



MLADINSKI  
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NATIONAL  
YOUTH  
COUNCIL  
OF SLOVENIA

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***Policy Paper***

***YOUTH EMPLOYMENT***

## **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 /.../«.<sup>1</sup>

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 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, *inter alia*, enter into discussions with policy makers, to react to current affairs, and to inform young people and the wider public.

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 EMPLOYMENT”**

Employment is one of the key fields of youth policies, 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;

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<sup>1</sup> Act on the Public Interest in the Youth Sector, ZJIMS, [http://www.ursm.gov.si/fileadmin/ursm.gov.si/pageuploads/pdf/ZJIMS/ZJIMS\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ursm.gov.si/fileadmin/ursm.gov.si/pageuploads/pdf/ZJIMS/ZJIMS_ENG.pdf). Original available at: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/content?id=97951> (19. 8. 2010).

- point out the difficulties that arise in this area because of an educational system that prevents a smooth transition from school to employment, and does not stimulate the conditions for counselling and for developing a lifelong learning career guidance;
- propose a systemic improvement of the current approach to youth employment, which addresses young people, youth organisations, formal education institutions, employers and authorities;
- contribute, in this way, to a stronger position of young people in the labour market, and to improve the conditions for a full realisation of 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 also 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 students 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.

Both in the European Union and in Slovenia **the concept of flexicurity** has increasingly been used in connection to 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 a post that would otherwise be covered with one full-time employee), triangle employment (agents offer their own workers to

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<sup>2</sup> Wilthagen, 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. 8. 2010).

other employers), false self-employment (the employee is forced to do so by the former employer) 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>3</sup> Felstead A., N. Jawson. 1999. *Global Trends in Flexible Labour*. London: Macmillan Business.

## The significance of youth employment

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

Young people enter adulthood through gaining competencies 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 is coupled with a lack of opportunities to establish and maintain social networks, which leads to larger social exclusion. Therefore, access to 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, and, according to Eurostat, the rate of youth in the total population is about to diminish as well. According to the Slovenian Statistical Office "youth represents /.../ a quarter of the world's work force, but also a half of the world's unemployed" (Križman in Vertot 2009, 1).<sup>4</sup> Youth unemployment in Europe is usually two to three times bigger than the total unemployment rate (Ignjatović and Trbanc 2009, 46).<sup>5</sup>

Youth as a period of life is characterised by frequent transition between jobs and recurrent unemployment periods. Young people face a lack of work experience but on the other hand often enter the labour market armed with fresh theoretical knowledge and numerous social and technical skills.<sup>6</sup>

Young people are a very adaptable and educated part of the work force but their **employment is mostly insecure, lower paid**, based on fixed-term contracts. Young people also take on part-time jobs, short contracts or student jobs, and work in other unstable forms. Slovenia has a distinctively segmented labour market –

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<sup>4</sup> Vertot, Nelka. 2009. *Mladi v Sloveniji*. Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana.

<sup>5</sup> Ignjatović, Mirosljub in Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. V *Med otroštvom in odraslostjo*, ur. Urban Boljka in Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM in IVZ.

<sup>6</sup> Ignjatović, Mirosljub in Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. V *Med otroštvom in odraslostjo*, ur. Urban Boljka in Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM in IVZ.

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>7</sup>

Slovenia is characterised predominantly by **fixed-term employment**; more than ¾ of the current labour offer is represented by this type of jobs.<sup>8</sup> Also, it ranks first among all European countries in terms of the number of fixed-term jobs for young people.<sup>9</sup> Fixed-term jobs do not provide sufficient social and financial security to young people, however. Young people have difficulties obtaining loans, in 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>10</sup>

Another typical issue for Slovenia is **structural inconsistency** between the offer of educated labour force, and the demand in the labour market. Every year the education system provides different profiles from those that are actually needed in the labour market. Over 60% of young people enrol in humanities, while the labour market still requires a lot of workers educated in technical and natural science professions (mechanical, engineers, electro-technicians, construction engineers, IT specialists ...). Moreover, through education, young people do not internalise all competencies and skills that employers expect them to show at the work place.<sup>11</sup>

### **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 at the end of their 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:

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<sup>7</sup> Ignjatovič, Miroљjub in Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. V *Med otroštvo in odraslostjo*, ur. Urban Boljka in Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM in IVZ.

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

<sup>9</sup> Eurostat, European Commission. 2009. *Youth in Europe: A Statistical Portrait*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>10</sup> Vir: Lukič, Goran. 2008. *Strategija zaposlovanja mladih v družbi znanja. 1. Knjiga. Analiza stanja*. Ljubljana: Študentska organizacija Slovenije.

<sup>11</sup> Milošević, Vesna. 2010. Kako bo trg dela reševal prihod mladih s fakultet. *Human Resource Management Magazine* 8 (33): 12–15.

- a) firstly, this means a loss of important work potential, which could bring new developmental dimensions and could thus 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 its investment in education.
- c) Moreover, 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, 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.

For the society and the state to develop successfully, youth employment and all requirements that create adequate conditions for it to emerge, are therefore key. Youth employment must be encouraged and supported already in the first phase of growing up and be actively enabled in the period when young people leave the education system.

## Key issues in the area of youth employment 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 10 months to get their first job.<sup>12</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 structure of youth seeking employment, is extremely imbalanced.<sup>13</sup> Formal education institutions only rarely create links with the economic sector, which also leads to a lack of practical experience among young people, in addition to a lack of adequate career orientation 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 their education (elementary, secondary, and tertiary) one can also note a significant lack of career guidance.<sup>14</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 in life. This also points to a contradiction between a growing pressure towards ever higher educational levels (which enable the entry into the labour market) and a simultaneous devaluation of the educational achievements. This is the so-called educational achievements' inflation problem. In the difficult conditions of transition between education and employment this problem is reflected in underemployment of young people (educated 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 thus use the opportunity of prolonged studies mostly due to few opportunities for employment; however, the studies are prolonged also due to a (still) inappropriate implementation of the Bologna system. Finally, the phenomenon of student work sometimes also renders the transition into the labour market more difficult: its current form and misuse cause a prolongation of time that young people spend in the framework of formal education.

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<sup>12</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. 9. 2010).

<sup>13</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. 8. 2010).

<sup>14</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 work experience is not recognised by the state, formal education institutions, and especially not by the employers.** Non-formal education, training and experience are basic components of the majority of young people's lives, who otherwise go through formal education. During their time in education, young people gain work experience through volunteering, student work, free time activities, education and training in youth organisations and other civil society actors, other organisations and enterprises. Non-formal experience is almost the only one that young people can gain whilst being in education, and is expertise- and content-wise equal to formal work experience. Through non-formal education young people obtain different competencies that contribute to their personal development, social responsibility and active citizenship, and which importantly contribute to the development of working skills and habits. These play an important role for the labour market; however, due to the lack of a systemic recognition, the role these skills play in entering employment depends on the will of employers. In most cases, formal work experience is demanded, which causes major problems in entering employment. Thus, regardless of their experience, young people are discriminated in the job market.

**When looking for their first job, young people are forced to take 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, which leads to difficulties in becoming independent, as the access to housing credits is limited; such working conditions also lead to a high risk of return to unemployment. All this causes 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 work motivation.

**Self-employment of youth is underdeveloped and insufficiently encouraged.** Young people lack information about the opportunities for self-employment and are not supported to venture into it. Formal education does not equip them with entrepreneurial skills (i.e. those that enable them to put their ideas into life – creativity, innovativeness, risk-taking, project planning and implementation skills) and, together with a recurring unstable economic situation, reduces their motivation for self-employment. A lack of adequate safety nets for unsuccessful attempts at self-employment leads to a lower inclination of socially and economically weaker young people to realise their entrepreneurial potential, and creates and maintains unequal opportunities for all. Last but not least, another problem is the complexity of procedures to set up a business and difficulties in obtaining starting capital.

**In seeking employment, in the labour market as well as in terms of working conditions, one can identify discrimination and a lack of equal opportunities between different categories of job seekers and workers.** The largest differences occur on the ground of age. Whilst older people wish to enter retirement 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 to do it.

The Slovenian labour market also suffers from a too large flexibility and a too low security in certain parts, especially in those mostly populated by young people (fixed-term contracts, part-time jobs, student work, and occasional jobs).<sup>15</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. Young people more and more often end up in jobs that do not provide sufficient social and financial security. In such jobs they do not develop a relation with the employer, neither in the sense of belonging, nor in the wish to actively participate in developing the working position. 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. Another problem lies in the quality of the special forms of work young people experience, such as student work, apprenticeships and internships that take place during or after the period of education and in which fair conditions of work are likewise missing; young interns are mostly misused as a cheap work force.

Next to age discrimination, discrimination in employment and working conditions arises particularly on the grounds of gender and other personal circumstances, which 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. One of the most vulnerable groups is obviously youth with fewer opportunities (especially less educated youth and early school leavers), who have difficulties meeting the basic pre-conditions for proper involvement in the labour market, as they have limited access to information, education and non-formal work experience. This makes their labour market activity largely impossible, which is a major violation of human rights.

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<sup>15</sup> Ignjatovič, Mirosljub in Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. V *Med otroštvom in odraslostjo*, ur. Urban Boljka in Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM in IVZ.

## Recommendations

The situation of young people in the labour market as identified and defined 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, which are central pillars of potential change in this area.

1. In order to achieve **closer links between the education system and the labour market** we firstly propose the next measures for:

*a) the field of education*

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 the labour market movement. The educational structure of young people needs to be better adjusted to the situation in the labour market. In this way young people must be given the possibility to find jobs corresponding to their education.

On the other hand, formal education institutions, in connection 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, BA or MA theses, and school/university projects, which can relate to individual companies and their work or functioning. Both employers and educators must be encouraged to assign such tasks to young people, as well as to enable and motivate young people to complete them, for example by introducing awards, subsidies or similar incentives.

*b) The labour market*

Appropriate institutions must develop a long-term plan of redirecting the labour market from an industrial to an information- and service-oriented one (to ensure employment for students of humanities); if Slovenia wishes to become a knowledge-based country, it needs to encourage an intellectual environment and correspondingly adapt the labour market.

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 the labour market dynamics. This means that all young people at all levels

and fields of education, and regardless of regional affiliation or educational 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 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 required to put the social value of professions on an equal level and to instil in young people a 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 per week). In this sense we propose to support the establishment of so-called study enterprises, along the example of the University Medical Centre, but in a way which will enable young people to have a regular job, instead of only an internship. 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 return to school, if they so wish. This way, also young people who already have practical experience would come back to universities, which would enrich the learning process, and would help build a more sustainable society, without pressuring young people to continue with tertiary education immediately after completing the secondary one. The latter might also lead to a more balanced division of demand and supply on 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 and an adaptation or change of its key elements, 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.
5. We call upon state authorities, formal education institutions, employers and other relevant actors to **establish a system for recognition of non-formal education, training and 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 different certificates. Non-formal experience should be recognised as having the same value as formal experience.

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

It is crucial for young people that the non-formal knowledge and skills they acquire through youth work, volunteering or student work, are properly noted. Efficient tools to do this already exist (Europass tools – Europass CV, Europass Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Europass Diploma Supplement, Youthpass, Nefiks, e-Nefiks). That these tools must be recognised also by state authorities, formal education institutions, employers and other stakeholders; inspired by such tools, a system of registering non-formal knowledge and work experience must be developed, which will enable to prove non-formally acquired skills and experience to the 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 an NGO.

6. Finally, **increasing employment in the non-governmental (NGO) sector** would be another applicable solution to help young people get their first job.

The NGO sector offers short-term, bridging 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 people in employment, whilst in Slovenia the rate in 2004 was only 0,74%.<sup>16</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 linking, however, does not take place in Slovenia.

We see the NGO sector as an excellent platform for youth employment. Work here 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, thus raising the quality of life. We thus 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

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<sup>16</sup> *Memorandum nevladnih organizacij*. 2009. Str. 3. Available at: [www.turisticna-zveza.si/aktualno/303-1.doc](http://www.turisticna-zveza.si/aktualno/303-1.doc) (19. 8. 2010).

project financing, which mostly does not even enable NGOs to employ people, let alone encourage it.

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 regular employment in the NGO sector can grow.

7. We call upon state authorities and formal education institutions to **actively begin supporting self-employment of 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 of 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 competencies within the educational process.

We particularly strongly strive for support to self-employment of specific groups of young entrepreneurs, especially women and people with disabilities. Access to entrepreneurship must be ensured for all young people on an equal basis, but should especially be eased for young people with fewer opportunities who decide to take this step even more rarely than the rest of young people.

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 young people throughout the process – not only until the point when they enter self-employment, but also in later stages. A youth-friendly entrepreneurial environment should be set up through strengthening technology parks and business incubators, which will 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 re-introduce a measure to abolish the high contributions for student self-employment.
9. We call upon state authorities to **introduce measures for active employment policy that will motivate employers to employ 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 an active employment policy, are not sufficient; equal opportunities and more opportunities for all young people need to be ensured.

10. We call upon state authorities to **balance the advantages and disadvantages of fixed-term and open-ended contracts**. This could encourage employers to recognise the larger interest of employing young people on open-ended contracts and could increase the security and reliability of fixed-term contracts. Legislative 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 (Ignjatović and Trbanc 2009: 40).<sup>17</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>18</sup> The labour market should orient itself towards flexicurity, which can be achieved with adequate tax reforms, especially with lowering the income tax.
  
11. In order to decrease inequality on the ground of age, a **new intergenerational dialogue** must be established, 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.
  
12. **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.

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<sup>17</sup> Ignjatović, Mirosljub in Trbanc, Martina. 2009. Zaposlovanje in brezposelnost mladih. V *Med otroštvom in odraslostjo*, ur. Urban Boljka in Tatjana Rakar, 38–55. Ljubljana: MŠŠ – URSM in IVZ.

<sup>18</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. 8. 2010).

13. We invite employers to introduce measures to **ensure young people's satisfaction at work and that decrease 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.
14. 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, through which they will have the opportunity to take part in decision making in companies, so that their voice will be represented in the social dialogue alongside all others'. This would strengthen the feeling of autonomy among young people, which has long-term benefits for their personal growth, wider social engagement and active citizenship.
15. We call upon employers to establish **an active policy of reconciling family and professional life 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.

## **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 consequentially towards ensuring a 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 one's 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 for the development of 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 have an important influence on the quality of life in Slovenia and on the future of our society.