

Making chocolate teapots* : Striving for 'good' youth work

Inclusive youth employment

Policy brief, November 2021
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THE SOCIAL DANGERS OF EXCLUSION FROM WORK

The biographies of those involved in terrorism, criminality and antisocial behaviours often reveal a significant gap in experiences of work - either no access to work, or only to poor quality, precarious work.

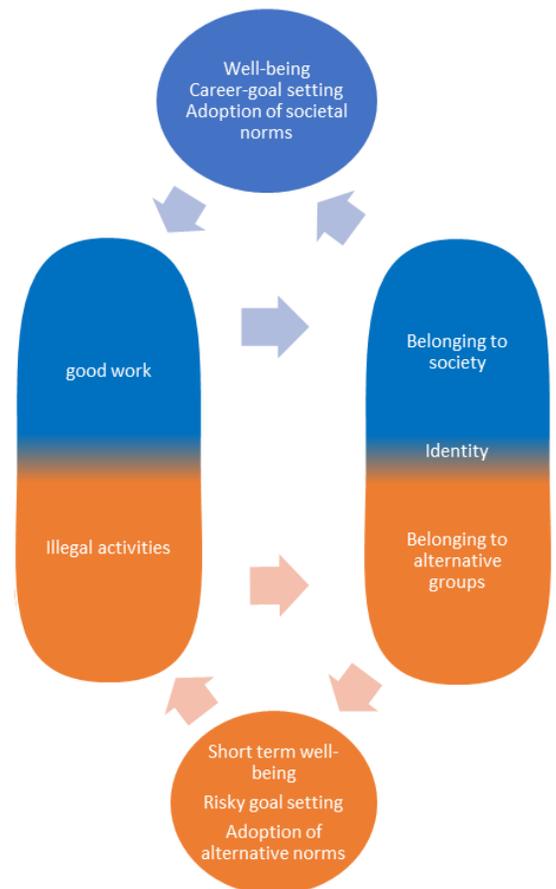
Work as a source of belonging

Work not only pays a living, it also offers young people access to important resources. Critically, it is a way to integrate into wider society, and to influence and change social norms.

Work provides the means to become an independent, self-sufficient adult, and a route to achieve life goals, such as living independently or starting a family (Heckhausen et al., 2010). It also offers individuals important opportunities to learn about themselves and others, and their place in society. Through such insights, they are better able to take the steps that are required to achieve their life plans. This process also works in the reverse. Without knowing who they are, people cannot plan who they want to be (Praskova et al., 2015).

Unemployment has negative effects at any age, but especially amongst young people (Paul & Moser, 2009), as it hinders identity development and participation in society. If good work is unavailable, young people risk ending up in a state of social anomie, of feeling powerless and excluded from society, its values and goals.

In situations of exclusion from work and society, illegal activities can provide an alternative route to feeling competent and as an independent adult (Searle et al., in prep). These alternative options can potentially also offer meaning and purpose, an alternative 'professional' identity and inclusion into an alternative society (Šverko et al., 2008). However, often these activities are risky, often exploitative and are narrowly restricted by their illegality. This makes this type of belonging more precarious and unsustainable.



Good work opportunities help young people integrate into society

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*phrase used by European Youth Parliament to describe a lack of purpose in poor quality jobs.

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Beth Suttill

IMPROVING LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCES OF NEET YOUNG PEOPLE

Barriers to employment

Poor labour market experience and the chance of remaining in precarious work is higher for young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). NEET status is more likely for young people who have been in work with no training. For these young people, common barriers to employment include (European Parliament, 2015):

- Lack of work experience
- Skill mismatch (including having few or no qualifications)
- Low demand
- High costs for young workers

Young people who are NEET often are considered not to be 'work ready'. Employers are encouraged to take on the risk of hiring younger workers. Young people are expected to develop themselves as individuals via education and training to ensure they avoid exclusion from the labour market. However, these young people also face further barriers, such as:

- overrepresentation in low paying, low skilled jobs and non-standard forms of work, and
- few training opportunities once in the workforce.

Provision which aims to enhance employability can often make little to no difference in moving young people towards 'meaningful' employment (Miller et al, 2015). This can lead to frustration as they get stuck moving from one course to the next, or between periods of employment, unemployment and training.



Recommendations for helping young people transition between training and employment:

- ✓ Labour market intervention programmes should deliver sustained employment, rather than just employability
- ✓ Provide NEET young people with access to careers advice and guidance
- ✓ Ensure diverse, high quality training programmes offering clear progression opportunities
- ✓ Develop individualised longer-term support for sustained change.

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