

RIAL SEMINAR ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Rio de Janeiro, May 20 – 21, 2008

Panel 4 – Summary of presentation by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security of Argentina

1. Youth Labor Problems

According to the report of the International Labour Organization, almost half the world's unemployed are young people and 10 million of them live in Latin America. The youth unemployment rate in our region stands at 16%, three times that of adults.

In Argentina, 25.1% of the active youth population (700,000 individuals) are unemployed, more than three times the average figure for the EAP as a whole. In other words, one out of every four young people in the job market is unemployed. Youth unemployment is more severely felt among women, people with lower levels of formal education (particularly those who did not complete their secondary schooling), and the poor.

One worrying figure is the high proportion of young people who neither study nor work: these total 1,200,000 people, of whom 760,000 are not seeking jobs.

Young people accept working for others more readily than adults, but they also face dramatic levels of labor precariousness: two out of every three hold unregistered jobs.

In general terms, youth unemployment in Argentina is not just a problem of young people securing their first jobs. People with low levels of schooling, little or no work experience, and scant social capital experience high rates of turnover between low quality jobs and the alternation of periods of employment and unemployment. This dynamic is also due to the quality of the job supply available to this segment of the population.

2. Youth Labor Inclusion Policy

To address these youth labor problems, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MTEySS) has launched, as a part of its Continuous Training Program, a program called “Young People with More Work and Better Jobs: Training and Employment for Labor Inclusion,” the objectives of which are:

- To create social and labor inclusion opportunities for young people aged between 18 and 24 from poor households and with low levels of schooling.
- To generate integrated actions that allow young people to identify the professional profiles they would like to hold through the construction of their individual work and training plans.
- To help create networks of governmental and non-governmental and public and private organizations in each region, which can then bring young people together in order to improve their educational, social, and job capital.
- To create training opportunities in municipalities and local productive corridors for strengthening the technical and job skills of young people and bringing them into line with the skills sought by local economies.
- To create opportunities whereby young people can finish their primary and/or secondary education and receive their diplomas.
- To create opportunities for training internships at companies located in the municipalities where the Program is in place, as a complement to the training received.
- To improve the social capital of young people through their involvement at training centers and local companies or through the job placement services offered by Employment Offices.

- To encourage participation by companies in the creation of training internships or part-time training mechanisms that will enable young people to consolidate the professional training they have acquired.

3. The Youth Employment Area Proposal: Tool Set

One of the keys to attaining the goals set is the creation of the Youth Employment Areas (AEJs) at the Municipal Employment Offices (OEMs) of the Job Services Network. Youth Employment Areas will provide services including job orientation, training development, help for jobseekers, and job placement, using instruments and working proposals that consider the cultural and socioeconomic problems of young people.

They will also help develop internal training within local companies. Based on those experiences, companies will be able to review their personnel selection procedures and development methods and will see internal training as a strategic instrument for increasing their market competitiveness.

4. What does the AEJ offer young people?

During the Program, with the aim of providing the young person with the opportunity to develop a relevant, high-quality employment path – in line with his/her profile, expectations, and environment – a series of integrated support benefits are made available, based on the construction of his/her job and training plans.

The aim is for the young people to embark on a path that focuses on their own needs: a path that they can follow to then commence the development of a professional and personal project.

This set of benefits comprises:

- Guidance and Insertion into the Working World

Each participant begins his/her involvement with the Program through a work orientation process, beginning with the preparation of their “employment history.” During this process (the duration of which depends on each individual case), the young person can update, review, or construct his/her job and training plan, with support from a guidance counselor and/or tutor. The following key considerations are taken into account: (i) the individual’s needs, interests, and priorities; (ii) the characteristics of his/her social and productive environment; (iii) the recognition of knowledge and skills that are useful for employment already acquired through different forms of learning and experience; and (iv) the need to deploy appropriate strategies for planning and developing the course of his/her training, jobseeking, and incorporation into employment.

During this first stage, the participating young person can also acquire a set of crosscutting skills that are vital in meeting the demands of the social and productive environment.

Based on the previously defined job and training plan, participants can embark on one or several of the following activities, which are organized into modules:

- (i) Job and Training Plan
- (ii) Basic rights and duties of workers
- (iii) Working conditions and health in the workplace
- (iv) Support strategies for jobseeking
- (v) Digital literacy

The participants can follow this initial job orientation process and participate in these modules for a maximum period of two months.

- **Completion and certification of formal studies:**
Young people who have not finished their schooling may re-enter the education system, under any of the forms in which it is available locally, in order to obtain their primary- or secondary-school diplomas. This is an obligatory requirement for remaining in the Program for those who have not finished primary education.
- **Professional training courses:**
In accordance with their interests and job expectations, participants can take the professional training courses offered to them, which serve to impart or strengthen the basic skills and know-how needed to perform the job identified in the job plan.
- **Internships in companies:**
To begin or complete their training, participants can pursue internships in a real working environment. These internships are provided by private sector companies that offer to do so. They include, on either an alternating or successive basis, a period of theoretical training and another period of on-the-job training. The former serves to address basic technical ideas, job-related issues of safety, hygiene, and health, quality and continuous-improvement considerations, as well as other aspects deemed of relevance. During the latter, with the support of a tutor appointed by the company, the young participant completes his/her training by performing the chosen job.
- **Support for jobseeking:**
While they participate in these activities, as well as during periods of recess, participants receive permanent assistance in drawing up their plans, are given access to jobseeking mechanisms, and meet regularly with the Employment Office to assess the progress they have made and the obstacles and contingencies they have encountered. Through this assessment, with the assistance of their tutors, they can redefine their initial jobseeking strategies.
- **Creation of independent enterprises:**
Participants who choose to develop their own enterprises, either individually or along with others, receive support through specialized training courses, a plan for drawing up their business model, funding for its launch, advice regarding applicable legal formalities, and technical assistance during the early stages of business development.
- **Job placement:**
Young people registered with the Program receive, from the Municipal Employment Offices, job offers submitted by companies that are in line with their professional profiles.
- **Permanent tutoring and mentoring:**
Each Program participant receives assistance from a personal tutor who is a member of the Employment Office's technical staff and is responsible for mentoring the participant throughout the duration of the process. To this end, the tutors hold regular meetings with the young people they mentor.

5. What services and benefits do companies receive?

One goal of the Young People with More Work and Better Jobs: Training and Employment for Labor Inclusion program is to convert a group of local companies into professional learning centers. With support from the Municipal Employment Offices, they draw up proposals for offering the participants practical internships, through which they develop their specific skills needed for a particular job in a real workplace environment.

- The Youth Employment Areas advise the companies in identifying those positions in which the participants can receive training, in planning the activities of the internship, including

those necessary for the job to be performed safely, in identifying the company officer who will be responsible for mentoring the participant, and in defining a system for assessing and certifying the job skills acquired.

6. How is it implemented?

The starting point for implementing this service is the signing of an annual agreement between the Municipality and the Secretariat of Employment, which specifies the rights and obligations of the parties.

Under this agreement, the Offices undertake the fitting and equipping necessary for an AEJ to be set up, locate human resources in line with the profiles demanded by each position, and then undertake a hiring process in conjunction with technical staff members from the Secretariat of Employment. The Ministry of Labor equips and specializes each Employment Office by providing human resources, equipment, training, and specific technical assistance for its new tasks. It also funds the economic assistance necessary for the enrolment of young people in the Program, which will depend on the kinds of activities to be performed.

This serves to strengthen the ability of the OEMs, through their AEJs, to provide guidance, counseling, and consultancy services for the youth population.

7. What are the requirements for participation?

For young participants:

- Aged between 18 and 24.
- Currently unemployed.
- Low level of schooling and socially at risk.

For municipalities:

- Existence of an Employment Office strengthened by the Ministry.
- Availability of appropriate premises to install youth-specific services.
- Proposal filed with the Ministry of Labor for hiring the human resources needed to set up the AEJ.
- Facilitation of links with institutes of education in the province.
- Establishment of partnerships with institutions and civil society organizations capable of gathering together and involving local youth.