Azerbaijan

Youth employment is a pressing issue in Azerbaijan where two-thirds of the population are younger than 35 years, accounting for 61 per cent of the country’s total number of unemployed.

Problems can be ascribed, in part, to a mismatch between the education system and the labour market demands, whereby too many young people are graduating from higher education in ‘popular’ professions such as law and economics, whilst there remains a shortage of qualified workers in key industries such as engineering and construction.

Furthermore the countries vocational training system is outdated and ill equipped, whilst being under utilised by youth and having few linkages to business.

To address this youth employment challenge, the Government of Azerbaijan volunteered to be a lead country of the UN Secretary General’s Youth Employment Network (YEN) in 2003.

Also in 2003 the President of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, promised a massive job creation scheme, which aims to create 600,000 new jobs in 5 years.

In line with its commitments as a lead country, the Government is developing a National Action Plan (NAP) on Youth Employment, as called for by UN General Assembly A/RES/57/165 (December 2002) on Promoting Youth Employment.

This NAP will form an integral part of an overall National Action Plan on Employment (NAPE) being currently developed by the Government, with technical assistance from the ILO.

The ILO through a consultant, have produced an assessment of the labour market situation for young people in Azerbaijan as first input into preparations for the development of the countries NAP.

A grouping of Youth NGOs and other civil society organisations, led by the National Assembly of Youth Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (NAYORA) have formed a Youth Employment Coalition of Azerbaijan (YECA), which will work closely with the Government, including the Ministries of Labour, Education and Youth, the countries social partners and other stakeholders to develop country’s NAP.

The YECA is currently preparing a Strategy Paper on Youth Employment in Azerbaijan that will feed into the NAP process.

The Government of Azerbaijan is planning to hold a Forum for the National Coalition on Youth Employment in the autumn of 2004, under the patronage of the President of Azerbaijan. This meeting will enable Azerbaijan to share its experience in developing its NAP both regionally and internationally as well as showcasing best practices in securing more and better jobs for Azeri youth.

The ILO, in collaboration with worker and employer organisations, will carry out a School-to-Work Transition Survey based on a model tested successfully in Indonesia, another YEN lead country. The responses of young people interviewed will be fed into the NAP process.

The ILO will also explore the possibility of adapting a publication for unemployed youth developed by the Indonesia-YEN. This publication, a Guide for Youth Seeking Work, targets young people both in and out of school, unemployed and new entrants to the labour market, providing them with information on how to profile themselves for work and what to do to seek work.

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