

Forum: Citizen Forum on Labour

Theme: Empowering the youth to drive/thrive/embrace and match the requirements of the future labour market

Name of Citizen : Julia Safianik

Family Status : • Married ○ Single • Children (1 child)	Level of Education : ○ Primary • Secondary ○ University
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1. How are you concerned by the subject?

My name is Julia Safianik, and I am a 25-year-old male currently employed in a small sweatshop in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The sweatshop I work in is one of many subcontractors working under a large corporation. When the larger company receives a big order, they outsource some of the manual labour to us. My company itself employs only about 50 employees.

As someone who works in the informal sector, I experience the disadvantages of this type of work first-hand. For starters, I do not earn a liveable wage - I don't make enough money to support myself, let alone my family. Consequently, I have to work over 50 hours of overtime per month to afford basic necessities such as food. This is the reality for millions of people in Vietnam.

What is more, I do not have a stable employment contract, and I could be dismissed at any time, without compensation. This also means that I lack not only job security, but also access to health insurance and a pension. Furthermore, abuse and intimidation from supervisors in the workplace are very common, making harassment and pressure to meet excessive demands a common aspect of the workday.

At 25 years old and without higher qualifications, I fear for my future on the labour market. Having at least 35 years of working life ahead of me, and considering the implications for future generations, I take into consideration the upcoming changes in manufacturing and automated technologies. The International Labour Organization (ILO) projects that upwards of 86% of garment and footwear jobs in Vietnam could face displacement due to new technologies. This could affect approximately 3 million people, including myself, who may ultimately lose their jobs as a result of automation.

I am also a parent who wants a better future for my child. Therefore, I strongly support the use of advanced technologies, including AI programs, as an extra tool for learning. I unfortunately cannot give my son the opportunity to attend a private school with advanced resources, and I know from my own experience that the under-resourced schools he will attend may not be able to provide the same level of support that AI can. This is why I believe that all children should have equal access to these programs. I also consider that teaching children how to use these programs correctly and to their full

educational and subsequently professional benefit is essential to avoid negative outcomes such as cognitive offloading.

2. What do you propose at your level?

From my point of view, formalising the informal sector is crucial. I believe that training programs for individuals currently employed in the informal sector would be a valuable and realistic measure to implement. These programs should be targeted at countries where a significant portion of the working population is employed in the informal sector.

Although Vietnam already has detailed worker protection rules on paper, enforcement gaps and economic pressures make these laws extremely difficult to enforce. I believe that another effective strategy would be to support the underfunded local authorities who at this time don't have the means, time, or manpower to monitor the large number of informal businesses in the country. This would help reduce loophole exploitation and lack of surveillance/enforcement of existing laws.

Today, the manufacturing sector of Vietnam is already undergoing a massive transformation. It is crucial that we continue to enforce the regulations that have already been established. The National Assembly of Vietnam introduced the 2025 Employment Law, replacing decade-old rules to protect short term and part-time workers by setting up an unemployment insurance system for anyone with a contract of at least 1 month. This law also formally mandates corporate funding and resources dedicated to continuous upskilling of employees in order to avoid structural unemployment for future generations. However, these laws are difficult to enforce. So, we must work towards developing practical and realistic methods of ensuring that they are effectively implemented for everyone, through additional funding and targeted approaches to smaller, under-resourced communities.

Last but not least, the growing use of AI in everyday life makes preparing children in schools to use it appropriately increasingly indispensable. Vietnam has started a formal AI education program across general schools nationwide, starting in the 2026-27 academic year. Thanks to this program, which ranges from AI assisted teaching tools to structured AI education programs, students can gain early exposure to emerging technologies. Nevertheless, this brings us back to the disparity between public schools and prestigious private academies. While this program is technically mandated to reach all schools nationwide, in practice, less privileged and rural schools face severe implementation gaps compared to wealthier urban ones. For this reason, I propose that the next step should be ensuring that this program effectively reaches all students, and that they all have equal access to it.

In conclusion, empowering young people to thrive in the future labour market requires dedicated work, effective enforcement of labour protections, and equal access to quality education for all. My experience in the informal manufacturing sector shows how low wages, insecure contracts and lack of social protection keep workers vulnerable, while automation and new technologies make upskilling increasingly urgent. For this reason, governments, employers and local authorities must cooperate to formalise informal work, invest in training, and ensure that existing labour and education reforms provide equal opportunities to all communities. Only this way can we give current workers and the next generation, including my own child, a real chance to adapt and build a better labour market, and thus a better future.