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Policy paper

YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

■ *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) 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, consequently, for the improvement of the situation of young people. With this in mind, MSS adopts policy documents tackling different sectoral policies, which call upon relevant stakeholders to implement the proposed actions. Such documents – the present one, tackling youth volunteering, being one of them – are a basis for MSS to, inter alia, 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 properly regulate 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 volunteering«

Volunteering brings a learning experience, contributes to one's well being and enables one to develop social skills and competences. Youth volunteering is particularly important because young people contribute to the development of the society, solidarity and democracy. In order for as many young people as possible to be able to take part in voluntary activities, we must ensure that the fast-changing societies provide effective support measures for learning and exchange, as well as for sharing of good practice at the local, regional, national and wider levels.

In order to stimulate youth volunteering we aim to use the present document to first and foremost achieve:

- improved conditions for the implementation of different forms of volunteering and its quality,
- the recognition, acknowledgement and validation of the voluntary engagement of young people,
- improved reputation of volunteers and volunteering.

The purpose of this policy paper is to define youth volunteering, establish its relevance, expose related problems, and propose measures to improve the area and the conditions for volunteering to function.

Definitions and explanations

Definition of volunteering

Several definitions of volunteering exist, differing mainly in scope or level of generality. Most of them include the following characteristics:

- free will, or own decision to take part,
- being unpaid,
- being useful for other individuals, social groups and entire society.

The Volunteering Act defines volunteering as a socially beneficial unpaid activity of individuals, who, through their work, knowledge and experience contribute to the quality of life of individuals and social groups, and to the development of a solidary, humane and equal society.¹

European Volunteer Centre gives a definition of volunteering in which volunteering relates to all forms of voluntary activity, both formal and non-formal, at full or part time, at home and abroad. Individuals undertake voluntary activities at their free will, choice and motivation; therefore, volunteering is not linked to financial gain. It benefits volunteers, communities and the whole society. It is also a means for individuals and associations to address human, social or environmental needs and concerns. Formal volunteering adds value but does not replace the work of professional paid staff.

Modern volunteering is personal or organised expert or lay work, exercised by someone who helps individuals, groups or the community to survive materially and to uphold interpersonal harmony; this can take place through informing, teaching or other preventative activities; through work, therapy, care or other support in solving problems or distress; through research and organisational work, or in another manner. Such support takes place:

- unofficially, with no material gain and for people outside one's own home;

¹ *Volunteering Act* (ZProst), Ur. l. RS št. 10/2011. Available (in Slovenian) at <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=102198> (21 January 2012).

- during one's free or available time, next to own obligations; at her/his own reasonable will;
- out of humanitarian solidarity for human needs and problems.²

Volunteering among youth and in youth policy

Volunteering represents a vital part of the youth field and is related to many other areas, important for young people, mainly youth participation and non-formal learning. Youth participation within youth organisations, other civil society organisations, schools, etc. mainly consists of voluntary engagement. Such activities can also be characterised as non-formal learning, as they include the gaining of competence and work experience outside the framework of formal education.

Youth organisations provide an environment that is best adapted to the needs of young people in different fields of organising. They accordingly have most experience in the transfer of knowledge and experience to their members, and have at their disposal the mechanisms needed to include young people in the organisation, in order for the organisation to be preserved and strengthened – and the same goes for youth volunteering.

At the same time youth organisations must develop and improve their knowledge, experience and mechanisms. The nature of voluntary work must be adapted to the age and to psychophysical capacities of volunteers. Volunteers in youth organisations are active in different areas: they are in charge of various projects, education, international exchange, cultural and social activities, campaigns, etc.

Other organisations that include young volunteers, need to pay special attention to them and ensure that adequate support measures are in place (e.g. supervision of their work, mentoring). It is recommended that all organisations involving young volunteers develop goals and work plans together with their volunteers. These should serve as a basis and assurance for the development of the young person, which guide them towards gradual taking on of responsibilities.

False and limited understandings of volunteering

In everyday life we often come across outdated and limited understandings of volunteering, or understandings that are perceived as such only in those areas where the word »volunteering« is specifically used. People often link blood donation actions or fire fighters' associations with volunteering. Years ago this term was related to the activities of work brigades. This is mostly the result of the daily use of terms »voluntary blood donation action«, »voluntary fire fighters' association«, »voluntary work brigade«, etc. We often link volunteering with humanitarian work, such as care for the ill, poor, older people, people with special needs, etc. This is certainly an important part of volunteering, but from the perspective of young people, two main forms of volunteering merit emphasis:

- activism – it includes activities aimed at »improving the world« – fighting for rights, reactions to day-to-day events, forming and communicating opinions and positions, etc., in short: the expression of active citizenship, and
- work in organised groups of young people, such as youth organisations, associations, project groups, etc., where activities take place, which allow young people to realise their common interest or mission.

² Ramovš, Jože. 2007. Prostovoljski dnevnik pri osebem prostovoljskem delu z ljudmi in učenju lepega medčloveškega sožitja. V *Spodbujanje prostovoljnega dela v lokalnem okolju*, Gabrijela Hauptman. 2011. Ljubljana: Zavod IRC. Available (in Slovenian) at http://www.impletum.zavod-irc.si/docs/Skriti_dokumenti/Spodbujanje_prostovoljnega_dela_v_lokalnem_okolju-Hauptman.pdf (22 February 2012).

This can partly overlap with activism but is more directed towards group members and less towards the external world.

An often-occurring stereotypical understanding of volunteering is that the only benefit for the volunteer is her/his personal satisfaction, and that the volunteer should not wish for other benefits; therefore, volunteering is necessarily connected with altruism. The latter is of course an important lever for voluntary activity, but such a limited approach is often an obstacle for the promotion of youth volunteering and for their voluntary work – young people are unaware of all the options that exist in volunteering.

Another false perception of volunteering is to be mentioned: that is that volunteering is not related to any cost. The term »voluntary work« means that such work is not paid. However, it is not ethical to expect from volunteers to cover their own travel, material and communication costs, etc. Were it so, volunteering would only be an option for those who could »afford« it. Even more important are the costs of the infrastructure, administrative costs, staff costs, etc., which need to be paid if we wish to ensure the stability of the volunteering organisations and the continuity of voluntary activities.

■ *Relevance of youth volunteering (to the state/society/youth)*

According to the Volunteering Act volunteering strengthens mutual solidarity, stimulates the development of human capacity and lifelong learning, ensures social cohesion and cooperation in resolving the problems of the individual and the society.

Relevance of volunteering to the society

Volunteering is an activity undertaken for others or for public good, and contributes to the development of socially valuable individual values and thus to the welfare of the state. In the European Union youth volunteering is understood as one of the foundations of learning for democracy, participation, intergenerational cooperation, responsible citizenship and as an important source of a successful transition of young people to adulthood.

Volunteering contributes to better social inclusion, stimulates social cohesion and intergenerational dialogue.

Young volunteers form a bridge between formal institutions ensuring social, cultural, economic and ecological means, and individual people. Hence, volunteering represents a counterbalance to consumerism and competitiveness, and is an expression of one's inclusion in their community. It enables the individual to withstand the modern way of life and the trends of increasing individualism, and helps to build the social network to solve situations of distress, problems, and to develop mutual trust. It contributes to better inclusion in the community, supports social cohesion and intergenerational dialogue. The civil society, particularly in respect of social solidarity and cooperation, thus becomes the carrier of new tasks, which would not be implemented by the state, but which can importantly contribute to the development of a culture of dialogue within a community.³

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More and more people, including youth, enter in various types of organised volunteering because they see this as a possibility to take an active part in the current affairs of the society. Through active citizenship people use the possibility to warn about problems, to raise awareness, to put pressure on decision makers and on those who develop new processes, preventative social models and support within the civil society. All these actions cannot be covered by the state and the market, but an engaged individual can use this active role to form her/his personal and cultural identity.⁴

Relevance of volunteering for volunteers

We can claim that youth volunteering forms a bridge between the private and the public – it not only benefits the society as a whole, it also benefits young people personally. Volunteering provides young people with versatile personal learning and maturing, and as such prepares them well for life. Volunteering through responsible and complex work for the benefit of the society develops young people's personal potential, social, organisational and communication skills, knowledge and experience through informal and non-formal learning, all of which they can later use in their professional life and in

³ Hauptman, Gabrijela. 2011. Spodbujanje prostovoljnega dela v lokalnem okolju. Ljubljana: Zavod IRC. Available (in Slovenian) at http://www.impletum.zavod-irc.si/docs/Skriti_dokumenti/Spodbujanje_prostovoljnega_dela_v_lokalnem_okolju-Hauptman.pdf (22 February 2012).

⁴ See footnote 3.

other areas of interest. They become more inventive, flexible, self-confident and better prepared for independence. Volunteering gives them a good use of their free time, forms their social networks, improves their image of themselves, and increases the sense of their own usefulness.

Volunteering represents an important form of upbringing of youth towards becoming responsible, critically thinking, active citizens, and to become socialised also outside of the standard frameworks. It raises their awareness about irregularities and inequality in the society, and teaches them social activism, inclusiveness and solidarity. Through volunteering young people develop a sense for the needs of others, responsibility, tolerance, persistence and patience.

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Young people's motives to become volunteers differ considerably between individuals. A young volunteer also gains a lot of knowledge, skills and unplanned experience that s/he might not be aware of yet. The role of her/his mentor is key in this process, helping the young volunteer to recognise and formulate the non-formally and subconsciously gained knowledge, skills and experience.

Relevance of volunteering for the associative life of youth

Encouraging young people to learn about democratic processes is only one of the reasons why youth volunteering matters for the associative life of youth, the youth sector and youth organisations. In their work youth organisations assure democratic procedures, and use information, education and other activities to encourage their members to become actively engaged, both within the organisation and in the society in general. Voluntary engagement in a youth organisation also opens up current social affairs and stimulates the co-production of social and political processes, i.e. active citizenship, among young people. At the same time young people in youth organisations most directly obtain competences for active and responsible citizenship, which represents a unique lesson for democratic processes.

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Volunteers in youth organisations are responsible for different education activities, international exchange, cultural and social events, campaigns, etc. Employment in youth organisations is at a very low level. Most of the work is done by volunteers, which may include simple tasks as well as expertise in different areas, such as education and upbringing, event management, political participation or international activity. There would be no youth organisations without voluntary engagement.

■ *Key problems of youth volunteering in Slovenia*

Low level of information among young people and other target groups on the possibilities for and meaning of volunteering

Lack of information among young people about the possibilities that exist for volunteering is a key obstacle for their voluntary engagement. Relevant information would enable them to follow their extracurricular interests and realise their potential more easily. Proper information would reach young people better if youth organisations, other non-governmental organisations and formal education institutions would cooperate well – these are the ones that reach out to the largest population of young people.

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(Lack of) information about the importance of volunteering for young people and the society can also be a problem for other target groups, such as educators, parents and decision makers.

Low visibility of volunteering among young people

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, youth volunteering is often not recognised as volunteering at all, because it is not named with this word, and it is misunderstood. Parents, decision makers and young volunteers themselves frequently do not realise the value and competences they gain as volunteers. Even youth organisations often fail to recognise the value of their work. It merits restating that activism and volunteering in organised groups are important elements of youth volunteering and youth organisations.

Non-recognition of volunteering as a complementary learning experience by formal education institutions and in the context of their programmes

Voluntary activities are included in school curricula to different extents, depending mainly on the educators at schools and on school policies. During education young people gain knowledge they can complement and upgrade with volunteering in their free time. This brings them mostly practical knowledge and skills (learning by doing).

There are certain obstacles in place within school programmes, which prevent or discourage the development of young volunteering. School curricula (at primary, secondary and tertiary levels) are not formulated in a way to dedicate some time to stimulating volunteering (e.g. by encouraging young people to become volunteers in different organisations for socially beneficial actions). This would allow pupils to enter in first contact with volunteering organisations. In absence of it formal education institutions are deprived of an important aspect of education, and non-formal education providers are likewise at loss.

Non-recognition of non-formal education renders it impossible to complement formal education processes with an important learning component, whilst aggravating youth employability.

The non-connectedness of both education pillars brings great loss, mainly to the detriment of young people. Non-recognition of non-formal education (as part of learning contents, as practical training, as one of the obligatory extracurricular activities, etc.) renders it impossible to complement formal education processes with an important learning component, whilst aggravating youth employability, which goes against to the aim of education to prepare young people to enter the labour market.

The main cause of non-recognition of non-formal education taking place in youth organisations lies in the absence of knowledge of youth work and the work of youth organisations by decision makers, educators, and the management of education institutions.

Non-recognition of volunteering as work experience

Whilst in education young people often gain work experience through volunteering and student work. Few employers recognise such experience, although it is actually the only one that young people, whilst being in the education process, can obtain. Thus, expertise- and content-wise it is as valid as formal work experience. Non-formal work experience gives young people numerous competences, which contribute to their personal development, social responsibility and active citizenship, and significantly influence the development of work capacity and habits of young people. For this reason non-formal work experience is highly relevant to the labour market; however, since the system only rarely recognises it, its role in youth employment depends on the employer's assessment. Young people thus face major problems when entering the labour market – they are mostly required to present formal work experience, which they had never had the chance to obtain. This might lead to discrimination in access to employment, despite their possible skills.

Whilst in education young people often gain work experience through volunteering and student work. Non-formal work experience gives young people numerous competences, which contribute to their personal development, social responsibility and active citizenship, and significantly influence the development of work capacity and habits of young people.

To participants, particularly young ones, in volunteering, this work brings no formal certification or higher level of education. Formal certificates, however, have high value in the Slovenian society. We cannot claim that every involvement in youth work develops competences valued and sought for by employers. Nevertheless, youth organisations certainly are the space where young people can develop their competences to a level, which is flexible enough and transferable to all areas of activity of a young person.

Insufficient efficiency in recording voluntary work

It is very important for young people that the non-formal knowledge and skills gained through youth work (volunteering or student work), are adequately recorded. Relevant tools already exist for this (e.g. Europass – Europass CV, Europass Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Europass Diploma Supplement, Europass Certificate Supplement, Youthpass, Nefiks, e-Nefiks). A recording system for volunteering was introduced through the Volunteering Act, which, however, entered into force only in 2011, is limited to a certain spectrum of organisations and includes extensive bureaucratic demands; thus, its efficiency is disputable. Tools therefore exist, but it is important that state authorities, formal education institutions, employers and other relevant actors recognise them, and that following them, a system of recording work experience gained through volunteering is developed, which will enable anyone to demonstrate to the employers their gained knowledge and skills.

It is very important for young people that the non-formal knowledge and skills gained through youth work, are adequately recorded. Such tools exist but need to be recognised also by state authorities, formal education institutions, employers.

Organisations working with young volunteers must inform them of the possibility to, in line with the Volunteering Act, receive a certificate of the skills and knowledge gained through training for volunteering, volunteering itself, or mentoring.

Inconsistent assessment of voluntary work as a financial contribution in calls for funding, and too weak financial support for youth volunteering

Non-recognition of volunteering is clearly shown also through its insufficient funding. Inclusion in volunteering in Slovenia has seen significant change in the last years. The share of so-called short-term or project volunteering is growing, so is the share of older volunteers and those who support the implementation of highly specialised tasks, which may be complementary to public service. Such change requires volunteering organisations to have more managerial knowledge to recruit and motivate volunteers, and to work with them. They also require more mentors who train volunteers to exercise the activities. Moreover, the administrative requirements for the functioning of volunteering organisations are increasing, and are accompanied by the organisations' financial instability.

Non-recognition of volunteering is clearly shown also through its insufficient funding. The Volunteering Act has somewhat increased the possibilities for the assessment of volunteering as a financial input of the applicant in public tenders; this option is not always considered by all calls for proposals, although it is obligatory every time when applicants are expected to provide co-funding.

Volunteering organisations, particularly youth organisations among them, thus largely depend on public calls for tenders. These mostly co-fund projects, rarely regular activities. In this sense organisational volunteering often depends on the guidelines and priorities of the funders, which demands an adaptation of voluntary work activities, limits organisations' autonomy, prevents undisturbed and continuous inclusion of volunteers, and lowers the quality of volunteering in an organisation.

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Exclusion of certain forms of work and organisations/institutions from the system of organised voluntary work according to the Volunteering Act

The Volunteering Act unnecessarily excludes certain forms of work from the concept of volunteering, and certain institutions from the system of organised volunteering. Since the Act introduces the concept and system of recording of a »new« form of work, which could be used and acknowledged in different areas, such as the recognition of work experience, with the obligations of pupils or students (e.g. obligatory extracurricular activities) etc., one should keep open the possibility for volunteers to be active on a variety of tasks in the widest array of institutions.

The Volunteering Act unnecessarily excludes certain forms of work from the concept of volunteering, and certain institutions from the system of organised volunteering. Consequently, certain volunteers legally enshrined rights, no right to record voluntary work, the ethical principles do not apply to them, etc.

Particularly controversial is the provision that recognises organised volunteering only for organisations included in the overview of volunteering organisations. According to the Act volunteering organisations cannot be legal persons, political parties, trade unions, employers' associations, professional and expert associations, registered

Churches and other religious communities. This might be sensible to an extent; unfortunately however, almost the entire content of the Act is linked to the term volunteering organisations, which means that the Act does not apply to volunteering in the above-mentioned and all types of organisations not included in the overview mentioned above. Their volunteers do not have legally enshrined rights, no right to record voluntary work, the ethical principles do not apply to them, etc.

Ethical principles and rights of young volunteers

Volunteering may also lead to burn out, overburdening, financial burdens, etc. Volunteering organisations must be aware of the level of obligation they can put on an individual volunteer, and must take into account her/his needs, wishes and rights. They cannot expect the volunteer to cover costs related to voluntary work. Ethical principles of volunteering, the rights of volunteers and volunteering organisations are enshrined in several Codes on Volunteering; they are also well-captured in the Volunteering Act, which, nevertheless, applies only to a limited number of organisations.

■ Recommendations

The reputation and meaning of volunteering could reach an appropriate level if we ensure that decision makers and experts systematically recognise it, and if regular funding for voluntary activities is put in place. It is particularly important to recognise the youth sector as a space for quality volunteering, where young people can develop and gain competences for future life and work. Therefore, youth volunteering requires particular care, growth and quality improvements. The National Youth Council of Slovenia thus strives for the implementation of measures by the state, local authorities, youth and other non-governmental organisations, education institutions and employers, who have the biggest influence on the changes in the area of volunteering.

1. We call upon **state and local authority bodies to increase the financial support for the regular work of organisations which integrate youth volunteering in their activities**, especially the support to youth organisations; this is the only way they can function successfully and provide quality work, and be visible in the society, especially among formal education institutions and employers. Higher financial support will allow these organisations to ensure the provision of different contents and knowledge and thereby equip young people with important competences in different areas of expertise, and for a responsible and successful autonomous life.

Higher financial support would allow organisations that integrate youth volunteering in their work, to ensure the provision of different contents and knowledge and thereby equip young people with important competences in different areas of expertise, and for a responsible and successful autonomous life.
2. We urge **state and local authority bodies** to promote, inform and raise awareness about youth volunteering, particularly through adequate financial, structural and expert support to youth organisations and other youth structures. The promotion of youth volunteering must address different target groups, which have closest connections with young people and can impact their decisions – parents, educators and decision makers.
3. We call upon **state and local authority bodies** to consistently **take voluntary work into account as applicants' own funding in their calls for proposals**, published to fund youth and other non-profit organisations, in line with the Volunteering Act. In the present circumstances it is difficult to ensure project co-funding, since the environment is not inclined to financial sponsoring and similar mechanisms; at the same time, voluntary work is an input that organisations can provide.

Calls for proposals for the funding of youth and other non-profit organisations should recognise voluntary work as the applicants' own funding.
4. We invite the ministry in charge of volunteering to amend the **Volunteering Act** by **abolishing the limited understandings of volunteering, volunteering organisations and organised volunteering**. The Act needs to allow all non-profit organisations and institutions to become involved in organised volunteering. The provision stating that voluntary work is not work aimed at fulfilling only personal interests of members of a membership-based organisation should be repealed; the line between personal interest and social benefit is difficult to draw.

5. We urge the ministry in charge of education to ensure that voluntary engagement in youth organisations and volunteering in other non-governmental organisations **are recognised as part of school and study obligations**, whilst regular cooperation with organisations in the youth sector should become an obligation of schools. This will ease the first contacts between pupils and organisations that involve young people.

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6. We call upon formal education institutions to, within their programmes, **ensure that pupils, school students and students are informed about the possibilities to engage in youth organisations and other volunteering options** in their local environment, and should recognise such experience as part of the obligations within their curricula; in this process they should connect with such organisations in their own environment. Young people need to be continuously, and in line with their age, informed about the options and forms of volunteering, which they can apply in their life, ranging from voluntary jobs, volunteering in youth organisations, in other non-governmental organisations, etc. Such contents must be integrated also in the curriculum of the subject addressing civic education. Adequate training of educators leading such processes, or cooperation with external experts is needed for this purpose.

Formal education institutions should, within their curricula, ensure that pupils, school students and students are informed about the possibilities to engage in youth organisations and other volunteering options in their local environment.
7. We invite the ministry in charge of higher education to, in cooperation with universities and faculties, ensure the control over the recognition and validation of voluntary work at the faculties. It should systematically stimulate them to **inform students about the options for volunteering and recognise the knowledge gained this way** in the frame of their curricula. It should also increase the funding to the faculties who take this path. Moreover, the rules on progressing to the next study year at faculties should include as a mitigating factor not only work in student organisations but also other forms of volunteering in youth work.
8. We call upon the **ministry in charge of finance** to treat the contributions of legal persons (sponsorships and donations) to youth work and public interest organisations in the field of youth equally with other areas and organisations (e.g. humanitarian, educational).

Employers should recognise volunteering as work experience, comparable to other forms of work.
9. We urge employers to **recognise volunteering as work experience**, comparable to other forms of work.
10. We call upon youth organisations and other organisations in the youth sector to **recognise the engagement in the youth sector as volunteering or voluntary work**, and to ensure that their volunteers are aware of the meaning and value of their engagement, both personally and for the wider society. In this regard they should **keep a record of volunteering and issue certificates of voluntary work**, as stipulated by the Volunteering Act, whenever possible and if agreed by the volunteers. The organisations should present to all their volunteers the advantages and disadvantages of such record-keeping, based on the way they understand them.

11. Youth organisations must actively work towards **ensuring high quality non-formal education and training for their volunteers**. A unified system of quality standards and record-keeping and recognition of non-formally gained knowledge and competences must be set up, on the basis of which all actors in the youth field would function.
12. We call upon **youth organisations** and other organisations in the youth field to **ensure quality volunteering** in their ranks, and to enable progression, education and new challenges for their members, as well as to **support the transfer of experience** from more experienced to new members. This is how we can raise the reputation of volunteering and youth work, and improve the willingness to recognise work experience gained through volunteering, which could significantly improve the quality of education of youth in the future, and consequently also the young people's position in the labour market.
13. In order to improve the quality of non-formal education in youth work youth organisations must increasingly **encourage international volunteering**, which plays an important role in the development of the youth and non-governmental sector both at home and abroad. International volunteering programmes bear many unexploited opportunities, which could give high added value to non-formal education as we exercise it.
14. Youth organisations and other organisations in the youth field must strive to prevent the burnout of young volunteers, cover the costs arising in relation to their voluntary work, and **pay regard to the ethical principles in volunteering and the rights of volunteers** as stipulated by international documents and the Volunteering Act.

Youth organisations must actively work towards ensuring high quality non-formal education and training for their volunteers.

In order to improve the quality of non-formal education in youth work youth organisations must increasingly encourage international volunteering, which plays an important role in the development of the youth and non-governmental sector.

■ Conclusion

Holistic regulation of the youth volunteering policy in Slovenia is a necessary step towards young people's active participation in society, to its development, solidarity and democracy. Young people are often the most ignored part of the society, often believed not to require special measures. Such attitudes are wrong, particularly due to the importance of life transitions that take place precisely in youth. If we thus desire a healthy, coherent and connected society, with a perspective for the future and as a space where people live happily and productively, youth need to be given proper care – and this needs to be done together with young people.

The National Youth Council of Slovenia strives for the cooperation of all social actors in this process, all those who can in a way contribute to improving the existing circumstances and conditions. We strive to develop a long-term and coherent policy in line with the needs of youth, enabling their successful achievement of independence. This is how we can importantly influence the quality of life in Slovenia and the future of our society.