

Youth poverty a ticking time-bomb

| 09:54 Almost half the recipients of social benefits in Switzerland are under the age of 25, notes a youth commission that urges changes to remedy the situation.



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The Swiss federal commission for children and youth (CFEJ) has denounced the growing precarious financial situation faced by young people and called for action. Close to one in two recipients of government social aid in the country are under the age of 25. The poverty and social exclusion of children and young people remains a largely “taboo” subject, the commission said in a report this week.

But 45 percent of recipients dependent on social benefits are young people, compared to just 1.5 percent for seniors over the age of 65, the commission said. The social system has forgotten the under-25s who account for 100,000 of the country’s poor, said Pierre Maudet, a Geneva cabinet minister and president of CFEJ. The situation is a ticking “social time bomb” ready to detonate, according to the group.

Among the principal factors leading to the dire social conditions is difficult family situations brought about by unemployment and a large number of children. It is necessary to focus particular attention on children, with targeted measures, said Chantal Ostorero, an expert in social issues from Vaud. The CFEJ has proposed 55 recommendations, including making the government more responsible for assuring access to the workplace for young people. Seventy percent of young people receiving social aid have not received job training. The commission recommends establishing a national fund to finance such training.

Young people are also increasingly hobbled by debts. To address this issue, the commission suggests that credit companies devote one percent of their annual revenues (SFr5-6 million a year) to counseling young people about budgeting and avoiding debt.

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