



AS IT IS

2020: A Lost Generation for European Youth?

July 19, 2020

Unemployment among young workers has been a problem in Europe following the 2008-2009 international financial crisis. Yet early signs show it is getting worse today with the coronavirus **pandemic**.

Dunia Skaunicova is one example of how the crisis has hurt young people. After Skaunicova completed her studies at Prague's Metropolitan University, she quickly found a job at a company in the Czech capital. The 24-year-old speaks Czech, English and French.

Months later, she lost her job when the pandemic hit. This time, she is having problems finding one. "I have been to five or six **interviews** in person during the last two months...there are so many people," said Skaunicova.

Dennis Tamesberger follows **youth** unemployment for the Chamber of Labor in Linz, Austria. He believes the youth unemployment rate in the Czech Republic could go as high as 16 percent in 2020. Before the pandemic, the rate was at 5 percent.

In May, the total European Union, or EU unemployment rate was 6.7 percent. But the unemployment rate among the under-25 age group was about 15.7 percent.

Youth unemployment across Europe took years to recover from the financial crisis. In countries such as Spain and Greece, the rate of unemployment remains at 30 percent. And experts believe that number could increase to 45 percent.

Effect on young workers

Tamesberger says when people are young, even short periods of time without a job can hurt a person's long-term earnings. He points to a study from the London-based Centre for Economic Policy Research. It shows that one month of unemployment at ages 18 to 20 causes **income** loss of 2 percent over a **lifetime**. The effect of youth unemployment, he warns, could last for a generation.

Kathleen Henahan is with the Resolution Foundation. She told Reuters, "The 'corona class of 2020' could face years of reduced pay and limited job **prospects**, long after the current economic storm has passed, unless additional support is provided fast."

Part of the problem is that young workers in Europe are often the first to lose their jobs. In addition, parts of the economy that have been hurt by the pandemic are mostly in **retail** and **hospitality**. Those are places where young people often get their first jobs.

The EU is urging governments to create jobs and training programs for young workers. In Britain, the finance minister recently announced a \$2.5 billion program to create six-month work placement jobs for unemployed people between 16 and 24 years old. It also supports more government job training programs.

Those looking for jobs find that the competition is fierce. Some companies ignore job searchers. Others tell young workers not to expect much in wages or **benefits**.

Blake Wittman helps people find jobs through Goodcall. He said one company in Prague told him that as many as 50-100 people applied for a job opening. Before the pandemic, there were just 5 to 10.

"Any job that opens is gold," he said.

I'm John Russell.

Michael Kahn reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for Learning English. Hai Do was the editor.

Words in This Story

pandemic -- *n.* an occurrence in which a disease spreads very quickly and affects a large number of people over a wide area or throughout the world

interview -- *n.* a formal meeting with someone who is being considered for a job or other position

youth -- *n.* young people; the time of life when someone is young

income -- *n.* money that is earned from work, investments, business, etc.

lifetime -- *n.* the time during which a person is alive

prospect -- *n.* the possibility that something will happen in the future

retail -- *n.* the business of selling things directly to customers for their own use

hospitality -- *n.* the activity of providing food, drinks, etc. for people who are the guests or customers of an organization

benefit -- *n.* something extra (such as vacation time or health insurance) that is given by an employer to workers in addition to their regular pay