

Skilling Migrants for Employment: Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in Europe

Young migrants are often described as “the most vulnerable among vulnerable people,” and recent statistics show how non EU-born youth still have the highest unemployment rate in the EU.¹ Following the GFMD Chair’s and OECD recognition of “*Skilling Migrants*” as a priority theme, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY) led an open European regional consultation on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic, for which we consulted 16 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with national or international focus, acting in 23 countries and representing around 2,300 youth overall. The results of these consultations are summarized in this policy brief.

Key Youth-led and Youth Focused Projects

European youth organisations are at the forefront in addressing the problem of youth unemployment with projects aiming to address its structural causes, including through the following:

- Providing technical and vocational education and training to young migrants in line with labour market needs, including on media and IT literacy, vocational training, and language courses.
- Promoting young migrants’ mental health as a tool for personal development and to allow better integration in host societies by offering safe spaces, information, counselling, and psychological support.
- Raising awareness among vulnerable populations on the topic of safe migration and future employment perspectives.
- Encouraging and facilitating young migrants to intern in local organizations in order to improve future job opportunities, making available documentation that recognizes the skills acquired.

Policy Recommendations for Government and other actors

We are missing out on the potential of young people when we don’t recognize their education level and qualifications. Youths in Europe call on stakeholders and relevant state institutions to ensure we are **creating and implementing lean pathways and regulations to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications**. A good example that could be widely adopted is the European qualifications passport, which is a document providing information about higher education **qualifications** of migrant population, based on available documentation and a structured interview.

Youth-led and grassroots organizations, as well as other stakeholders, are providing **additional educational opportunities**, including skills training, language courses, digital/technological literacy, and formative professional experiences to young migrants. We call on all stakeholders to help us expand our reach by **investing and supporting youth-led educational projects**, which promote driven skills development, **optimizing the employability of migrants in formal labour markets**. Also, focus on **productive employment creation**, in partnership with the private sector and trade unions, with a view to reducing youth unemployment.

Youth are working to educate and raise awareness about labour risks and rights. This has limited impact without **governments’ and private sectors entities’ commitment to uphold and respect anti-exploitation measures and labour rights including concerning wages and safety for all migrants, irrespective of status**. We call on governments to improve regulations and monitoring procedures on private companies and recruitment agencies to ensure the full respect for human and labour rights of migrant workers.

¹https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_%E2%80%93_labour_market_indicators#Youth_unemployment

Fostering partnerships to realize migration-related goals in the Sustainable Development Agenda and managing the future of human mobility

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Partnerships are necessary to effectively reach shared goals, as detailed in the Sustainable Development Agenda. Efforts to protect young migrants' needs are indeed necessary to ensure we leave no one behind, as well as to leverage the potential of migration. Following the GFMD Chair's and OECD recognition of "*Fostering partnerships*" as a priority theme, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY) led an open European regional consultation on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic, for which we consulted 16 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with national or international focus, acting in 23 countries, and representing around 2,300 youth overall. The results of these consultations are summarized in this policy brief.

Key Youth-led and Youth-Focused Projects

European youth have been working in partnership with other entities and sectors to realize migration-related goals on the 2030 Agenda, including with the following:

- Inclusion of young migrants and refugees in key decision-making roles such as part of the advisory and/or executive boards, within relevant organizations.
- Ensure migrants and refugees are not left behind in the achievement of SDG4 by supporting the creation of legal and lean pathways for them to enroll in high level education.
- Advocate for the Youth Guarantee scheme - as it exists in the EU - to the youth in the non-EU countries, including refugee youth in transit and local youth planning to emigrate.
- Implement and lead European exchange projects through which young EU citizens acquire skills to ideate and replicate projects addressing migrants' needs.

Policy Recommendation for Government and other actors

We cannot achieve the SDGs if we are leaving part of the population behind. Migrant's perspectives should always be taken into account and particular attention should be given to the instances of young migrants. Disaggregated and extremely valuable data is being collected by numerous organizations. **We call on governments to establish partnerships to utilize data effectively in their programmes and create evidence-based policies, as well as to support relevant institutions and migration observatories, with attention to young researchers.** As youth and youth-led organizations we stand ready to collaborate in the analysis, design, implementation, and follow-up of inclusive policies that contribute to our shared future.

Youth are leading extremely valuable projects in their communities to facilitate interaction with authorities, ensuring migrants, irrespective of migratory status, are not left behind and socially included in the host community. In such grassroots initiatives, host communities are fully considered and involved in designing projects addressing migrants' needs, as well as to shape different narratives on migration and to deconstruct stereotypes. **We need governments and other stakeholders to provide funding and help us scale our effective initiatives and projects.**

Furthermore, the lack of spaces for discussion and engagement is an obstacle for strengthening local, regional and global policy discussions. **Governments and other stakeholders should help create specific physical and virtual spaces dedicated to share views, information and best practices** among the stakeholders working in the migration field, to build upon accomplishments and to identify opportunities for further cooperation. The involvement of the private sector as well as civil society is crucial.

Governance of Labor Migration in the Context of Changing Employment Landscapes: *Policy Brief on Youth Perspectives in Europe*

Only the jurisdictions that treat their youth migrant workers with dignity can benefit from their contribution to the economy. However, in European countries, it is common to identify protectionist measures when it comes to their job markets, and to tolerate the exploitation and abuse of migrant workers. Following the GFMD Chair's and OECD recognition of "Governance of Labor Migration in the Context of Changing Employment Landscapes" as a priority theme, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY) led an open European regional consultation on youth perspectives and priorities on this topic, for which we consulted 16 locally-based youth-led and youth-focused organizations with national or international focus, acting in 23 countries, and representing around 2,300 youth overall. The results of these consultations are summarized in this policy brief.

Key Youth-led and Youth-Focused Projects

The consulted organisations are implementing projects with the following focus and objectives:

- Raising awareness on union rights and precarious and exploitative working conditions, as well as promoting market-responsive insertion of young migrants in the labor market.
- Conducting research and collecting data about labor conditions of young migrants in European countries and sharing the evidence with relevant stakeholders in international conferences.
- Provide mental health support services to vulnerable young migrants who have experienced sexual abuse and other forms of explorations, with special attention to intersectionality, including gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and migratory status.
- Providing support and referral services for undocumented young migrants workers to guarantee labor rights protection.
- Advocate for: refugees and asylum seekers' rights to decent employment, the establishment of non-discriminatory national social protection systems, and to fight derogative narratives.

Policy Recommendation for Government and other actors

To realize the potential contribution of young migrants and refugees to the economy and prosperity of local communities, we need to give them a chance to access decent employment rather than pushing them into informality. **For this reason, we call on governments and the private sector to collaborate to remove discriminatory laws and promote the creation of market-responsive, flexible labour mobility schemes. This should include lean pathways to facilitate the recognition of transnational education of qualifications and skills.** As youth, we stand ready to support the identification of good practices.

Youth are leading initiatives to conduct research on the situation of migrants, as well as create evidence-based policies, and, crucially, monitor their implementation. Based on these insights, **we call on governments to create and strengthen their structures to oversee the situation and enforce policies, as well as partner with civil society organizations and research institutions to improve monitoring, and for the private sector to showcase their policies and lead by example.**

Vulnerable young migrants (including because of migratory status, victims of trafficking, members of minorities, and for sexual orientation and gender identity) need specific support and attention to ensure they do not become victims of further exploitation. As youth, we are leading projects for this, including to deliver mental health support and legal referral services. To scale up and increase our impact, **we need governments and other stakeholders to invest and help us expand our projects.**