as the construction and retail sectors;
- Vulnerable young people such as those who have a disability, belong to minority groups or from other disadvantaged backgrounds;
- Those who applied for apprenticeships and didn't get one should be supported to enter an apprenticeship or a similar educational qualification;
- Students on work placements including apprentices, 2nd level and 3rd level students;
- Graduates who do not have any work experiences or who are not considered "work-ready";
- Newly qualified teachers and teachers under 35 without regular employment.

1. Education

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Second-level

Most OECD countries have separate vocational and general streams of upper secondary schooling; pupils are segregated after junior cycle into an academic and a vocational stream. Ireland is unique in having only a general stream in the form of the Leaving Certificate. This examination is designed to regulate admission to third level education and prepares students to cross the hurdle of third level entry. There have been sustained attempts over more than two decades to promote alternatives to the Leaving Certificate but brand loyalty remains strong among pupils and parents alike, with the result that many vocational courses in the VEC sector are branded as a post Leaving Certificate course. Although retention rates are good, students may stay in the wrong kind of education which will result in diminishing returns. That this is the case is shown by the statistics on practical literacy and numeracy, which show that 20 per cent of those in the 16-25 age cohort scored at the lowest or level one at basic literacy. This situation where Ireland has a weak vocational element in its upper secondary education system makes a training systems all the more important.

Recommendations:

- Encourage a higher uptake of students taking a more vocational and practical education stream through the LCA and LCVP programmes by;
 - strengthening the LCA and LCVP programmes and increasing the scope and range of subjects on offer such as business studies, enhance the vocational elements, outline the learner outcomes of these programmes to improve the image/perception amongst employers;
- Development of accredited modules and recognition within school/college programmes of the value of volunteering and civic engagement which encourages students non-academic as well as academic development;
- Establish structured work experience schemes to complement such programmes with clear learning outcomes which also provides for a module on workers' rights, employment legislation and supports in the form of student and trade union organisations;
- Provide adequate career services, linked to industry and trade union experts, which includes skills development, critical thinking and communication skills;
- Work with stakeholders to ensure the programmes equip students to be work-place ready according to their specific aspirations or sectors of choice.

Vocational Education & Training

In February 2010 the OECD conducted an evaluation of vocational education and training in Ireland. It is entitled ‘Learning for Jobs’ – a title which encapsulates what should be the core value of any skills development system. Despite contradictions and methodological weaknesses the OECD work contains a number of noteworthy points and lists some strengths of the Irish system as:

- ‘Collaboration with the social partners is well established and takes place at most relevant levels’;
- ‘The apprenticeship system is well structured with a systematic blend of on and off the job elements’;

Among the challenges set out are:

- ‘Apprenticeships are limited to a narrow set of occupations. Workplace training is insufficiently used in many programmes’;
- ‘FÁS is a large body with multiple missions. Evaluations and data to assess its efficiency and effectiveness are lacking’.

Another example of outside analysis of the training system is that of Dr. Paul Ryan of Cambridge, who is quite positive about the Irish apprenticeship system and suggests that the UK might do well to pursue a similar course. Three key characteristics of continental apprenticeships are outlined which include linkage to the education system, a statutory approach and the involvement of the social partners in the design and development of the apprenticeship system.

The paper demonstrates that the Irish apprenticeship system compares favourably with the systems in smaller mainland European countries

The latest OECD report stresses the value of workplace learning which consists mainly of the transmission of values and attitudes combined with a chance to put learned theory into practice. As this cannot happen in the classroom, it makes a compelling argument for an extension of apprenticeship into other areas of employment, and this is advocated by the OECD in their recent review of the Irish VET system. A recent Forfas review of labour market programmes also describes traineeships as having the highest employment outcomes of all programmes reviewed.

Recommendations:

- A higher investment in skills is necessary as it has shown to lead to increased GNP whilst most importantly supporting working people to secure decent jobs and advancing working conditions;
- The creation of a new skills agency to provide a wide range of courses through work-based learning, based on but not confined to, existing apprenticeship, certified to the highest standards and based on EU best practice in areas such as the hospitality sector, green jobs and the high-tech/IT industry;
- State certification requires a certifying authority with a high level of credibility and robust quality assurance procedures which are actively applied;
- The governance structure of a new skills agency, based on international evidence, should include the active involvement of employers and unions in the governance of VET systems which improves the effectiveness of such systems and binds them to the needs of the labour market;
- The skills agency mentioned above should also conduct, or at least be consulted, on the latest apprenticeship review which should include a number of relevant stakeholders including trade unions;
- An acceptable system for the recognition of prior learning would allow people to avoid doing exams in areas of knowledge which they have already mastered and can allow them to focus on acquiring additional skills. This is however dependent on the development of a nationally consistent system which the public will trust.

2. Youth Unemployment

The Irish labour market has been convulsed in the five years since the crash of 2008. GDP has collapsed, together with employment levels in the construction and retail sectors. Ireland has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the EU and one of the worst ratios of jobseekers to vacancies. It is all reminiscent of the crisis of the eighties – except that in the eighties the issue of youth unemployment was far higher up the agenda and there was a specific agency set up to deal with the problems of youth unemployment.¹

As the high levels of Youth Unemployment prevailing in Ireland have not been widely discussed, Congress welcomes this opportunity to participate in this debate. Our policy on training was published last year under the title 'New skills for the new economy' and is available online. It deals in part with the issue of youth unemployment – and in particular youth unemployment as a problem particularly affecting young men.

However, this is not to say that youth unemployment does not affect young women as recent figures indicate that the female unemployment rate is at 11%.

Forfás has recently described the situation as follows:

The immediate cyclical challenge of the current recession is the over representation of young people among the unemployed and the difficulties in opening up labour market opportunities for them in addition to the longer term structural challenge of tackling early school leaving...younger age cohorts are particularly vulnerable given their lack of experience in the labour market. This is evident in higher than average unemployment rates being experienced by the under 25's regardless of their level of qualification.²

At the end of March 2012 there were 74,400 under 25's on the live register which was a fall of 1,500 compared to February 2012 and a drop of 8,400 on March 2011. Decreases in persons aged under 25 have occurred in all months since July 2010. The percentage of persons aged under 25 on the Live Register has fallen from 19.5% in March 2010 to 16.8% in March 2012. However it is generally accepted that most of this decline is due to younger workers' participation in state training programmes and to emigration.

It is important to remember that the Youth unemployment rate is the percentage of 15 to 24 year olds who are unemployed compared to the total labour force in that age group.

¹ This body, the YEA was subsequently subsumed in to FAS

² Forfas, February 2012 Guidelines for the alignment of further education programmes with the skills needs of enterprise, p.21

However as a large share of 15 – 24 year olds are studying full time and thus are not available for work youth unemployment rates are generally higher than overall unemployment rates and the concept of a youth unemployment ratio is used.

Youth unemployment ratios in the EU are much lower than youth unemployment rates; they have however also risen since 2008 due to the effects of the recent crisis on the labour market. Even in good times Youth unemployment will be higher than prime age unemployment. This is due to a combination of a number of factors such as the requirement for experience for some jobs, the tendency to fill jobs through informal enterprise networks and the fact that young people who are working part time may be on the live register. Also, younger workers are more likely to genuinely be ‘between jobs’ as they settle into their career, and switch employers more often than older workers.

We can examine this problem in another way by looking at the number of students as recorded in the quarterly national household survey numbers for students between 2002 and 2010.³ During the early years of the century, for every 100 female students there were 90 male students. This figure dipped to 86% in 2006 at the height of the construction boom as young men took up jobs in the industry. By 2010 the latest year for which statistics are available the number of male and female students was approximately equal as young men stayed on in education or training.

This balancing of the male/ female student ratio is welcome but we must ask ourselves what happened to the people who constituted that 10 -15 % gap.⁴

Female	Male	ratio	year
191	176	0.92	2002
197	180.1	0.91	2003
192.8	174	0.90	2004
190.4	171.7	0.90	2005
194.4	166.5	0.86	2006
189.9	167.1	0.88	2007
190.5	172.6	0.91	2008
184.9	174.6	0.94	2009
184.6	184.5	1.00	2010

Causes of Youth Unemployment

The high levels of youth unemployment in Ireland is caused mainly by a collapse in construction for males, with the ensuing slump provoking a slump in retail employment for females. However, there are also other factors which continue to contribute to unemployment remaining at such high levels and include public sector redundancies, cut backs in employment in the public service have increased the level of graduate unemployment and the continuation of austerity policies which has led to a contraction in public spending and domestic consumption.

Young people tend to take up new jobs, and as there is less job creation there are fewer opportunities for recent school leavers to get a job.

³ The small but growing number of mature students does not significantly affect this exercise

⁴ CSO Quarterly national Household Survey

Job destruction affects all ages, but lack of job creation mainly affects the young. The crisis in Ireland is not specifically a youth crisis, but a job creation crisis, and young workers are the worst affected by this.

The high rate of youth unemployment in Ireland is not caused by over generous employment protection. Ireland has one of the most flexible labour markets in the OECD, having the sixth least regulated labour market in the OECD and the second least regulated in the EU after the UK. Interestingly the next most flexible EU countries after us are Denmark and Sweden.⁵ The interaction between employment protection legislation and youth unemployment is discussed in greater detail by a British academic based in Italy, Dr. Niall O Higgins who writes that

Interestingly the strength of employment protection seems to have had an albeit weak beneficent influence. The OECD's strength of EPL index is positively related to the change in unemployment and even more important negatively to labour market withdrawal and unemployment. This suggests that in countries where EPL is strong young people were less likely to become discouraged workers or unemployed.⁶

Scarring

The adverse effect of youth unemployment has been well documented by Blanchflower

and others.⁷ The most recent research supports the view that early adulthood unemployment creates long lasting scars which affect labour market outcomes much later in life, showing significant effects at age 50 from early adulthood unemployment. These effects are stronger than more recent unemployment experiences. This is a worrying prospect.

While youth unemployment attracted major attention during the crisis of the eighties, the sheer scale of the current crisis has meant that the system generates 'noise' which tends to crowd out the debate on youth unemployment. For example much of the current debate on unemployment focuses on the Community Employment Scheme which is generally confined to the over 25's.

Recent work undertaken by the ESRI confirms the importance of a low level of education in Youth Unemployment

Characteristics that have been identified as increasing young people's LTU risk, and which affect bigger proportions of both the male and female populations, are low levels of educational attainment (9 per cent of young males and 5 per cent of young females have no formal qualifications), literacy/numeracy problems (11 and 5 per cent of males and females respectively) and a history of long-term unemployment (10 and 7 per cent of males and females respectively).⁸

5 Danielle Venn (2009), "Legislation, collective bargaining and enforcement: Updating the OECD employment protection indicators", at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/9/43116624.pdf>

6 Niall O'Higgins This Time It's Different? Youth Labour Markets During 'The Great Recession' IZA discussion paper 6434 at <http://www.iza.org/en/webcontent/publications/papers>

7 Youth Unemployment in Europe and the United States IZA DP No. 5673 April 2011 David N.F. Bell David G. Blanchflower

8 Transitions to Long-Term Unemployment Risk Among Young People: Evidence from Ireland Elish Kelly*, Seamus McGuinness and Philip O'Connell Forthcoming (2012): Journal of Youth Studies

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This finding reaffirms the need to strengthen existing policies towards retaining young people in education and in minimising school dropout.

Young people outside the system [NEETs]

The use of the term NEETs is not intended to be offensive or degrading to those who comprise that category, but rather is used as a short descriptive mechanism.

This categorisation refers to young people not in employment, education or training, and measures youth joblessness rather than youth unemployment, thus measuring young people who have become detached from the labour market.

Ireland has historically avoided this phenomenon; however, the number of young people in this category has risen from 11 per cent to 18 per cent in the last two years.⁹ The slides in appendix 1 show that we moved from being at or about the European average in this area to being among the worst in the EU, with the highest rate of increase in any member state. Young men are also disproportionately represented among NEETS. It is vital that we work toward reversing this trend. There is a danger of a cultural shift. During the boom most young persons' peers had a job, but now there may be groups of friends where no-one has a job. In a time when priorities have to be set it is important that any new initiatives should have as their targets the NEET group, or those with a low educational level. (It is likely that the two will overlap).

⁹ European Union Employment in Europe 2010. P.132 for historically low Irish levels, p.59 for rapid increase in 2008 -2010

The International Labour Organisation is one of the most respected commentators on labour markets.¹⁰ In its most recent report it describes the youth unemployment situation as a crisis and continues:

Labour market statistics aside, the situation is so dire that it threatens an important foundation of the current economic and social model. Economic and social policies across the world are still underpinned by faith in the possibility of achieving continuous economic and social progress... One has to look all the way back to the Great Depression in the 1930s to find a comparable threat to the goal of continuous economic and social progress. The loss of faith in the paradigm, however, is what makes the current youth employment crisis so significant worldwide.¹¹

One might encounter the argument that in terms of the numbers, this is not a youth employment crisis it is a prime age earner crisis. One might also encounter the argument that the numbers involved are relatively small. Both arguments fall into the trap of regarding unemployment as a purely econometric rather than a socio economic problem.

¹⁰ It is also the first international body which the Irish state joined after independence

¹¹ The youth employment crisis: Time for action ILO 2012

According to Eurostat, Youth unemployment in Ireland has increased from 13.3% to 29.9% between Q3 2008 and Q3 2011. Only Spain and Greece had greater levels of increase. Using the more conservative youth employment ratio Ireland does not perform well, as Ireland, together with Spain and the Baltic states is one of the countries where the ratio has risen most during the last three years

It is noteworthy to contrast this performance with countries with strong apprenticeship systems covering a wide sector of the economy, such as Germany, Austria and the Netherlands where the trend has almost without exception been downwards.¹² This certainly gives food for thought for Ireland, in the context of the restructuring of our further education and training system.

12 http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment_trends

3. Investment in Quality Jobs

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As stated in the Congress document **“Delivering Growth & Jobs”** investment is the key to future economic growth and unless serious inroads are made into reducing the level of unemployment, the long term costs associated with entrenched social and economic problems will far exceed the short term gains accrued in cuts in current expenditure under a fiscal adjustment programme.

It is therefore necessary and imperative that an investment stimulus takes place, not as the only solution but as part of a long-term strategy to achieve economic recovery, sustainable development and greater equality.

Some of the areas suggested for specific investment include:

- Roll-out of advanced Broadband;
- Retrofitting and Energy Efficiency;
- Public Transport;
- Water and waste water treatment;
- Health & Education;
- Green jobs;
- Information Communications Technology;
- Social innovation projects [such as digitising public records];
- Combining capital works projects across the public sector. For instance, investment in public infrastructure would benefit young workers in the construction industry;
- It is also important to boost employment opportunities for young people through investment in human capital, particularly in areas such as child-care, hospitality, retail, distribution and agricultural work and to promote good labour standards, quality-service and innovation;
- Sectoral and/or national requirements should be considered by government, in consultation with the social partners, together with appropriate action plans, with a strong focus on vulnerable young workers.

4. Youth Activation and the Jobs Agenda

We need to base our policy on information. Getting the right answer means asking the right question, and drawing a scientific conclusion from the answers given. In relation to the further education sector which has a key role in combatting youth unemployment Forfás has found that 'Currently there is insufficient data available on costs benefits and quality of further education programmes'.¹³ Assuming this information deficit is rectified an appropriate policy response needs to be selected.

There have been three approaches to youth unemployment: Employment schemes, Internships and employer subsidies and Social Clauses. Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages which are outlined below. However an overarching priority must be to ensure that all such initiatives need to be administratively simple while guarding against the risk of exploitation. Care must be taken in designing such programmes in order to ensure that they become a stepping stone to the labour market and not a treadmill.

Employment Schemes

The problem with employment subsidies is the problem of dead weight – i.e. they support the taking on of workers who would have been taken on in any event. Employment subsidies have to be carefully targeted – as in the case of redundant apprentices- and the regulation must supply a correct balance between preventing abuse of the scheme and maintaining employer interest.

The most recent high profile employer subsidy is the jobbridge scheme, to which the ICTU accorded a cautious welcome in advance of its implementation, as a short-term means to providing important opportunities for young workers to gain valuable work experience but pending a rigorous and thorough evaluation. Jobbridge provides the intern with work experience while providing the employer with an element of free labour. In addition if they decide to retain the intern the employer is spared the often hefty fees charged by employment agencies.¹⁴

In order to measure the results of this scheme there is an urgent need for an evaluation and for accurate and up to date statistics to be published. A basic information grid would include the number of applications successful, the mean and median size of firm, the distribution of applications by sector and the outcomes in terms of employment, further education or training or return to the live register. It would also be helpful to develop a risk profile of industries/sectors to guide inspections.

It is premature to express any opinion on Job-bridge in the absence of an evaluation beyond saying that in order to retain the worthwhile aspect of the scheme it would be important to maintain it at a manageable scale and not on a permanent basis.

¹³ Forfás Guidelines for the alignment of further education programmes with the skills needs of enterprise, p.9

¹⁴ 'Job agencies accused of driving up costs of IT staff' The Irish Times - Thursday, April 12, 2012

However, it is worthwhile to note that any internship scheme should adhere to the criteria set out in this paper which ensures individuals are not exploited but obtain the best access to improve their skills and learning increasing their employment opportunities whilst gaining a new or extended qualification.

If adequately regulated and monitored, JobBridge may act as a stepping stone for a young person who is seeking to enter the labour market, having had none or limited previous work experience and/or no access to a network of contacts in the jobs market. It is important to prevent the situation of a young person feeling obliged to take a succession of low-paid internships in order to prevent a gap in his/her CV, while employers take advantage of free labour and young workers find they are subjected to continuous exploitation. Young workers have a legitimate expectation of paid employment after a short period of work experience and this type of internship should be limited to the absolute maximum period of 6-9 months.

Social Clauses

Another mechanism to combat youth unemployment is to incorporate a social clause into public purchasing. This would compel those tendering for state contracts to guarantee that a certain proportion of young unemployed people would be employed on the normal terms prevailing in the industry. It might well be argued that such clauses would contravene EU procurement rules. In point of fact they do no such thing. A Social clause is part of the programme for government in Northern Ireland.

A research paper for the OFM/DFM in Northern Ireland outlines the EU position on Social clauses :

procurement operations that take into consideration, inter alia, the promotion of employment opportunities, build-in safeguards with respect to the standards of working conditions, strive to support social inclusion (including persons with disabilities), social economy and SMEs, promote equal opportunities and “accessibility and design for all”, take into account Fair and Ethical Trade issues as well as human and labour rights and seek to achieve wider voluntary adherence to CSR while observing the principles of the EU treaty and the EU Procurement Directives.¹⁵

Social clauses in public contracts are arguably the simplest and most efficient way to direct some of the limited jobs on offer to those who need them most. It also helps to alleviate one of the arguments advanced that much of the stimulating power of public expenditure ‘leaks out’ in a small open economy such as Ireland. Rather than subsidising employers with all the attendant deadweight problems, it seeks to mobilise public money at the tendering process to achieve a social end. This form of social clause is a matter for further discussion.

¹⁵ Study on the incorporation of Social Considerations in Public Procurement in the EU: Proposed Elements for taking account of the Social Considerations in Public Procurement

There are recent precedents for social clauses in public contracts and they are to be found in Skillnets the training networks initiative. All training which Skillnets grant aids must as a condition of grant, ensure that approximately ten per cent of places on each course are offered to jobseekers. This initiative has helped to bring jobseekers nearer to the labour market and has encountered no significant resistance from employers. This policy initiative has also shown that social clauses are a practical response to the issue of unemployment.

Analysis of current schemes

Young people are generally excluded from Community employment which is the largest intervention for unemployed people. In the eighties, young people were catered for by two schemes- teamwork run by the national manpower service, which was run down in the mid-eighties and the Community youth training programme of ANCO (later FAS) which was set up to provide youth training originally based on a system to provide opportunities for redundant apprentices. The general consensus is that the nearer such schemes are to the labour market the better they are and we fully concur with this.

Recommendations

- Employment schemes should be a last, rather than a first, resort. What is required is a social guarantee focussed on the NEET category which would guarantee an offer of a job, a structured traineeship/apprenticeship or an educational course to everyone in this category;
- Congress has directly and at local level, a defined role in schemes such as Community Employment and TUS. This role constitutes a safeguard to prevent abuse, together with oversight of all aspects, of such schemes. This ensure that employers availing of DSP subsidies live up to their responsibilities. Congress aims to extend this monitoring role to all labour market schemes.

5. Supporting Education to Workplace Transition

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According to a Eurofound study of 2012 *Recent policy developments related to those not in employment, education and training*, there are numerous factors which make the transition from education to the workplace difficult; sometimes young people have not yet decided on their career; they may lack work experience; or they may have a low qualification level. There can be a mismatch between their skills and those required by employers. Although the time between education and first job after education may take some time, if the time period is too long, it can have a long-term negative impact on the future career of the individual.

General Recommendations

The following recommendations are recognised as supporting a smooth transition into the labour force for all young people;

- Provide an activation measure such as a Youth Guarantee to provide a job, apprenticeship or study placement within **4 months** of a young person becoming unemployed or leaving formal education;
- Support the retention of students within second and third level education by providing tailored career services and advice [see below] along with induction courses for prospective 3rd level students to include such things as online campus tours, sample lectures and introductory videos on learning modules. These should be made available on all school, college and CAO websites;
- Provide adequate tailored career services to meet the specific needs of young job-seekers. This should include individual assessment of a young job-seekers training needs including their preparedness for the workplace, guidance on CV writing, interview preparation and alerts when suitable job vacancies arise;
- Early individual assessment for those who have been made unemployed as a direct result of the crisis, such as in construction and retail, and given the opportunity to retrain/reskill either through an apprenticeship scheme, study placement or full-time education. The assessment should take into account their particular circumstances, their current skills and their career aspirations;
- A new career information scheme should be provided to ensure students/young people can make informed career choices and decisions based on accurate information. The new scheme should be established in close alignment between education, industry and the trade union movement. It should provide accurate and up-to-date information on future skills needs, how to achieve those skills/education required and job opportunities across new and existing sectors. The scheme should operate at various stages from end of 1st level through 2nd and 3rd level education, utilising experts from trade unions and current/emerging sectors to provide direct contact and information to young people. This scheme should be provided as early as young people start to make decisions on their education/subject choices;

- Skills gaps should be mapped out on a nation-wide basis in terms of industry, sector and location and attempts made to match up with areas of high unemployment, particularly among young people. In order to address these skills gaps into the future, the specific industry should work in close collaboration with all levels of the education sector to ensure that young people are encouraged/motivated towards the sector and also to provide programmes to reskill/re-educate young people who are unemployed, particularly those in long-term unemployment;
- Structured work experience opportunities should be provided within all education courses beginning at 2nd level. These opportunities should be closely linked with the subject choices/educational qualification of the student and provide opportunities for students to develop skills relevant and required by the workplace;
- The issue of ‘Teacher Supply’ is at crisis point and needs to be tackled. Following graduation from teacher training colleges, teachers find it most difficult to find employment due to the increasing number of teachers being introduced into the education system each year. The number of students entering publicly funded teacher training colleges is capped by the Dept. of Education and Skills while numbers in private sector teacher training colleges are not capped.

The International Review Panel on the structure of Initial Teacher Education Provision in Ireland 2012 recommended that an effective model of supply and demand for new teachers should be developed as a matter of urgency in the interest of maintaining an adequate supply of high calibre entrants to the profession.

Improving the transition for second-level students;

- Structured work experience programmes should be offered to all second-level students which will adequately prepare them for the workplace in an area of specific interest to their course content. These work experience programmes should provide adequate learning experiences for students;
- Career guidance should be offered to students prior to entering and throughout their second-level education, particularly at crucial subject choice times;
- Early induction courses for 6th year second-level students to be developed by all 3rd level colleges;
- Up-to-date national career information programmes should be made available to second-level students at both junior and senior cycle to ensure they are aware of the career opportunities associated with their subject choices.

Improving the employability skills of graduates

A skills initiative for 3rd level students should also be developed which is accredited and implemented in every college covering essential skills to make a smooth transition into the labour market regardless of the students' subject/course of study. The following lists some of the skills identified as beneficial to improving employability;

- Analysing and Solving Problems;
- Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills;
- Verbal Communication;
- Written Communication;
- Personal Planning and Organising;
- Initiative;
- Numerical Reasoning;
- Information Literacy and ICT Skills.

These skills should be broken down into specific learning blocks/modules suitable to be embedded within existing course modules and college career services. Students' proficiency at each skill will be assessed by a specific skills demonstration within their course of study.

On successful completion of their course of study/degree students will receive a separate national certificate of competence in the skills which were successfully demonstrated during their course.

This skills certificate will be of a standard recognised by industry/employers as a measure of their expertise and employability.

A national e-portfolio to be established which will hold all evidence of skill development and demonstration for ease of job application and interview performance.

Work-placements

For the purposes of this document and the proposed set of criteria as set out, work placements will be considered to include apprenticeships, traineeships and internships. Where apprenticeship schemes have different and specific procedures based on the industry concerned, this will be highlighted.

The criteria outlined in this section should be included in ALL placement programmes offered to students from Transition Year and Apprenticeships, through to Graduate internships/ Graduate education programmes and Labour Activation programmes.

In response to the current recession a number of schemes were put in place by FAS to allow apprentices to complete their term of apprenticeship by providing a subsidy to employers. This scheme was generally regarded as successful, if somewhat limited, as it allowed young people to complete their apprenticeship.

It is however, increasingly difficult for apprentices to secure placements with an employer and any new apprenticeship scheme should work towards ensuring apprenticeships can secure sustainable decent employment later on within the industry.

Quality work placements/traineeships are a valuable tool in helping young people make the transition from education to the workplace, however, a lack of clear guidelines and quality standards can undermine quality employment for young people. It is equally important for schemes to recognise and consider the aspirations of young people and to help facilitate a broad range of choices to meet the need for diversity, creativity and reflection in society whilst also offering decent conditions and security.

Studies on apprenticeships and traineeships in EU countries for the EU Commission recommended that schemes should be more responsive to labour market requirements, better adapted to business needs and offer more guarantees in terms of quality and perspectives for young people. These schemes should overall be a learning experience for young people, provide valuable experience and opportunities and ensure that they provide the necessary skills and learning to improve the employability of young people.

Within the Commission's second consultation on Traineeships, they identified a number of principles that characterise good quality traineeships which include:

- Traineeship agreement;
- Transparency of Information;
- Objectives & content;
- Guidance and recognition;
- Stated duration;
- Successive traineeships;

- Social security provision;
- Remuneration/cost compensation;
- Partnership approach;

Similarly the European Youth Forum recently developed, with the support of 98 National Councils, the European Quality Charter of Internships and Apprenticeships. This charter outlines the key principles of traineeships which include:

- It should be a learning experience for participants;
- It should not lead to job replacement;
- The experience should contribute to a recognised qualification;
- Contracts should be drawn up between the employer, educational institution and the trainee which should outline tasks, learning outcomes, supervisors etc.;
- Remuneration is optional, however, reimbursement costs for basic travel and subsistence should be made available to trainees;
- Traineeships should be carried out under the guidance of an appropriate supervisor and have access to robust evaluative and complaints channels to monitor progress and quality of the traineeship experience.

In addition to the above, we would also include the following criteria which should form the basis of good practice in all quality work placement schemes.

- The vast majority of schemes should take place within formal education systems and have clear learning outcomes for participants;
- The Irish Government to commit to establish legal quality frameworks for work placements including internships and apprenticeships;
- Work placements should be given a place in the national legislation and employers should be provided with assistance to any legal enquiries related to the implementation process;
- Work placement providers [Traineeship/ Internship/ apprenticeships] and public decision makers should adopt a system of certification to ensure the recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired through these traineeships;
- All the providers of work placements [internships and apprenticeships] should commit to quality standards and apply a clear and coherent code of conduct, developed in consultation with the social partners and youth representative groups including trade unions and student union bodies;
- A work placement should not constitute valid grounds to reduce the general levels of protection to employees afforded at national level;
- Adequate support and monitoring mechanisms should be put in place;
- Statistics should be available on internships, nationally and at European level, with a special focus on: the number of internships available, the average length of internships, the social benefits being made available for interns, the allowances paid to interns, the age groups of interns;
- National partnerships run between schools, universities, civil society organisations and the social partners should be encouraged more and supported;
- At the European level there should be mechanisms in place to promote the exchange of best practices in the area and the implication of the main criteria that define quality work placements and internships;
- More career development loans and investment in training by employers should be encouraged and supported;
- Schools should provide assistance to young people when they are looking for a suitable traineeship/apprenticeship;
- Student organisations and trade unions should be available to provide assistance and support to individuals throughout the work placement period;
- An overview should be available, nationally and at European level, on the different internship schemes and their place within the legal systems;

Where schemes are established outside the formal education system the following criteria should also apply;

- existence of a written and legally binding contract outlining the length, remuneration of the work placement and tasks should be attached to the contract;
- comprehensive details as to the specific learning objectives and outcomes of the placement including levels of supervision required and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to be used;
- level of remuneration should be regulated either in law or in collective agreements in accordance with national good practice;
- reimbursement of costs incurred during the placement such as travel and subsistence;
- decent remuneration NOT below the national minimum wage, or more favourable, in accordance to the tasks which are performed by the individual and to working hours (overtime should be additionally compensated);
- use of work placements should be limited to pupils, students and very recent graduates, length of placements period should be restricted to a reasonable and fixed number of months, ideally not more than between 6 – 9 months;
- inclusion of the individual in the social security system, especially those of health, unemployment, pension systems;

- a mid-term evaluation should take place to discuss the possibilities of the individual to be hired as a permanent employee during the placement period and a final evaluation at the end of the placement period;
- limited number of placements per provider dependent on size, but should not exceed 5% of their workforce;
- positions should be advertised in a transparent way that outlines role, supervisory mechanisms, task description and working conditions.

It is not acceptable for employers to just claim individuals are 'interns' or to require them to sign a contract waiving their right to remuneration. Rights as an intern or participant on a work placement, depends on the facts of the situation, the criteria of the scheme, what happens in practice in the workplace and who decides the role as outlined by the employer. It also depends on whether the role includes work of value to the employer, level of supervision required to be given and the degree of responsibility, if any, in comparison to the rest of the workforce.

If the work being performed by the individual on a placement is similar to other employees who are not on work placement or interns, then participants are likely to be entitled to at least the national minimum wage regardless of the title of the role.

However, if an individual is on a specific Government Intern or Work Experience scheme this MAY be exempt from minimum wage laws and different rights to payment may apply.

6. The Youth Guarantee

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A Youth Guarantee, which will ensure that all young people will receive either a quality education course, training place, apprenticeship, regulated work placement or decent job within 4 months of leaving school/college to ensure they remain engaged, is both welcome and necessary.

It should be recognised that young people have the right to a decent job with decent working conditions, including security of employment, employment rights and protection from exploitation.

It should further be recognised that a Youth Guarantee scheme, should neither displace young people with access to current Youth services, replace existing jobs with traineeships/internships nor become the only access route for young people into the labour market.

Where current schemes and access to employment opportunities are successful in terms of transitioning young people to the workplace, they should remain in place. The Youth Guarantee should be a method of increasing capacity and opportunities for young people and provide young people with real opportunities to progress into the labour force whilst having the potential to act as a stimulus to the local and regional economy.

Any new scheme must also have the following fundamental principles:

- Adequate financial resources identified before the roll-out of a guarantee with at least matching funds pledged by government;
- A key outcome of any scheme is to ensure that young people's employability is increased and they actually progress into the labour market and into sustainable jobs;
- A targeted and tailored approach to account for the variety of circumstances and background of young people;
- Specific actions to address young people with no or very low educational qualifications and skills;
- Target young people from vulnerable groups such as those with a disability, minority groups and from a disadvantaged background;
- Consultation and inclusion of student unions, trade unions and youth representative groups as partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a scheme;
- Early intervention [3-4 months] to remove the likelihood of long-term unemployment or disengagement;
- Scheme should have time limits with clear and measurable outcomes;
- Work placements used within a Youth Guarantee should adhere to the criteria as set out earlier in this document;

- Individuals on such schemes will retain all their employment protections and rights including access to the right to organise, collective bargaining and to join a union;
- Should improve the long-term employability prospects of those within the scheme rather than be a short-term solution;
- Designate clear Ministerial responsibility for youth unemployment and encourage coherence across relevant Government departments through the establishment of a high-level steering group. The group should also consist of representatives from trade unions, student unions, youth representative bodies and employers. The group would be responsible for the development and implementation of a national strategy and work programme for youth employment.

7. Quality Jobs & Decent Work

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Young people are disproportionately affected by the crisis, unemployment and the precariousness of employment. They are the workers who are being offered little or no decent work opportunities or conditions of employment and are looking at a future of precariousness, underemployment and insecurity.

All workers have basic employment protections and it is important that young workers are afforded the same protections and opportunities as other workers. Any strategy or scheme which involves providing work placements or job opportunities for young people should ensure that they don't dilute or breach employment protections and mechanisms are put in place to raise awareness among young people of their rights and where they can obtain additional supports.

However, current Government policy appears to favour reduced and diminished conditions of employment for young people in comparison to more experienced workers which is a continuing source of frustration for young people. For instance, the INTO has long expressed concern about the New Single Service Pension Scheme and separate pay scales for Newly Qualified Teachers. In addition, Government spending cuts in education have had a serious negative impact on youth employment and conditions of employment over the past two years. As a result, many young teachers have been forced to emigrate in order to find secure employment in other jurisdictions.

The Young Workers' Network, supported by SIPTU, undertook an online survey to ascertain the views of young people about the key issues they are concerned with and that face them in the workplace. More than 350 respondents participated in the survey of which 94% indicated they want to stay and work in Ireland rather than emigrate. Almost half are principally concerned with youth unemployment while 10% respectively see inequality/social justice and mental health as the key issues. Discrimination at work and in society was the number one concern for about 7% of respondents. The results of the survey underline the importance of organising young workers into trade unions so that the issues they are facing can be dealt with in a coordinated way.

The top workplace issue for respondents is pay (20%), followed by job security (19%), career progression (15%), bullying and harassment (9%) and a lack of respect and recognition (9%).

In relation to job security, 44% of respondents indicated their top problem is a lack of career progression/prospects; 32% consider temporary contracts as the biggest issue and 24% see irregular hours as most significant.

There is also concern expressed at the introduction of lower levels of pay, reduced pensions, reduced conditions of employment and entitlements, abolished allowances and fewer incentives for professional development.

Such issues are among the top priorities for young people because they are experiencing a vast erosion of the decent working conditions which generations have enjoyed previously. No discussion on youth employment and unemployment would be comprehensive or complete without also identifying the challenges and issues which young people, already in the labour force, are facing such as under-employment, precariousness, low pay or in some cases no pay, and other forms of exploitation. All of these issues will continue to contribute to the crises for our young people such as mental health issues and emigration, if they are not effectively dealt with.

According to the latest CSO figures there are 88,322 people on the live register who are classified as casual or part-time workers. The latest Quarterly Economic Facts from NERI suggest that there is an unemployment/under-employment rate of 23.5%, a figure which includes persons working part-time who wish to work additional hours and are available to do so. This indicates a significant level of under-employment in Ireland affecting young people's ability to participate fully in the labour market.

Since the beginning of the recession and the continuation of austerity policies there has not only been a rise in unemployment and underemployment, but also increases in the level of precarious employment and an erosion of job security. Many young people are being asked to work for no payment during "internships" which are not part of an accredited or comprehensively supervised programme, or are being offered temporary and/or zero-hour contracts on wages below the minimum wage based on a "lack of adequate work experience". These situations should not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Case studies*

HANNAH is 18, originally from New York, and is working in Dublin with a builders' providers.

She has been working in her current job since January and works between six and 12 hours a week – covering lunch shifts for permanent staff.

Hannah is paid less than the minimum wage as she is on a 'training schedule'. However, in the last six months she has only attended one training session – the rest of the time she has been working. Her average monthly income is €240, which barely covers the cost of her phone and the travel to and from work, with the remainder going to her parents, towards rent.

Hannah can't socialise with her friends, or even meet them in town because of lack of money. Her employer doesn't cover sick-pay or holiday-pay, so she works even when she is sick and she tries to recuperate on her days off.

Although there are four other young workers in the company in the same position, Hannah feels as though it's very difficult for them to organise, as they are competing against each other for hours.

Hannah thinks that young workers need to be given a chance. She told Liberty: "*There's such a dim view of our generation. We're seen as lazy, or disinterested... but some of us are hard-working and driven. We want the same things as everyone else.*"

STEPHANIE is 25 and works in retail in Tralee, Co Kerry.

She has been working in her current job for the last eight months, on a part-time contract with no stated hours. This means that her employers can give her whatever hours they wish each week. On average, she works two hours a day, five days a week but she can be sent home early, if it's quiet.

Stephanie has two children, aged three and one, and what she is earning is barely covering her childcare costs. The hours she works are not enough to qualify her for Family Income Supplement. After bills and rent she is left with between €20 and €30 to live on each week.

She said: "*The three of us are stuck indoors a lot of the time because we don't have the funds to go and do anything.*" Many of her friends have emigrated to Australia to seek full-time work. Stephanie can't see things getting better for her, unless she can get a contract with stated hours. "*I'd just like to know where I stand. To know when I'm working and when I'm not working and [be able to] budget better, as well.*"

ANTHONY is 26, living in Dublin and recently qualified as a community youth worker.

After finishing a six-month contract, which was not extended due to cuts to the sector, Anthony now works on a '20-hour contract' basis, which means he is employed 20 hours each week. However, he can be asked to work those hours within any time period from two to six days, depending on his employer's needs.

He said: *"It's really frustrating because you want to plan your week but you can't... because of the work. You need the money to survive, you need the money to plan your life as well."*

Anthony also found himself in a precarious work situation when he was in college, working as a waiter in the city centre, never knowing how many hours' work he would receive, if any at all. He feels that he was treated with no respect, nor dignity, by full-time staff and management. He hoped that this would end when he finished college and started his career – but, unfortunately, he is now in a similar situation again. *"I'd like to know that I'd be given the respect and dignity that I deserve and that every worker does deserve...I am flexible but you have to meet me half way"*.

CAOLBA is 29, originally from Brazil, and is working as a sales assistant, but has no official contract.

She has no regular, set hours and can be asked to work anything from three to 25 hours a week, with very little notice. Schedules can suddenly change if her employer is busy, or if the shop is quiet.

She finds it difficult to plan – financially and socially. She is never sure what her income will be, so she has to be careful of her expenditure. Her employer does not provide her with sickpay, or holiday-pay – only paying for the hours she works, regardless of what was scheduled that week.

Prior to her current position, Caolba worked in a shop and was paid less than the minimum wage. When she and a co-worker approached a government agency about the situation, they were told that little could be done. She told Liberty: *"They said if they're not paying the minimum wage, you have to leave the job."*

*These case studies are taken from a video on precarious work produced by SIPTU.

Recommendations:

- A comprehensive national review and survey of youth employment to take place focussing on working hours, contract status, pay levels, training opportunities and progression routes;
- More investment in education programmes for young people comprising their rights in the workplace, employment protections and access to trade unions;
- NERA should conduct comprehensive labour inspections in organisations providing youth work-placement programmes including internships, apprenticeships and traineeships;
- Work placements should be heavily regulated and monitored by NERA to ensure employment protections are not being eroded and jobs are not being displaced.

8. Rights at Work & Collective Bargaining

Young workers can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to their age, level of experience within the workplace and in the current climate, lack of access to opportunities to develop their employability skills. Young workers can find themselves faced with serious cases of exploitation without access to the necessary supports, information and knowledge.

The crisis has also had a disproportionate effect on young entrants and graduates to a range of professions including the public sector. Therefore it is imperative that the impact of such changes are acknowledged and these issues addressed, to ensure that these situations are not allowed continue into the future resulting in long-term inequalities.

Every worker therefore, particularly younger workers, should have the opportunity and right to join and be represented by a trade union without fear of adverse outcomes or victimisation. Ireland's failure to implement such legislation is a clear breach of their human and trade union rights and is a violation of workers' fundamental rights and ILO conventions No 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the right to organise and No. 98 The Right to organise and collective bargaining.

Recommendation:

- As part of the Programme for Government, legislation for the recognition of the right to collective bargaining should be implemented immediately;
- The impact of collective bargaining agreements should always be assessed for equality of treatment and both gender and age proofed.

Investment In Young People

Developing an ethos of entrepreneurship among young people

According to the National Youth Council of Ireland's analysis, there is an inadequacy of entrepreneurial supports for young people in Ireland and a lack of information available to potential young entrepreneurs wishing to start up a new business venture.

While the current economic environment is challenging, many young people have excellent ideas and just need additional supports and advice to start their own businesses. Too often the ideas and proposals of young people are seen as too risky.

Recommendations:

- Track and evaluate the effects of entrepreneurship in order to develop an effective programme taking into account elements of good practice;
- Entrepreneurship programmes should be a feature of the entire educational system, as one study level feeds into the other. The formation of an entrepreneurial mind-set is a collaborative effort from primary education to tertiary education;
- Mainstream entrepreneurship into all levels of education with the objective of ensuring schools and colleges offer at least one entrepreneurship module;
- Colleges should also integrate entrepreneurship across different subjects of their study programmes, as it may add value to all degrees (e.g. technical and scientific studies, but also humanities and creative studies). All facilities/disciplines should develop opportunities at every level to experience entrepreneurship;
- Students of entrepreneurship should also be educated to take cognisance of all legal requirements including employment rights and protections;
- Government should establish a series of programmes and events, in partnership with industry experts, which will help facilitate young people to explore new ideas and business opportunities;
- Government should establish a fund to support young business entrepreneurs to advance their business venture which should be set up as efficiently as possible, keeping administration and bureaucracy to a minimum whilst ensuring transparency in expenditure and oversight;
- Grant public funding for the establishment of Entrepreneurship Centres at all universities and the creation of a network between them. These Centres would have the mission, among others, of spreading entrepreneurship across different fields of studies within the institutions; fostering the commercialisation of research and exploitation of new business ideas; building links, etc.;
- Encourage students, graduates and researchers with commercially viable business ideas to develop them into companies, by providing a range of support services within the institution (incubators, financing, mentorship, etc.).

Graduate Development Programmes

The major schemes currently operating to assist unemployed graduates in Ireland (FÁS Work Placement Programme, IBEC Gradlink) have provided approximately 1,700 places nationally. However, if the government is serious about combating graduate unemployment and reigniting the smart economy, far more comprehensive action is needed to assist the 100,000 graduates USI estimates to be currently unemployed [figure taken from CSO figures from the Live Register plus the 2010 graduates from Irish colleges].

Some of these programmes are not without merit, however they are on too small a scale to make any real and substantive contribution to combating the graduate unemployment crisis. Like the Employment Subsidy Scheme, a graduate development programme would help the economy retain its productive capacity and assist employers to ensure continued innovation among their employees, thereby supporting a faster return to sustainable growth.

Recommendations:

- Establish a comprehensive graduate development programme similar to the Graduate Talent Pool initiative in Britain with the website overseen by the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation;
- The programme would involve placements in both the public and private sector;

- There are ample opportunities for graduates to take up development placements in hospitals, local authorities, schools and Government Departments which would ensure they gain valuable experience;
- Additional supports would be required to be provided to small and medium sized enterprises to encourage the introduction of such a programme;
- SMEs should be encouraged to create links and working relationships with schools and universities in order to establish viable and worthwhile programmes for graduates;
- Large organisations should be encouraged to establish or re-establish programmes for graduates such as the ESB Graduate development programme.

Standard good practice criteria:

Each graduate development programme should bring benefits not only to the business but ensures that it provides real learning and experience opportunities for graduates and improves their employability prospects. The business and the graduate should both benefit from such a programme. The following criteria should be considered when establishing such a programme:

- The reasons for the programme and the recruitment of graduates should be clearly stated. For instance, is the programme to attract recruits to entry-level positions, does the business wish to build a pool of professionals with clear career progression opportunities or is it linked to succession planning within the business;

- A graduate development programme should be developed and established following consultation with relevant stakeholders such as trade union representatives, professional bodies and student union organisations to ensure that the programme is beneficial for graduates but also to ensure that non-graduate employees have access to progression opportunities;
- Current employees should not automatically be excluded from such a programme;
- The recruitment of graduates should not be used to replace or displace current employees;
- The aim of a graduate programme should be clear in terms of what is expected of the graduate and what they can expect in terms of their own professional development;
- At the commencement of the programme, a clear plan should be set out which includes:
 - Time-frame of programme [12 months – 3 years],
 - Transparent and realistic expectations from both parties,
 - Training opportunities such as on-the-job learning, formal accredited training, personal development etc.,
 - Assigned supervisor and/or mentor;
- Graduate induction training should be scheduled on commencement of the placement and include familiarisation with all company policies, procedures and organisational structures;
- The programme should be linked to and approved by the relevant professional body such as associations or institutes;
- The programme should have a structured development plan to ensure graduates obtain the best opportunities to develop their skills, experience and own potential. Each programme should include an induction programme, training plan, mentoring system, CPD, rotation opportunities, performance management and assignments relevant to existing qualification;
- When recruiting the company should clearly outline the recruitment procedure, job description and associated conditions, opportunities for progression etc.,
- Each business should assign a management team for the graduate programme with clearly assigned responsibilities for line managers and graduates;
- The programme should clearly outline what opportunities might exist when the programme ends.

Supports for Mental Health Issues

The Irish Association of College Counsellors has stated that the number of college students seeking counselling is up by one third. IAUCC treasurer & counsellor at Cork Institute of Technology, Kay Walsh has said “It’s often to do with not having part-time jobs, a lot of parents are out of work and that’s putting extra pressure on students while going through college. Our main function is to help them remain in college”.

Studies have shown that people who are unemployed for long spells in their youth can suffer depression, lack of job satisfaction, poor health and a substantial and permanent loss in future earnings.

Also graduates who are not in paid employment are more than twice as likely to be depressed. Findings on positive mental health indicate that having access to a job, income and good education are all critical to positive mental health.

Increases in the unemployment rate tend to be associated with increases in the suicide rate. Unemployed people appear to have a higher propensity to commit suicide.

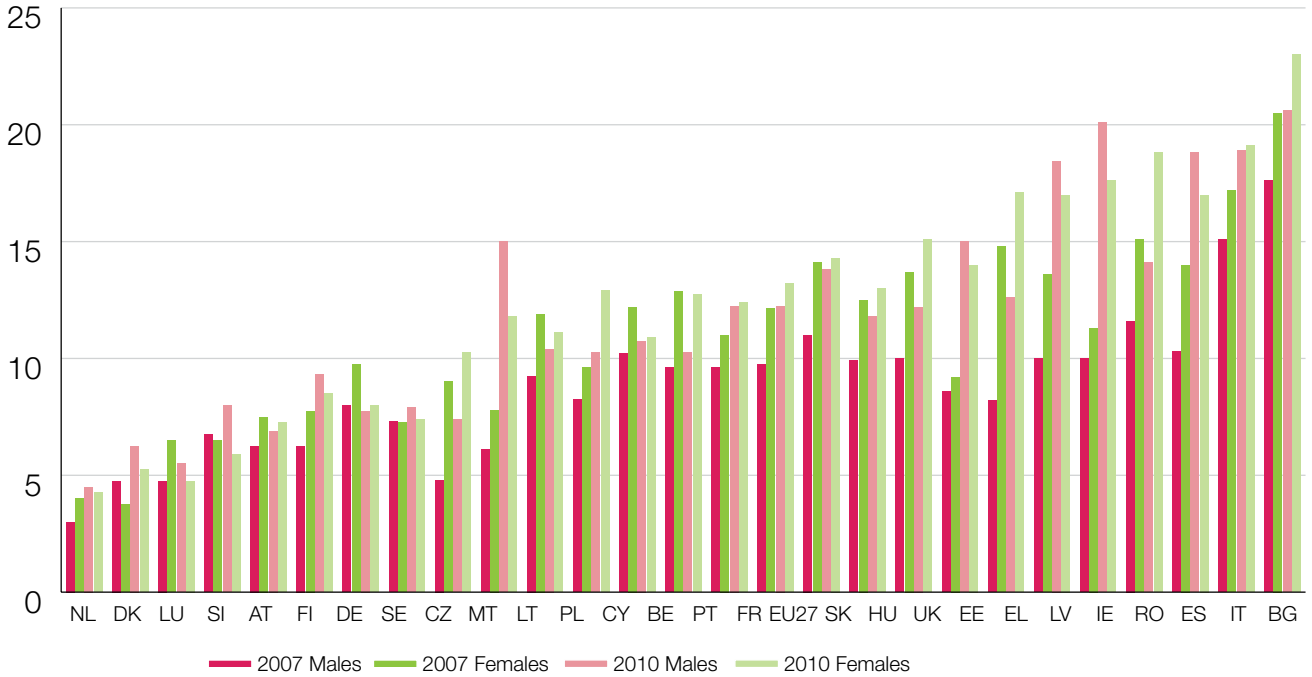
Unemployment while young, especially for long periods of time, causes permanent mental scars rather than temporary blemishes. For the young a spell of unemployment does not end with that spell; it raises the probability of being unemployed in later years and has a wage penalty. These effects are much larger than for people over the age of 30. The rapid rise in unemployment means that policy needs to focus on preventing a rise in long-term unemployment.

Recommendations:

- Specific supports should be made available to young people who are unemployed to ensure that their mental health doesn’t adversely suffer;
- It is important that when people enter or return to the workforce, after a long period of unemployment, that there are specific supports for mental health which they can access.

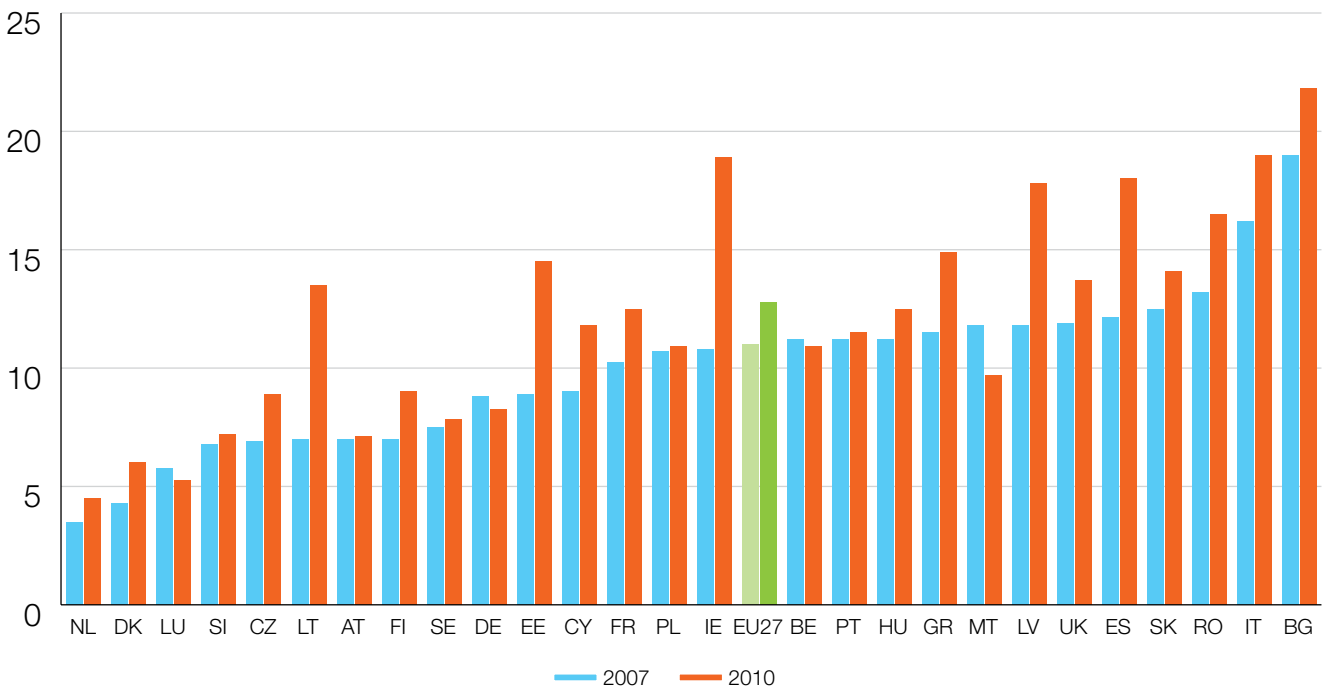
Appendix 1: NEET statistics

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Source European Trade Union Institute based on Eurostat data

NEETs – Not in Employment Education or Training



Source: Eurostat

