



MLADINSKI  
SVET  
SLOVENIJE  
NATIONAL  
YOUTH  
COUNCIL  
OF SLOVENIA

**MSS-176-13**

***Policy Paper***

**YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**  
***1<sup>st</sup> revised edition***

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **ON YOUTH POLICIES**

In the past few years, youth policy in Slovenia has entered the socio-political agenda, and has become increasingly important and taken into account. Since 2010 it is also defined in the Act on the Public Interest in the Youth Sector (ZJIMS)<sup>1</sup> as: “ *.../ a harmonised set of measures of various sectoral public policies with the purpose of promoting and facilitating the integration of youth in the economic, cultural and political life of the community and appropriate support mechanisms for developing youth work and operation of youth organisations, which is carried out in cooperation with autonomous and democratic representatives of youth organisations and professional and other organisations /.../*«.

The National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS), the umbrella organisation of national youth organisations and the key partner in the social dialogue in the field of youth, strives for the development of youth policies and for the improvement of the situation of young people. With this in mind, MSS adopts policy documents tackling different sectorial policies, which call upon relevant stakeholders to implement the proposed actions. Such documents – the present one tackling youth employment being one of them – are a basis for MSS to, enter into discussions with policy makers, to react to current affairs, to inform young people and the wider public and undertake other measures.

A definition of youth says that one is young until one has reached the desired points of growing up (has moved away from one's parents, has created a family, has become employed, has finished schooling, etc.), and has thus become autonomous and independent. Youth policies intend to regulate precisely these key transitions in the lives of individuals. Through policy papers, MSS wants to form these processes according to the views of young people

### **POLICY PAPER "YOUTH EMPLOYMENT"**

Employment is one of the key youth policy fields, due to its role in the process of young people's transition to independence. The aim of this paper is to present and define the problems of youth employment, to outline certain inconsistencies and to propose measures for improvement.

In this framework we wish especially to:

- present the systemic mistakes that force young people to take on inappropriate forms of employment and work, which do not offer adequate security;
- encourage decision-makers to formulate systemic measures to prevent youth unemployment;
- point out the difficulties that arise in this area because the education system prevents smooth transitions from school to employment, and does not stimulate the development of counselling and lifelong learning career guidance;
- propose systemic improvements of the current approach to youth employment, which will address young people, youth organisations, formal education institutions, employers and authorities;

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<sup>1</sup> Act on the Public Interest in the Youth Sector (ZJIMS). Available at: [http://www.ursm.gov.si/fileadmin/ursm.gov.si/page\\_uploads/pdf/ZJIMS/ZJIMS\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ursm.gov.si/fileadmin/ursm.gov.si/page_uploads/pdf/ZJIMS/ZJIMS_ENG.pdf). Original available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=97951> (19<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

- this way contribute to a stronger position of young people in the labour market, and improve the conditions for youth autonomy.

## DEFINITIONS

**Formal education** is a planned process of learning or gaining knowledge, which follows pre-determined goals, takes place in formal education and training institutions, and leads to generally recognised diplomas and qualifications.

**Non-formal education** is also a planned process of learning or gaining knowledge, but it takes place outside formal systems of education and training; it does not necessarily lead to formally recognised outcomes. It emphasises participants' activity and self-initiative. When compared to formal education methods, those of non-formal education are more diverse, whilst the relationship between the teachers and learners is interactive and non-hierarchical. Non-formal education is more flexible, as it adapts to the needs of participants and the society in general. Non-formal learning can take place in the framework of organisations and civil society groups, or at the workplace.

**Informal learning** applies to knowledge and skills gained as side effects of living and functioning. Informal learning takes place daily in the family, through social networks, media, etc. It is largely experiential (e.g. learning from mistakes). As opposed to formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is unplanned.

Both in the European Union and in Slovenia the concept of **flexicurity** has increasingly been used as an answer to the question of what the labour market should look like. Flexicurity attempts to reconcile the needs of employers and employees, and thus to link flexibility with security; this is done by ensuring that employees can safely change jobs, whilst it aims at improving the competitiveness of enterprises and at retaining the European Social Model. Flexicurity should increase the flexibility of the labour market, the organisation of work and employment relations, and should at the same time stimulate security – security of employment, social security, and income security.<sup>2</sup>

**Flexible forms of employment** denote a term used for non-standard jobs. While standard employment is characterised by open-ended contracts, flexible forms of work include part-time jobs, fixed-term contracts, self-employment, copyright contracts or contracts for specific work, work at home, work in shifts, sharing of the work place (combining two workers in one full-time equivalent post), triangle employment (agents offer their own workers to other employers), bogus self-employment (the employee is forced to by the former employer to self-employ) and standby work (workers wait for work at home).<sup>3</sup> In Slovenia, student work also falls in the category of flexible forms of employment.

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<sup>2</sup> Wilt Hagen, Ton. 2008. Flexicurity: from principles to process and progress. Available at: [http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/uploads/ModuleXtender/Trscontent/4/TRS%20H\\_Wilthagen\\_final%20version.pdf](http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/uploads/ModuleXtender/Trscontent/4/TRS%20H_Wilthagen_final%20version.pdf) (26<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Feltd A., N. Jewson. 1999. Global Trends in Flexible Labour. London: Macmillan Business.

**Social entrepreneurship** is briefly defined as *"a form of entrepreneurship which strengthens social solidarity, promotes cooperation and volunteering."*<sup>4</sup> The European Commission defines social enterprises as *"those enterprises that strive for the interests of the community (social, societal, environmental) and not for profit maximisation. The products or services they offer are usually innovative, so are their organisational structure and forms of production. They often employ vulnerable groups (socially excluded persons), and contribute to social cohesion, lower societal differences and better employment."*<sup>5</sup>

In Slovenia this form of entrepreneurship is defined by the Social Entrepreneurship Act as *".../a continued undertaking of social entrepreneurship or continued undertaking of other activities under special employment conditions, engaging in the production or sale of goods or services in the market, whereby profit making is not the exclusive nor the main aim of the activity."* In addition *„social entrepreneurship strengthens social solidarity and cohesion, promotes cooperation and volunteering, boosts the innovation capacity of the society to solve social, economic, environmental and other problems, provides additional offer of goods and services in the public interest, develops new forms of employment, provides an additional work places and social integration and professional reintegration of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market (goals of social entrepreneurship)."*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Available at: [http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/delovna\\_podrocja/trg\\_dela\\_in\\_zaposlovanje/socialno\\_podjetnistvo/](http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/trg_dela_in_zaposlovanje/socialno_podjetnistvo/) (27<sup>th</sup> July 2013).

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. 2011. The EU Single Market. Social Entrepreneurship. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/social\\_business/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/social_business/index_en.htm) (27<sup>th</sup> August 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Zakon o socialnem podjetništvu (ZSocP), Ur. l. RS, št. 20/2011, čl. 3. Available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=102703> (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

### 1. Access to jobs is the basis for youth autonomy

Young people enter adulthood through gaining competences and developing personal circumstances that enable them to live and act independently. The first step on this way is to finish formal education, but already the second step is to become socially and economically independent through employment. The aggravated transition period causes a paralysis in gaining one's autonomy, which strongly marks the rest of one's life. Young people without (decent) jobs do not reach financial independence, which prevents them from organising their housing. This situation is followed by a delay in creating a family, and coupled with a lack of opportunities to establish and maintain social networks leads to larger social exclusion. Therefore, employment is one of the main conditions for a suitable transition from youth to adulthood. Employment enables young people to develop personal dignity, reach full autonomy and realise personal goals in life.

### 2. Youth employment is one of the main challenges of today

**The number of young people in Europe is falling.**<sup>7</sup> According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia „young people represent /.../ a quarter of the world's workforce, but also half of the world's unemployed.”<sup>8</sup> Youth unemployment in Europe is usually two to three times higher than the total unemployment rate.<sup>9</sup> According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) the EU needs to create 6 million jobs, in order to bring the labour market to pre-crisis conditions. The ILO estimates that to resolve the problem of youth unemployment in the EU, 21 billion Euro would need to be invested in active labour market policy.<sup>10</sup>

Youth is characterised by frequent transitions between jobs and by high unemployment. Young people lack work experience but on the other hand often enter the labour market armed with fresh theoretical knowledge and numerous social and technical skills.<sup>11</sup>

Young people are a very adaptable and educated segment of the work force but their **employment is mostly insecure, lower paid**, based on fixed-term contracts. They often do work. However, they are not covered by labour legislation, as they are formally not employed. They will often do the

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<sup>7</sup> In 1990 there were over 450.000 young people aged 15-29; in 2012 this number fell to just over 364.000. The last years have also seen a fall in the share of young people in the total population, from 22,6% in 1990 to 17,7% in 2012. By 2060, compared to 2012, almost 58.000 fewer young people are estimated to live in Slovenia. Future demographic change will strongly affect the labour market, since the share of older people (aged 65 and over) will significantly increase. In 2012 older people represented 16,6% of the population, in 2060 their share will rise to 31,6%. The pressure on public finance, especially the pension and healthcare budgets is predicted to grow, which means that in the future Slovenia should further promote active ageing and prolonged work activity, and raise the inclusion of the active population in work. This implies increasing work activity of older people, women, and youth. (Reference: Zavod RS za zaposlovanje, Ministrstvo za delo, družino, socialne zadeve in enake možnosti. 2013. Mladi in trg dela. Available at: [http://www.ess.gov.si/\\_files/4809/mladi\\_in\\_trg\\_dela.pdf](http://www.ess.gov.si/_files/4809/mladi_in_trg_dela.pdf), 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Vertot, Nelka (2009). Mladi v Sloveniji. Statistični urad Republike Slovenije. Ljubljana.

<sup>9</sup> Ignjatovič, Miroljub and Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. In Med otroštvom in odraslostjo, ed. Urban Boljka and Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM and IRSSV.

<sup>10</sup> ILO. 2013. World of Work Report 2013. EU snapshot. Available at: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_209607.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_209607.pdf) (15<sup>th</sup> August 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Ignjatovič, Miroljub and Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. V Med otroštvom in odraslostjo, ur. Urban Boljka and Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM in IRSSV.

same work as other employees with the same employers but on the basis of an author contract, self-employment, etc. Since these forms of work involve elements of an employment relationship, they should be based on an employment contract. Young people also take on part-time jobs, temporary jobs, short contracts or student jobs, and work in other unstable forms, mentioned above. Slovenia has a distinctively segmented labour market – young people's jobs are mostly insecure and more flexible, while the jobs of other social groups are mostly safer (open-ended) and less flexible.<sup>12</sup>

Slovenia is characterised by fixed-term employment; more than  $\frac{3}{4}$ <sup>13</sup> of the current labour offer is represented by this type of jobs.<sup>14</sup> Also, Slovenia ranks first<sup>15</sup> among all European countries in terms of the number of fixed-term jobs for young people.<sup>16</sup> Such jobs do not provide sufficient social and financial security, however. Young people have difficulties obtaining loans or becoming independent, they move away from their parents late and also establish their own family late. Slovenia faces the concept of "semi-adulthood"; young people continue living with their parents until 30 years of age; similarly, the age of mothers bearing their first child is moving towards the age of 30.<sup>17</sup>

Another typical issue for Slovenia is the structural inconsistency between the offer of educated labour force, and the demand in the labour market. Every year the education system provides different profiles than those actually needed in the labour market. Up to 2011, over 60% of young people enrolled in humanities, while the labour market still requires a lot of workers educated in technical and natural science professions.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, through education, young people do not gain all competences and knowledge that employers expect them to show at the work place.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ignjatovič, Miroljub and Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. In *Med otroštvom in odraslostjo*, ed. Urban Boljka and Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM and IRSSV.

<sup>13</sup> In the last months 80 % of all vacancies were fixed-term. Source: Zavod RS za zaposlovanje. Mesečne informacije, August 2013 (available at: [http://www.ess.gov.si/\\_files/5047/MI0813.pdf](http://www.ess.gov.si/_files/5047/MI0813.pdf), page 7, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013), September 2013 (available at: [http://www.ess.gov.si/\\_files/5105/MI0913.pdf](http://www.ess.gov.si/_files/5105/MI0913.pdf), page 7, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013), October 2013 (available at: [http://www.ess.gov.si/\\_files/5174/MI1013.pdf](http://www.ess.gov.si/_files/5174/MI1013.pdf), page 8, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Milošević, Vesna. 2010. Kako bo trg dela reševal prihod mladih s fakultet. *Human Resource Management Magazine* 8 (33): 12–15.

<sup>15</sup> In the first half of 2012 almost a third of young people (20-34 years old) were in fixed-term employment in Slovenia; the share in the entire working population was 16,7 % (source: Statistični urad Republike RS 2012. *Mladi v Sloveniji, 2011*, available at: [http://www.stat.si/novica\\_prikazi.aspx?id=%205114](http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=%205114)). We could claim that this form of employment is characterised by dualism: fixed-term employment is prevalent (66%) among youth (up to 34 years of age), whilst few (4%) older people (above 55 years of age) have a fixed-term job (Source: Statistični urad RS. 2012. *Aktualno na trgu dela: prožne oblike zaposlitev, brezposelnost in neaktivnost*, available at: [http://www.stat.si/novica\\_prikazi.aspx?id=5045](http://www.stat.si/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=5045)).

<sup>16</sup> Eurostat, European Commission. 2009. *Youth in Europe: A Statistical Portrait*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-78-09-920/EN/KS-78-09-920-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-78-09-920/EN/KS-78-09-920-EN.PDF) (12<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Lukič, Goran. 2008. *Strategija zaposlovanja mladih v družbi znanja*. 1. Knjiga. Analiza stanja. Ljubljana: Študentska organizacija Slovenije.

<sup>18</sup> The structure of tertiary enrolment shows a decrease for social sciences, and the overall tertiary enrolment has dropped by 2,9% in 2011/2012, the second year in a row, and due to demographic change. Relatively speaking, the largest decrease was in social and business sciences and law, with constant falls since 2006. In 2011/2012 the share of students enrolled in these fields has fallen to 33,6%. Despite that it was, according to latest international data, still above the EU average. (Reference: Urad za makroekonomske analize in razvoj. 2013. *Poročilo o razvoju 2013*. Available at: [http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user\\_upload/publikacije/pr/2013/POR\\_2013s.pdf](http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user_upload/publikacije/pr/2013/POR_2013s.pdf) (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Milošević, Vesna. 2010. Kako bo trg dela reševal prihod mladih s fakultet. *Human Resource Management Magazine* 8 (33): 12–15.

### 3. Youth employment is key for a successful development of the society

The right to work is a basic human right. Work enables survival, realisation of one's potential, development of personality and social responsibility. On the other hand, unemployment causes poverty and social exclusion, which is unacceptable from the perspective of human rights and basic values, and is thus not in public interest.

The work potential of young people finishing formal education is very high, and forms a basis for high efficiency at work, as it is coupled with high adaptability, the desire to work and continue learning, as well as creativity and innovativeness. Obstacles in the field of youth employment thus have several long-term negative consequences for the individual, the society and the state:

- a) This means a **loss of important work potential**, which could bring new developmental dimensions and could contribute to strengthening the general welfare of the society.
- b) This further means **more expense on the side of the state, in the form of social transfers, and a major loss of investment in education**, while it could lead to financial gain by employing young people – who would regularly pay taxes and contribute to the social, healthcare and pension budgets.
- c) Obstacles in youth employment **slow down the process of a young person becoming independent, of her/his personal development, and of her/his awareness of social responsibility and the meaning of active citizenship**, which can lead to detachment and apathy. The work becomes only a means of survival, and its added value diminishes day by day. In addition to that, young people in long-term unemployment become stigmatised and may lose self-confidence and impetus.
- d) The consequences of youth unemployment are reflected in high figures and are detrimental to the public budget, the economy and the entire society. According to Eurofound youth unemployment in Slovenia has led to the loss of 342 million Euro in 2008 and 465 million Euro in 2011. This estimate includes all costs of lost profit, unpaid taxes and increased social transfers. The reasons should be sought in the economy that is incapable of (re-)employing young people.<sup>20</sup>
- e) Individual consequences of unemployment are evident in one's (mental) health, psychological reactions, social and financial situation, and free time. Young unemployed people are increasingly exposed to long-term unemployment, which leads to a low self-image, lack of self-confidence, late moving away from parents and late autonomy as well as the postponing of creating a family. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) are more exposed to this.<sup>21</sup>
- f) **The category of so-called „working poor“ has emerged among employed people in the last years. Young people are amongst the most vulnerable groups;** they may be employed

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<sup>20</sup> According to Eurofound youth unemployment in the EU has caused the loss of 153 billion Euro in 2011, which equals 1,2 % of the entire EU GDP. (Adapted by: Milošević, Vesna. 2013. Pridobivanje in izbor mladih kadrov v slovenskih podjetjih in prilagoditev postopkov značilnostim mladih. Magistrska naloga. Available at: [http://www.ediplome.fm-kp.si/Milosevic\\_Vesna\\_20130619.pdf](http://www.ediplome.fm-kp.si/Milosevic_Vesna_20130619.pdf), page 20, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Milošević, Vesna. 2013. Pridobivanje in izbor mladih kadrov v slovenskih podjetjih in prilagoditev postopkov značilnostim mladih. Magistrska naloga. Available at: [http://www.ediplome.fm-kp.si/Milosevic\\_Vesna\\_20130619.pdf](http://www.ediplome.fm-kp.si/Milosevic_Vesna_20130619.pdf), pages 20–22. (15<sup>th</sup> September 2013).

but their income is so low that they are more exposed to poverty than other groups. For different reasons young people are paid less than others in the labour market. One of the reasons is that they more often do work that does not correspond to their level of education, or the profession they studied for, and are employed in lower paid and inadequate work places. It is also characteristic of young people that they are at the start of their professional path and due to a lack of experience are forced to take up entry-level jobs with lower wages. Moreover, young people may end up in temporary contracts, without the status of student or secondary student, or as unemployed persons. They earn just enough to lose the right to social support, but not enough to cover their basic monthly costs.

#### **4. Work in youth organisations increases youth employability**

**The study on the impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on youth employability**<sup>22</sup> has demonstrated that through work in youth organisations, young people gain at least five of the key competences sought by employers: communication, leadership and decision making, teamwork, organisation and planning, etc. The study has shown that youth organisation experience increases youth employability, so such young people are more competitive in the labour market.

For the society and the state to develop successfully, youth employment and all activities that create adequate conditions for it, are therefore key. Youth employment must be encouraged and supported from an early age and be enabled once young people leave the education system.

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<sup>22</sup> Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability. University of Bath, ICF-GHK. 2012. Available at: [http://www.projects.aegee.org/yue/files/ReportNFE\\_Employability.pdf](http://www.projects.aegee.org/yue/files/ReportNFE_Employability.pdf) (1<sup>st</sup> March 2013).

## KEY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT ISSUES IN SLOVENIA

**Young people in Slovenia face an aggravated transition into the labour market.** This situation (similarly as the general situation in the labour market) is influenced by economic movements and (un)employment trends. The situation of youth entering the workforce is also marked with a weak link between the education system and the labour market. Young people, after finishing school, on average wait for 10 months to get their first job.<sup>23</sup> The ratio between sufficient (i.e. those with low demand in the labour market) and deficient professions (i.e. those highly demanded by the labour market) and the educational profile of youth seeking employment, is extremely uncoordinated.<sup>24</sup> Formal education institutions only rarely create links with the economic sector, which also leads to a lack of practical experience, in addition to inadequate career choice with regard to the needs in the labour market. These weak links put young people in a less favourable position when seeking quality jobs. Throughout education (elementary, secondary, and tertiary) one can also note a significant lack of career guidance.<sup>25</sup>

**Young people enter the labour market late.** One of the reasons is that a large percentage of young people are in tertiary education, which is one of the goals of the Lisbon strategy, and is something EU Member States strive for. However, it prolongs the education period and thus pushes the entry into the labour market to a later stage. This also points to a contradiction between a growing pressure towards ever higher education levels, which enable the entry into the labour market, and a simultaneous devaluation of educational achievements. It leads to the so-called education achievements' inflation problem. In the difficult transition between education and employment this is reflected in underemployment of young people (youth accept jobs inappropriate for their level of education, which increases the competition for jobs intended for young people with a lower level of completed education). Many students use the opportunity to prolong studies mostly due to few opportunities for employment; the studies are prolonged also due to a (still) inappropriate implementation of the Bologna reform. Finally, the current regulation and misuse of student work as a form of employment sometimes also render the transition into the labour market more difficult.

**Non-formal work experience (all work experience gained outside regular employment) is not recognised by the state, formal education institutions, and especially not by employers.** Non-formal work experience gives young people a variety of competences contributing to their personal development, social responsibility and active citizenship. They are particularly important for the development of work capacity and work habits of young people; they play an important role in the labour market but in the absence of systemic recognition their role in youth employment depends on the discretionary will of the employer. Hence young people face severe difficulties when entering the labour market, which mainly requires formal work experience, and regardless of their potential capacity, they are discriminated in the employment process. While in education young people also gain experience through volunteering and student work. Non-formal work experience is almost the only form of experience young people in education can get, and can be equal to formal work experience in terms of expertise and content.

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<sup>23</sup> Tomislav Silaj. 2009. Vrednotenje vladnega programa za spodbujanje vpisa na naravoslovne in tehniške študijske programe v obdobju 2005–2008: diplomsko delo. Available at: <http://www.mss.si/datoteke/dokumenti/silaj.pdf> (1<sup>st</sup> September 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Zavod RS za zaposlovanje. 2010. Deficitarni in suficitarni poklici. Available at: [http://www.ess.gov.si/trg\\_dela/aktualno\\_o\\_trgu\\_dela/deficitarni\\_in\\_suficitarni\\_poklici](http://www.ess.gov.si/trg_dela/aktualno_o_trgu_dela/deficitarni_in_suficitarni_poklici) (26<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Niklanović, Saša. 2009. Povzetek strokovnih podlag za izgradnjo systemskega pristopa k vseživljenjski karierni orientaciji v okviru operativnega programa razvoja človeških virov 2007–2013. Ljubljana: Kadis.

**Non-formal education and training forms part of the majority of young people's lives, while in formal education; however, due to its non-recognition they have difficulty entering the labour market and developing their career path.** During formal education young people use free time to participate in activities, education and training organised by youth and other non-governmental organisations, other providers and companies. Non-formal education brings them key competences that should increase employability, but practice shows otherwise. Also, we should not disregard **informal learning**, taking place during daily activities related to work, family or free time.<sup>26</sup> For example young people are exposed to new technologies and modern knowledge that they use to achieve other goals. Most young people learn to use the computer at home, not in school; the same goes for mobile telephones, online applications, etc. Volunteering brings skills in working with groups, working in teams, etc. However, all this knowledge and competences do not facilitate finding the first job because no adequate system of validation of informal learning is in place.

**When looking for their first job, young people are forced to take on insecure, unstable, and particularly inappropriate positions.** Young people represent one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market, especially due to a lack of formal work experience. The working conditions imposed on them in their first jobs include low wages, fixed-term contracts, incompatibility of the job with their education, and low social security. This leads to difficulties in becoming independent, as the access to housing credits is limited; it also represents a high risk of return to unemployment. The consequence is a weak economic and social position of youth, limits their autonomy and slows down their working potential. Having to wait for the first job for a long time, young people suffer from psychological fatigue, insecurity and as a consequence, lower motivation for work.

**Young people who have a real business idea and a perspective for creating jobs have little expert support in their endeavours.** Young people lack information about opportunities for self-employment and are not supported to venture into it. **Formal education does not equip them with sufficient entrepreneurial skills** (i.e. those that enable to put ideas into life – creativity, innovativeness, risk-taking, project planning and project management skills) and, together with the recurring unstable economic situation, reduces their motivation for self-employment. A lack of adequate safety nets for unsuccessful attempts at self-employment render socially and economically weaker young people less inclined to realise their entrepreneurial potential, and creates and maintains unequal opportunities for all. Long-term functioning and maintenance of a business is another difficulty, so is the lack of support and entrepreneurship education. The formal education system is not open for entrepreneurial subjects and learning of entrepreneurship skills.

**Recent years have witnessed abuse of self-employment as a form of hiring the workforce.** Self-employment is no longer the path to realise a business idea, but rather a common form of youth employment. It has become the most cited reason for removal from the unemployment register.<sup>27</sup> Self-employment is becoming an alternative form of engagement instead of a regular employment contract.<sup>28</sup> In recent years subsidies for self-employment in the context of active employment policy

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<sup>26</sup> These are e.g. project management skills or ICT skills gained at the workplace, language knowledge and intercultural competences gained while living abroad; ICT skills gained outside work, and skills obtained through volunteering, culture, sport, youth work and domestic work (e.g. caring for a child). (Reference: Svet Evropske unije. 2012. Glavni rezultati zasedanja Sveta EU za izobraževanje, mladino, kulturo in šport, 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Sporočilo za javnost. Available at: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/SL/educ/134959.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/SL/educ/134959.pdf), 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Zavod RS za zaposlovanje, Ministrstvo za delo, družino, socialne zadeve in enake možnosti. 2013. Mladi in trg dela. Available at: [http://www.ess.gov.si/\\_files/4809/mladi\\_in\\_trg\\_dela.pdf](http://www.ess.gov.si/_files/4809/mladi_in_trg_dela.pdf), page 12, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013).

<sup>28</sup> The share of self-employed (not employees) in the total employment numbers was 8,3% in the second quarter of 2012, which is 1,3% more than in the second quarter of 2009. The phenomenon of bogus self-employment in Slovenia is demonstrated through the labour force survey, according to which around 10 % of

have only simplified the bogus self-employment and created a new category of „employees“ who are in fact economically dependent workers.<sup>29</sup>

**Social entrepreneurship is an underexploited form of entrepreneurship as an opportunity for youth.** In general the society has too little systemic and planned information about opportunities for social entrepreneurship. Young people have too little knowledge and information to start their business. Youth work as a potential form of social entrepreneurship raises the question whether youth organisations can obtain the status of a social enterprise, since most of the work in youth organisations is done by volunteers. One of the conditions to register as a social enterprise is precisely the employment of at least one person (depending on the type of social enterprise<sup>30</sup>). In this sense social entrepreneurship remains an unattainable goal for most youth organisations.

**In seeking employment, in the labour market as well as in terms of working conditions, one can identify discrimination and a considerable lack of equal opportunities between different categories of job seekers and workers.** The largest differences occur on the ground of age. Whilst some older people wish to retire at a reasonable age, the raising of the retirement age prevents them from doing so. On the other hand, young people would like to be employed but have too few opportunities for it.

The Slovenian labour market also suffers from too much flexibility and a too low security in certain parts (fixed-term contracts, part-time jobs, student work, and occasional jobs).<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, it is very safe and insufficiently flexible for those employed with standard employment patterns –open-ended contracts, in full-time jobs, and on regular working schedules. In such

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the self-employed work mainly for one client and around 5% work mainly at the premises of that one client. The active employment policy has also contributed to the growth of self-employed persons, as it enlarged the opportunities for self-employment subsidies in 2008–2011. The share of partial employment has fallen for the second consecutive year and was at 8,5% on the second quarter of 2012 (1,2% less than in the second quarter of 2009). (Reference: Urad za makroekonomske analize in razvoj. 2013. Poročilo o razvoju 2013. Available at: [http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user\\_upload/publikacije/pr/2013/POR\\_2013s.pdf](http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user_upload/publikacije/pr/2013/POR_2013s.pdf), 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).

<sup>29</sup> The Employment Relationships Act (ZDR-1, art. 213, 214) defines economically dependent workers as self-employed persons who on the basis of a civil law contract personally work under the conditions of economic dependence, against remuneration, independently and for a longer period of time, and do not employ workers of their own. Economic dependency means that at least 80% of annual income is received from the same client. The self-employed enjoy legal protection according to the law; they are protected in certain aspects of the Act, related to the prohibition of discrimination, the application of minimal notice periods, unsubstantiated dismissal reasons, assurance of payment for work, and the enforcement of liability for damages. (Reference: Zakon o delovnih razmerjih (ZDR-1), Ur. l. RS št. 21/2013. Available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=112301>, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2013).

<sup>30</sup> A non-profit legal entity may acquire the status of a social enterprise if it is:

- established with a view to permanently performing the social entrepreneurship activities and employing at least one worker in the first year of its operation and at least two workers in subsequent years (hereinafter: social enterprise of Type A); or
- established with a view to employing the most vulnerable persons in the labour market and being engaged in a particular activity by permanently employing at least one third of these workers out of the total staff (hereinafter: Type B social enterprise);
- and if all other conditions stipulated by the Act and the act governing the legal structure of particular types of a non-profit legal entities are fulfilled. (Reference: Zakon o socialnem podjetništvu (ZSocP), Ur. l. RS št. 20/2011. Available at:

[http://www.mddsz.gov.si/fileadmin/mddsz.gov.si/pageuploads/dokumenti\\_\\_pdf/zaposlovanje/Act\\_SE\\_rev\\_cl ear.pdf](http://www.mddsz.gov.si/fileadmin/mddsz.gov.si/pageuploads/dokumenti__pdf/zaposlovanje/Act_SE_rev_cl ear.pdf), 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Ignjatovič, Miroljub and Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. In *Med otroštvom in odraslostjo*, ed. Urban Boljka and Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM and IRSSV.

circumstances young people do not develop a sense of loyalty to the employer nor the wish to contribute to developing their workplace. This negatively affects the results of their work, their potential, knowledge and skills, as well as their motivation and responsibility for wider engagement in the society.<sup>32</sup>

**A separate problem is related to the quality of special forms of work young people engage in, such as student work, apprenticeships and traineeships taking place during or after education, where the rules on fair conditions also do not apply; young trainees are mainly used as cheap or free workforce (in the cases of voluntary traineeships).**

**Next to age grounds, discrimination in employment and working conditions arises also on the grounds of gender and other personal circumstances.** This most often puts discrimination against young people on other grounds on a side track. Equal opportunities in employment and working conditions should apply to everyone, including in relation to equal pay for equal work of men and women, and job security. Among the most vulnerable are obviously young people with fewer opportunities (especially less educated youth and early school leavers), who have difficulties meeting even the basic pre-conditions for proper involvement in the labour market: they have limited access to information, education and non-formal work experience. This renders their labour market activity largely impossible, which is a violation of their human rights.

**Brain drain is increasing.<sup>33</sup> In the absence of jobs and with the limited potential for development in some areas young people look for work abroad.** Both the unemployed and those who already work in Slovenia decide to move away, as they find better opportunities, better pay or better working conditions in other countries. The economic crisis, the shrinking of job options in the economy and the reduction of the public sector have „forced“ young people to look for work abroad even more. Alongside this trend, Slovenia also sees instances of clientelism in employment. There are no new opportunities for young people. Brain drain means that Slovenia is losing its best, most promising people, and it means a cost – the loss of human capital that grew on big public investment. In addition to the brain drain, a number of dissatisfied Slovenians wish to move abroad for shorter or longer periods, but have not yet had the opportunity.<sup>34</sup> Hence the danger of a continued loss of human capital in the future is large, mainly among young people with tertiary education, which will negatively affect innovation, entrepreneurship and cohesive social development.

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<sup>32</sup> The goal of the new labour legislation from 2013 is to diminish labour market segmentation. It has brought some benefits for youth but the results are yet to be seen. Some of these benefits include: shorter waiting periods before obtaining the right for financial compensation for unemployment, obligatory coverage of travel costs and meals for apprentices, severance pay for fixed-term contracts, limitations to fixed-term contracts and certain financial burdens related to such contracts.

<sup>33</sup> Since 2009 emigration from Slovenia has been considerable. Around 2.600 citizens moved abroad between 2005 and 2007, and almost 4.300 between 2008 and 2011. Among those over the age of 15, 38.5 % were aged 25–39 with secondary (50.1 %) or tertiary (35.1 %) education. Among emigrants with tertiary education the share of those aged 25–39 is high and much higher than in 2005. Emigration data shows that the number of high educated people among emigrants is growing. In 2011 there were 919 and 22,9 % among all emigrants, most of them were aged 30–34 (a quarter of all emigrants with tertiary education). Based on this and following negative trends in the labour market we could infer that people with high education have emigrated due to low employment prospects (Reference: Urad za makroekonomske analize in razvoj. 2013. Poročilo o razvoju 2013. Available at:

[http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user\\_upload/publikacije/pr/2013/POR\\_2013s.pdf](http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user_upload/publikacije/pr/2013/POR_2013s.pdf), 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).

<sup>34</sup> According to Eurobarometer (2011) there were 64,2% of people aged 15-35 in Slovenia, who were ready to seek work in another European country (EU: 57,5 %). (Reference: see previous footnote.)

**The imbalanced development in urban and rural areas and certain regions** significantly impacts youth autonomy. There are more jobs in urban centres, posing challenges for daily commute. We notice that the transport infrastructure and public transport are imbalanced and mainly badly developed. Young people tend to move to larger towns, which affects the housing situation. Also, ever fewer young people return to the place of origin, which additionally impedes the coherent development of all regions.

**Cooperatives<sup>35</sup> are an excellent but in Slovenia rather underused option for youth (self) employment.** There have been some efforts based mainly on the well-functioning Italian example, but have not borne fruit as yet. Cooperatives are an excellent opportunity for job creation, for lowering unemployment and for economic growth.

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<sup>35</sup> A cooperative is an organisation with a number of members not determined in advance; its purpose is to pursue economic benefit and develop economic or social activities of its members. It is based on free access, freedom to leave, equal cooperation and management by members. A cooperative may manage its activities via a dependent company (Zakon o zadrukah, ZZad, Ur. l. RS št. 97/2009, available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?urlid=200997&stevilka=4249>, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation of young people in the labour market as identified in the present policy paper must urgently be improved. The National Youth Council of Slovenia strives for the implementation of several measures by the state, formal education institutions and employers, as the central pillars of potential change in this area.

1. If Slovenia wishes to become a country of knowledge-based development and innovation, cooperation **between the education system and the labour market** must be promoted. In order to achieve better links between them we propose the following measures:

a) We call upon formal education institutions to better connect with the labour market. On the one hand this means the adaptation of programmes and numbers of places in different educational fields to the needs for knowledge required by the labour market. In order to achieve this, respective institutions need to produce a long-term employment strategy, taking into account forecasts of labour market movements. The educational structure of young people needs to be better adjusted to the situation in the labour market.

On the other hand, formal education institutions, in cooperation with the public sector and the economy, must ensure that all users can gain practical experience in their field of education. Links between the education system and the employers must also develop through concrete assignments, e.g. home assignments, bachelor or master theses, and school/university projects, which can relate to individual companies and their work. We propose that the practical part of studies takes place at the workplace. Both employers and educators must be encouraged to assign such tasks, as well as to motivate young people to complete them, for example by introducing awards, subsidies or similar incentives.

- b) **We call upon decision makers to regulate the field of traineeships by law so that a traineeship is a one-off activity, it does not replace regular work and every apprentice has a proper mentor to follow and guide her/his work and ensure progress is made.** The purpose of a traineeship is to equip the individual for independent work in a given workplace, and to provide experience and competences that will enable an easier transition from education to the labour market.

The state must develop a **framework for quality traineeships**,<sup>36</sup> including the following elements:

- a traineeship agreement,
- the definition of professional and learning goals and mentoring/guidance,
- adequate recognition of the traineeship,
- reasonable duration,
- adequate social protection and remuneration,
- transparent information on rights and obligations.

We invite decision makers to introduce a **national scheme of paid traineeships** and adopt the needed legal rules for **voluntary traineeships**, which will ensure equal opportunities, fair remuneration, adequate social protection and fair working conditions to everyone. Voluntary traineeships should not be allowed.

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<sup>36</sup> Reference: Evropska komisija. 2012. Delovni dokument služb Komisije. Okvir za kakovost pripravništev. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7620&langId=sl> (2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013).

We further call upon formal education institutions to introduce obligatory **practical experience** in education programmes, which do not foresee traineeships after the completion of education. This would close the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge and would allow students to gain competences for better competitiveness in the labour market, and would ease their transition into employment.

2. We call for an **active introduction of life-long career guidance and individual planning, in elementary, secondary and higher education**, which will inform young people about all possibilities and opportunities in education and employment, and at the same time allow them to learn about labour market dynamics. This means that all young people at all levels and fields of education, and regardless of regional affiliation or education institution, should have equal and thorough career guidance. These processes need to take place within school/study programmes, be obligatory for all pupils and (school) students, and need to be given also on a wider scale – either as out-of school or as facultative programmes. The cooperation of school counsellors, the Information and career guidance centres, the Employment Service of Slovenia and various career centres as well as other providers of career guidance/planning in this process is crucial.

In this sense it is also important to put the social value of professions on an equal level and to instil in young people the consciousness about their choice of education relative to the possibilities to gain employment; this would shorten the period of transition from education to the labour market.

3. Conditions must be established to enable young people to **benefit from the opportunities for education alongside regular work** (e.g. to work three days and study two days a week). In this sense we propose to support the establishment of so-called study enterprises, as exemplified by the University Medical Centre, but in a way which will enable young people to have a regular job, instead of only a practical experience. At the same time, recognising the importance of lifelong learning, we ask for an **eased transition from the labour market back into the education system**. This would enable young people who start working after completing secondary education, to later on continue with tertiary education, if they so wish. This way, also young people who already have practical experience would return to universities, which would enrich the learning process, and would help build a tolerant culture, with fewer pressures on young people to enter tertiary education immediately after completing secondary. The latter might also lead to a more balanced division of demand and supply in the labour market.
4. We call upon state authorities to **adequately regulate the system of student work**, including especially an increased control of its use (also by increasing the number of inspectors) and abuse through chain student work in the same workplace. They should also look for solutions to other key issues, which widely affect the areas of (un)employment and the trends in the Slovenian labour market. First and foremost, student work should be officially recognised as formal work experience.

Systems of validation of work experience already exist.<sup>37</sup> However, they need to be formalised to enable young people to prove their experience and enter the labour market more smoothly. A unified system of registration for secondary and tertiary education programmes needs to be put in place to prevent potential abuse. Certain attempts at

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<sup>37</sup> An example of such a system is *Moje izkušnje (My Experience)*.

diminishing the scope of student work and its regulation have happened through legislative change but long-term consequences will not be seen for several years.<sup>38</sup>

5. We call upon state authorities, formal education institutions, employers and other relevant actors to **establish a system of recognition and validation of non-formal work experience**, which should be developed together with youth organisations and other civil society organisations, and should enable the certification of non-formally acquired knowledge and experience with certificates. Non-formal experience should be recognised as having the same value as formal experience.

Systemic recognition of non-formally acquired work experience would significantly strengthen the position of young people in the labour market, would meaningfully increase their employability and would consequently positively influence their development, independence and autonomy.

It is crucial for young people that the non-formal work experience they acquire through youth work, volunteering or student work, is properly noted. Efficient tools for this already exist<sup>39</sup> but must be recognised also by state authorities, formal education institutions, employers and other stakeholders; inspired by such tools, a system of registering non-formal work experience must be developed, which will enable to prove non-formally acquired work experience to the employers. Rules must be set as to what may be registered and which knowledge and competences are valid and taken into account by employers. A practical proposal would be to introduce financial support for volunteering from the Employment Service of Slovenia; registered unemployed people could be entitled to higher social support if they would complete a certain number of hours volunteering in a non-governmental organisation.

We call upon state authorities, formal education institutions, employers and other relevant actors to **set up an adequate system of recognition and validation of competences gained through non-formal education and training and informal learning**. The system should be developed in cooperation with youth and other non-governmental organisations and social partners, and should allow demonstrating non-formally acquired knowledge and skills. Non-formal and informal knowledge should have the same value as that gained formally.

Systemic recognition of non-formal and informal knowledge would significantly improve the situation of young people in the labour market, boost their employability and positively affect their development, independence and autonomy.

6. **Increasing employment in the non-governmental (NGO) sector, particularly the youth sector and following active employment policies in line with the youth sector**, would be another applicable solution to help young people get their first job.

The NGO sector offers short-term, transitional and long-term jobs and enables training for a high-quality work force. Compared to the European average, its employment potentials are far from realised; in EU Member States, the non-governmental sector employs 8,1% of all

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<sup>38</sup> The Fiscal Balance Act has increased the taxation of student work, which has rendered it less attractive. This has led to a 30% decrease of student work and tax-wise has made it comparable to other forms of work.

<sup>39</sup> Examples: Europass tools – Europass CV, Europass Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Europass Diploma Supplement, Europass Certificate Supplement, Youthpass, Nefiks, e-Nefiks, Moje izkušnje.

people in employment, whilst in Slovenia the rate in 2004 was only 0,74%.<sup>40</sup> The NGO sector is friendly to youth employment due to its very nature: it also takes in people without formal work experience. However, it is financially not strong enough to provide a sufficient number of jobs for them. At the same time this sector can be the key partner of formal education institutions in ensuring that all users can obtain important practical experience. Such partnering, however, does not take place in Slovenia.

Youth organisations struggle with shortages of staff and finances, and offer potential for youth employment, particular seekers of a first job and the long-term unemployed. Youth work contributes to better youth competences, better employability and competitiveness in the labour market. In youth organisations young people gain communication skills, leadership and decision-making skills, experience teamwork, and gain organisational and planning skills, etc.<sup>41</sup>

The NGO sector is an excellent platform for youth employment. Work there is adaptable, varied and offers a space to grow and learn, thus going beyond seeing work as solely the source of income. This is due to its wider socially beneficial aspects, which also nurture the values of active citizenship, responsible living and participation in the society, thus raising the quality of life in the country. Hence we call upon state authorities to significantly increase the financing for employment in the NGO sector, to primarily ensure financial support for the sustainability of NGOs, not only project financing, which mostly does not even allow, let alone encourage NGOs to employ people.

Last but not least we call upon state authorities and formal education institutions to link the NGO sector with the formal education system in terms of providing practical training for young people in education. This way the employability of young people who gain practical experience in NGOs already within their time in education can be significantly increased, and the opportunities for later regular employment in the NGO sector can grow.

7. We call upon state authorities and formal education institutions to **actively support entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurial mind-set among young people**, which needs to be in line with the needs of the economy. Young people need to have simple access to information and professional counselling in this area. Mechanisms supporting innovativeness, creativity and development potential among young people need to be set up, inter alia through awards for young innovative entrepreneurs. We also invite formal education institutions to increase the emphasis on gaining entrepreneurship-related competences. Schools should promote creativity, entrepreneurship and innovative thinking.

We particularly strongly encourage supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship for certain groups, especially young women and people with disabilities. All young people must have equal opportunities to develop entrepreneurship, also those with fewer opportunities who decide to take on this path to a lesser extent than others.

Active employment policy subsidies for self-employment should only be available to those with a concrete entrepreneurial idea and business plan. Mechanisms preventing abuse of self-

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<sup>40</sup> Memorandum nevladnih organizacij. 2009. Available at: [www.turisticna-zveza.si/aktualno/303-1.doc](http://www.turisticna-zveza.si/aktualno/303-1.doc), p. 3 (19<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

<sup>41</sup> See Raziskava o vplivu neformalnega izobraževanja v mladinskih organizacijah na zaposljivost mladih (footnote 21).

employment as a replacement of employment contracts need to be set up; young people are the main victims of such abuse and their interests need to be protected.

Students should again be allowed to undertake activities as self-employed entrepreneurs. The so-called student companies are an excellent opportunity for students to set up contacts with employers and businesspeople. This allows them to gain knowledge and experience already during studies, upgrade them and create new jobs and opportunities for other young people and other social groups. In such a way at least some graduates will not be first job seekers but experienced seekers of an employment or a business opportunity. Such students should enjoy all student rights (subsidised food vouchers, basic health insurance), and certain reductions through lower social and healthcare contributions, tax breaks on income, etc. The „student company“ does not mean pursuing maximised profit but is a temporary form of work during the transition from education to employment.

8. We call upon state authorities, entrepreneurs and all other relevant stakeholders to **ensure a friendly environment for youth entrepreneurship**, where young people will be able to develop their business ideas with the support of mentors, and with adequate safety nets in case of eventual new unemployment. Mentoring should be accessible for all young people throughout the process – not only until the point when they enter self-employment, but also at later stages. A youth-friendly entrepreneurial environment should be set up through strengthening technology parks and business incubators, which would not only provide the space but a holistic financial, infrastructure-related and professional support to also enable young people to learn from mistakes. We call upon state authorities to set up measures that will provide for lower taxes for **self-employed young people**.<sup>42</sup>
9. We invite the authorities to adopt **programmes to finance the establishment and development of social enterprises, and provide additional tax breaks for social enterprise start-ups**. Special financing and support models for social entrepreneurship should be formed, adapted to the functioning of organisations in the youth sector. In this regard, the provision on the obligatory number of employees should be removed from the list of conditions to obtain the status of a social enterprise. Social enterprise development programmes should work together with formal education institutions to provide information about opportunities for social entrepreneurship, its rules and financial sources.
10. We call upon authorities to **ensure adequate infrastructure for the functioning and development of social entrepreneurship**. It should allow the setup of incubators based on the existing business incubators, info points along the lines of the VEM and e-VEM points, mentoring for the preparation and implementation of business plans, mentoring schemes for social enterprise management and operation. It should furthermore offer lower tax rates for social enterprises, eased access to loans and subsidies for the setup of a social enterprise.
11. We call upon state authorities to **introduce measures for active employment policy that will motivate employers to hire all young people who completed formal education**. In this framework employers need to be given adequate tax breaks, subsidies or other incentives. Measures already in place for final-year students and long-term unemployed youth, in the frame of active employment policy, are not sufficient; equal opportunities

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<sup>42</sup> This does not imply measures such as „economically dependent workers“ through the Employment Relationships Act (2013, art. 213, 214), but measures that really lower financial burdens for young self-employed persons.

and more opportunities for all young people need to be ensured. The measures should allow funding and support for reskilling and should provide a widely accessible system for the validation of national qualifications.

12. We call upon state authorities to **balance the advantages and disadvantages of fixed-term and open-ended contracts**. This could encourage employers to employing young people on open-ended contracts and could increase the security and reliability of fixed-term contracts. Legal and by-law regulation of employment are very important in this sense, determining the conditions of hiring and firing (types of contracts, rights and duties, allowed forms of youth employment, etc.) and enabling more or less flexibility in employment.<sup>43</sup> Such regulation should enable a faster transition to more stable and safer jobs and at the same time diminish the asymmetry between standard and non-standard (flexible) jobs.<sup>44</sup> The labour market should orient itself towards flexicurity, which can be achieved with adequate tax reforms.
13. In order to decrease inequality on the ground of age, a **new intergenerational dialogue** must begin, which will lead to an agreement about equal access to social security in the field of employment as well as during retirement. We call upon state authorities to more adequately regulate the access to pension schemes and other tools for security and autonomy of young people, and to implement a fair reform of the pension system. At the same time we propose to introduce mentoring schemes in employment, where older workers can mentor younger employees, which brings significant added value to young people, older people and employers.
14. **Equal opportunities, fair remuneration, adequate social security and fair working conditions for all must be ensured**, without discrimination on any personal ground. Next to age discrimination special attention must be paid to discrimination on the ground of gender, and to young people with fewer opportunities.
15. We invite employers to introduce measures **ensuring young people's satisfaction at work and decreasing stress levels**, which would increase loyalty to employers and work efficiency, and would motivate young people to continue developing knowledge, skills, creativity and innovativeness. Mechanisms to encourage and award good and innovative ideas need to be put in place, especially by increasing job security. Young workers should have the opportunity to continue developing expertise through training and education. A reliable and adequate system of lifelong learning must be put in place, to ensure constant adaptability of workers and a continued high level of productivity of business.
16. We suggest that young people in regular jobs be **actively included in democratic processes at the work place**. We call upon trade unions to set up youth boards and trade union structures, through which they will have the opportunity to take part in decision making, particularly with regard to youth-specific issues, so that their voice will be represented in the social dialogue alongside all others'. This would strengthen the feeling of autonomy

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<sup>43</sup> Ignjatovič, Miroљjub and Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. In Med otroštvom in odraslostjo, ed. Urban Boljka and Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM and IRSSV.

<sup>44</sup> Mutual Learning Programme. 2008. Thematic Review Seminar: The development of national flexicurity policies in response to labour market challenges (summary). Available at: [http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/uploads/ModuleXtender/Trscontent/4/TRS%20H%20Summary%20report\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mutual-learning-employment.net/uploads/ModuleXtender/Trscontent/4/TRS%20H%20Summary%20report_EN.pdf) (26<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

among young people, which has long-term benefits for their personal growth, wider social engagement and responsibility and active citizenship.

17. We call upon employers to establish **active policies reconciling family and professional life, the concept of socially responsible companies and family-friendly companies in the work environment**. Proper balance between family and professional life is especially crucial for young people who enter the period of adulthood through gaining autonomy, establishing a family, etc. Young people should be allowed to work flexible hours, work from home and have adequately regulated medical and parental leave, with a special emphasis on equal opportunities between women and men.

We invite decision makers to introduce measures co-financing social security contributions of employers for employing young mothers with children up to 3 years of age.

18. The ministry in charge of labour should provide systemic, cross-sector measures under the **Youth Guarantee** programme. This should enable activation measures to every individual within four months of becoming unemployed, be it through a job, training or continued education.

19. Decision makers must give a perspective to the young educated labour force:

- a) We call upon decision makers, education institutions and companies to ensure an environment that will enable the **creation of new jobs at universities** for highly educated researchers and innovators. Research and development departments at universities can use their knowledge to develop products needed also by companies. Such a synergy brings added value to the economy (to the companies who lack own research and development departments, or lack knowledge, as well as to high-tech companies who wish to develop semi-products but lack staff) and to young highly educated people, as well as to education institutions – universities.
- b) We call upon decision makers to set up a system to verify procedures for new employments, and thus **create a transparent employment system**. Despite the lack of jobs and the persisting clientelism, young people need to have a chance to be employed if they fulfil the criteria.
- c) The ministry in charge of economic development shall formulate a **strategy for attracting foreign investors** who will boost economic growth and job creation with their knowledge. The strategy must include a range of measures making Slovenia more attractive, such as the elimination of certain administrative obstacles in the field of employment and management, and the introduction of a stimulative tax policy.
- d) We call upon decision makers to overturn the trend of emigration by attracting Slovenian citizens back to Slovenia. These people have enhanced their knowledge abroad and their „international“ dimension can help them create new opportunities and jobs in Slovenia (e.g. by bringing in conference tourism, the seat of a non-governmental organisation or a branch of a company, a franchise, etc.). Opportunities should be planned for people who have moved abroad, in order for them to return to Slovenia.
- e) We call upon all decision makers to prepare concrete **measures for their respective areas, to create new jobs** and boost entrepreneurship both in the civil society and the economy. Special measures should be set up to promote employment in the youth sector and in science, where there is the largest potential for young people to create added value.

20. We invite all decision makers to use special measures for a cohesive development of urban centres, rural areas and regions. They should promote youth employment, enable mobility and access to housing in all regions, both in urban and rural areas.
21. We call upon decision makers to study the opportunities for youth employment in cooperative systems, by:
  - a) implementing an experimental development of cooperatives and following up on their development (ensuring basic conditions for projects over at least a five-year period),
  - b) promoting and enabling adequate research projects around cooperatives (development possibilities in different economic fields and in services for individuals, etc.).

We also invite decision makers to establish support mechanisms for cooperatives and employment in them, by:

- a) promoting support and counselling services for cooperatives and social enterprises (theoretical basics and practical implementation),
- b) promoting and funding education for cooperatives and social enterprises in the context of the Public Employment Service,
- c) ensuring adequate education programmes at all levels from elementary to postgraduate education (education for cooperation in elementary and secondary schools, and practical work in further education),
- d) preparing and supporting a complementary self-employment programme in the context of cooperatives' creation, in the same way as regulated for self-employed businesspeople,
- e) ensuring guarantees or loans intended for the setup of cooperatives.

## **CONCLUSION**

A regulated youth employment policy in Slovenia is a necessary step towards the improvement of the position of young people in the labour market, and consequently towards ensuring sustainable development of the society. Young people are often the most overlooked part of the society, as a group which in the opinion of many does not need special measures. However, such reasoning does not hold, seen the importance of transitions one goes through during youth. If we strive for a healthy, harmonious and interconnected society, giving a perspective for the future and enabling a happy and productive life, young people need to be properly provided for.

The National Youth Council of Slovenia works to foster cooperation of all stakeholders which can in any way contribute to the improvement of existing conditions. We strive to develop a long-term and coherent policy corresponding to the needs of young people, enabling their successful integration in the labour market, and motivating them for lifelong learning. In this way, we can importantly influence the quality of life in Slovenia and the future of our society.