



Provisional programme

The future of work for UK-Nordic youth: rising to the challenge

0900-1130 GMT / 1000-1230 CET

Thursday 4 February 2021 | WP1854V3

To be held virtually

This virtual event aims to connect young people across UK and Nordic countries, providing them with a platform to address shared challenges and opportunities, especially with regards to the future of work, as well as mapping areas for ongoing collaboration and partnership. This is part of a series of three sessions under the umbrella heading '**UK-Nordic collaboration on post-COVID recovery**', which aims to connect key stakeholders to build and strengthen cross-border partnerships for influencing the global recovery agenda.

In 2019, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on young people and the future of work, which highlighted insecurity, the lack of social protection and precarious working conditions as the main problems facing young people in the current and future labour environment¹. Over a year since these conclusions were adopted and the global pandemic has shifted the way of life of billions of people, with significant impact not only on labour markets but also on how people work.

Moving forward post-COVID: Youth are key to global recovery. However, young people now navigate an uncertain future during an expected recession as employers who would have opened their doors to give them their first work opportunities, now face immense challenges to remain in business. Almost a third of graduates have lost jobs or had job opportunities deferred due to the pandemic. Those most vulnerable remain the ones that are most impacted, with many left without access to the necessary support networks and education opportunities key to their development. In parallel, we face a widening skills gap, with industries struggling to recruit the talent they need to grow.

Building resilience: Even without the impacts of a global pandemic, the needs of the labour market has evolved rapidly in the last decade, meaning the requirements of the emerging labour force has progressed. The technical skills required for most sectors quickly become outdated owing to rapid changes in technology and the spread of automation. The World Economic Forum projects that by 2022 at least 54% of all employees will need reskilling and upskilling to respond to changing work requirements. Young people need the skills to rapidly learn, adapt, practice resiliency and take advantage of entrepreneurial mindsets, to respond to this reality with the ingenuity to earn an income.

¹ Press Release, Council of Europe, May 2019: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/05/22/young-people-and-the-future-of-work-council-conclusions/>

Changing agendas: As societies have developed, through increasingly advanced technology, the choices, opportunities and challenges that lay ahead of young people in embarking on their career journeys has significantly altered. Arguably, so have their agendas when looking for and choosing work.

In their recent study on Nordic Youth as Sustainable Changemakers, the Nordic Council of Ministers stated that, in relation to environmental issues, 'the main source of inspiration for young people is other young people. Young people gain little inspiration from political leaders, and the young sustainable changemakers are calling for more adult role models'.² In this perceived absence of elder role models, youth will need to collaborate more closely than ever to achieve the profile and focus to ensure that they can create and optimise opportunities in a post-COVID economic environment.

COVID-19 is casting a long shadow over the futures of young people around the world. What does the future of work look like for young people? What needs to be done to effectively support young people's personal development and growth to autonomy, build their resilience and equip them with necessary resources to participate in society? How do changing agendas of young people align with the new opportunities caused by COVID-19?

This meeting seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Connect and ignite a network of young, emerging leaders from across the UK and Nordic countries;
- Highlight key challenges and opportunities for youth in the post-COVID economic environment;
- Identify best practice experience and potential ways forward

In association with the British Embassy in Stockholm

(Speakers invited and themes proposed, * denotes confirmed)

Thursday 4 February

0900-0915

Welcome and introduction

***Nick Linfield**

Programme Director, Wilton Park

***Judith Gough**

British Ambassador to Sweden, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, Stockholm

0915-0930

1. Future of work – the reality for young people

What is the future of work? Why is it important to engage in this discussion? How can cross-border discussions help build a better future of work for young people?

0930-1000

2. Entering the labour market in the time of COVID and beyond

What have been the key impacts of COVID on the labour market and experiences of young people entering the labour market? What might be the long-term impacts for young people entering the labour market of 'temporary' approaches implemented by businesses during the pandemic? How has recruitment changed to fit a remote working landscape?

² Nordic Youth as Sustainable Changemakers: in the Transition to Sustainable Consumption and Production, Nordic Council of Ministers, 2019: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1331807/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

What is a degree worth today? Will retraining and reskilling be a more prominent aspect of life for young people than for previous generations? How might retraining and reskilling initiatives implemented as a response to the pandemic impact future labour trends?

1000-1030

3. Social cohesion, corporate responsibility and equal opportunities post-COVID

How can employers provide young employees with a stable guaranteed income, certainty of hours, a productive work-life balance and flexibility to support health and wellbeing? Benefits of the modern employer? Will young people be employees or consultants? What have employers learned about employee wellbeing and work-life balance for the future? What is happening to the workplace as a social hub?

What are the differing experiences of youth in rural and urban areas? How has COVID exacerbated differences and equality of opportunity? How to balance job security with opportunity of moving to other countries for work? What sustainable considerations are important to young people when navigating the labour market?

1030-1115

4. Breakout session on UK and Nordic Youth: facing a common challenge

Groups will discuss one of three sets of questions relating to the following topics:

UK-Nordic Collaboration:

What opportunities are there for UK and Nordic youth to work together to increase secure job opportunities for themselves and other young people? How can young people work together to ensure the labour market is equally open to everyone on equal terms and provides equal opportunities?

Facilitator tbc

Sharing ideas on overcoming job market uncertainty:

How can young people negotiate an uncertain future during an expected recession as employers who would have opened their doors to give them their first work opportunities, now face immense challenges to remain in business? What examples are there of youth initiatives that are placing them in a position of influence in the post-COVID debate?

Facilitator tbc

Sharing experiences on pathways to employment:

What can young people learn from the experiences of their counterparts in the UK/Nordics? What do alternatives to the predominant route to employment in each country/region look like? What case studies exist of the role of academia, vocational qualifications, and additional alternative routes to employment?

Facilitator tbc

1115-1130

5. Concluding remarks

***Emma Parry**

Head of Changing World of Work Group, Cranfield University

1130-1200

Informal networking opportunity (optional)

The Zoom meeting room will stay open for 30 minutes at the end of the meeting for optional informal networking.