

The Government is not to blame for the lack of employment; society is.

By **Catie Thorburn**

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President

Translation from the article "**El Gobierno no tiene la culpa de la falta de empleo; la sociedad, si.**"
Originally published in Spanish, in El Correo, 11 December 2009.

Available on <http://www.elcorreodigital.com/vizcaya/20091211/economia/gobierno-tiene-culpa-falta-20091211.html>

Experts from around the world convened in Bilbao to discuss and analyze the employment situation of young people on the European labour market.

Young people were at the centre of yesterday's debate during the 4th International Encounter of Experts organised by the Novia Salcedo Foundation. Its president, Jon Arrieta, considers the attitude towards the future to be very problematic but maintains that this is a problem that could be resolved by adopting "a different economic model".

During the meeting - in which different international experts took part – potential solutions were discussed to address the issue of young people "who don't study, nor look for work" and thus avoid the creation of a "lost generation".

Catherine Thorburn, a Scottish business woman with extensive experience in international business as well as the promotion of creativity and motivation amongst the youngest, maintains that, to avoid losing out young people should become employment activists.

What's the real situation young people are facing on the European job market?

There is a generic unemployment problem that is only going to get worse. I believe that the existing education system doesn't prepare young people for the real world. School does not prepare them to make decisions regarding the professional path that they may want to follow. Correct and useful information does not reach them, nor is anyone trying to help them.

So the real problem is already present at the school stage?

Yes, it begins with the education system. During the fifteen years that children spend at school they should be introduced to the different possibilities that exist in terms of employment and what will exist in the future.

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At the moment that possibility does not exist but it should be obligatory from the very beginning of adolescence.

What's the way forward – what are the options – for young people who have not had these guidelines?

Self-help. If an individual really wants to go forward and find a solution, he or she will find a way. Available research information has it that 60% of those that find work do so via contacts and networking. That's to say: through family and friends... They should use this network, be more proactive, join forces and unite in groups. In short, they should become "employment activists".

Furthermore, they should be less reluctant to start something by themselves. And on a community level as well as from their surroundings they should receive more support and not be punished for failing. They should be encouraged to try all over again.

There is talk of a "lost generation". Do they need more help from the authorities and the government to move forward?

The Government is not to blame for the lack of employment; society is. It is a mental attitude. Nowadays young people actually see benefits in being unemployed, which was unthinkable just a few years ago. Many think that working is not worth the trouble, since it actually pays off to receive unemployment benefits.

We no longer teach them how to think, to analyze, and to get to know themselves and their own potential. And this can not simply be "picked up" on the internet.

So what future waits the present generation of school leavers?

They have to realize that, at least in Spain, immigration will present an opportunity as well as a threat. States such as Russia and Belarus are keen to join Europe and have a large and highly qualified workforce that is willing to accept work below their qualifications. It is their responsibility to find work. They can not expect "the system" to hand it to them on a tray.