

## News 15

### Social Enterprises and the Economy

**The EU economy is now returning to sustained recovery but there is some distance to make up after such a sharp recession and delayed return to growth. Recovery has taken longer than before, not helped by severe problems in the Eurozone and the recent referendum decision in the UK. Nonetheless, while the rise in unemployment was smaller than expected, it was still substantial, and hit hardest upon those at the margins, including those with low skills and young people.**

Unemployment amongst the 16-24 year olds, at over 20 per cent, is four times that for the rest of the working age population. There has also been an increase in 'precarious' forms of employment, including casual and very short-term arrangements. Young people are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to precarious practices such as those used by employers wanting to exploit their naivety through low pay and informal working arrangements. In order to ensure the EU achieves its economic potential, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills indicated the following policy moves were needed:

Skills need to sit at the heart of economic policy in order to improve productivity and maintain competitiveness. This requires creating and retaining high skill jobs in those areas where the EU's competitiveness is strong such as the creative sector.

Collective approaches (such as professional standards, employer networks and training levies) were necessary to help to break through the barriers that prevent employers from pursuing more ambitious plans for workforce development.

Employer networks at sector or local level should be encouraged to help smaller business enterprises access the training provision for their workers and the financial support they need for growth.

Approaches to economic growth were needed to take account of local and sectoral variations in the economy and labour market, especially where the recession has had a disproportionate impact on young people and those with low skills, which in turn has tended to reinforce disadvantage.

There needs to be greater connectivity between education and work, so that the skills that the education system provides are the skills that employers need. This requires a better alignment of the skills system and labour market as well as new methodologies that support young people

There is a need to increase young people's exposure to the world of work, through work experience placements, part-time jobs, and sandwich courses. Individuals will also need to take more responsibility for investing in and developing their skills. Gaming can be seen as a

valuable resource to develop young people's skills (independent living, resilience, team working, finance, employability etc).

The EU needs to expand post-secondary education and build vocational pathways that lead all the way up from school to professional and degree level qualifications, so that employees can retrain and develop new skills throughout their working lives.

There needs to be adaptability, readiness for change and being prepared to meet future labour market needs.

Policy makers therefore need to: ensure that public investment supports skills provision that meets employer needs; encourage employers to take ownership of skills and develop training solutions; support those with lower-level skills to re-skill and take opportunities in a changing labour market and mitigate local, regional and demographic disparities in access to jobs and skills.

A redesign of the skills system in this way will rely on much greater employer involvement, which will take time in order to realise full benefits and achieve financial sustainability. The analysis of labour market issues portrays an EU economy and labour market that has suffered substantial shocks over the past five years, but has significant potential to emerge as a strong player in the global economy if it can meet the challenges ahead.

Games are a good and fun way of developing young people's skills, Games can be used to develop emotional, social and work based intelligence that can support people to develop and grow and be resilient to the world of work.