



MLADINSKI
SVET
SLOVENIJE
NATIONAL
YOUTH
COUNCIL
OF SLOVENIA

MSS-124-11

Policy paper

YOUTH MOBILITY

■ **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 mobility, 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 MOBILITY«

The contemporary world is in constant movement, which particularly applies to youth. At the highest level of engagement in (formal and non-formal) education and the highest learning potential, the key characteristics of today's youth (also Slovenian) are also creativity, innovation, openness, capacity to think out of the box, a high level of mobility and activity in various free-time activities.

Due to these youth lifestyle elements, and due to their role in the process towards independence, the aim of this policy paper on youth mobility is to:

- Define the meaning of mobility in youth policies,
- Emphasise the fundamental elements of the issue and deficiencies in the regulation of youth mobility in Slovenia, especially in terms of access to mobility for young people outside formal education,
- Propose improvement measures enabling young people to decide for mobility.

The document tackles wider aspects of mobility in non-formal and formal education, mobility in youth organisations and youth work, and partly also tackles youth mobility in employment.

DEFINITIONS

Youth mobility is the capacity of young people to move between different places in their home country and outside of it, with the purpose of achieving personal development goals, autonomy, for the purposes of volunteering and youth work, of education systems and programmes, of expert training, of employment and career goals, of housing opportunities and free time activities.

Several types of youth mobility exist – *spatial* (physical, geographical move within the country and between countries) and *social* (the transition from one social status to another, between different societal groups and related social circumstances), with the addition of *psychological* (the capacity and readiness for physical mobility) and *virtual mobility*.¹

Since youth policies address the process of regulating key transition factors between youth and adulthood, the aspects of social youth mobility are presented in detail in specific policy papers of the National Youth Council of Slovenia² and together build a coherent totality, part of which is also the spatial mobility of youth.

The present document thus focuses mostly on **spatial learning mobility of young people** in the context of youth mobility in the international sphere and within Slovenia. Such mobility takes place for the purposes of learning, gaining new skills, and personal development, and tackles the position of young people in non-formal and formal learning environments³, i.e. as participants in youth exchange, youth work and in volunteering (in order to take part in non-formal education, training, education for youth workers, and to acquire experience in the international environment – e.g. the Youth in Action programme), as participants in school mobility programmes, in graduate and postgraduate university studies, as interns, apprentices or

¹ Williamson, H. 2002. Supporting young people in Europe: principles, policy and practice. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

² National Youth Council of Slovenia (2011). Policy papers. Available at: <http://mss.si/en/news/30/1/policy-papers-in-english> (25 November 2011).

³ At European level, the following definitions are used: Formal learning is typically provided by education or training institutions, with structured learning objectives, learning time and learning support. It is intentional on the part of the learner and leads to certification. Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. However, it is intentional on the part of the learner and has structured objectives, times and support. Informal learning results from daily activities related to work, family life or leisure. It is not structured and usually does not lead to certification. In most cases, it is unintentional on the part of the learner (European Commission. 2009. Green Paper: Promoting the Learning Mobility of Young People. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0329:FIN:EN:PDF> (31 August 2011)).

in the context of vocational training within the European Union or outside of it (for the purposes of study and practical training, which youth can access within the Lifelong Learning Programme (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci), Marie Curie action (7th Framework Programme), the CEEPUS initiative, national grant instruments (particularly for graduate and postgraduate students in the context of other bilateral international agreements on cooperation in education, culture and science). We partly touch upon employment mobility as well (ranging from mobility for the purpose of expert training at the workplace, gaining or exchanging work experience, to the improvement of employment opportunities, etc.). We only address leisure time mobility (related to tourism, sport and culture) only as part of the learning mobility of youth in non-formal and informal learning. Other aspects are deliberately left aside, as we assess that they do not entail issues that would pertain specifically to youth.

■ ***The role of youth mobility within Slovenia and outside of it***

The experience with living in another country impacts a young person's personal and professional development, increases independence and responsibility, helps improve the knowledge of languages and develops other social skills and competences. We hereby particularly mean inter-cultural communication skills, solidarity, learning about others, about the circumstances, systems and cultures. This is how young people develop a new viewpoint about their own reality, systems and culture. Lack of knowledge and consequent development of prejudice (too) often lead to conflicts both among individuals and among larger groups, countries, nations, etc. Therefore, youth mobility indirectly diminishes various forms of intolerance (homophobia, racism, xenophobia, etc.), which would otherwise lower the chances for cooperation and collaboration within and outside of the country.

Youth mobility in a time of increasing unemployment, also in Slovenia, plays an important role for young people. Through mobility and by gaining varied learning experience (educational, professional) young people increase their chances for employment and in this way influence their own position in the labour market. Many people decrease their own employability and access to the labour market by not having sufficient qualifications, specific and transferable skills or experience demanded by the global economy and sought and valued by employers (knowledge of foreign languages, openness, tolerance, a sense of initiative, intercultural and social competences, etc.).

Positive outcomes of mobility are important for the personal development of individuals, for the development of their values and skills. Mobility increases youth employability and chances to enter the labour market.

The state must encourage youth mobility and provide the conditions in which mobility can grow and develop, as it matters to youth also in terms of openness and social development of the country and the society in general. Youth mobility increases the potential for development, which benefits both the sending and the host country and locality.

Young people who experience mobility are more adaptable, because they strengthen the skill of change and adaptation to the environment, broaden their social networks and intercultural competences, and are more employable. Transferring good practice from different fields (e.g. youth organisation, work) they contribute to the improvements in their home environment. This is positive for the state mainly in terms of economy-related opportunities, better intercultural understanding, and better opportunities for cooperation and networking, not only of non-governmental organisations, but also across different sectors. Stronger tolerance, active citizenship and the construction of a common European identity also benefit the European Union and the entire international community. The European Commission has put the strengthening of youth mobility programmes among its priorities, due to the relevance for all stakeholders.

Positive outcomes of mobility within Slovenia and outside of it (international mobility) matter to one's personal development, and the development of values and skills. It increases youth employability and potential to enter the labour market. Intercultural understanding improves the development potential and possibilities for intercultural collaboration of the country in different areas, which leads to a more open society in general.

■ ***Key challenges for youth mobility***

International mobility out of Slovenia

Young people in Slovenia are not sufficiently internationally mobile. The Mladina (Youth) 2010 research shows that the majority of young people in Slovenia do experience foreign countries, regardless of age and gender, since over 75% of young people have a certain experience with what is »different«; however, it is mainly short-term, tourism-related and made in free time. The rate of young people (15 – 29 years old) in Slovenia, who have spent more than two months in a foreign country in the past year, amounts to a

Young people in Slovenia are insufficiently internationally mobile. Short-term mobility abounds, long-term mobility is almost absent.

mere 3,6 %. This rate is lower still when considering the period over 12 months (around 0,25 % in 2008).⁴ To sum up: **short-term mobility abounds, long-term mobility is almost absent.**

Young people in Slovenia show a relatively positive attitude to learning mobility. The Eurobarometer on youth and mobility shows that 82% of respondents from Slovenia have not been educated or trained in another country, which is 4% above the EU average.⁵ Also Mladina 2010 shows that 86,3 % of respondents did not obtain part of their education outside Slovenia (this percentage is lower than among students, but also includes short-term mobility), but at the same time only 24,6% of them have expressed that they certainly do not plan to spend part of their educational path abroad. Only a third of respondents from Slovenia⁶ are not willing to leave home in order to work in another European country (33 % of young people would move to another European country for a limited amount of time, 31 % would do so for an unlimited time). The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that **a significant discrepancy remains between the planned and the real youth mobility in Slovenia. There is a lot of planned but little real mobility.**

Slovenia demonstrates a significant discrepancy between the planned and real youth mobility. The reasons lie in insufficient information about the importance, opportunities and support instruments that ease mobility.

Despite an increasing variety of youth mobility programmes, the reasons and challenges for future improvement of the currently low international mobility of young people (in comparison to the planned one), are:

- (non-)recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences,
- the lack of connections between relevant institutions (no cross-sector transition from education to business and vice versa, from education to volunteering, from academic studies to vocational training, from public research institutions to companies, etc. – at the local, regional, national and international levels),
- insufficient financial support from programmes or other sources (grants, loans, etc.) for mobility, and consequent high costs for mobility,

⁴ Lavrič, dr. M. in sod. 2010. Mladina 2010. Končno poročilo o rezultatih raziskave. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, Urad RS za mladino.

⁵ European Commission. 2011. Flash Eurobarometer on Youth on the Move. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/292&type=HTML> (21 November 2011).

⁶ European Commission. 2011. Flash Eurobarometer on Youth on the Move. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/292&type=HTML> (21 November 2011).

- absence/lack of information for those engaging in mobility (individuals, organisations, employers, etc.) about the relevance, opportunities and support instruments for mobility,
- the lifestyle and educational system in Slovenia, which do not see enough advantages of mobility, and general unpreparedness of youth to leave »home«.

The reason for low realisation of planned youth mobility mainly lies in the insufficient connection between different institutions; this leads to low recognition of the value of obligations fulfilled in another country and to obstacles in (non-)recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences.

Investments in youth mobility have an excellent long-term return, due to its positive impact. Volunteering and non-formal learning can be outstanding ways of reaching out to those young people who would otherwise remain excluded from learning mobility programmes – provided that these activities are properly valued or recognised. In many cases the participation in mobility programmes and the knowledge and skills gained through it are insufficiently recognised and taken into account. The procedures for obtaining documents (visas, residence permits, information, support, etc., especially for non-EU countries) to live and to have the formally, non-formally and informally gained knowledge, skills and competences recognised, bring large bureaucratic obstacles (gathering documents, duplication of requirements, slowness of the administration) and costs. In the spirit of lifelong learning non-formal and informal learning must be recognised and confirmed, e.g. through Europass – mobility, Youthpass, etc. moreover, the legal status of those young people included in mobility actions that can not be classified in any of the groups, is not always clear (such as volunteers, young professionals – artists, designers or entrepreneurs – in mobility). These uncertainties and limitations related to their status may affect their right to social protection or social transfers, and may deter them from mobility.

The reason for low realisation of planned youth mobility mainly lies in the insufficient connection between different institutions, in low recognition of the value of obligations fulfilled in another country, and obstacles in (non-)recognition of formally, non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences.

The recognition policy for learning mobility of youth is currently best developed in tertiary education, where the European Commission benchmark calls for at least 20% of EU graduates to spend part of their studies or training in another country by 2020.⁷

⁷ Commission of European Communities. 2009. Green Paper: Promoting the learning mobility of young people. COM(2009) 329 final. Available at:

However, this area still faces problems and numerous administrative and legal obstacles. Respondents in the Evroštudent 2010 study identified so-called »environmental reasons« as the strongest disincentive for international mobility, especially student mobility; among them are weak support to youth mobility in Slovenia and (non-)recognition of educational achievements in another country (exams, semester, year, etc.). Thus, a large part of students go abroad at their own initiative. For those young people who did part of their studies abroad the level of education was the least important element when deciding to study in another country, which suggests that other positive effects of mobility are recognised as primary.⁸

(Lack of) access to legal chances, i.e. low support to mobility at home is affected by several elements: (in)accessibility to information about mobility; the fact that study programmes mostly do not envisage education gained abroad; individual agreements and additional concern around the (non-)recognition of contents and obligations, caused by autonomy and inconsistencies with the individual study programmes; the expected stalling or prolongation of the studies; weak value of such education; limited access to mobility programmes, etc.

High economic cost of international mobility, insufficient financial support to young people from mobility programmes and the absence of economic capacity or financial means on the side of participants or their families do not enable equal access to and conditions for mobility to all young people and discourage many from finding experience abroad.

Both Eurobarometer and Mladina 2010 reveal that almost two thirds (65 % and 63 %, respectively) of young people who went abroad for the purpose of learning mobility, did so with the help of private financing or savings. A third (33 %) of those wishing to go abroad for learning mobility purposes, said that they cannot afford it due to a

High economic cost of international mobility, insufficient financial support to young people, and the absence of economic capacity or financial means on the side of participants, do not enable equal access to and conditions for mobility to all young people and discourage many from finding experience abroad. Moreover, young people are financially dissuaded from international mobility also because of an inadequate national granting policy.

http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communique_April_2009.pdf (22 November 2011).

⁸ Nekrep, Andreja, Robert Repnik, Marjan Krašna, Marko Marhl. 2011. Evroštudent SI 2010. Ekonomski, socialni, bivalni položaj in mednarodna mobilnost študentov v Sloveniji. Maribor: Univerza v Mariboru, Pedagoška fakulteta.

lack of financial means and due to high costs of living in another country,⁹ **which offers the conclusion that differences in mobility opportunities for young people from lower and higher strata exist, and that the access to mobility is not equal for all young people.**

European funds within mobility programmes are certainly insufficient. State or regional grants or loans enable only 17 % of participants to (co-)fund their international mobility.¹⁰ Insufficient involvement and cooperation of European, national and regional institutions with education institutions, the civil society and local authorities engaged in mobility, is particularly problematic; these could join capacities to (co-)fund mobility and thus record highest indirect benefits. Measures by the home country such as grants, transferable social security income (child support, unemployment benefits, etc.) loans and co-financing of interest rates when saving for mobility can represent an important financial resource for participants in mobility. However, these and other direct or indirect subsidies in the home country are often non-transferrable, which may be contrary to the Community rules and which discourages young people from living abroad.

The economic status of the family has relevance to youth mobility in formal education as well – the student and her/his family bear 56 % of the cost. Other sources do not enable studies abroad but can to a certain extent merely relieve the family from some financial obligations. Among young people who undertook part of their studies abroad we find mostly girls and those from better-off families. Weaker economic situation of the individual or her/his family prevent most young people from taking part in mobility programmes.¹¹

Awareness raising and information about learning and employment mobility for youth are insufficient. Likewise, there is not enough support and attention given to young people with disabilities, young parents and youth outside the education system.

Inadequate national granting policy

contributes to dissuading youth from international mobility due to high cost. It does not allow transferability or simultaneous use of different grants for the purpose of international mobility. Only 3 % of respondents believe that the grants for studies abroad are high enough.¹² Also, the international mobility grants are not always in line with the living standard in the host country; thus, young people who move to a country with a higher standard than Slovenia's, are more dependent on their own (co-)funding or on the possibilities to obtain a grant in the host country.

⁹ European Commission. 2011. Flash Eurobarometer on Youth on the Move. Available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/292&type=HTML> (22 November 2011).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Lavrič, dr. M. in sod. 2010. Mladina 2010. Končno poročilo o rezultatih raziskave. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, Urad RS za mladino.

¹² Ibid.

Awareness raising and information about learning and employment mobility options for youth are insufficient. Information about mobility programmes and related opportunities reaches a very low percentage of the wider target population; many young people no longer have possibilities to be mobile, once they find out about the programmes, thus information needs to be regularly updated and its access to wider public must be ensured.

Institutional support and information about the opportunities and potential benefits of international mobility must target young people, people active in youth work as well as students, participants in vocational education and training, teachers. There is also not enough attention and support given to young people with disabilities, young parents and those outside formal education system (thus, those who have not completed their studies, have already completed them, or wish to continue them).

Formal and non-formal education systems include no planned systematic education for mobility. Mobility opportunities are too often the result of personal efforts and investments of free time and means by, particularly, educators or youth leaders, youth workers, volunteers, supervisors, teachers and individuals who have experienced mobility themselves (former volunteers, graduates and pupil or student networks). They encourage and motivate young people to experience mobility at early age, mainly with personal examples, personal mobility experience, with the recognition of the added value of learning mobility in their programmes and with the provision of information.

Young people are relatively well informed about the opportunities and programmes of student mobility, they in principle like the chance to study abroad, but student mobility in Slovenia remains low. The rate of internationally mobile students in Slovenia is highest in the Lifelong Learning/Erasmus programme but stays below the European average and in the long-term stays relatively stable (under 1% of the student population).¹³

International mobility to Slovenia from abroad

The two directions of the youth mobility process in Slovenia are very weak.

Relative to the low youth mobility from Slovenia there are also few foreign young participants in learning mobility processes who come to Slovenia. Such mobility

The two directions of youth mobility in Slovenia are very weak, since the existing support instruments for youth mobility are given too little attention or are not developed at all.

¹³ Lavrič, dr. M. in sod. 2010. Mladina 2010. Končno poročilo o rezultatih raziskave. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, Urad RS za mladino.

should be systematic, organised and bi-directional (to and from abroad). With the arrival of foreign participants in mobility processes and with an increased visibility of the results of various forms of learning mobility (in youth work, in studies, etc.) the society creates a general opinion of the positive aspects of youth mobility, the impact of national and local host communities and their outward openness increase. Higher youth mobility makes institutions that come into contact with participants adapt better (e.g. the language of teaching and work), and this results in more young people from Slovenia deciding for international mobility.

The Slovenian environment can be very unfriendly towards mobility users from abroad, which is an important factor of the current situation. This is particularly true for institutional setup relevant for those with long-term residence in Slovenia. Slovenian companies and local authorities need more convincing about the benefits of learning mobility so as to invest more efforts to ensure a larger number of practical trainings, internships and volunteering activities to increase international youth mobility. Companies and local stakeholders can, in cooperation with European, national and regional bodies, share and exchange rich experience with youth, contribute to the (co-)funding of youth mobility and thus contribute to the international characteristics of Slovenian companies and local communities even at home.

Too little attention is paid to existing support instruments for youth mobility, or they are not even developed. The current support instruments need to be redirected to be more accessible to users, and mobility actions need to be more visible and more effective. When young people face the day-to-day reality while being in mobility schemes, major problems may occur. Although some support instruments are developed even at the European level (such as European Youth Card), they are not part of the information system, let alone of an organised support system. Benefiting from some existing support instruments depends on the individual and her/his ingenuity. The same goes for important support measures like grants, health insurance, housing support whilst living in Slovenia and abroad, etc.

Including these in an organised offer and informing people about accessible support instruments would certainly increase the number of participants in youth mobility schemes from abroad and to other countries. A high quality holistic support is also missing because many skilled people from Slovenia stay abroad, lacking proper opportunities at home.

International mobility in youth work and youth organisations

International youth mobility in youth work and non-formal education is a reality for a limited number of young people. Many young people are active in non-formal education in their free time, which offers not only education but also chances for international mobility.

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Youth work and youth organisations understand youth mobility as a form of youth work over a longer period (e.g. one year) and linked to independent goals. This form of work reaches and strengthens important wider youth policy aims (such as youth participation, inclusion of passive or vulnerable groups, strengthening of skills, development of solidarity, tolerance, cooperation, incentives for critical thinking, creativity). These independent goals within youth mobility in youth work and non-formal education serve as an incentive to use group and individual learning mobility in youth work, and strengthen the quality of the learning process in such forms of youth work.

Youth mobility in non-formal education in youth work gives young people experience that is key to strengthen interpersonal, intercultural, linguistic and other skills.

At the European level, such programmes for youth mobility exist, but do not reach a sufficient percentage of the target public; mobility thus remains the exception not the rule, and accessible only to some – e.g. students. It is crucial that such international mobility programmes for youth work are accessible to young people, youth organisations and their representatives, and youth workers, working with and for young people, regardless of whether they are part of the formal education system or not.

Youth mobility within non-formal education in youth work, supported by European programmes matters, because it gives young people an international experience that strengthens their interpersonal, intercultural, linguistic and other skills or competences, whilst contributing to smooth functioning and development of youth work, stronger recognition of the value of non-formal education, youth mobility, stronger youth organisations and promotion of active citizenship in the life of the international community. Through concrete and visible outcomes of different forms of learning mobility in youth work youth organisations can influence local communities and processes. Access to such mobility for a wider array of actors in the youth sector, who can use it as a learning form and tool, is also necessary for a dynamic and long-term development of youth work and youth policies, in the national context of EU Member States and for connections outside of it.

Youth mobility within Slovenia

Taking into account the educational, employment and free time activities and the lifestyle of young people, better youth mobility within Slovenia is limited by an inadequate youth housing policy, inefficient and youth-unfriendly public transport system and a lack of systematic development of support instruments for youth mobility – this is particularly problematic outside urban centres – or a complete absence of public transport in some rural areas.

Their lifestyle as well as different educational, employment and free time activities, which often complement each other, are an important factor when young people decide to use public transport, and thus should be as adaptable as possible to them.

Due to lower transport connectivity of some rural areas and due to a youth-unfriendly housing policy, the readiness for long-term emigration is highest in areas that need skilled people most. At the same time, improvements in the area of housing and access to public transport are urgent, in order to strengthen the decisions of young job seekers to be mobile outside their place of residence or in more rural environments.

Inadequate and inefficient public transport is problematic also because it promotes environmentally unfriendly mobility practice among youth, which – linked to the lack of education and awareness raising among youth about environmental sustainability in mobility – contributes to irresponsible and damaging behaviour of youth towards the environment.

Due to lower transport connectivity of some rural areas and due to a youth-unfriendly housing policy, the readiness for long-term emigration is highest in areas that need skilled people most.

■ **Recommendations**

The youth mobility situation as identified in this policy paper, needs urgent improvements. The National Youth Council of Slovenia thus strives for the state, formal education institutions and employers to implement different measures; these are the key agents of change in this area.

- We call upon decision makers to enable and support youth mobility as a whole and to increase public financial means for international training programmes, internships and other exchanges. They should also make it possible to receive social protection transfers and other means during mobility experiences, and should strive for an increase of such means at the international level; this is how they will raise the opportunities for mobility for a larger number of young people.
- We invite political stakeholders and competent ministries to increase the subsidy and grant finances for international exchanges, and to allow individuals to simultaneously receive different grants; the amounts of grants should be adapted to the standards of the host countries, which would decrease the

Measures to enable and support youth mobility as a whole, and measures to ensure more public financial means for international training programmes, internships and other exchanges are urgently needed.

necessary individual investment towards housing, food and transport costs during the youth mobility programme. At the same time we call upon them to study the possibilities of introducing a loan or guarantee instrument for young people in mobility.

- We call upon decision makers to financially strengthen mobility programmes in youth work for young people and youth organisations, which will boost the cooperation within youth work, active citizenship of young people and youth organisations, exchange of good practice as well as knowledge and working methods in non-formal education.
- Slovenian decision makers and other stakeholders should ensure national means to support the development of specialised national (bilateral international cooperation agreements, agreements with major trading partners and with neighbouring countries) and local mobility instruments in youth work at the regional and municipal levels (e.g. local community partnerships, sister municipalities); in cooperation with companies they should study the possibilities to introduce bi-directional mobility, which hardly exists in Slovenia at the moment (»traineeships«, »au pair« etc.) and should in this way promote learning mobility of youth.
- We invite Slovenian universities and companies (both foreign and domestic) to promote dialogue and stronger cooperation, leading to higher student and young adult mobility. We see it as part of the solution in the area of transition between education and employment, lowering youth unemployment and better economic growth in the European economic area.
- We urge decision makers in Slovenia and the European Union to remove objective obstacles to inter-institutional cooperation and to work more towards mutual recognition of formally, non-formally and informally gained knowledge, skills and competences outside Slovenia. Apart from strengthening the economic capacities for international mobility of youth, more attention must be given to actual assurance of legal possibilities for international mobility to all youth.
- We call upon providers of formal and non-formal education to increase the awareness raising and information for young people on the value and opportunities for international mobility – within their regular education processes. Job descriptions and work plans should adequately recognise the time and work that teachers, educators and youth workers invest in supporting young people in their preparations for life abroad; this work should be properly recognised as an element of their development. To overcome the current insufficient outreach to the wider target public it is important to ensure that concrete effects of mobility are better presented to youth in the future, and more emphasis must be put on informing about

Formal and non-formal education providers must – within regular education processes – increase the awareness raising and information for young people on the opportunities of international mobility.

mobility options and on the use of different outreach channels. Part of the solution for better information lies in the promotion of non-material benefits or advantages of mobility, better collection of information about youth mobility opportunities, not only from the point of view of education, training, internships, work experience but also from the point of view of housing, practical information, contacts, etc.

- We urge Slovenian and European decision makers to systematically include existing support instruments in the implementation of international mobility programmes and to develop new support instruments at the European level. Experts are needed as one of the support instruments, as they can gather information about learning and work opportunities for youth after returning from abroad and, in the absence of immediate employment options, can direct them to entrepreneurship options and into developing own ideas. In this way, opportunities to use the knowledge gained abroad, can be created at home too.
- We call upon actors in the youth sector to include information about mobility opportunities in regular trainings for members. This is how they can encourage the use of learning mobility in their work at the regional and local levels, where they have the most direct contact with youth, they can significantly increase the visibility of outcomes of different learning mobility options in youth work, obtain (co-)funding and at the same time make an impact on the wider local community.
- The Slovenian Office for Youth and the Council for Student Affairs should in cooperation with decision makers seek solutions to perceived problems of host mobility and in this way promote a friendlier environment and gradual adaptation of Slovenian institutions to the needs of host mobility.
- Decision makers and competent ministries shall improve the cooperation with other actors from the non-formal education sector, and should regulate the record-keeping, recognition and verification of skills, knowledge and competences gained through learning mobility, which we believe is key to promote youth mobility and to link it with education.
- We call upon decision makers to set up a more efficient and financially accessible public transport system, to encourage youth mobility between Slovenian towns and regions. Next to investments in public transport for better efficiency, also better adaptability or complementarities among different providers must be ensured. We believe that such measures will raise the rate of young people who become mobile within Slovenia, and will simultaneously lower the differences in access to urban and rural areas.
- National- and local-level decision makers must ensure that young people have efficient logistical and environmentally friendly mobility options at their disposal, particularly in terms of rational use.

Mobility between different towns and regions in Slovenia must be encouraged among youth, and a better and financially more accessible public transport system must be set up.

- We call upon political stakeholders at the national level, who work on youth mobility issues, and upon youth organisations, to pay more attention to support instruments in youth mobility in Slovenia, which will ease young people's access to programmes, services and products relevant to mobility. Significant results in increasing youth mobility in Slovenia can be achieved with relatively few means for the development of support instruments.
- We invite formal and non-formal education providers to – within their regular education programmes – improve information provision and to give practical examples on awareness raising among youth about environmental sustainability in mobility.

■ **Key findings**

One single actor cannot expand the opportunities for youth mobility far beyond the limits of existing programmes. In order to overcome mobility obstacles, we need a coherent approach in all sectors – from language learning to volunteering, efforts in various areas and measures at the regional, national, supranational and institutional levels, and active inclusion of youth organisations, civil society, companies and other interested actors.

A new partnership must be formed, which will connect public bodies with partners, civil society and the business world. Expert associations, youth organisations and other non-governmental organisations can be encouraged to actively promote youth mobility. It can become part of all relevant policies, from education, training and culture to research, entrepreneurship and innovation. By strengthening the existing programmes and forming new, more appropriate European ones, civil society organisations in partnership with regions and local communities could encourage close inter-institutional cooperation along the lines of inter-city partnerships and foundations for dialogue.

■ **Conclusion**

Holistic regulation of the youth mobility policy in Slovenia is a necessary step towards a quality lifestyle of youth, faster reaching of autonomy and consequently towards sustainable development of the society.

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.

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 and supporting them on their path to independence. This is how we can make an important impact on the quality of life in Slovenia and on the future of our society.