Helping Europe tackle youth unemployment

A €5m European Union research project on youth unemployment, using innovative multidisciplinary approaches involves the voices of young people and businesses from the outset.

Across the European Union over 5 million young people under 25 are unemployed. In the worst affected countries in southern Europe, more than 50 per cent of young people are without work. In the UK three-quarters of a million young people are looking to jobs. A new project, led by the Centre for Research on Management and Employment (CROME) at the University of Brighton Business School, is using state-of-the-art academic analysis to produce policy recommendations and practical resources in collaboration with organisations aimed at helping young people find work.

The four-year project Strategic Transitions for Youth Labour in Europe (STYLE) began in March 2014, and builds on a range of established international networks and projects funded by the Leverhulme Trust and Santander Universities.

“In previous research we found that ‘governed’ internships linked to educational programmes or active labour market policies, are much more likely to have beneficial outcomes than unregulated ‘open market internships’. Positive governance conditions relate to contract, duration and partnership arrangements. When employers, interns and educational providers understand the mutual benefits is when they work best,” said Dr David Lain, early career researcher at CROME, who is leading the research on internships.

“Central to the project are a number of international advisory partners, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Office (ILO) and the European Youth Forum, together with a representative group of 24 universities from 20 countries across Europe. Employers have a key role to play in the project through the advisory network, which includes temporary work agencies and Business Europe, an organisation that represents the views of a range of enterprises in 33 European countries. The project’s advisory boards meet regularly to discuss the specific issues in their communities and the research analysis.

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Professor Jacqueline O’Rielly, Director of CROME and Co-ordinator of STYLE, said: “The real value of CROME’s research will be its in-depth analysis into the skills gap and ways to tackle long-term unemployment effectively. It is very exciting to be involved in something that brings us so close to the latest academic research. I am very keen personally that we have something that unites an academic, rigorous policy approach with the fieldwork we do and have been doing for years.”

Abi Levitt, Director of Development Services at the employment charity Tomorrow’s People.

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