

# Minister wants entrepreneurship studied in higher learning institutions

Ghana's minister of Employment and Labour Relations, Nii Armah Ashietey, has called for the introduction of entrepreneurship as a course in institutions of higher learning in ECOWAS Member States.

Exposure to the rudiments of the course may influence some young people to "seriously consider self-employment as a better option than looking for jobs", the minister said while opening a four-day regional workshop to build the capacity of Member States on the development of National Youth Employment Action Plans on Tuesday, 7 May 2013 in Accra, Ghana.

The minister who was represented by his deputy, Antwi Boasiako Sekyene, decried the "serious disconnect between the world of work and some of the courses offered by our higher educational institutions", which has contributed to the shortfall of human resources in certain fields whereas schools are "producing many graduates in sectors where their expertise is not needed and there is even a glut".

While calling for a better linkage between countries' labour needs and the supply of human resources by our universities, Ashietey assured that the ministry would soon "embark on re-tooling our training institutions."

"It is hoped that this way numerous unskilled and unemployed people will be given the much-needed skills over a longer period, examined and given the appropriate certificates to find jobs," the minister said.

He then described as critical, the challenge of unemployment and called for "effective collaboration, cooperation and coordination of our efforts to maximize our efforts".

## Youth Employment Action Plan

In her opening remarks, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Human Development and Gender, Dr. Adrienne Diop, noted the gap in most member states between strategies and necessary policies and tools to tackle the challenge of youth unemployment holistically.

The commissioner, who was represented by the director of Gender, Youth, Sports and Employment and Drug Control, Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe, stated that the ECOWAS Commission had started implementing the regional Youth Employment Action Plan which was adopted in 2012 in Dakar, Senegal.

According to her, one of the key priority areas identified in the action plan is to support the development of member states' capacities in developing their own national youth employment plans.

She noted that a serious developmental issue such as youth unemployment calls for a systematic and guided approach to effectively address it, and expressed the hope that the workshop would enrich the participants so that member states can have their action plans and implement them "earnestly to ensure the problem of unemployment is addressed coherently".

In his goodwill message, the representative of the ILO Regional Office for Africa, Diego Rei, described the National Action Plans on Youth Employment as tools for delivering decent employment for young people.

## **Learn from one another**

He expressed the hope that the workshop would allow for the establishment of a peer review mechanism which would enable member states to learn from one another, saying that this was even more relevant for ECOWAS as only a few countries have so far set up their own National Action Plans.

Rei reiterated the ILO's commitment to its partnership with ECOWAS in other areas of common interest, including the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, labour migration and social protection.

The workshop is specifically to provide the right regional frameworks to effectively address the challenge of youth unemployment and promote decent work in the region.

It is also planned to train member states and develop their capacities on the development of National Youth Employment frameworks, as well as acquaint them with ILO guidelines for the preparation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment.

In attendance at the workshop are representatives of the Ministries responsible for Youth Affairs and the National Youth Councils or National Youth Associations in ECOWAS Member States, the ECOWAS National Unit in Ghana, the UNDP and ILO.

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