

# THE WORLD OF WORK IN TRANSITION FOR YOUTH WORLDWIDE

The reflection of a society in search of  
meaning

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *EYES*<sup>1</sup> report on the thoughts of international youths highlighted a distrust of the corporate world and a series of concerns shared around the world. In light of this, we wanted to go further in our exploration of young people's relationship to work. The following three-part study presents several findings and draws some lessons for the various actors concerned.

## 1. Young people and work – *one* reality?

In part one, examining the validity of treating “young people” as one homogeneous reality, we first demonstrate **the irrelevance of using the concept of "Generation Z" ("Gen Z")** to understand how young people see the professional world.

By distinguishing between the open and closed job markets, we then highlight the existence of a hierarchy of needs relating to the work environment. The reality of such a hierarchy (or pyramid) actually explains why young people in North America and Europe make personal happiness their priority, whereas those living in other parts of the world are more concerned with achieving success, and particularly professional success<sup>2</sup>. Without some degree of security (financial, contractual, etc.), environmental, social and governance considerations become secondary when looking for work. These elements support the idea that, **despite facing structurally distinct economic realities, the youths of different countries are nonetheless comparable**: once the hierarchy of needs is taken into account, **it becomes possible to detect common fundamental aspirations**.

Far from being completely foreign to the concerns of previous generations, **these expectations reflect the spirit of the times**. Thus, across all age groups, **the current employment model is becoming less and less appealing and reinforcing the feeling that the "social contract of work" has deteriorated**. It needs to be reinvented. The conclusions reached with regard to the need for meaning, to individualism, to the distrust felt toward the corporate world, and to the mercenary relationship it would seem young people now have with companies, are undoubtedly hasty when these characteristics are attributed to their age alone. Moreover, contrary to what has been claimed, young people do not seem to be *spontaneously* more receptive to the new forms of work popularised after the COVID-19 pandemic (flex office, co-working, etc.)<sup>3</sup>. Many factors suggest that young people's demands, when it comes to employment, are the expression of broader latent social dissatisfactions that public and private decision-makers have failed to address.

And while it is true that the younger generations have embraced job hopping<sup>4</sup>, they do not seem to be calling into question the corporate model *per se*. **The distrust expressed by young people is part of a crisis of confidence in institutions and in the future, believed to have begun in 2007-2008 in the wake of the international financial crisis**<sup>5</sup>. In fact, the specialists we interviewed wondered whether the successive crises that have since marked our times might have led people to develop a greater aversion to risk than before.

In any case, since work is clearly at the centre of a global societal evolution, **the issues raised cannot be dissociated from considerations regarding the quality and standard of living of the population as a whole**.

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<sup>1</sup> SKEMA Publika. (2022, January 6). *EYES Report: Thoughts of International Youths*. <https://publika.skema.edu/eyes-2021-report/>

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education for Good Foundation (2023, September). *Youth Talks*. <https://youth-talks.org/>, pp. 48, 51

<sup>3</sup> Poirel, G. & Coppola, M. (2021, March 12). Wrong numbers. Why a focus on age can mislead workforce development. *Deloitte Insights*, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work/post-pandemic-talent-strategy-generations-in-the-workplace.html>

<sup>4</sup> French Senate. (2021, July 8). *Évolution des modes de travail, défis managériaux : comment accompagner entreprises et travailleurs ?*. <https://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2020/r20-759-notice.html>

<sup>5</sup> OECD. (2020, October 22). *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice*. <https://www.oecd.org/gov/governance-for-youth-trust-and-intergenerational-justice-c3e5cb8a-en.htm>

## 2. What can be done to meet the employment aspirations of young people?

The aim of the second part of this report is to present the options available to the stakeholders involved (institutions and companies) to re-establish a relationship with young people and, in doing so, make a positive contribution to changing their attitudes toward work. Generally speaking, **the first step for these stakeholders is to lower their barriers to entry. Where institutions and public authorities are concerned, it is important to work toward an effective and efficient representation of young people in decision-making bodies.** This is true for the development of public policies in general, not just for those relating to employment. As the OECD puts it: **no trust without participation**<sup>6</sup>. To render societal norms acceptable, every individual must have the opportunity to take part in their production.

**Where companies are concerned, they must first and foremost ensure that their actions are consistent with the values they proclaim and the promises they make in terms of responsibility. Young people undoubtedly pay special attention to idea of *exemplariness* and to its inspirational dimension, given the waning of authority in our contemporary societies.**

In addition, companies should lower their expectations in terms of the professional experience required to be considered for a position, in order to clearly signal their interest in the potential of candidates and thus foster a relationship of trust with employees. Continuing professional development thus appears to be an important tool for attracting and retaining talent.

In order to meet young people's demand for meaning and avoid sparking incomprehension among employees if a discrepancy is noticed between management decisions and their effects, companies should also **focus on translating their extra-financial objectives and their *raison d'être* into concrete individual missions and achievements. Managers have a crucial role to play here, since they are the ones who must make the work of employees fit into a coherent narrative aligning strategy and operations, to make daily work meaningful by showing everyone how they contribute to the collective goal.** Moreover, it is up to managers to inspire a sense of psychological safety<sup>7</sup> in their team members. The well-being of individuals must therefore become a performance indicator for middle managers, in the same way as financial metrics. Here, the attitude of young managers (under 35) reveals the paradox they face: while they are better at incorporating the issues mentioned above in the performance of their duties (for example, by asking for more training in psychosocial risks), they nevertheless feel less legitimate than their elders in carrying out their role. Indeed, young managers do not seem to give themselves enough time to acquire the skills they need<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, to contribute to reinventing the social contract of work, which is currently seen as being in a state of decline, companies need to encourage the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and know-how. It may seem counterintuitive, **but renewing collective support for salaried employment first requires accepting the individualisation of the relationship to work**<sup>9</sup>.

## 3. Technical and societal developments and the expectations of young people

To assess the potential impact of these developments on young people, the third and final part of our report analyses **two salient trends in the professional world: (1) the emergence of the green economy to address environmental challenges, and (2) the digitalisation and automation of jobs through artificial intelligence (AI).** Young people are on the front line of these changes.

<sup>6</sup> OECD. (2020, October 22). *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice. Fit for All Generations?*. [https://www.oecd-library.org/governance/governance-for-youth-trust-and-intergenerational-justice\\_c3e5cb8a-en](https://www.oecd-library.org/governance/governance-for-youth-trust-and-intergenerational-justice_c3e5cb8a-en)

<sup>7</sup> First theorised by Amy Edmondson, the concept of “psychological safety” is defined as “a shared belief held by members of a team that it’s OK to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns, to speak up with questions, and to admit mistakes — all without fear of negative consequences”. Cf. Gallo, A. (2023, February 15). What Is Psychological Safety?. *Harvard Business Review*, <https://hbr.org/2023/02/what-is-psychological-safety>

<sup>8</sup> Alan & Harris Interactive. (2023, April). *Soutien, responsabilité et attractivité : repenser le rôle du manager*. <https://alan.com/fr-fr/l/barometre-bien-etre-mental-avril2023>

<sup>9</sup> This does not mean individualising the *contractual terms of employment*, as these are established in collective bargaining agreements.

Not only is **climate change having direct and quantifiable effects on the world of work**, but **the working poor and those in the informal sector, two groups in which young people are over-represented, are particularly affected**. In the face of these phenomena, the development of the green economy – which aspires to result in “improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities”<sup>10</sup> – and its 25 million new jobs can seem like a boon to young people in search of meaning. However, besides the knowledge gaps identified by the ILO<sup>11</sup> (lack of technical knowledge, financial management skills, etc.) as obstacles preventing young people from benefiting fully from this dynamic, **it is the risk of informal work – its insecurity, its instability – that threatens this new field of work**.

Similarly, in addition to offering unequal opportunities to young people depending on their geographical location and national affiliation, the digitalisation of occupations, and more specifically the introduction of AI into organisations, is jeopardising job security. **Goldman Sachs mentions the possible automation of the equivalent of 300 million jobs in the USA and Europe<sup>12</sup> thanks to generative AI programs, which have been likened to a "high-end intern"<sup>13</sup>**. Assuming that this does not lead to pure destruction but simply to a drastic transformation of occupations, the fact remains that, in the immediate future, the growing use of AI will result in a massive elimination of tasks that once required skilled labour, and in the simultaneous creation of a huge pool of click workers available to index and catalogue vast quantities of textual, audio and visual data. In other words, **the development of AI – and generative AI in particular – is currently associated with a rise in job insecurity, to which young graduates are particularly exposed**.

Furthermore, since AI “is by nature unpredictable, because it is self-learning”<sup>14</sup>, **it seems necessary for companies to embrace a learning dynamic themselves and make efforts to preserve the diversity of their employees’ skills**, since together the latter must combine technical know-how and multi-disciplinary knowledge to be able to maintain objectivity and exercise critical thinking when deploying and managing this technology.

## Conclusion

Our study shows that, now and in the future, **the main risk young people aspiring to enter the job market face is informality and job insecurity**. The absolute priority in the face of the technical and societal changes presented above must therefore be – as the ILO suggests – to **promote the formal economy and guarantee decent working conditions**. In a changing environment, the business and employment model of the past often proves to be outdated, but the model of the future has yet to be invented. We are currently in an “in-between” situation, a source of frustration and misunderstanding.

**In order for young people to be able to express their aspirations calmly, and for organisations to be in a position to provide a real solution, their primary needs must be met**. Since stable, formal employment is seen as a driving force for life goals enabling greater participation in the social and political spheres, this is the only way that young people will be able to regain confidence in the future. **The reinvention of the social contract of work must therefore be underpinned by non-negotiable minimum guarantees concerning wages and job security**. Hence, these should be better integrated into regulations. What remains to be determined is the level – national or international – at which these standards should be established and adopted, and the degree of constraint – voluntary or mandatory – that would enable them to be most effective.

<sup>10</sup> UNEP. (n.d.). *Green economy*. <https://www.unep.org/regions/latin-america-and-caribbean/regional-initiatives/promoting-resource-efficiency/green>

<sup>11</sup> ILO. (2022, September 1). *How to work in the green economy? Guide for young people, job seekers and those who support them*. [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/publications/WCMS\\_856666/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/publications/WCMS_856666/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Goldman Sachs. (2023, March 26). *The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth*. [https://www.ansa.it/documents/1680080409454\\_ert.pdf](https://www.ansa.it/documents/1680080409454_ert.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> See Ethan Mollick's comments in Verma, P. & De Vynck, G. (2023, June 2). ChatGPT took their jobs. Now they walk dogs and fix air conditioners. *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/06/02/ai-taking-jobs/>

<sup>14</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). Les transformations du travail et de l’emploi à l’ère de l’Intelligence artificielle : Évaluation, illustrations et interrogations. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/items/4ee5668c-7405-434b-8714-3cd524d6735d>

At the global level, in the face of labour laws that are sometimes non-existent and employers who prefer deregulation, **the ILO could, for example, develop a set of standards with which member countries would be required to comply, along the lines of its Maritime Labour Convention 2006**, which constitutes a global labour code for seafarers, guaranteeing them decent living and working conditions<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> French Senate. (2012, February 15). *Convention du travail maritime* [bill]. <https://www.senat.fr/leg/pjl11-376.html>

# INTRODUCTION

## REPORT OBJECTIVES

SKEMA Publika's *EYES*<sup>16</sup> report identified a series of concerns international youths shared regarding the world of work. It also highlighted the existence of a feeling of distrust toward the corporate world among these youths<sup>17</sup>. However, their opinions are not so clear-cut, as we had the chance to find out at the conference we organised in Brussels in May 2022 in partnership with UNIDO<sup>18</sup>. **Many questions remain surrounding their relationship to work, particularly as regards their supposed demotivation, their expectations and their perception of companies, their links with institutions, and their attitude toward the collective.**

The distrust expressed by young people is diffuse and concerns the conditions as much as the substance. Might we go so far as to say that it questions the assumptions underlying contemporary work organisation? In any case, the opinions expressed reveal unresolved dissatisfactions.

With these observations in mind, we decided to take our exploration further by conducting a multi-faceted analysis, with the help of a working group of specialists from a variety of backgrounds and through interviews with experts<sup>19</sup>, based on a review of the literature<sup>20</sup> **and with the operational aim of enlightening public and private decision-makers and contributing to the public debate.** We have attempted to identify the main trends emerging for the coming years, by **tracking nuance**, which is fundamental in this area, and expanding our reflections to **a broader political and social framework** than the aspects of work and employment alone, while also **extending them to the non-Western world**. Our reflections do not purport to be scientific; our aim is to share analyses based on multidisciplinary knowledge and experience.

It is important to focus on young people, because they represent the future. **We are aware, however, that the other generations also have concerns about the changes occurring in the world of work, so in our analysis we will also be looking to see whether the aspirations of young people are different from those of their elders.**

The COVID-19 health crisis has further shaken up an already turbulent relationship between young people and the job market. Numerous publications mention a “search for meaning” at work and the desire to find a job aligned with one's values. Does this search go so far as to call into question what we have, until now, taken to be fundamentals? Is this the case all over the world? The multiple points of view we will be presenting are not intended to be conflicting; on the contrary, they are complementary and indicative of the challenges facing public policy, both nationally and internationally.

The SKEMA Publika think tank aims to **identify weak signals and the changes occurring** in this area and others, in order to formulate possible solutions without a preconceived model.

This report is divided into three parts:

1. Young people and work – *one* reality?
2. What can be done to meet the employment aspirations of young people?
3. Technical and societal developments and the expectations of young people

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<sup>16</sup> SKEMA Publika. (2022, January 6). *EYES Report: Thoughts of International Youths*. <https://publika.skema.edu/eyes-2021-report/>

<sup>17</sup> Revel, C. & Vallée, S. (2022, February 2). Youth at Work: Distrust of the Corporate World and Political Demands. *SKEMA Publika*, <https://publika.skema.edu/youth-work-distrust-corporate-world-political-demands/>

<sup>18</sup> SKEMA Publika. (2022, May 20). Conference on International Youth at Work [with UNIDO Brussels]. <https://publika.skema.edu/evenement/conference-on-international-youth-at-work/>

<sup>19</sup> The list of working group members and experts interviewed is provided in the appendix ("Authors" section).

<sup>20</sup> Refer to the bibliography.

## THE BASIS OF OUR WORK

In October 2021, we published the *EYES (Emergy Youth Early Signs)*<sup>21</sup> report on the thoughts of young people in five countries (South Africa, Brazil, China, the USA, and France). Between July 2020 and June 2021, we analysed 2.8 million tweets posted by young people aged 18 to 24. 53,200 of these tweets, posted by 4,900 young individuals, contained the expressions "world of work" or "professional world". The study showed that young people talk about the corporate world in rather negative terms. This was the case for 48% of tweets by young Americans, Brazilians and South Africans, 37% of tweets by young French people, and 34% of posts by young Twitter users in China. This rather unflattering preconception shared by young people from five different countries raises questions about the paradigms that govern salaried work today. The negative perception of the corporate world also extends to the world of work in general, with the latter generating apprehension and criticism.

The following findings emerged from our report:

- Young people have a moralistic attitude toward companies.
- They want an effective digitalisation.
- They want a better work-life balance.
- To them, employment is more of a means to provide for their needs rather than a way to self-actualize.
- Remuneration is their top criterion when choosing their first job.
- They feel underprepared when entering the job market.

In light of these findings, we made the following recommendations:

- *For companies:*
  - Embrace useful digitalisation without falling into the systematic use of technology to solve problems. Maintain social connection, particularly through workplace attendance.
  - Take a clear "political" stance that is reflected in practices.
- *For governments and international organisations (ILO, OECD, UNIDO, etc.):*
  - Work on different approaches for access to employment.
  - In high school and university (secondary and tertiary education), teach the soft skills necessary for a successful entry into the job market and, as requested by young people, help them to develop their critical thinking skills.

Other studies confirm these findings.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) report entitled *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022. Investing in transforming futures for young people*<sup>22</sup> presents key youth labour market indicators and trends in a context still disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, there were approximately 73 million unemployed young people worldwide, which was 6 million more than in 2019. COVID-19 had an impact on the education of more than 1.6 billion learners, causing a decline in literacy and numeracy skills within a same generation and creating intergenerational inequalities that may affect the future of these individuals. The report also highlights the difficulties young people now face in entering the job market as a result of the health crisis (disruptions to education and training, difficulties in achieving the SDGs<sup>23</sup>, unemployment, labour force participation rate, etc.), while exploring prospects for improvement (opportunities in the green, blue, orange, digital and care economies) and proposing recommendations for public policy makers. The report calls for decisive policy action over the long term (overhauling economic structures, making them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient).

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<sup>21</sup> SKEMA Publika. (2022, January 6). *EYES Report: Thoughts of International Youths*. *Op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> ILO. (2022, August). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022. Investing in transforming futures for young people*. [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_853321/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_853321/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>23</sup> Sustainable Development Goals as established by the United Nations.

In November 2022, Fondation Jean Jaurès published its study entitled *Les jeunes et l'entreprise: quatre enseignements*<sup>24</sup>. Focusing on France, it looked at young people's work aspirations and their attitude toward the corporate world by concentrating on four key themes: (1) the place of fulfilment in the workplace, (2) the importance of the CV when entering the job market, (3) the need for security and stability, (4) the ambivalence of young people's commitment.

More recently, the Higher Education for Good Foundation (HE4G) unveiled the results of the first edition of *Youth Talks*<sup>25</sup>, a consultation designed to give a voice to young people around the world to better understand their hopes and concerns for the society of today and tomorrow. Between October 2022 and May 2023, more than 45,000 individuals aged 15 to 29 from 212 different countries were given the opportunity to speak freely about a range of topics relating to the future, what they are and aren't willing to give up, their perceptions and aspirations on the topic of learning, and the questions they have for other young people.

As for The Boson Project, it interviewed business leaders on the radical changes occurring in the world of work. What they had to say was published in a study entitled *Le monde d'après aura bien lieu*<sup>26</sup>. It draws five major lessons: (1) we are witnessing a switch in the balance of power between employees and companies; (2) in the face of change, managers are showing pragmatism; (3) to alleviate recruitment pressures, business leaders are opting for quick, short-term solutions; (4) as a result, they are focusing more on attractiveness and less on loyalty building; (5) the pressing issue of flexible working conditions needs to be addressed, but the real challenge remains usefulness of work and team spirit.

With regard to the new forms of work deriving from technical and societal developments, in August 2022 the ILO published the report *How to work in the green economy*<sup>27</sup> as a guide for young people looking to work in this field. In partnership with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the organisation subsequently supplemented this with another report, *Renewable Energy and Jobs - Annual Review 2022*<sup>28</sup>, which takes stock of the skills required to work in "green jobs" in several sectors.

In its report *Humains & Machines: Quelles interactions au travail?*<sup>29</sup>, the Conseil National du Numérique (the French Digital Council) concludes that it would be wise to seize on the digitalisation of work environments not as a lever for additional surveillance of workers, but as a vector for renewed trust in the professional environment<sup>30</sup>. With this in mind, we also drew on the work of the economist Salima Benhamou<sup>31</sup> to highlight the organisational conditions that would enable an "empowering" – rather than alienating – deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) within companies. These ideas are developed in the work she produced for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 2022 – *Les transformations du travail et de l'emploi à l'ère de l'Intelligence artificielle : Évaluation, illustrations et interrogations*<sup>32</sup> – and for France Stratégie in 2018 and 2020 – *Intelligence artificielle et travail* and *Les organisations du travail apprenantes : enjeux et défis pour la France*<sup>33</sup>, among other publications.

<sup>24</sup> Fondation Jean Jaurès. (2022, November 21). *Les jeunes et l'entreprise : quatre enseignements*. <https://www.jean-jaurès.org/publication/les-jeunes-et-lentreprise-quatre-enseignements/>

<sup>25</sup> Higher Education for Good Foundation (2023, September). *Youth Talks*. <https://youth-talks.org/>

<sup>26</sup> The Boson Project. (2022, November 16). *Le monde d'après aura bien lieu. Dans les yeux des dirigeants*. [https://app.plezi.co/landing\\_pages/6373b38ae317a772d468c2f9/preview?tenant\\_id=6255262754067a0770a80e2c](https://app.plezi.co/landing_pages/6373b38ae317a772d468c2f9/preview?tenant_id=6255262754067a0770a80e2c)

<sup>27</sup> ILO. (2022, September 1). *How to work in the green economy? Guide for young people, job seekers and those who support them*. [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/publications/WCMS\\_856666/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/publications/WCMS_856666/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>28</sup> IRENA & ILO. (2022, September). *Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2022*. <https://www.irena.org/publications/2022/Sep/Renewable-Energy-and-Jobs-Annual-Review-2022>

<sup>29</sup> Conseil national du numérique. (2022, December). *Humains & Machines. Quelles interactions au travail ?*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/rapport/287461-humains-et-machines-quelles-interactions-au-travail>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Salima Benhamou is an economist in the Labour, Employment and Skills Department at France Stratégie and a member of the working group that helped produce this report.

<sup>32</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail et de l'emploi à l'ère de l'Intelligence artificielle : Évaluation, illustrations et interrogations*. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/items/4ee5668c-7405-434b-8714-3cd524d6735d>

<sup>33</sup> France Stratégie. (2018, March). *Intelligence artificielle et travail*. <https://www.strategie.gouv.fr/publications/intelligence-artificielle-travail>; Benhamou, S. & Lorenz, E. (2020, April). *Les organisations du travail apprenantes : enjeux et défis pour la France*. <https://www.strategie.gouv.fr/publications/organisations-travail-apprenantes-enjeux-defis-france>

As for the experts in our working group, they insisted on four key themes that will be the focus of this study: (1) the intergenerational dimension in the relationship to work; (2) the link between employment and social usefulness; (3) the interpretation of the notion of "distrust" used to describe the attitude of young people toward the corporate world; and finally (4) the common trends observed among young people from different continents, despite the heterogeneity of the world's youth.

## I. YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORK – ONE REALITY?

Recently, a number of reports set out to analyse young people's expectations of companies and of the world of work, and in doing so referred to "Generation Z" and its supposed aspirations<sup>34</sup>. However, too few bothered to question the relevance of this concept and to justify why the individuals concerned should be viewed as a homogeneous entity distinct from previous generations. So when looking at the question of young people and work, we must first determine which young people we are talking about.

### 1. ON THE (IR)RELEVANCE OF "GEN Z"

Generation Z is a vague concept. The expression is sometimes used to mean the 15-to-24 age group, sometimes to refer to people born after 1995, or 1996, or 1997... right up to 2010. Depending on the sources, it also partially overlaps with the previous generation, namely the so-called "Millennials", aged between 25 and 35 or born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s.

In addition to the fact that belonging to Generation Z is often – wrongly – considered the self-explanatory cause of the differences allegedly observed with previous generations, some researchers and specialists dismiss the very idea of *generation*, arguing that it has no real scientific basis. Others<sup>35</sup> go so far as to say that one of the objectives of this concept is primarily to sell companies management training focused on attracting and retaining young talent. To them, it is merely a marketing concept. Consequently, to better understand the deep-rooted grievances of employees, it may be worthwhile to take an individual approach, in order to forge relationships and encourage greater commitment within organisations by offering appropriate management.

**In its strictest sense, "Generation Z" – i.e. all individuals aged 15 to 24 – seems ill-suited to a pertinent analysis of the reality of international youth employment.** Indeed, across all OECD countries, only 43.7% of people in this age group claim to be in employment, and this figure itself has a significant standard deviation<sup>36</sup>. In France, the employment rate in this age group is 35.3%, while the Netherlands reports a rate of 76.1%<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, if we take France as an example, the average age for taking up a first *stable* job is now 27 versus 20 in 1975, according to a March 2019 report by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE)<sup>38</sup>. For this reason, we prefer the broader but more accurate approach of the ILO, which does not use the term "Generation Z", but rather refers to people in the 15-to-29 age bracket as "youth"<sup>39</sup>.

**Lastly, it is possible that this "Generation Z", used to refer to a coherent group of individuals, is not insignificantly heterogeneous.** Indeed, what do ambitious, highly-qualified young people who see their first job as a career launchpad and an opportunity for further training have in common with young individuals of more modest means who work to survive and are primarily seeking to achieve some form of financial stability, both in the West and elsewhere?

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<sup>34</sup> See in particular: Mawhinney, T. & Betts, K. (n.d.). Understanding Generation Z in the workplace. New employee engagement tactics for changing demographics. *Deloitte.*, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/understanding-generation-z-in-the-workplace.html>; Mazars & OpinionWay. (2019) Future of work : Quelles attentes de la Gen Z pour l'entreprise de demain ?. <https://www.mazars.fr/Accueil/Insights/Publications-et-evenements/Etudes/FUTURE-OF-WORK-quelles-attentes-de-la-Gen-Z>; Kumar, V. S. (2023, April 18). Gen Z In the Workplace: How Should Companies Adapt?. *Imagine (John Hopkins University)*. <https://imagine.jhu.edu/blog/2023/04/18/gen-z-in-the-workplace-how-should-companies-adapt/>

<sup>35</sup> Costanza, D. (2018, May 3). Can We Please Stop Talking About Generations as if They Are a Thing?. *Slate*, <https://slate.com/technology/2018/04/the-evidence-behind-generations-is-lacking.html>

<sup>36</sup> OECD. (2023). Employment rate by age group [indicator]. <https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-rate-by-age-group.htm#indicator-chart>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> CESE. (2019, March 27). *Les jeunes et l'avenir du travail*. [https://www.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/Avis/2019/2019\\_09\\_jeunes\\_avenir\\_travail.pdf](https://www.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/Avis/2019/2019_09_jeunes_avenir_travail.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> ILO. (2022, August). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 (...)*. *op. cit.*

This prompts us to raise the question of the plurality of situations encountered by individuals as they enter the job market, to determine the extent to which young people can still be referred to as a homogeneous transnational category in their relationship to work.

## 2. WORLD'S YOUTH FACED WITH A PLURALITY OF JOB MARKETS

### a. Open job markets and closed job markets: what priorities for young people?

One of the points stressed by our interlocutors at the ILO was the major difference that exists between the desires expressed by young people faced with a so-called *open* job market, i.e. one that is accessible and where the match between supply and demand is fairly fluid – as is more the case in Western countries –, and the priorities of those faced with a so-called *closed* job market, which is tighter and more hidden – a situation more common in non-Western economies.

**In an open market, while salary remains important, young people are increasingly wanting jobs that are aligned with their personal aspirations (organic products, clean transport, etc.), and thus they look for work that matches their environmental and social values.** Interestingly, this trend is also evident among individuals wanting to change careers.

**In closed job markets, on the other hand, young people often take the first job they find, even if it is *informal or indecent*,** i.e. even if it is not covered by an adequate employment contract or it does not meet the 'decent work' conditions set by the ILO, conditions which are grouped into four main categories: freedom, equity, security and human dignity<sup>40</sup>. This is why, in the context of closed job markets, environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations often take a back seat while the quest for financial stability takes priority.

The results of *Youth Talks*, the largest-ever consultation of the world's youth, conducted by the Higher Education for Good Foundation, seem to corroborate this dichotomy between open and closed markets. When asked about their future, **young people in North America and Europe seem to be mainly concerned with their personal happiness (joy, overall satisfaction and pleasure). In contrast to this, for those living in other parts of the world, success, and particularly professional success, outweighs everything else**<sup>41</sup>.

### b. The lure of informal work in closed job markets

Since they are much more likely to be confronted with the above-mentioned problems than young people from high-income countries, **the youth of low- and middle-income countries**<sup>42</sup> **tend to opt massively for the informal sector**, i.e. jobs where workers are not covered by formal legal arrangements (low wages, no guaranteed workers' rights, etc.).

In low- and middle-income countries, 96.8% of young people (versus 90% of adults over the age of 30) are in informal employment, and 70% of young people are considered to be working poor<sup>43</sup>. They prefer informal and sometimes indecent work to being jobless or reliant on welfare benefits, as social protection is often limited or non-existent. This explains why, despite how difficult it is to find a – stable and decent – job in low- and middle-income countries, the unemployment rate is lower than in high-income countries.

<sup>40</sup> See in particular ILO. (1999, June). *Report of the Director-General: Decent Work*. [https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09625/09625\(1999-87\).pdf](https://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09625/09625(1999-87).pdf); and Deranty, J.-P. & MacMillan, C. (2013). Qu'est-ce qu'un « travail décent » ? Propositions pour élargir la campagne de l'OIT pour le travail décent à partir de la psychodynamique. *Travailler*, 2(30), p. 153

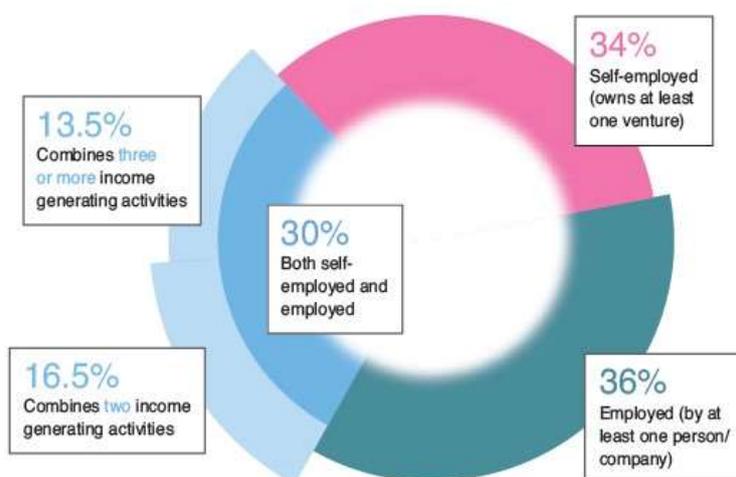
<sup>41</sup> Higher Education for Good Foundation (2023, September). *Youth Talks. op. cit.*, pp. 48, 51

<sup>42</sup> Hamadeh, N., Van Rompaey, C. & Metreau, E. (2023, June 30). World Bank Group country classifications by income level for FY24 (July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024), World Bank Blogs, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-group-country-classifications-income-level-fy24>

<sup>43</sup> Barford, A., Coombe, R. & Proefke, R. (Summer 2020). Youth experiences of the decent work deficit. *Geography*, vol. 105 (2), pp. 60-68

But informal work has not always been so widespread in these countries. With the introduction of structural adjustment programmes and other neoliberal reforms in several developing countries (since the late 1980s), budget cuts reduced the number of jobs available in the public sector, which used to employ a significant portion of the population. The private market subsequently proved incapable of filling that void, as the experts we spoke to pointed out.

**To earn a living in these countries, young people regularly have to combine several paid activities (13.5% of them engage in at least three income-generating occupations), or set up their own business (64% of them are self-employed)<sup>44</sup>.**



Source: Barford, A., Coombe, R. & Proefke, R. (Summer 2020). Youth experiences of the decent work deficit. *op. cit.*

Often, in addition to these paid activities they must engage in unpaid work to fulfil family responsibilities. Furthermore, due to a lack of demand for skilled labour, young people from low- and middle-income countries are regularly overqualified for the positions they hold and thus find themselves underemployed.

### c. Promoting decent work and the formal economy everywhere

**Young people see stable, formal employment as the driving force for their life goals, enabling them to participate more fully in the social and political spheres.** That is why it is essential to promote the development of the formal economy, not just in low- and middle-income countries, but everywhere. The following steps should be taken:

- promote social dialogue;
- invest in quality education and skills development;
- raise awareness among workers and employers of the importance of being covered by social security;
- enforce regulations (labour inspection) and impose sanctions if apprenticeship agreement conditions are not met;
- adhere to ILO conventions and revise laws for specific groups of workers to bring them into line with decent work standards.

**Since Western and high-income countries are now faced with a resurgence of informal occupations in a context of high inflation accompanied by economic upheavals linked to technological innovations (one example being the advent of ride-hailing and food delivery platforms), they too should take heed of these recommendations.**

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

Complementary tools can also be put in place: training and guidance in niche sectors; associations for representation and learning through mentorship; simplification of worker registration processes; use of technology to inform, monitor and anticipate changes in occupations<sup>45</sup> – **when it comes to employment policies, this anticipation seems to be the Achilles heel of governments, particularly during periods of major technological change.**

**Decent work and minimum wage thresholds should, in any case, be established as non-negotiable constants.** However, most employers seem disinclined to introduce international labour regulations, as they are reluctant to engage in mandatory collective bargaining, preferring instead to decentralise wage decisions to the company level.

When working toward a better understanding of young people's experience of work and job hunting, one aim should therefore be to address the *structural* difficulties that prevent them from accessing decent employment<sup>46</sup>.

For over twenty years, the values set out in the Decent Work Agenda (1999) have been disseminated by the ILO and its partners<sup>47</sup>. The latter have placed a "toolkit" at the disposal of all actors concerned, to facilitate the evaluation of the public policies and programmes deployed by states, and to enable the sharing of best practices<sup>48</sup>. Nevertheless, in a context of globalisation, digitalisation, flexible working hours and changing employability criteria, the concept of decent work is becoming increasingly difficult to evaluate<sup>49</sup>. For instance, there is also a strong cultural dimension to take into account in its measurement. **That is why decent work cannot be tackled without also addressing the issue of a decent life<sup>50</sup>.**

Consequently, some observers criticise the concept of decent work as defined by the ILO, explaining that the organisation proposes too broad a definition<sup>51</sup>. While the ILO programme addresses the need to establish decent conditions in the labour market, it does not call into question the structural mechanisms that can lead to indecent working conditions in the context of globalisation<sup>52</sup>.

#### d. A pyramid of needs, but comparable fundamental aspirations

More than a divide between young people from different backgrounds, a comparison of the wishes expressed by young people who have access to an open job market with the priorities of those faced with a closed job market reveals a hierarchy of needs relating to the world of work. As is the case with Maslow's pyramid, the most elaborate work-related needs can only be addressed once the basic needs have been met. **This is why we believe that, even though there are obvious dissimilarities in the priorities expressed by young people from different backgrounds, these priorities are primarily determined by the economic conditions they face rather than any deep-seated differences. The work-related needs and aspirations of young people may follow common trends.** It is therefore legitimate to look at *young people* as a sufficiently homogeneous reality – at least in terms of their relationship to work – to detect salient characteristics.

But how do the expectations of the young compare with those of the *not-so-young*? Is there a radical difference between these groups' relationships to work or are they comparable in certain ways?

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> ILO. (1999, June). *Report of the Director-General: Decent Work. op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Budowski, M., Jany, N. & Schief, S. (2020). Decent Work Revisited - Effects, Implications and Limits of the Concept Twenty Years Onwards. *Sozialpolitik.ch, vol 2*, pp. 1-10

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Hauf, F. (2015, May 31). The Paradoxes of Decent Work in Context: A Cultural Political Economy Perspective, *Global Labour Journal, vol. 6 (2)*, pp. 138-155

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3. YOUNG AND NOT-SO-YOUNG: DIFFERENT DEMANDS?

#### a. Young people reflect the spirit of the times

**Do young people have a fundamentally different relationship to work than their elders, as is often said in the media? Nothing is less certain.** The terms "young people" and "employment" are often associated with relatively contemporary concerns, such as the quest for meaning and work-life balance, or with sentiments that were once less prevalent, such as individualism and distrust of the corporate world. While the expression of these aspirations is new, their recent irruption into the debate on working conditions does not justify attributing them to young people exclusively.

The relationship to time and the workspace, as well as to managerial culture, is changing everywhere. This seems to spell the end, for everyone, of the myth of the employee who works without counting the hours. As Fondation Jean Jaurès has shown, **we are now seeing a very personal relationship to work in all salaried employees**<sup>53</sup>. At the end of October 2022, 84% of French employees still considered work to be *important*, versus 92% in 1990; but only 21% of 18- to 24-year-olds considered it to be *very important* – a proportion similar to the 23% among 50- to 65-year-olds. Moreover, only 29% of workers would be prepared to give up some of their free time to earn more, versus 62% in 2008<sup>54</sup>.

The workspace has also evolved. The heavy reliance on teleworking during the COVID-19 crisis moved the office into the privacy of the home<sup>55</sup>. The first consequence of this has been a "deconsecration" of the workplace no doubt welcomed by employees. But it has also led to the emergence of new forms of organisation (flex office or flex desk, desk sharing, co-working spaces, etc.), which are still struggling to convince people of their benefits. The privacy-work link and the personal relationship with one's professional activity are evident in the desire expressed by people to have an individual, set space, including at the office. Thus, the flex office, for example, is seen as an excessive depersonalisation of the workspace: only 13% of young people are in favour of it<sup>56</sup>. This practice further reduces attachment to the company.

**Contrary to what is often claimed, young people are not spontaneously more receptive to the new forms of work. According to a study by Deloitte**<sup>57</sup>, the global COVID-19 pandemic did not result in any significant differences between generations in adapting to technology tools. Further, we know that teleworking is most appreciated by workers who have adequate housing, large enough to enable them to isolate themselves and carry out their tasks in a tranquil environment – which is more often the case for more experienced employees –, and that it holds fewer benefits for workers with limited space or living with their parents, as is the case for many young employees.

While teleworking and its corollaries sometimes seem more *natural* to young people, it is undoubtedly because it has been the norm for a proportionally larger part of their academic and professional careers. **It is this reality that has undoubtedly reinforced the individualistic aspirations of employees – another characteristic regularly attributed to young people entering the job market – by restricting de facto interactions between colleagues (informal chats, convivial moments, etc.) and thus limiting the possibility of developing a real sense of belonging.**

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<sup>53</sup> Baumin, F. & Bendavid, R. (2023, January 23). « Je t'aime, moi non plus » : Les ambivalences du nouveau rapport au travail. Fondation Jean Jaurès, <https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/je-taime-moi-non-plus-les-ambivalences-du-nouveau-rapport-au-travail/>

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Poirel, G. & Coppola, M. (2021, March 12). Wrong numbers. Why a focus on age can mislead workforce development. Deloitte Insights, <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work/post-pandemic-talent-strategy-generations-in-the-workplace.html>

### b. A deteriorating social contract of work

Our interviewees noted an evolution in attachment – or rather indifference – to the collective among young people, which is notably evident in their great appetite for entrepreneurship and their increased tendency to job hop. In France, for example, 51% of 18- to 30-year-olds are part of the entrepreneurial chain – a figure which includes those who have considered starting or taking over a business, whether or not they have actually gone ahead and done it<sup>58</sup> –, versus an average of 30% among the general population. Similarly, according to Pôle Emploi, today's young workers will change employers 13 to 15 times over the course of their lives<sup>59</sup>. However, it is likely that these trends are due to factors other than a supposedly innate individualism.

**Across all ages, the current employment model is becoming less and less appealing. There is a general feeling that the “social contract of work” has deteriorated: in France, 48% of working people now feel they are on the losing end when it comes to the effort-benefit ratio at work, compared with 25% in 1993<sup>60</sup>.** Young people no doubt still remember, albeit vaguely, the work patterns their parents or even their grandparents may have known. A few decades ago, *good work* meant a kind of “bundle” agreement between employer and employees<sup>61</sup>. Having a salaried position was a guarantee of a decent living and being able to pay the bills (food, housing, etc.). This is less true today. Some incomes are too low in relation to the cost of living to provide a decent standard of living. Some jobs no longer guarantee social protection. Working for a company no longer comes with the guarantees it once did.

Many young people have grown up with waves of deindustrialisation and financial crises that have led to unemployment, redundancies, etc. As a result, they may have become more anxious in their attitude toward work, they may no longer believe in the ideal of success through work, and the very notion of meritocracy is now being called into question<sup>62</sup>. Consequently, they are distancing themselves from the corporate world.

**So the supposed loss of a sense of collectivism observed among young people could be interpreted, at least in part, as a response to the breakdown of the social pact (full employment, sustainability of the pension system, etc.).** Young people may feel they are starting their working life with fewer opportunities than their elders. But does this mean that the desire to belong to a group has been affected to such an extent that it is disappearing? Instead, might it be expressing itself in other ways, with the focus shifting to other themes such as political and societal causes?

### c. Young people, a sounding board for intergenerational aspirations

Young people differ from their elders in one way at least. Unlike their predecessors, they now have many non-institutional channels of expression at their disposal: social media. As our EYES<sup>63</sup> study showed, these platforms provide a veritable sounding board. On the one hand, young people express their difficulties or their dissatisfaction with their working lives there, and on the other, they use them to organise themselves to denounce companies that do not respect the values they uphold (cyberactivism, boycott campaigns, calls for demonstrations, etc.), but also to challenge political decision-makers directly. In this way, young people are influencing public debate and making their voices heard.

**Yet, while it is true that the younger generations have embraced job hopping, driven as they are by their search for meaning<sup>64</sup>, they do not seem to be calling into question the corporate model *per se*.** In fact, their aspirations

<sup>58</sup> Bpifrance. (2022, December 19). *Les jeunes se tournent de plus en plus vers l'entrepreneuriat*. <https://bpifrance-creation.fr/enseignant/temoignages/jeunes-se-tournent-plus-plus-lentrepreneuriat>

<sup>59</sup> French Senate. (2021, July 8). *Évolution des modes de travail, défis managériaux : comment accompagner entreprises et travailleurs ?*. <https://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2020/r20-759-notice.html>

<sup>60</sup> IFOP & Les Makers. (2023). *Les Français et le Travail – 7 chiffres clés en 2023* [survey]. <https://lesmakers.fr/francais-travail-sondage-ifop/>

<sup>61</sup>The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, RSA. (2022, September 22). *Rethinking what good work means today* [video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2T7q2mlB3Q>

<sup>62</sup> Sandel, M. J. (2020). *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?*. Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>63</sup> SKEMA Publika. (2022, January 6). *EYES Report (...)*, *op. cit*

<sup>64</sup> French Senate. (2021, July 8). *Évolution des modes de travail, défis managériaux (...)*, *op. cit*.

are often the same as those expressed in the past, but decision-makers – both public and private – have failed to provide satisfactory solutions. What are these aspirations?

#### 4. WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS?

##### a. A desire for meaning: exemplarity and commitment

Based on several of the studies cited and the opinions of the experts consulted, it would seem that **"good work" today includes the question of usefulness to society**. Young people in France think that the chief role of a company must be to<sup>65</sup>:

- 1/ create jobs and hire people (51%)
- 2/ give employees the means to flourish in their work (40%)
- 3/ be useful to society (38%)

While the first two missions young people attribute to companies are fairly traditional, the third requirement is much more prevalent now than it used to be.

Young people expect companies to keep their promises, i.e. to match their words with deeds. In open job markets in particular, young people now feel that they are in a position to *choose* or reject a company according to whether they actually uphold and follow through on their stated values and ambitions. **"Committed" companies must therefore provide concrete proof of their socially responsible behaviour. According to young people, the most important ways of doing this are: refusing to work with suppliers that do not honour their commitments (31%), establishing partnerships with associations (21%), and donating money to causes every year (21%)<sup>66</sup>.**

This consistency must also be reflected in the daily work life of employees, enabling them to feel truly useful. **A job where they feel useful within a company that is also useful**. This could explain the often-mentioned disaffection suffered by large corporations and, specifically, the major consulting firms. In the past, graduates of the top business and management schools flocked to consulting firms or investment banks. But these days, the Big Three, Big Four<sup>67</sup> etc. are much less attractive, despite the high salaries they offer. Young people want to work in SMEs, in companies with local roots, where they can find meaning in their daily activities. And this seems to apply to all skill levels, not just to higher education graduates. The organisations that will succeed in attracting talent are those that can offer the best combination of remuneration, job satisfaction and work-life balance.

However, Fondation Jean Jaurès has highlighted a paradox in young people's attitude toward commitment: **while they are demanding of companies in this area, only 20% of them would like to make a commitment to society in the future (whether in the environmental, political or social sphere), and barely 10% of them consider that a successful life is one made up of commitments<sup>68</sup>.**

**What young people seem to be seeking through a company's commitment is not so much commitment for commitment's sake, but rather inspiring exemplarity** – always with the aim of finding meaning in their daily work life. This observation is also in line with the recurrent diagnosis of a contemporary crisis of authority. Indeed, although at first glance the philosopher Hannah Arendt gives a fairly classic definition of authority<sup>69</sup> – that is, whatever *makes people obey* –, she nevertheless insists on its *unconditional* dimension, thereby dissociating it from the idea of power. To do so, she contrasts authority with persuasion and argumentation on the one hand, and with violence and coercion on the other. Thus, to say that we are currently experiencing a crisis of authority would simply be affirming that subordination and allegiance – particularly in the workplace – can no longer be obtained by any means other than force or argumentation. Therefore, it is hardly surprising

<sup>65</sup> Fondation Jean Jaurès. (2022, November 21). *Les jeunes et l'entreprise : quatre enseignements. op. cit.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Consulting firms: BCG, McKinsey, Bain; Audit firms: Deloitte, EY, KPMG, PwC.

<sup>68</sup> Fondation Jean Jaurès. (2022, November 21). *Les jeunes et l'entreprise : quatre enseignements. op. cit.*

<sup>69</sup> On this subject, see "What is Authority?" in Arendt, H. (2006). *Between Past and Future*. Penguin Classics. (Original work published in 1961).

that young people are expressing a desire for inspiring exemplarity, as this is the only way to reconnect with authority and obedience that are neither persuasive nor coercive.

Given young people's attachment to this idea of *exemplarity*, the role of managers is absolutely crucial in meeting their expectations. At their level, they must manage the challenges of group activity so that each employee feels part of a coherent whole. This undoubtedly happens more naturally in small and medium-sized companies than in large ones, where meaning and purpose tend to get lost in the “machine”.

**b. Widespread concerns and distrust?**

**i. Aimed at companies and the world of work**

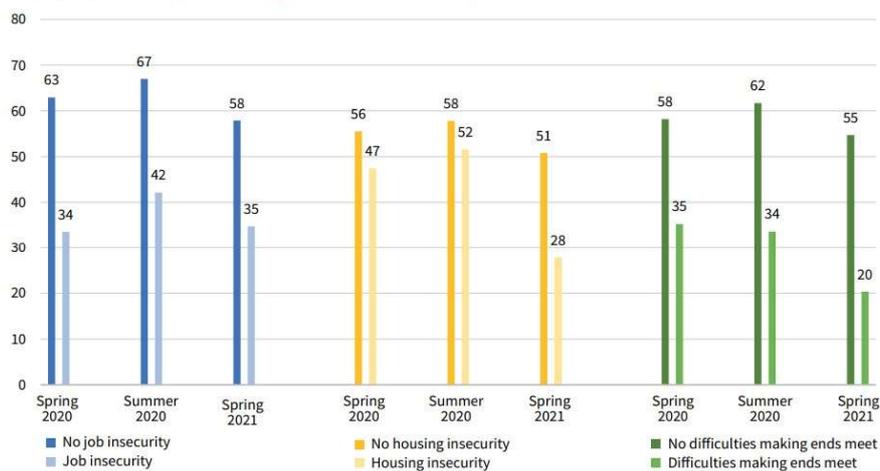
It would be naive, however, to think that young people's distrust of the corporate world is solely due to a lack of exemplarity on the part of certain organisations. And actually, this is no doubt why, as mentioned earlier, they are not calling into question the corporate model *per se*. As hinted at by the identification of a feeling that the social contract of work is deteriorating, the problem seems to be broader, with an important structural dimension.

One of the concerns expressed in all the countries included in our *EYES*<sup>70</sup> study was that **many young people feel underprepared when arriving on the job market. They feel that they have not acquired sufficient tools during their schooling to enter the job market effectively, and that they have little knowledge of what is expected of them in the professional world.** They report a lack of essential skills – particularly soft skills such as negotiation, networking, public speaking, conflict resolution, etc. – preventing them from achieving professional fulfilment. They see their lack of experience at the end of their studies as a barrier to employment.

During the *Youth Talks* consultation, 11% of individuals questioned mentioned their career and work as a source of concern for the future. They have three types of fears: the fear of losing or not finding a job, the fear of not finding fulfilment in their work, and more general worries about their professional situation<sup>71</sup>.

Moreover, young people are relatively pessimistic about the future. The graph below, produced by Eurofound in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (between 2020 and 2021), illustrates young people’s growing uncertainty about their own future.

Figure 41: Proportions of people aged 18–29 feeling optimistic about their own future, spring 2020 to spring 2021, by experience of job, housing and financial insecurity (%)



Source: Eurofound. (2021, November 24). *Living conditions and quality of life. Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU.* <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2020/impact-covid-19-young-people-eu>

<sup>70</sup> SKEMA Publika. (2022, January 6). *EYES Report (...), op. cit*

<sup>71</sup> Higher Education for Good Foundation (2023, September). *Youth Talks. op. cit.*

The pandemic had an uneven impact on young people – even more so than in the over-30 age group. Some lost their job or struggled to find a new one. Others were able to enjoy some degree of security (including financial security) and less social isolation by staying with their parents. Faced with the risk of being laid off and the anxiety this triggered, the mental health of young people and their overall satisfaction with their situation were severely affected.

Without minimising the psychological harm caused by the pandemic or the validity of the psychosocial risks associated with the changes occurring in the world of work, our interviewees wondered whether, **as a result of a succession of crises and the exacerbation of the personal and collective need for protection, employees – and young people in particular – might have now developed a stronger aversion to risk.**

ii. Aimed at public authorities

In any case, as a more general explanation for this distrust it is worth noting **the deterioration in the relationship between young people and institutions, believed to have begun in 2007-2008 following the international financial crisis**<sup>72</sup>. In 2018-2019, for example, only 46% of 15- to 29-year-olds in OECD Member countries expressed confidence in their national government, and in 20 of these 37 countries this confidence has decreased steadily since 2006<sup>73</sup>.

This chronic disregard could also be encouraging young people to turn to non-traditional channels such as social media to make their voices heard. However, restricting the expression of young people's aspirations to social media would only increase the risk of irresponsible behaviour, disinformation and inequalities within society (unequal access to education, digital illiteracy, etc.)<sup>74</sup>. **Every effort must therefore be made to encourage the institutional participation of young people in shaping social norms.**

Furthermore, the many social protests sparked around the world by the latest reforms to the organisation of work (working hours, contract types, pensions, etc.) show that these issues cannot be dissociated from broader considerations concerning the population's quality of life and standard of living, and that young people are above all the sounding board for a society undergoing radical changes. **Therefore, the solutions for addressing the demands of young people must not be confined to laws and labour market negotiations, since work is at the centre of a global societal evolution.**

Generally speaking, a harmonious relationship between young people and institutions is based on three pillars: (1) a functioning democratic system, (2) political decisions that produce observable benefits and (3) the government's ability to deliver satisfactory services to citizens. Today, these pillars may seem altered, and this could well contribute to young people's anxious view of the job market.

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<sup>72</sup> OECD. (2020, October 22). *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice*. <https://www.oecd.org/gov/governance-for-youth-trust-and-intergenerational-justice-c3e5cb8a-en.htm>

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

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How should we respond to the expectations, concerns and distrust expressed by young people in their relationship to work? The solutions are many and, most importantly, they are multifactorial. Thus, we cannot provide definitive answers. However, our working group emphasised the fact that institutions and companies both have a role to play here.

### 1. INSTITUTIONS

We have seen that the attitude toward work needs to be analysed in the broader context of a loss of confidence in institutions, made obvious by the lack of participation in electoral consultations. This is true whether we are looking at young people or other generations. To remedy this, should we be inventing new ways for young people to participate in public debate? Should we be ensuring a better representation of the specific interests of young people within traditional bodies?

#### a. Distrust at work and the context of youth representation in public debate

**International organisations point to low youth representation as the cause of this age group's lack of participation in institutional democratic processes (e.g. voting) and its loss of confidence in "the system".** According to the OECD, this *under-representation of youth in state and multilateral bodies* is glaringly obvious: only 26% of those working in youth ministries in member countries are under the age of 40, and young people make up barely 22% of parliamentarians in the lower chambers, despite the fact that people aged 20 to 39 make up 34% of adults over the age of 20 in the OECD<sup>75</sup>. Without adequate representation, the relationship with institutions cannot be effective and spontaneous.

In fact, this is what drives young people to make their voices heard and take part in public debate outside the institutional framework, using alternative means such as online activism and discussions, mobilisations on specific themes, demonstrations, political consumerism and petitions<sup>76</sup>.

Our experts also highlighted the problems posed by the changing relationship to time. **Technological acceleration in particular has created a need for immediacy in young people, both in decision-making and in the implementation of appropriate measures.** The gap between this sense of urgency and the timescale of politics is certainly a source of frustration. Of course, each generation always sees itself as more agile and more driven than the last. But this sense of immediacy is now exacerbated, and public authorities have no choice but to take it into account.

Given that work is a major preoccupation for young people, it is necessarily affected by these unresolved differences. The aim should thus be to ensure that young people are properly represented and that decision-makers take their interests into account when developing policies concerning access to employment and its preparation through educational programmes.

#### b. Ensuring effective and efficient youth representation in employment policymaking

**Aware of the aforementioned challenges, European institutions and national and regional authorities have been working for several years to introduce young people to civic participation and democratic life.** However, these efforts are relatively recent, receive little media coverage, and the specific question of work is not sufficiently central to them.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Political consumerism means giving a political dimension to the way we shop. When consumers demand more environmentally-friendly, fair-trade or solidarity-based products, for example, that is political consumerism.

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Within the Council of Europe, for example, an Advisory Council on Youth “is made up of 30 representatives from youth NGOs and networks” and “ensures that young people are involved in other activities of the Council of Europe”<sup>77</sup>. As for the European Union, it adopted a Youth Strategy for 2019-2027 centring on 11 Youth Goals developed during a 2017-2018 dialogue process involving young people from all EU member countries<sup>78</sup>. A number of concrete actions have resulted from this, in the Alpine Region among others. In addition, in 2022 a Mock Council of Ministers of the European Union was held, involving thirty French secondary school students<sup>79</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that France boasts a number of municipal youth councils. While these are usually composed of lower-secondary school students, these actions will bear fruit in the long term.

Furthermore, 25 of the 38 OECD Member countries have deployed an operational national youth strategy to support young people's transition to adulthood<sup>80</sup>. Of these, 88% include a goal to increase youth inclusion in decision-making processes, and 81% aspire to take better account of young people's concerns and expectations when developing public policies<sup>81</sup>.

However, barely 40% of these strategies include commitments to increase youth *representation* in state institutions. Yet, as the OECD summed it up so well in its report<sup>82</sup>: “no relation without representation”, no trust without participation. Governments hoping to curb the widespread distrust of institutions observed among young people thus have important work to do in this area.

To lead the way, in 2021 the OECD established its own Youth Advisory Board, Youthwise, with a dual mission: “to foster a better understanding of the OECD's work and international policy-making among young people”, and to “bring forth the valuable perspectives and ideas of youth to the Organisation”<sup>83</sup>.

In the context of our study, the problem of youth (non-)representation in the development process of public policies relating to work was highlighted by the ILO. As a result, in November 2022, this institution organised the *Social Dialogue With and For Youth* meeting, to (re)build a bridge between young people and institutions. The aim was to create a platform for discussions between representatives of governments, youth associations and worker and employer groups from some twenty countries, and to find solutions to make social dialogue more youth-inclusive<sup>84</sup>.

This initiative was in response to the organisation's findings on the subject. In addition to the lack of direct youth participation in decision making and the inability of the social partners to represent the interests of young people, the ILO highlighted<sup>85</sup>:

- high youth unemployment and a lack of employment opportunities for young people, who are consequently over-represented in the informal economy;
- higher unemployment rates among young university graduates, since young people prefer a university education to skills acquisition and vocational training, demonstrating a lack of awareness of the skills needed to access the labour market;

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<sup>77</sup> Council of Europe (n.d.). *What is the Advisory Council on Youth?*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/advisory-council-on-youth>

<sup>78</sup> Youth Europa (n.d.). *EU Youth Strategy*. [https://youth.europa.eu/strategy\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/strategy_en)

<sup>79</sup> Youth Europa (n.d.). *Simulation d'un Conseil des ministres avec des jeunes lycéens de toute la France métropolitaine et des Outre-Mer*. [https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth/activities/1801\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/year-of-youth/activities/1801_en)

<sup>80</sup> OECD. (2021, June 15). *Renforcer l'autonomie et la confiance des jeunes au Maroc*. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/renforcer-l-autonomie-et-la-confiance-des-jeunes-au-maroc\\_588c5c07-fr](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/renforcer-l-autonomie-et-la-confiance-des-jeunes-au-maroc_588c5c07-fr)

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> OECD. (2020, October 22). *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice. Fit for All Generations?*. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/governance-for-youth-trust-and-intergenerational-justice\\_c3e5cb8a-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/governance-for-youth-trust-and-intergenerational-justice_c3e5cb8a-en)

<sup>83</sup> OECD. (n.d.). *OECD Youthwise: putting youth at the centre of policy making*. <https://www.oecd.org/about/civil-society/youth/youthwise/>

<sup>84</sup> ILO. (2022, November). *High-level meeting on “Social Dialogue with and For Youth”*. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_870340.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/genericdocument/wcms_870340.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

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- the presence of specific challenges in “post-conflict” countries, where young people are more likely to fall below the poverty line (e.g. Cambodia, where young people lack formal opportunities for decent employment).

It is encouraging to note that some governments have set up initiatives aimed at facilitating youth access to employment. One example is Portugal, which has developed a range of services to this effect: childcare, financial aid for companies employing young people, and a programme bringing together educational institutions, public employment services and youth<sup>86</sup>.

Workers' unions, however, feel that young people should be consulted *systematically*, and not just in the case of youth employment policies specifically. In this, they are at odds with employers' representatives, who see no need to add a fourth constituent to social dialogue. Furthermore, the workers' unions also feel that this proactive consultation of young people should take place not only at the local level, but also nationally and internationally. They believe that young people's expectations relating to work do not vary drastically from one country to another, and that it is now time to invent a new social contract of work. To guarantee the rights of young people (representation, social protection), the unions insist on two points<sup>87</sup>:

- the work of young people must be recognised at its true value: it must not be reduced to voluntary work or mere training;
- it is important to prepare and facilitate youth participation in social dialogue at the “main table”, and not to relegate them to the sidelines during negotiations – as is often the case.

**At the end of this meeting, the ILO put forward a number of suggestions for decision-makers wishing to bridge the gap between youth and institutions<sup>88</sup>:**

- be proactive in listening to young people and translating their expectations into concrete policies;
- strengthen the prerogatives of social dialogue institutions with regard to youth-related matters and to the involvement of youth in issues pertaining to sustainable development;
- expand cooperation between social partners and youth associations;
- set up structures such as “youth committees”, “youth advisory councils”, “youth networks”, and enable them to participate in *formal* social dialogue;
- promote youth participation in multilateral institutions (UN, etc.) at the international level.

### 2. COMPANIES

In a climate of distrust, what can companies do to shift young people's attitude toward work and help them fulfil their aspirations?

#### a. Inspiring confidence

Our working group did not fail to examine **the role of companies and our experts wondered in particular whether these are really responsible for the happiness of their employees**. Indeed, today we tend to entrust companies with missions that used to be state prerogatives (monitoring the proper application of CSR rules by suppliers and customers, checking the application of dual-use rules, etc.). While no single company can have a real influence on structural employment conditions, it is nevertheless important that each one strives to promote conditions that foster the psychological well-being of employees, as well as optimism in young people and other age groups.

**It is now imperative that organisations honour their commitments and act in accordance with their stated values, or they risk failing to attract and retain young talent.** Like institutions, companies would do well to lower their barriers to entry, which include requiring significant professional experience prior to being considered for a position, even though young people sometimes complete many work placements. Companies must come to

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

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terms with the reality that individuals may not always tick *all* of their boxes in terms of initial training and qualifications. Since the aim of this study is not to deal with education policies, it should be stressed that showing a genuine interest in young recruits often means spending time training them. Similarly, **the efforts of human resource departments and recruitment agencies are crucial if we are to move away from a linear vision of careers** and accept that the tasks of workers recruited today will evolve tomorrow.

Furthermore, while better working conditions (hours, pay, etc.) are now non-negotiable demands made by the most highly qualified or socially privileged candidates, allowing employees to work from home and setting up a workplace recreation room is not enough to keep young people happy. In today's troubling social climate, companies can also play a role – although this is not their primary purpose – **by contributing to the “psychological safety” of their employees**. The concept of psychological safety, theorised by Amy Edmondson, is defined as “a shared belief held by members of a team that it's OK to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns, to speak up with questions, and to admit mistakes — all without fear of negative consequences”<sup>89</sup>. Psychological safety is underpinned by good management practices, but there is no instruction manual for these. It can bring significant benefits, such as<sup>90</sup>:

- a more engaged and motivated team;
- better decision-making thanks to a diverse range of perspectives being voiced and considered;
- an appetite for learning new skills, continuous improvement, and risk taking.

While the benefits associated with the existence of a feeling of psychological safety are presented in various studies, the question of *how* to generate this feeling is, in Edmondson's own words, “more magic than science”<sup>91</sup>. That is why **the know-how of managers is crucial to a company's ability to meet the aspirations of young people at work – particularly in terms of their search for meaning**.

### b. Managers: fulfilment, meaning and storytelling

31% of young French people believe that the chief role of a manager is to create a fulfilling work environment<sup>92</sup>. According to them, this notion of fulfilment encompasses the following realities:

- continuous learning (lifelong learning is highlighted by 6 out of 10 young people);
- participation in the life of the company thanks to a greater consideration of what employees have to say (for 36% of individuals consulted);
- greater autonomy;
- recognition of the work done by employees.

To achieve this, non-managers expect managers to demonstrate three qualities: (1) know how to encourage and motivate, (2) be a good listener and (3) be attentive to employee morale. It is therefore just as important for a manager to be receptive to what team members have to say, and to invite them to speak up, as it is to be able to **show them how they are contributing to the collective enterprise**.

**In fact, employees say they often find it hard to see how the decisions taken by management are given concrete expression in the field. This leads to a deteriorated sense of well-being at work in 45% of individuals, makes 47% of individuals more likely to resign, and generates stress and a loss of motivation in 62% of those surveyed**<sup>93</sup>. As mentioned earlier, the company's ethical commitments at the strategic level are therefore necessary to meet young people's expectations, but they are not enough to satisfy their need for meaning. This need must be addressed at a more fundamental level: in daily work activities. It is managers who, through their ability to fit the work of their employees into a coherent narrative, can achieve this by transforming these daily work activities into part of a meaningful whole so that they do not become a mere cog in an anonymous machine.

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<sup>89</sup> Gallo, A. (2023, February 15). What Is Psychological Safety?. *Harvard Business Review*, <https://hbr.org/2023/02/what-is-psychological-safety>

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Fondation Jean Jaurès. (2022, November 21). *Les jeunes et l'entreprise : quatre enseignements*. *op. cit.*

<sup>93</sup> Alan & Harris Interactive. (2023, April). *Soutien, responsabilité et attractivité : repenser le rôle du manager*. <https://alan.com/fr-fr//barometre-bien-etre-mental-avril2023>

**The manager is – or should be – the link enabling the organisation's storytelling<sup>94</sup> to work in practice and to motivate individuals by giving them a direction in which to move forward.** In this regard, the experts consulted stress the importance of the extra-financial dimensions of a company's performance, which must be translated into a set of individual missions and lead to personal convictions as obvious as "thanks to me, the candidates are in the right place", or "I improve people's lives".

However, the responsibility managers bear for the well-being of their employees is not inconsequential when it comes to their own sense of fulfilment, because it subjects them to demands that sometimes conflict with those emanating from the objectives set by the company's management. So it is important to ensure that these demands are better aligned, by making team satisfaction a genuine performance indicator for managerial staff.

Moreover, **younger managers under the age of 35 seem less able to cope with the pressure placed on middle managers:** according to a study by Alan and Harris Interactive, two out of three young managers do not feel capable in their role – versus 46% across all managerial staff – and 56% are considering resigning, versus 43% on average across the board<sup>95</sup>. And yet, it is these younger managers who are also the most attentive to the needs of their employees: 3 out of 10 young managers would like their team members to talk more about their expectations and career objectives, compared with just 15% of managers aged 50+, and 36% of young managers would like training on psychosocial risks (PSR), compared with an average of 30% across the board<sup>96</sup>.

**One explanation for this paradox, whereby young managers have the right approach but feel out of place, is the fact that they consider themselves insufficiently prepared or unqualified to manage, because they do not give themselves the time to acquire the skills and know-how they need.** Adding to these observations is the fact that almost 50% of managers under the age of 35 believe that their difficulties are specific to their company, versus only 30% of managers aged 50+. This implies that as their career progresses, managers gain more perspective and consider that the challenges they face are common to all managers (irrespective of the sector)<sup>97</sup>.

While young people are indeed a driving force behind the changes taking place in society and in the world of work, they need to ensure that they benefit fully from the lessons learned by their elders through their longer experience working for companies. **Young people's expression of their own expectations, whether or not these are shared by their predecessors, must not hinder the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and know-how, which is crucial to reforming companies effectively.**

### c. Inventing the company of tomorrow

According to our specialists, in a changing societal environment, the company and work model of the past often proves outdated, but that of the future has yet to be invented. In this respect, several types of work organisation are likely to develop, along the lines of the four scenarios ("learning organisation", "virtual learning organisation", "the super interim-model", and "new age Taylorism") envisaged by Salima Benhamou<sup>98</sup>. In any case, we are currently in an "in-between" situation which can be a source of frustration and misunderstanding.

#### i. A fragile in-between

This precarious situation is illustrated by the mismatch between, on the one hand, the conclusions reached by the business leaders surveyed as part of The Boson Project in November 2022<sup>99</sup> and, on the other hand, the solutions they are providing to the difficulties encountered. Indeed, **when asked about the upheavals underway**

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<sup>94</sup> By storytelling, we mean a genuine explanation of objectives, set within a narrative consistent with the company's *raison d'être*, and not merely an additional or superficial form of communication.

<sup>95</sup> Alan & Harris Interactive. (2023, April). *Soutien, responsabilité et attractivité : repenser le rôle du manager*. *op. cit.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Benhamou, S. (2018, June). The World of Work in 2030. Four scenarios. In Neufeind M., O'Reilly J. & Ranft, F. (Ed.). *Work in the Digital Age. Challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. (pp.259-270). Rowman & Littlefield International <https://policynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Work-in-the-Digital-Age.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> The Boson Project. (2022, November 16). *Le monde d'après aura bien lieu*. (...). *op. cit.*

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**in the world of work, the leaders lamented the loss of a sense of collectivism in particular**, made evident, in their view, by:

- the disappearance of loyalty (according to 60% of them);
- a more individualistic approach to work (also 60%);
- a shift toward a more transactional and mercenary attitude to work (41.3%)<sup>100</sup>.

Furthermore, 86.3% of the business leaders consulted felt that it is now more difficult to recruit, and that we are witnessing a reversal in the balance of power between employees and companies, with candidates allowing themselves to demand more from employers<sup>101</sup>.

**At the same time, a majority of them favoured short-term recruitment solutions to hire new talent** (66% by focusing on better working conditions and 50.5% by offering salaries outside their usual ranges), **and concentrated more on attractiveness than loyalty building – thus neglecting the fundamental issue of redefining the social contract of work**<sup>102</sup>.

To remedy this, the various studies we examined and our discussions with specialists revealed two major avenues to explore:

1. accept the individualisation of the relationship<sup>103</sup> to work in order to create a new social contract and make a collective sense of purpose within the corporate framework meaningful once again;
2. increase opportunities for intergenerational cooperation and knowledge transfer.

For example, both the SHRM Foundation and Fondation Jean Jaurès stress the importance of employee training, which must be tailored to the specific needs of each individual<sup>104</sup>. This is seen as a lever for retaining talent and strengthening their commitment to the organisation. Thus, systems need to be put in place to better identify the aspirations of each employee, which as we already mentioned requires not only a more attentive management style, but also the introduction of new, more individualised, HR policies and tools.

In a way, we need to help talented individuals to claim their place within the organisation, so that they feel connected to it and free to flourish within in, not by “fitting the mould” and moving toward greater uniformity, but by exploiting their strengths and creativity. While the collective dynamic is no longer what it used to be, valuing singularities and being open to voices that are more critical of the company's activities can only contribute to a stronger feeling of belonging among employees, as long as there is a real sense of purpose.

**Among the initiatives designed to strengthen intergenerational collaboration, and thus enable employees to benefit from all available knowledge and know-how, the practices of mentoring and reverse mentoring (where younger employees teach the older ones certain skills, particularly in the digital field) are regularly cited.** Others also mention modifying work spaces as well as designing work to be carried out more in "project mode", with initiatives open to all in order to combine talents and create a strong identity around common values<sup>105</sup>.

Ultimately, it is a question of finding common ground between the aspirations of actors that sometimes have trouble understanding one another: company directors want loyalty and commitment to a collective purpose, and young talent is searching for meaning.

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> This does not mean individualising the *contractual terms of employment*, as these are established in collective bargaining agreements.

<sup>104</sup> The SHRM Foundation. (2017, October). *Harnessing the Power of a Multigenerational Workforce*. <https://www.shrm.org/foundation/aging-workforce> ; Fondation Jean Jaurès. (2022, November 21). *Les jeunes et l'entreprise : quatre enseignements. op. cit.*

<sup>105</sup> AmCham France. (2018). *Different Generations in Companies: The Key to Creating Value*. <https://amchamfrance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/EN-White-Paper-Final-2.pdf>

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### ii. The learning organisation: a model for the future

In light of the above, the “learning organisation” model seems particularly well suited to enabling the companies of the future to respond not only to market developments, but also to the demands of young people. This is what Edward Lorenz and Salima Benhamou demonstrated in an empirical study conducted in 2020, entitled *Les organisations du travail apprenantes: enjeux et défis pour la France*<sup>106</sup>. Taking up the idea put forward by Peter Senge that “the rate at which organisations learn may soon become the only sustainable source of competitive advantage”<sup>107</sup>, **the authors illustrate how the learning organisation, which fundamentally relies on the continuous development of its members' learning capacities [at all levels of the hierarchy] to achieve shared objectives and anticipate future transformations**<sup>108</sup>, **contributes in particular to enhancing employee commitment**<sup>109</sup>, **thus echoing the demands for meaning emanating from young people** while contributing to the renewal of the sense of collectivism. That is why, in their view, it is important to support companies and administrations in their transformation projects, which will no doubt involve drawing up a national programme to promote managerial and organisational innovations, along the lines of initiatives taken by certain Scandinavian and Northern European countries<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> Benhamou, S. & Lorenz, E. (2020, April). *Les organisations du travail apprenantes : enjeux et défis pour la France*. *op. cit.*

<sup>107</sup> Senge P. M. (1990), *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Doubleday, New York, cited in Benhamou, S. & Lorenz, E. (2020, April). *Les organisations du travail apprenantes : enjeux et défis pour la France*. *op. cit.*

<sup>108</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail et de l'emploi à l'ère de l'Intelligence artificielle : Évaluation, illustrations et interrogations*. *op. cit.*

<sup>109</sup> Benhamou, S. & Lorenz, E. (2020, April). *Les organisations du travail apprenantes : enjeux et défis pour la France*. *op. cit.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* See for example the TYKE and TYKES programmes in Finland, or the *Value Creation Programme* in Norway.

## III. TECHNICAL AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Although the job market has already undergone a number of shocks in recent years (the international financial crisis of 2007-2008, the COVID-19 pandemic, etc.), it has not finished evolving in a societal context where the impact of major collective challenges (climate change, geopolitical tensions) and technological (r)evolutions has yet to be clarified. That is why we need to talk about the prospects that two salient trends are opening up for young people, particularly in their relationship to work: the development of the green economy and the growing role of digital technology and AI in work activities.

### 1. IS THE GREEN ECONOMY A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S RELATIONSHIP TO WORK?

In its guide *How to work in the green economy?*, the ILO points out that global climate change is having a direct and quantifiable impact on the world of work<sup>111</sup>. Causing natural disasters of various kinds (droughts, heatwaves, cyclones, rising sea levels, etc.), it regularly leads to “the displacement of workers, disruptions to business activities” and “damage to business equipment, infrastructure”, while also having “negative repercussions on productivity”<sup>112</sup>, since research has shown that heat affects our cognitive abilities.

That is why, according to the ILO, it is urgent to put in place “climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies”<sup>113</sup>, which means investing in “new products, technologies, services and infrastructure” and creating new jobs linked to the energy transition and the circular economy.

According to the definition of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “a green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities”<sup>114</sup>.

The ILO's simulation estimates that, in total, 103 million new jobs would be created in the green economy by 2030, leading to a positive balance of 25 million jobs<sup>115</sup> – which is still relatively few on a global scale. Indeed, since the aim of the energy transition is to substitute renewable energies for fossil fuels, it should lead to the creation of 25 million jobs and the destruction of 7 million. While the circular economy, the objective of which is a more sustainable use of resources, should create 78 million jobs and cause 71 million to disappear<sup>116</sup>.

Despite offering a limited increase in the number of jobs available, the green economy could be a boon for young people, as it promises more meaningful work. But this opportunity must be seized *actively* and requires support and training, both to enable those whose jobs are in danger of disappearing to retrain, and to ensure that young people benefit fully from the creation of green jobs. Indeed, the ILO has identified three major challenges that could get in the way of this opportunity:

- a lack of technical knowledge;
- a lack of financial management skills in companies (80% of businesses created through green entrepreneurship do not survive more than one year);
- complicated access to public and private financing<sup>117</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> ILO. (2022, September 1). *How to work in the green economy? (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> UNEP. (n.d.). *Green economy*. <https://www.unep.org/regions/latin-america-and-caribbean/regional-initiatives/promoting-resource-efficiency/green>

<sup>115</sup> ILO. (2022, September 1). *How to work in the green economy? (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

**It also seems that parts of the green economy are currently affected by informal or even illegal employment. In some countries, this is the case for waste management and recycling. This risk of informality in green jobs is reinforced by the interactions that exist between digitalisation and ecological transition.** While on the surface the digital world and the green economy appear to be complementary – for example, farmers, who are the front line when it comes to the sustainability imperative, are now more inclined to use digital innovation than their elders were (digitally optimised watering based on collected data, use of AI and social media, etc.) – we have seen that in certain fields (ride hailing, food delivery, etc.), the arrival of platforms has led to a casualisation of employment. **That is why it is important to ensure that green jobs are developed as decent, formal employment, to ensure that they truly represent an opportunity – not just for young people, but for everyone.**

Finally, as regards young people's much talked about search for meaning, companies in the green economy have a strong, easily identifiable *raison d'être*. However, this alone is not enough to guarantee a long-term commitment from new talent, and their expectations regarding managers who listen, the provision of ongoing training tailored to the individual, and the possibility of taking a critical view of the company's activities must also be met.

The distinction the ILO makes between *green jobs* – i.e. jobs that contribute *directly* to the production of goods and services that protect the environment and to the sustainable management of natural resources – and *greening jobs*, which contribute *indirectly*, is interesting in this respect. While the former are easily integrated into a meaningful narrative at the individual level, the latter undoubtedly require a more frequent effort of explanation on the part of managers and management.

## 2. DIGITAL AND AI

### a. Digitalisation of work: young people in pole position?

**The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting labour market shock reinforced the trend toward an increased digitalisation of work.** As the ILO points out, young people seem to be better placed to benefit from this, as often they have grown up with digital tools – hence the "digital natives" moniker applied to them – and are generally more exposed to them and better trained in their use than their elders<sup>118</sup>. It is important to bear in mind, however, that different degrees of familiarity can be observed according to level of education, and that the ability to use social media does not equate to a mastery of digital tools. In general, though, young people have acquired skills that are now essential in a great number of occupations. But this supposed opportunity conceals a number of nuanced realities.

First of all, there is no universally accepted definition of digital employment. The ILO defines it as a professional activity that includes the use of digital technologies in varying degrees. Sectors are categorised according to three levels of digital intensity<sup>119</sup>:

- low digital intensity (LDI);
- medium digital intensity (MDI);
- high digital intensity (HDI).

High digital intensity jobs are better paid than MDI or LDI jobs, offering wages around 40% higher than the average, and are mainly found in high-income countries. Within individual countries, HDI and MDI jobs are concentrated in urban areas, while LDI jobs are mostly found in rural areas. Young people therefore have unequal access to the opportunities presented by the digitalisation of the economy, depending on where they live. Moreover, the tools for MDI and HDI jobs, which are the most lucrative but also the most technical, must be made available early on in the process of educating and training young people.

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<sup>118</sup> ILO. (2022, August). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022 (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

Yet, in many countries, including in the West, access to the Internet and to electronic devices is still too limited. The benefits of the digitalisation of the economy, particularly for young people, are thus contingent on the development of a certain level of skill among the population, a goal which in turn requires significant investment in infrastructure and the education of individuals. This investment should be encouraged and declared a priority because, according to ILO projections, the provision of universal broadband coverage by 2030 could lead to a net increase in employment of 24 million new jobs, 6.4 million of which would be filled by young people<sup>120</sup>.

As mentioned previously, digitalisation is also synonymous with the emergence of platforms and the expansion of the so-called “gig economy”. This sector is relatively attractive to young people, who see in it several advantages<sup>121</sup>:

- “learning by doing”;
- an opportunity to accumulate professional experience without needing prior experience;
- rapid task execution;
- flexibility.

In low- and middle-income countries, this type of activity is all the more attractive as it offers decent wages in comparison to the rest of the jobs open to young people. But in high-income countries too, young people are jumping on the bandwagon: in Europe, “the share of young workers undertaking task-based (or gig) work is around twice as large as that of older workers”<sup>122</sup>. However, we do insist on the fact that the gig economy is a source of instability and often offers little or no social protection to those engaging in it.

Once again, it seems to us that **it is through a legal framework for practices that we must ensure that the digitalisation of work stays within the bounds of decent, formal employment**. Pushing this reasoning further, it is easy to see how the latter not only improves young people’s relationship to work, but also restores their confidence in the institutions that guarantee it.

#### **b. Artificial intelligence: a (r)evolution with uncertain consequences**

Within this societal trend toward the digitalisation of jobs, one specific area of technical innovation is raising major questions as to the long-term effects it will have on economic activity: artificial intelligence (AI).

Defined by the European Parliament as “the ability of a machine to display human-like capabilities such as reasoning, learning, planning and creativity”<sup>123</sup>, what we now refer to as AI is in fact a collection of relatively heterogeneous systems. What they all have in common, however, is that they perform tasks that until very recently could only be carried out by human beings. This raises many questions about the future of work, especially for young people.

In a study dated March 2023, Goldman Sachs estimated that the productivity gains made possible by the introduction of AI could, over the next ten years, “eventually increase global annual GDP by 7%”<sup>124</sup>. At the same time, **the equivalent of 300 million jobs could be automated in Europe and the United States thanks to generative AI**<sup>125</sup>. According to Bpifrance, generative AI is a category of AI that focuses on creating data, content or artistic things, independently. It differs from the classic form of AI, which performs specific tasks such as classifying, predicting or problem solving<sup>126</sup>. While Goldman Sachs points out that technological breakthroughs

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> European Parliament. (2020, September 4). *What is artificial intelligence and how is it used?* <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20200827STO85804/what-is-artificial-intelligence-and-how-is-it-used>

<sup>124</sup> Goldman Sachs. (2023, March 26). *The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth*. [https://www.ansa.it/documents/1680080409454\\_ert.pdf](https://www.ansa.it/documents/1680080409454_ert.pdf)

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Napierala, S. (2023, September 14). *Intelligence artificielle générative : de quoi parle-t-on ?*. *Big média (Bpifrance)*, <https://bigmedia.bpifrance.fr/news/intelligence-artificielle-generative-de-quoi-parle-t>

that have led to the retraining and displacement of workers have historically resulted in the emergence of new roles offsetting the job destruction caused, this is precisely the issue on which not all experts agree in the case of AI.

The concern surrounding this (r)evolution is shared by a substantial proportion of the world's working population. According to a Boston Consulting Group report published in June 2023, 42% of workers in the Netherlands, 41% in France, and 38% in Japan say they are concerned about the introduction of AI into organisations<sup>127</sup>. While this proportion is lower in the United States and the United Kingdom, studies conducted in both of these countries show **that young people are more concerned than their elders about the effects of AI on their professional future**<sup>128</sup>. Among American employees, a third of 18- to 24-year-olds say they fear that the jobs they are interested in will be automated and replaced, versus only 14% of over-65s and 24% of workers overall<sup>129</sup>. It should be noted, however, that the imagination of workers plays a major role here, particularly in individuals who do not use AI systems as part of their activities. These individuals have a much more negative perception than workers familiar with AI systems. This is why, based on the results of the LaborIA Explorer<sup>130</sup> survey report, Jean Condé, Scientific Director of Matrice, and Yann Ferguson, Scientific Director of the LaborIA project at Inria (National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology), suggest that using *artificial intelligence* and becoming accustomed to this tool ultimately drains the expression of its (pejorative) symbolic power<sup>131</sup>.

While it will undoubtedly be some time before we can truly gauge the qualitative and quantitative impact of AI on the labour market, and Goldman Sachs points out that the productivity "boom" associated with a new technology generally only starts 20 years after its introduction, when at least 50% of businesses are using it<sup>132</sup>, we must nevertheless look at what is emerging from the early data available regarding the direct or indirect creation/destruction of opportunities resulting from this technological breakthrough.

i. A mix of specialised and precarious jobs created...

In recent years, AI applications have developed and spread to a number of sectors (healthcare, services, mechanics, etc.)<sup>133</sup>. In the future, companies will undoubtedly express greater needs in this area, requiring future recruits to demonstrate new skills. However, when assessing the consequences of AI on the labour market, and in particular its effects on young people's relationship to work, it is important to distinguish between the professions that are directly linked to it and those on which its deployment has, will have or is likely to have an impact.

<sup>127</sup> BCG. (2023, June). *AI at Work: What People Are Saying*. <https://web-assets.bcg.com/8c/26/b80dfaa64b1d92bed7b64d2e19dd/ai-at-work-what-people-are-saying.pdf>

<sup>128</sup> Rosenbaum, E. (2023, June 8). These are the American workers most worried that A.I. will soon make their jobs obsolete. *CNBC*, <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/06/08/these-are-the-workers-most-worried-that-ai-will-soon-take-their-jobs.html>;

Harle, E. (2023, July 12). MPs call for improved youth employment pathways amid AI fears. *CYP NOW*, <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/mps-call-for-improved-youth-employment-pathways-amid-ai-fears>

<sup>129</sup> Rosenbaum, E. (2023, June 8). These are the American workers most worried that A.I. will soon make their jobs obsolete. *op. cit.*

<sup>130</sup> Condé, J. & Ferguson, Y. (2023, March 13). *LaborIA Explorer – Rapport d'enquête : usages et impacts de l'IA sur le travail au prisme des décideurs*. [https://www.matrice.io/uploads/Rapport\\_Laboria\\_VF\\_c1ff362730.pdf](https://www.matrice.io/uploads/Rapport_Laboria_VF_c1ff362730.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> Remarks made on 26 September 2023 at the *Colloque sur les transformations du travail par l'AI*, a symposium organised by Matrice, Inria and the French Ministry of Labour, Employment and Economic Inclusion, focusing on how AI is transforming work. See Calenda. (2023, August 1). *Les transformations du travail par l'intelligence artificielle (IA)*. <https://calenda.org/1090223>

<sup>132</sup> Goldman Sachs. (2023, March 26). *The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth*. *op. cit.*

<sup>133</sup> OECD. (2023, February 23). *Six questions about the demand for artificial intelligence skills in labour markets*. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/ac1bebf0-en.pdf?expires=1697557450&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=820B9BB566F76EE5F47690008774EB9E>

The workforce directly employed to contribute to the technical development of AI (AI workforce) represents just 0.3% of the workforce in OECD countries<sup>134</sup> – or around 1.8 million out of almost 608 million workers – although this proportion is growing rapidly. Most AI development jobs are located in Western countries and are high-skill occupations<sup>135</sup>: mathematicians (5.2% of ads for this type of position require AI skills), software and application developers (4.9%), information and communication technology managers (4.3%), database and network professionals (3.6%), and electrotechnology engineers (3.2%). Thus, 60% of the AI workforce has a tertiary degree<sup>136</sup>. Moreover, this is a rather young workforce: 44% of individuals are aged under 40<sup>137</sup>.

But progress in AI requires more than just highly skilled individuals, offered stable and decent conditions of employment. At the opposite end of the spectrum, millions of repetitive, non-complex micro-tasks have to be performed by individuals whose low-skill jobs are only indirectly linked to AI. While the reality of micro-workers is heterogeneous, depending on their geographical location in particular, and while the nature of the micro-tasks to perform may vary, these often consist of labelling, cataloguing and indexing textual, audio or visual data to feed the AI algorithms and enable them to be used more efficiently and accurately. However, as early as 2014, articles warned of the precarious conditions in which a large proportion of “click workers” were working<sup>138, 139</sup>.

Today, this population of “digital pieceworkers” continues to grow. The Clickworker website alone claims to have a community of over 4.5 million people doing this kind of work<sup>140</sup>, 65% of whom are under the age of 35 with no higher education qualifications. In addition to low wages and the informality of the employment relationship, this gig economy encouraged by the deployment of AI also has its share of questionable practices when it comes to the promises made by the companies involved. In January 2023, Time Magazine dissected the value chain that had enabled OpenAI, the company that owns ChatGPT, to make its virtual assistant less toxic and expand its use to the general public<sup>141</sup>. The magazine revealed that OpenAI had used the services of a California-based firm called Sama, which markets itself as a company contributing to “ethical AI”. Sama had outsourced the processing of snippets of text graphically describing situations of sexual abuse, murder, suicide, torture, incest and other sordid acts to Kenyan workers, for wages ranging from \$1.32 to \$1.44 an hour (the average wage for a receptionist being around \$1.52 an hour locally) at the lowest level, while the more senior quality analysts earned up to \$2 an hour<sup>142</sup>. By comparison, Sama received around \$12.50 per hour of individual work for these projects. When interviewed by TIME, the Kenyan workers confirmed that they were still mentally scarred by the data they had to read and watch. Although it is likely that in the long term the number of click workers will eventually decrease, since AI algorithms are becoming capable of feeding each other<sup>143</sup>, for the moment the reality is as we have just described and it is a somewhat gloomy reality for young people.

#### ii. ... and the destruction of automatable jobs

Antonio Casilli, a professor of sociology at Institut Polytechnique de Paris, insists that “in this debate on artificial intelligence and employment, we need to ask ourselves this question: when we talk about automation, what are we really talking about? [...] Often, this means replacing visible people with invisible ones, separated from the

<sup>134</sup> OECD. (2023, February 16). *The Supply, Demand, and Characteristics of the AI Workforce across OECD countries*. <https://www.oecd.org/publications/the-supply-demand-and-characteristics-of-the-ai-workforce-across-oecd-countries-bb17314a-en.htm>

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> De La Porte, X. (2014, January 21). Le Turc mécanique d’Amazon. *France Culture*, <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/ce-qui-nous-arrive-sur-la-toile/le-turc-mecanique-d-amazon-3845098>

<sup>139</sup> See also S. Benhamou's analysis of the working conditions created by platforms similar to Amazon's Mechanical Turk, in the report she produced for the United Nations (ECLAC): Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail (...)*. *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>140</sup> Clickworker. (n.d.). *Our Clickworker community*. <https://www.clickworker.com/clickworker-crowd/>

<sup>141</sup> Perrigo, B. (2023, January 18). Exclusive: OpenAI Used Kenyan Workers on Less Than \$2 Per Hour to Make ChatGPT Less Toxic. *TIME*, <https://time.com/6247678/openai-chatgpt-kenya-workers/>

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> The crucial questions that this development is bound to raise are beyond the scope of our study. However, they will be discussed in a forthcoming SKEMA Publika report on the cost of the digital transition.

rest of the world by a screen”<sup>144</sup>. According to him, **what we are seeing today is not so much mass unemployment as a situation of generalised insecurity**<sup>145</sup>. In fact, this new situation is prompting a number of researchers and practitioners to take a closer look at the crowdsourcing and crowdworking platforms that enable companies to recruit micro-workers, to analyse the working conditions and working relationships generated by these practices. This is the aim of the TraPlaNúm project in France, for example<sup>146</sup>.

But it is perhaps in jobs that are in theory unconnected with AI, or only indirectly related to it, that its introduction will have the greatest impact. It is doubtlessly these types of activities that account for most of the 300 million jobs that Goldman Sachs suggests could be automated<sup>147</sup>.

For the United Nations<sup>148</sup>, as for the OECD<sup>149</sup> and France Stratégie<sup>150</sup>, the key issue is to determine whether AI is destined to replace or simply to complement human work. According to Goldman Sachs, *generative* AI can sometimes replace humans, but often it complements the work of humans<sup>151</sup>. In any case, it is and will be a factor of major macroeconomic change. It is estimated that two-thirds of American jobs are likely to be at least partially automated<sup>152</sup>. In these activities, 25-50% of the workload could be automated<sup>153</sup>. But the study goes further and considers that a quarter of available jobs in the United States could be completely automated, versus 18% globally<sup>154</sup>, with the occupations least at risk this time being those involving intense physical labour (such as construction or maintenance).

Although it also leans toward “human-machine complementarity”, Salima Benhamou's analysis emphasises the responsibility of companies in the role assigned to AI in the workplace<sup>155</sup>. In her report for ECLAC<sup>156</sup>, the economist asserts that **the improvement of working conditions as a result of AI deployment is just as credible a hypothesis as alienation and intensification of work**<sup>157</sup>. So neither scenario is a given. Ultimately, human-machine complementarity will depend on the organisational “design” public and private companies choose<sup>158</sup>. **Here again, the learning organisation seems to be the solution for meeting both the challenges associated with technology and the societal expectations of greater autonomy and well-being at work**<sup>159</sup>.

iii. Anticipate and support the development of AI

- Through continuous learning

While current “debates focus on the development of specific skills, based on what we know about the technical possibilities of AI today, it is important to remember that this technology is by nature unpredictable, because it is self-learning”<sup>160</sup>. That is why **organisations must preserve a diversity of skills among their employees, who together must combine technical know-how and multi-disciplinary knowledge to be able to maintain**

<sup>144</sup> Antonio Casilli, quoted in Ronfaut, L. (2022, December 7). L’intelligence artificielle, une précarisation de l’emploi plus qu’une destruction. *Libération*, [https://www.liberation.fr/economie/lintelligence-artificielle-une-precarisation-de-lemploi-plus-quune-destruction-20221207\\_MJDIHYZ3JFB3H6A4SXVWW5VHU/](https://www.liberation.fr/economie/lintelligence-artificielle-une-precarisation-de-lemploi-plus-quune-destruction-20221207_MJDIHYZ3JFB3H6A4SXVWW5VHU/)

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR). (n.d.). *Nouvelles formes de travail via les plateformes numériques – TraPlaNúm*. <https://anr.fr/Projet-ANR-19-CE26-0012>

<sup>147</sup> Goldman Sachs. (2023, March 26). *The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth*. *op. cit.*

<sup>148</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>149</sup> OECD. (2023, February 23). *Six questions about the demand for artificial intelligence skills in labour markets*. *op. cit.*

<sup>150</sup> France Stratégie. (2018, March). *Intelligence artificielle et travail*. <https://www.strategie.gouv.fr/publications/intelligence-artificielle-travail>

<sup>151</sup> Goldman Sachs. (2023, March 26). *The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth*. *op. cit.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>156</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

<sup>157</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> France Stratégie. (2018, March). *Intelligence artificielle et travail*. *op. cit.*

<sup>160</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail (...)*. *op. cit.*

**objectivity when deploying and managing AI.** Since AI algorithms “work by using historical data to identify statistical patterns”, it is essential to guarantee that humans have the ability to “deviate from rules and norms [...] when the environment requires it”, and to nurture their ability to “critically assess the machine's recommendations”<sup>161</sup>. Individuals must “learn how to learn”<sup>162</sup>.

The most significant challenge when it comes to successfully integrating AI, and generative AI in particular, into the workplace, is thus training, and especially *initial* training. Echoing the findings of other researchers<sup>163</sup>, Ethan Mollick, an associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, summed up the shake-up caused by AI's introduction into the world of work in these terms: “In every previous automation threat, the automation was about automating the hard, dirty, repetitive jobs [...]. This time, the automation threat is aimed squarely at the highest-earning, most creative jobs that... require the most educational background”<sup>164</sup>. “Think of AI as generally acting as a high-end intern,” he added. “Jobs that are mostly designed as entry-level jobs to break you into a field where you do something kind of useful, but it's also sort of a steppingstone to the next level — those are the kinds of jobs under threat.”<sup>165</sup> In other words, **the work of young people is in the firing line of this technical innovation.** But are the only alternatives specialisation or job insecurity? Dan Wang, a professor at Columbia Business School, suggests that while not everyone needs to become an AI expert, workers – especially young people – will need to quickly understand how to use this tool to be more effective in their jobs<sup>166</sup>. As is the case now with a range of office software, the ability to use ChatGPT and other AI models will certainly be a prerequisite for employment in a great number of sectors in the future.

**So it is important to take this not-so-distant reality into account right now when it comes to youth education.**

In this regard, several initiatives have sprung up in recent months. Some examples have been posted on the web. For instance, a Sciences Po professor decided to ask his students to hand in two copies each time he gives them an assignment: one produced by ChatGPT, and one they have written themselves<sup>167</sup>. The aim is to enable students to familiarise themselves with the tool and become more aware of their added value, but also to develop the specific cognitive skills they have as human beings, and in particular their critical thinking abilities. Remember that **giving young people the opportunity to exercise their critical thinking faculties was one of the recommendations presented in our EYES study**<sup>168</sup>, cited previously. **The secondary and higher education systems thus seem to be in a position to deploy – not so complex – methods to achieve this.**

But AI's sudden arrival within organisations also raises anew the question of continuing education and where it fits in with initial training. Since this technology is capable of taking on an increasing number of tasks every day, it could accelerate the obsolescence of certain acquired skills<sup>169</sup>. Hence the challenge of, on the one hand, securing career paths within the occupations that will be transformed and, on the other hand, facilitating professional mobility toward other, future-proof occupations and industries for those most exposed to the risk of automation<sup>170</sup>. To this end, a good balance must be struck between the formal knowledge and know-how acquired during formal education and the knowledge based on “experiential” learning, grounded in trial and error and practical problem-solving, creativity and risk-taking in “work situations”, developed through continuing education<sup>171</sup>.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> See France Stratégie in particular. (2018, March). *Intelligence artificielle et travail. op. cit.*

<sup>164</sup> Verma, P. & De Vynck, G. (2023, June 2). ChatGPT took their jobs. Now they walk dogs and fix air conditioners. *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/06/02/ai-taking-jobs/>

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Thorbecke, C. (2023, July 4). AI is already linked to layoffs in the industry that created it. *CNN*, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/04/tech/ai-tech-layoffs/index.html>

<sup>167</sup> Lacroix, A. (2023, September 8). “À tous ceux qui enseignent : une parade contre l'effet ChatGPT !”. *Philosophie magazine*, <https://www.philomag.com/articles/tous-ceux-qui-enseignent-une-parade-contre-leffet-chatgpt>

<sup>168</sup> SKEMA Publika. (2022, January 6). *EYES Report (...), op. cit.*

<sup>169</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail (...), op. cit.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

- Through legislation

In any case, giving individuals the ability to learn how to learn while retaining a sense of responsibility and ethics in decision-making must remain the objective<sup>172</sup>. In the words of the LaborIA Explorer project, the challenge is to **encourage the advent of “empowering AI”<sup>173</sup>, i.e. AI that enables workers to increase their skills, achieve gains in productivity and performance, and leads to a reduction in tasks with low added value etc., while minimising its alienating side and guarding against overconfidence**. To achieve such results, the authors of the survey report recommend including workers in the innovation process, encouraging interactions between the various stakeholders, and “opening the black box”, since lack of information is the chief obstacle to the acceptance and successful deployment of AI systems<sup>174</sup>.

We therefore understand that, looking beyond the issue of the number of jobs destroyed or automated, **AI demands that we collectively ask ourselves *what type of society we want to live in in the future***<sup>175</sup>. Indeed, the risks associated with using ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence systems – generative or otherwise – in the workplace cannot be contained through sporadic, isolated actions, whether these initiatives be individual or organisational. Consider, for example, the problems posed by the use of AI in HR-related activities; this can lead to discrimination, abusive surveillance practices, and automatic decisions that contribute to the erosion of human-centric values. In 2017, globally, 69% of companies with 10,000 employees or more were already using AI to recruit, reward and monitor their employees<sup>176</sup>.

So, once again, salvation will come from appropriate legislation tackling the issue systemically. In the European Union, the GDPR<sup>177</sup> has already restricted the use of AI in the professional environment. Article 22 of this regulation ensures that individuals are not subject to decisions based solely on automated processing, and article 13 stipulates that employers must inform individuals of the existence of automated decision-making when collecting private data. The Artificial Intelligence Act (EU AI Act), which aims to be the world’s first comprehensive AI law, focuses primarily on reinforcing the rules regarding data quality, transparency, human oversight, and accountability<sup>178</sup>. It aims to go even further by addressing ethical challenges in various sectors (health, education, finance, energy, etc.)<sup>179</sup>. To do this, the draft regulation introduces a classification system that gauges the level of risk different AI systems could pose to the fundamental rights of a person in different applications<sup>180</sup>.

Europeans agree that this type of regulation will enable legislators to anticipate the consequences of the introduction of new digital tools, and thus preserve the social contract of work. China, too, seems intent on legislating in this area. As for the United States, which one might have expected to lean more toward some form of self-regulation by industry players, it has finally taken extensive measures with regard to AI and its use, via an executive order from President Biden dated October 30, 2023.

We have discussed AI and the issues surrounding its deployment in organisations at length because this technological (r)evolution will hit young people hard and have considerable effects on the future conditions of their employment. Consequently, if we want the steps taken at the European level to be a source of inspiration for the global reflections underway – or even to become a competitive advantage for our continent – we must exert our legal and normative influence. Although such considerations are beyond the scope of this report, SKEMA Publika has examined the subject of influence in depth<sup>181</sup>.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Condé, J. & Ferguson, Y. (2023, March 13). *LaborIA Explorer (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Benhamou, S. (2022, December). *Les transformations du travail (...)*. *op. cit.*

<sup>176</sup> Chavez, K. P., Bahr, J. & Vartanian, T. (2022, December 6). AI has made its way to the workplace. So how have laws kept pace?. *OECD.AI*, <https://oecd.ai/en/wonk/workplace-regulation-2022>

<sup>177</sup> General Data Protection Regulation

<sup>178</sup> Feingold, S. (2023, March). The European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, explained. *World Economic Forum*, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/06/european-union-ai-act-explained/>

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Revel, C. (2023, March 2). *Influence and Counter-Influence in 2023: Forms, Actors, Excesses and Strategies*. <https://publika.skema.edu/influence-counter-influence-in-2023-forms-actors-excesses-strategies/>

## CONCLUSION

It has emerged from our study that **the absolute priority**, in the face of the technical and societal changes outlined above and the changes occurring in young people's relationship to work, must be – as the ILO suggests – **to promote the formal economy and guarantee decent working conditions**. In a changing environment, the business and employment model of the past often appears outdated, but the model of the future has yet to be invented. We are currently in an "in-between" situation, a source of frustration and misunderstanding.

In order for young people to be able to express their aspirations calmly, and for organisations to be in a position to provide a real solution, their primary needs must be met. Since stable, formal employment is seen as a driving force for life goals enabling greater participation in the social and political spheres, this is the only way that young people will be able to regain confidence in the future. **The reinvention of the social contract of work must therefore be underpinned by non-negotiable minimum guarantees concerning wages and job security**. Hence, these should be better integrated into regulations. What remains to be determined is the level – national or international – at which these standards should be established and adopted, and the degree of constraint – voluntary or mandatory – that would render them most effective.

At the global level, in the face of labour laws that are sometimes non-existent and employers who prefer deregulation, **the ILO could, for example, develop a set of standards with which member countries would be required to comply, along the lines of its Maritime Labour Convention 2006**, which constitutes a global labour code for seafarers, guaranteeing them decent living and working conditions<sup>182</sup>.

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<sup>182</sup> French Senate. (2012, February 15). *Convention du travail maritime* [bill]. <https://www.senat.fr/leg/pj11-376.html>

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- **Ramatoulaye Kassé**, former project manager at SKEMA Publika
- **Claude Revel**, Director of SKEMA Publika
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- **Marie-Bernard Guillaume**, Partner and Director at Mercuri Urval
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