

# Reactions of the European Union to the situation of young people: Employment Plans, Lisbon Strategy, Comprehensive Reform Policies

We present three Agreements or Strategies that are closely related to youth policies passed by the European Commission and the Heads of government of the EU-countries and we link them to data that have been published about the situation of young people and the concern that was becoming obvious in society – all measures appear in very specific contexts. To get to know the situation of young people in the EU different studies and researches funded by the Commission, as well as studies carried out by various institutions in different EU-countries have helped. Therefore, we think that it could be interesting to present the most relevant studies of recent years (2005 and 2006).

In the evaluation of the measures carried out in the framework of the Employment Plans, we state that, generally, the institutional point of view focuses in transitions from school to work, but there are other processes that take place in transitions, such as those that refer to the transition from the family of origin to independence, the couple and sexuality, from the peer-group and the youth culture to individual life-styles, from childhood to citizenship, and so forth, and that are not taken into account.

From the point of view of society of second modernity we underline the need of taking into account that it is the young people who have to take decisions and they not always have the needed instruments to choose correctly. That is why policies that focus on the individual are relevant and these policies give more importance to participation, counselling, orientation and guidance. The objective is to carry out integrated youth policies that include (financial and personal) structures and resources to create a different type of social support, where young people feel completely accepted as “negotiators of their own matters”.

**Key words:** second modernity, liquid modernity, individualization, choice/decision, transitions, Employment Plans, Lisbon Strategy, Reform Plan, integrated transition policies, counselling.

## 1. Introduction

The evolution of youth policies that have been passed in EU-countries shows that, most of the times, the objective is to react to changes in the labour market and society. Many different researches about young people being carried out on behalf of the European Commission in different European countries also have an influence or develop these policies. The high number of young people without a job shown by statistics for the mid-nineties and the fact that to obtain a job academic certificates and social abilities are important motivated the approval of Employment Agreements/ Strategies developed since 1997 – Luxemburg Summit – in different European Commission and EU Head of Government Conferences.

The objectives are the same: to favour convergence, activate employment creation – mainly for young people, females and long-term unemployed people – and, in the framework of network society, the knowledge society, bet on continual training, on extending the stay of young people in educational institutions.

Generally speaking about “constellations of disadvantage” among young people and about strategies to cope with them can mean many things, such as reminding us about policies developed by the European Commission and EU-countries to favour “Social Inclusion”, policies against social discrimination due to ethnic group, gender disabilities, or new policies focused on the emancipation of young people, favouring participation, a stable job and access to housing, as well as policies directed to support young people as an active subject that is obliged to take decisions.

From all these possible aspects, this monographic issue presents two topics that show and make the situation of disadvantaged young people visible: early school leaving and precarious unemployment/employment. Based on the presentation of experiences carried out in some countries, we insist on the fact that policies that favour overcoming these deficiencies need to be linked to other policies that reinforce motivation, participation and decision taking of young people.

Recent researches carried out in EU-countries and other countries show success deficits of youth policies and showed up, in spite of advances, that the key for success still are academic certificates: young people coming from a family with a higher social class will get more support from the social environment and go to schools that offer more possibilities to be successful, while children and young people from disadvantaged classes will not receive economic support and normally leave the post-compulsory education system too early.

In the framework of this introduction, I would like to make a brief presentation of representative youth studies done in EU-countries and other OECD-countries, with researches to be taken into account. As an extension to the reports of seven countries we present in this issue, we make a brief reference to researches about young people in: Canada, Italy, Germany, United States of America and Australia.

Therefore, we take the possibility of classifying the reports/studies carried out on a national level by *typologies*. Depending on the theoretical and methodological framework, as well as on the topics analyzed, being aware of the fact that these research-typologies hardly or never appear in a pure form, but rather are centred round a neuralgic point, amplified through individual aspects taken from a different typology.

In order to classify youth studies currently being carried out, we can group them in four categories:

1. Studies about **transitions**: research whose main topic is the transition from childhood/ youth to adult life as a development process; others, from the point of view of life-stages, are more inclined to study social contexts and the influence of factors derived from different life-conditions. (1)

Among this kind of research, we could mention the Canadian study “Youth in Transition Survey” – YITS – that focused on the factors that have influence on transitions and career-models related to education, training and employment. This is a longitudinal research, with two groups sorted by age. A different study that can be included into this typology is the one carried out since 1983 by the Institute IARD, Milan (Istituto di Ricerca S.c.r.l. Via Sancino, 1. 20123 Milano). “The IARD-report”, a research about young adults between 15 and 34 years old, focuses on the transition to adult life analyzing a wide range of aspects, taking into account factors such as values, political participation and attitudes towards institutions, with special regard to their life-forms: when they leave their parents' household, couple relationships, labour integration and positioning in adult life.

(1)  
In this typology we could mention the following studies:  
Statistics Canada, Ottawa and Human Resources and Skills Development, Quebec  
Istituto sulla condizione giovanile in Italia, Milano;  
Giovani del nuovo secolo. Quinto rapporto sulla condizione giovanile in Italia, Milano 2002/3  
Kinderen in Nederland, Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands, The Hague 2005  
National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) 1997-2010, Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Washington D.C.  
Statistics Canada, Ottawa and Human Resources and Skills Development, Quebec:  
National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY)  
Alt, Ch., 2005/2006:  
Kinderleben - Zwischen Familie, Freunden und Institutionen - Bd. 1. Aufwachsen in Familien, Bd. 2. Aufwachsen zwischen Freunden und Institutionen, Deutsches Jugendinstitut, München

2. Studies focusing on the **fields of life**: the different situations in life and the behaviour of young people are analyzed sorted by fields of life. Situation and behaviour is studied in a wide range of situations, but normally it is not possible to cover all the topics completely and research them in depth. (2) This kind of investigation usually maintains some constant neuralgic topics, which allows comparisons with one or more past studies, and that way it is possible to see the changes that have happened. These studies analyze basic information such as social origin, educational trajectory and labour situation, as well as attitudes and expectations with regard to values, cultural attitudes, leisure-time, identity, and political participation. Usually, already tested instruments are used and, that way, it is possible to examine and compare if there are changes in the ways young people react to new situations.

In this category, we could include the German report “Shell – Youth Study”, with the 15<sup>th</sup> edition released in 2006. Since 1953, the energy company “Deutsche Shell” commissioned the carrying out of studies on attitudes, perceptions, situation and expectations of young people in Germany to different Institutions. The study is published every four years.

In the presentation of the research we put emphasis on the fact that current youth can be defined or characterised by being a *pragmatic generation under pressure*. As in studies belonging to this typology, the situations of young people, their perceptions and attitudes towards family, training, work, couple, future, political participation, values, etc. are analyzed, but, for the first time, there are questions in the report regarding attitudes towards demographic change, and from this point of view youth is analyzed. Demographic change and ageing of society, also related to youth, is one hot topic in German society.

(2)  
Shell Deutschland Holding (hrsg.): Jugend 2006, Frankfurt a.M. 2006  
Gille, M.; Sardei-Biermann, S.; Gaiser, W.: Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene in Deutschland, Wiesbaden 2006  
Fairfax County Youth Survey, 2005, The Southeast Kansas Education Service Centre Iowa Youth Survey, Iowa Department of Public Health

An important part of the study is devoted to the so-called “big topics”: *demographic change, European Union and globalization*. The study also underlines the importance of the chapter entitled “*Young people in an ageing society*” for the rest of the research. In that chapter they present a qualitative analysis based on different *portraits* of young people.

The fieldwork was carried out at the beginning of 2006 and the results were presented in September of the same year.

Frequently, in investigations with pre-determined objectives, already tested measurement instruments (indicators) are used to obtain information on the aspects related to ways of acting in life, and this information is analyzed based on data coming from other previous studies. This way, the design of the investigation is not previously determined, and neither are the objectives of the information nor the methodological theory of the indicators, which means that what, or why, or in what specific circumstances a certain information may be important, or why the measurement instruments are thought to be appropriate for the research is not specified.

The “Shell 2006” study, and also the investigation “Australian Youth 2006”, base the choice of their respective special topics on their theory about the developments taking place in society and the effects on the situation and perception of life of young people. For instance, the study “Shell 2006” assumes, among other things, that the strain between socio-cultural independence and socio-economic dependence has increased. The stay – waiting room – in the education system is longer and the procedures to enter the labour market without knowing if they will fulfil the needs, that increase with age, of obtaining socio-economic autonomy or coping with the fear of not obtaining a secure position in work and society. The psychological pressure deriving from this situation not only prevents tranquillity and inner self-organization, but also favours the appearance of resignation and fear towards the possibility of some kind of protest strategy (Shell 2006: 35). Following this speculative hypothesis, leads the authors of the study to conclude that, compared to past studies, the gap between “winners” and “losers” has probably widened in the field of training and occupation. The analysis of the constellations would confirm this situation.

3. Studies related to **specific “problems”**: studies whose objective is preventive or therapeutic, or about situations that are considered of social or political relevance, such as the situation of training or labour, couple relationships, sexual behaviour, family orientation, cultural and political identity, their democratic behaviour / the political participation, etc. (3)

This typology includes studies that, for commercial, economic or socio-preventive reasons focus on researching a specific aspect as, for example, the situation in school or training, political attitudes, consumption, spare-time behaviour, criminality, sexual behaviour, etc. There are a lot of studies in the different States of the US about “Youth and Health”, or researches that refer to the “relation between parents and young people”.

(3)  
Healthy Youth Survey, Washington State, 2005  
Survey of parents and youth, Columbia University, 2002  
Università La Sapienza. Dipart. di Scienze Demografiche: *Giovani e mercato del lavoro*, Roma 2006  
La situation des jeunes en echec scolaire et professionnel, Conseil économique et social de Bourgogne, 2006  
Charest, D.: *La situation des jeunes non diplômés de l'école secondaire*. Québec 1997  
Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques (OCDE), 2002: *Un meilleur départ pour les jeunes? Perspectives de l'emploi de L' OCDE; Évolution récente et perspectives du marché du travail*, p. 22-64, Paris  
Ministère de l'emploi, de la cohésion sociale et du logement: *Les jeunes face à l'emploi: alternance et apprentissage plébiscités*, Paris, 20 Sept. 2006  
Bourmaud, F.-X.: *Alerte sur l'emploi des jeunes dans le monde*. Le Figaro, Economie. L'actualité économique, Le Figaro 30 oct. 2006

Together with topics related to health and family, all those related with training, profession and occupation stand out.

The Italian research «Giovani e mercato del lavoro» (Roma 2006) analyzes the precarious possibilities that specially young people between 20 and 34 years old suffer in order to access a professional life. Among other reasons, this study confirms that, against the needs derived from the global market, young people are not willing to learn foreign languages or to accept a job in a foreign country, and generally to labour mobility. On the other hand, young people demand a training that is not that far away from praxis, and state-support that allows a needed mobility, in the field of education, as well as in the professional field.

4. Studies from **the point of view of social change**: studies whose topic profile is based on information or assumptions about development of society and the effects of this developments on young people: structural changes in economy and the effects on labour perspectives and/or demands directed to young people; structural changes of the population with effects on the social system, the change of values, the change of relational structures and the effects on life situations and behaviours of young people. (4)

The study "National Survey of Young Australians 2006" starts with the theory that modern life taxes the perception of life and the expectations of young people. Unstable economic grounds, broken families and dissolution of community links have a negative influence, creating insecurity to young people's way to adult life. For that reason, there is every day a higher number of young people that do not successfully cope with the access to adult life. An important reason for failures in form of unemployment, early divorce, lack of vocational training, economic poverty, addictions and psychological problems, etc. is to be found in the fact that, during their school and training period, young people spend their time without bonds to their community and without being controlled by adults. The study confirms that changes taking place in society with regard to life-conditions reinforce the sensations of insecurity among young people; the new factors of insecurity ("levels of turbulence") aggravate the already difficult transition to adult life.

The research-group states that the number of experiences of discrimination has increased among young people, so in future researches they are focusing on this topic.

Finally, I would like to remind you of the fact that most studies highlight not only the central importance of the life context of young people, but also the importance of these young people for society. All studies usually contain the theory that structural changes of the economy, the changes in the labour market, and socio-political demands have an influence on transitions and endanger those young people with lower academic/professional qualifications and social competences, also adding the insufficient support by the family. These situations mean a burden for the whole life of these young people, and also a burden for society. (Still, 13.1% of young people under 25 years old living in EU-countries are

(4)  
The National Youth Survey' (14 700 interviewed) and the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth Cohorts' (13 000 interviewed):  
- Mission Australia, Research and Social Policy, Sydney  
- Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Camberwell

neither in the education system nor have an occupation; they seek a job without success or have a job with no qualification requirements and with a very low salary) (Bourmaud, 2006). (5)

## 2. The European strategy to favour the creation of employment: homogenization of language and joint strategies

### National Employment Plans

At the European Conference on Employment, held in November 1997 in Luxemburg, the guidelines for the development of Employment Action Plans were approved. These guidelines were to be presented and developed by Member States at the Head of State and Government summit of 1998 (Cardiff, June of 1998). There are two aspects to be highlighted of the Luxemburg conference: first, the joint acknowledgment of the need to view employment as a priority by all EU-member states and, second, the homogenization, through joint guidelines, of the language to be used in order to develop individual policies related with the socio-economic characteristics of each country. The homogenization of language may serve to improve the joint “europeization” of EU-member states and it is an important way to balance how the most important and influential Member States understand issues and practices. (Until then there were great differences, mainly regarding how bigger countries understood education issues and made proposals regarding the “description and formulation” of educational and professional qualifications at the European level).

The guidelines presented in Luxemburg affected the main improvable areas: the implementation of new norms and strategies directed towards unemployed young people to ensure unemployment periods not longer than 6 months (12 months in the case of other groups of unemployed people). And, it is expected that the new structures of the national system of vocational training improves flexibility and compatibility of qualifications obtained within the education system. The main aim consists in updating the education system with the introduction of more measures to activate vocation training in order to ensure a better adjustment between education supply and labour market.

The guidelines were centred on four main pillars:

*Pillar I: Improvement of professional insertion*, through different guidelines: fighting unemployment and long-term unemployment...

*Pillar II: Development of the spirit of business*, in order to allow favourable conditions for the creation of companies...

*Pillar III: Promote the capacity of workers and companies to adapt*, in order to enable the labour market to react to economic changes...

*Pillar IV: Reinforce policies that promote equality of opportunities in the labour market*, in order to fight discrimination between males and females and bring employment rates of both collectives nearer...

(5)  
Bourmaud, F.-X. : Alerte sur l'emploi des jeunes dans le monde. Le Figaro, Economie. L'actualité économique, Le Figaro 30 oct. 2006

The Luxemburg guidelines, the Social Action Programme 1998-2000 and the National Employment Plans join active measures to create employment with policies to develop formal and non formal education systems, as well as permanent training, everything from a perspective to facilitate the transition to the labour market and the adaptation to technology and economic transformations.

The statistical information that we will now present again reinforces the need and importance of the Agreement on Employment approved by Heads of State and Government to develop Employment Action Plans.

During the years 1996 and 1997 the unemployment rate among young people under 25 year olds were high.

Table 1. **Unemployment rates among people under 25 years old**

	1996	1997	1998	2004
<b>EU (25 countries)</b>			19,4	18,6
<b>EU (15 countries)</b>	21,2	20,5	19	16,5
<b>Euro-area</b>	23	22,4	20,5	17,9
<b>Euro-area (12 count.)</b>	23,2	22,6	20,8	17,9
Belgium	22,1	22	22,1	19,8
Germany	15,6	16,2	15	15,1
Greece	31	30,8	30,1	26,9
France	28,5	28,4	25,6	22
Italy	30,4	30,2	29,9	23,6
Luxemburg	8,2	7,9	6,9	12,9
Netherlands	11,1	9,1	7,6	8
Austria	6,3	6,7	6,4	9,7
Portugal	16,7	15,1	10,6	15,4
Finland	28	25,2	23,5	20,7
Sweden	20,5	20,6	16,1	16,3

Source: INE (National Institute of Statistics). European Indicators.

In the Employment Action Plan of 1998 promoted by the government of Spain the situation of the labour market in Spain is described as follows:

- The unemployment rate of young people under 25 was 39.0%.
- The female employment rate was 28.4% (16.2% for males).
- Long-term unemployment was 54.7% of the total unemployment.
- 44.2% of long-term unemployed people were young people and 59.8 were females.
- For people between 16 and 64 years old, the occupation rate was 49% (year average) and the female occupation rate was 34.3%.
- The activity rate, for the same age group as mentioned before, was 61.9% and for females it was 48.0%. The temporary employment rate was 33.2%.
- Seasonality affects fundamental sectors of the Spanish economy very much.
- The situation of the labour market in different *Comunidades Autónomas* (regions) shows great differences. While in some of them unemployment is lower than the European average, in others is over 30% (page 4).

Table 2. **Unemployment rate sorted by age-group**

	1996	2000	2003	2004	2005
16 to 19	52,2	33,6	30,9	29,08	27,70
20 to 24	38,2	23,4	30,9	19,46	16,15
25 to 54	19	11,9	10,1	9,46	7,67
Over 55	11	8,5	6,4	6,68	5,54
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,7%</b>	<b>13,4%</b>	<b>11,2%</b>	<b>10,56</b>	<b>8,70</b>

Source: INE (National Institute of Statistics), Labour Force Survey and MTAS (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

Table 3. **Evolution of the temporality rate sorted by age-group 1998-20004**

	16-19 year olds	20-24 year olds	25-29 year olds	< 30 year olds	> 30 year olds
<b>1998</b>	26,34	69,78	47,93	59,20	21,91
<b>2004</b>	82,57	62,12	44,42	53,24	24,22
<b>Dif/</b>	+56,23	-7,66	-3,51	-5,96	+2,31

Source: INE (National Institute of Statistics), Labour Force Survey and MTAS (Ministry of Work and Social Affairs)

### Lisbon Summit, March of 2000

Few years after the implementation of the Employment Plans, the existence of weaknesses in the European labour market is again confirmed: the creation of employment is insufficient; there are imbalances between EU-member states, especially with regard to southern European countries. There is insistence towards answering to two of the circumstances that are more important for the economy in general: globalization and the importance of information and communication technologies, in the professional field as well as in the private field.

Five aspects are highlighted: technological challenge, knowledge society, improvement of competitiveness, integration and coordination of financial markets and modernization of the European social model. One of the most important novelties at the Lisbon Summit was determining objectives and establishing *quantitative and qualitative indicators* to measure the impact and compare “good practices” among states on all levels, from the European level to the local level.

We are going to analyze the guidelines referred to the improving of education and training, to the existent gaps between the labour market and the education/training system, and to indicators suggested at the Lisbon summit. (6)

The so-called “Lisbon Strategy” sets the objectives of increasing permanent training to reach “at least” 12.5% of the population in 2010 (in Spain it is 5.8%); lowering early school leaving” from the present 30.4% to 10%, and increase the percentage of people with post-compulsory education from 63.4% to 85.0%.

(6)

In the article by Germán Gil Rodríguez the Spanish situation is analyzed in detail from a comparative perspective, taking into account other European countries.



Table 4. **Indicators for the Lisbon Strategy, 2000**

Indicators labour market/training	Spain	UE-15	Objective Lisbon 2010
Participation of population in continual training (25 to 64 year olds)	5.8	9.7	At least 12.5
Early school leaving (18 to 24 year olds)	30.4	18.0	Not over 10.0
Population with at least finished post-compulsory secondary education (20 to 24 year olds)	63.4	74.0	85.0

Source: Own elaboration.

[http://www.europarl.eu.int/summits/lis1\\_es.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/summits/lis1_es.htm)

The introduction of indicators has meant an important step towards the use of evaluations about the levels reached regarding the suggested objectives. Therefore, in 2004 the Commission created a high level work-group led by Wim Kok (former prime minister of the Netherlands) to carry out a report about the objectives and results of the Lisbon Agreement (known as the KOK-report): Report from the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok "Facing the challenge. The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment", November 2004.

The results of the KOK-report show that, at the current speed the programmes of the Lisbon Agreement (2000) are being developed, we are still far from reaching the objectives.

#### **National Reforms Programme of Spain, October 2005**

After the KOK-report, the Social Agenda 2005-2010 (February 2005) is approved and the Lisbon Strategy is relaunched (European Council 2005). This can be summed up in three main objectives:

- a) more growth – make Europe a more attractive place to invest and work;
- a) create more and better jobs – knowledge and innovation for employment;
- a) better governance – more coordination of macro- and microeconomic policies.

The response of the Spanish government to these demands is the "*National Reforms Programme of Spain – Convergence and Employment* -, passed the 13<sup>th</sup> of October of 2005".

#### **Contradictions between the education system and the labour market**

Different reports carried out by the OECD (1992: 59; 1995, 1997), inform about the situation of employment in the world by the ILO (from 1999 to 2004), White Books by the European Union (*Growth, competitiveness and employment*, 1993, and *The knowledge society*, 1995), as well as different annual employment plans of Spain have continued insisting on the need of "training of the labour force" as a privileged way of fighting unemployment, establishing a close relation between education level and unemployment rates.

In spite of advances made during the last decades by increasing training of young people and lowering unemployment rates, young people, in their process towards adulthood, are still characterised by having "the doors open to education/training, but closed to the labour market. Here, there

is a great gap, a great rupture between training, mainly done in school, and the labour field (...) young people can participate in nearly all education areas, as mentioned before, but have serious problems when it comes to integrating into the labour market” Hernández Arístu (1998:274).

The relations established between educational institutions and labour institutions have been ambivalent and were followed by strains, disagreement and even close collaboration. Currently, and due to high structural unemployment rates affecting especially young people, educational institutions, from the decades of the 80's/90's onwards, started a change process of the education plans, as well as of internal structures and the meaning of education and training itself.

This fact has raised voices that demand an education that prepares young people for a future labour insertion, while others consider that education/training has a meaning, independently of its link to the labour market. The every time closer relation between training and work has made training into an element of economic policies of the countries.

The business world wants learning to “subordinate” to the interests of the labour market and young people to be prepared by educational institutions for the moment of their insertion into the labour market, being able to adapt (flexibility) to changes that are being produced very fast in the field of labour organization and the technologies applied to production.

The need to increase the level of training of workers due to the demand of qualification of the labour market and the high unemployment rates of young people have caused a longer period of stay of young people in educational institutions. These institutions have acted, occasionally, as real “containers” of young people, “hiding” them by saying they need a better qualification and arguing that the education system would provide them with an easier labour insertion in the future.

Table 5. **Activity and unemployment rates sorted by level of training. Year 2005**

	Activity rate		Unemployment rate	
	25-34 years	25-64	25-34 years old	25-64
Total	84,9	74,4	9,6	7,8
Illiterates	36,2	30	16,4	21,4
Primary education and no education	76,4	55,6	14,1	9,6
Lower secondary education	82,8	73	10,7	8,9
Upper secondary education	84,6	80,6	9	7,3
Higher education	89	87,6	8,6	6,2
Doctorates	91,8	92,7	4,3	1,8

Source: MEC (Ministry of Education and Science). Education Indicators. 2006

If during Industrialization, companies demanded workers with low or no knowledge at all, because they learned at the working place and occasionally a single job lasted for the whole life, currently the development of technology has caused companies to demand workers with very different qualifications, costly technical knowledge and a preparation of workers by the State (or a training subvention by the State).

The technical preparation of future workers through regulated vocational training, the response to unemployment through training for employment and permanent technical update through permanent training has become one of the main axes of economic and social policies in the different countries. The knowledge society obliges the whole of society to be in a permanent state of training and acquisition of knowledge, because the training acquired may not be valid for very long, and it could even be difficult to know who is interested in the acquired training. It is difficult to find levels of youth unemployment as high as today in other historical periods, in spite of the important investments destined to education/training for employment.

Table 6. **Occupational training, sorted by previous level of education of participants**

	Lower than lower secondary education	Secondary education		Post-secondary education		
		Vocational Training programmes	General Education	Higher Professional Technicians	First University Cycle	Second University Cycle
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,8</b>	<b>7,6</b>	<b>60,5</b>	<b>12,4</b>	<b>7,2</b>	<b>9,6</b>

Source: MEC (Ministry of Education and Science). Education Indicators. 2006

Today, the longer stay in educational routes leads young people to create expectations related to their professional life. At the same time, these expectations can not be always satisfied, due to economic and social changes related not only to the flexibilization of the labour market and the high level of unemployment, but also to the general increase of the level of qualifications among the population, which created an inflation of educational careers. Learn and forget is a simultaneous process, because what was learned for the world of today is no longer needed tomorrow. Learning has become a never-ending process during the whole life. And today learning consists of being able to change what we considered to be true, real, useful and effective (Bauman, 2004).

For young people with academic certificates there are many possibilities that they will experience a long period of wait before they assume responsibilities related to work and independence.

The productive activity is in a constant and radical process of change in all its elements. Computing and telecommunications added to the world of labour in a very fast and comprehensive way so that theoretical knowledge is not the most important element when young people access the labour market. This labour market demands procedures and attitudes, because needed knowledge to fulfil a specific work is part of what the company, occupational training or permanent training offer.

Education is subjected to strains produced by the plurality of demands coming from very different sectors. Sectors that demand immediate solutions to problems that are not caused in school nor can these problems be answered by school.

Frequently, we lose sight of the perspective that states that work is a scarce resource and that it is very difficult to fulfil the circumstances to allow full employment. Therefore, the conception of education based on

learning during the whole life is very important and, occasionally, training is used to hide the rough reality of admitting that there is not enough work for everyone while economic structures are maintained with the perspective of economic profit.

Table 7. **Permanent and continual training: people over 25 years old that are in education.**

	Total		
	1996	2002	2005
Total	4,3	6	12,1
Males	3,8	4,6	11,2
Females	4,7	5,6	13,1

Source: MEC (Ministry of Education and Science). Education Indicators. 2006.

Education has become a primary socialization factor and work is the most important instrument of social insertion. For some people, the education system is responsible for the number of unemployed people, more than the labour market. This way, the structural dimension of unemployment and the subordination of social and economic policies to economic profitability are forgotten. If school as an institution is no longer the only place for young people to learn: What function does it have or must it have? To what kind of objectives must it answer?

The distancing between school and companies can be counterproductive, even irreversible, if there is not an appropriate relation between them. Overcome the strains between the two worlds, create renovation and innovation conditions among companies and in educational centres is currently an indispensable task. Investment in research, development and human capital is not only a need, but something essential.

Schools face every time more difficulties to “keep” young people and continue with their educational task. The distancing between educational and labour world has been favoured by the reservations towards their relationship, that sometimes and during longer periods of time were inexistent, due to mental reservations and prejudices from both sides. Occasionally, the distancing was followed by mutual ignorance, and therefore it is needed to activate actions that bring companies and educational centres into contact.

### 3. Youth policies in second modernity/ liquid modernity.

“individualization is not a choice, but a destiny. In the land of individual freedom, the choice to escape individualization and refuse to take part in this game is something emphatically not considered” (Bauman, 2004:39)

While presenting the Topic of the journal we briefly referred to the paradigm that defines current society – individualization, choice, access to goods/services through the market (mass consumption society) – now, we would like to introduce its influence regarding the implementation of employment plans. These thoughts are based on an investigation carried out during the years 1998-2001 (7) and on the publication (8) released in 2002.

*We cannot escape from individualization: we are “obliged” to choose, to make decisions.*

One of the most important results of our research was the fact that most policies did not take changes in society, its implications and consequences for the development of policies directed towards young people, their transitions to adult life and the labour market into account.

Generally, the institutional perspective is focused on transitions from school to employment, but there are others that also take place as the ones referred to the transition from the family of origin to independent life, the couple and sexuality, from peer group and youth culture to individual life-styles, from childhood to citizenship, and so forth. These fragmented transitions follow different speeds and work with a different logic, which shows the change between modern societies to post-modern societies. Young people have to reconcile different aspects of these broken or, at least, fragmented trajectories. These trajectories tend towards disintegration, but still keep an internal logic within their own individual biographies (EGRIS, 2001) (9)

In spite of the results of the investigations and the European Commission's (2001) interest in them, policies generally tend to re-standardize young people's transitions. They create a fiction, the “logic of linearity, that does not represent non linear trajectories (yo-yo) seen in the life-cycle of many young people. Lots of these policies tend to create an artificial agenda within a chaotic social structure” (Machado Pais, 2002: 88).

The analysis of education and employment policies for young people carried out by us in the framework of National Employment Plans has highlighted policies as “failures” when:

- They do not take subjective perspectives of young adults into account, restricting social integration and integration into the labour market.
- They work as “containers” with the objective of removing young people of the streets and directing them towards “career plans” instead of helping them to build their own itineraries.
- They disguise the structural imbalance between education system and labour market, turning problems into something personal and defining problematic collectives in order to make them guilty of structural deficits.
- They demotivate young people demanding of them more education, without being able to offer a worthy education.
- They regulate the access to benefits by means of bureaucratic criteria such as age, length of unemployment, nationality or gender, instead of taking into account individual needs.

(7)

During four years, the EGRIS network carried out the 4th Framework programme in the section “Targeted Socio-Economic Research” (TSER). The research group AREA is part of this network. The research project was entitled “Evaluation of employment policies for young people in Europe. Unsuccessful trajectories?”

(8)

Bois-Reymond, M. du, Cuconata, M., Lenzi, G., López Blasco, A., Stauber, B., Walther, A. (2002) (see bibliography)

(9)

The results of the researches carried out by the EGRIS network and other research groups have an effect on the activity of policy-makers. The European Commission, in the White Book “A new impetus for European youth” (2001), mentions three important challenges related to the analysis of the situation of young people, and its relation to policies and measures directed to this group: (1) youth lasts longer; (2) life-trajectories are not linear; (3) collective traditional models loose ground and are every time more individualized” (E. Commission 2001:9)

Other conclusions show the need of measures that go in the direction of activating education and employment while prioritizing the interrelation of the systemic and the subjective perspective. Generally, however, education systems tend to prioritize the systemic perspective and therefore it is needed to prepare people for different social positions in order for them to answer to the demands of the labour market. Students have to adapt to an organizational structure and to a curriculum with fixed educational objectives. The subjective perspective of individual is not taken into account, or rather, is not possible to be taken into account by the education system.

It is necessary to contextualize learning in relation to system and subjective perspectives involved in the process. The main implications are: extension of access to all kinds of education in all levels, increase of abilities recognized as relevant and acceptance of more forms and configurations of informal education. In any case, we have to admit that educational reforms will not give us all answers, because these answers also depend of innovations in other areas of society.

It seems very difficult for education systems to face this problem with satisfactory results for all involved actors, and this fact delays answers to new demands of the knowledge societies. In knowledge societies, it is essential that individuals understand as soon as possible that they learn for themselves and that they will continue learning throughout their whole life. Young people have to create the habit of learning in order to support this attitude.

The integration potential of a permanent education requires an extension of the abilities recognized as relevant in transitions to work, as well as the access of all young people to the possibility of acquiring and developing these competences in the context of individual education biographies. This means that:

- a) Education and training systems do not have to exclude young people due to social class, gender or ethnic group; this also includes making transition from one level to another more flexible. Students also should not be punished for leaving the system: sometimes, earning money can be more important for the individual, and consequently they can postpone their studies. In any case, education systems are structured with selection mechanisms. Furthermore, putting formal qualifications as the most important factor may lead to a dead end, to a trap or a curl that demotivates young people to continue in education. They must have the possibility to choose from different education routes.
- b) It has to be promoted that young people are able to manage their own educational trajectories. Many times students start a certain educational trajectory, but they need support to finish successfully. Schools, as well as companies are reluctant or unable to offer support to young people in order for them to learn. Schools and companies usually give advice and accept a percentage of young people that do not integrate. Young people have difficulties to manage their educational trajectories. If, on the one hand, organizational structures are not very clear, they lack experience related to the labour market or no one advises them in case they need it, about alternative routes,

and on the other side teachers and professors do not know anything certain about the world young people live in, young people could face difficulties when it comes to making decisions.

- c) A successful education depends on motivation. In the knowledge society it is not enough with external motivations and it is counter-productive to leave school too early. Many students are tired of learning because the experience of learning seems as something they are forced to do; it does not feel as something related to their own potential and personal doubts. Everyday life in schools and training centres in Europe shows the “loss” of learning abilities, which leads to less opportunities and higher risk of social exclusion for young people that are unable to stay within the system. In any case, individual education “contracts” which oblige young people to carry out an individual curriculum can be designed in a way that allows a higher degree of intrinsically motivated learning.

Young people in a situation of transition to adult life, to the labour market, not only have to acquire a number of abilities and qualifications, but they also have to manage and take decisions regarding multiple transitions, under the risk of failing. Every day, they face the need of individually “managing” structural risks. There are social exclusion risks inherent to the transitions to work, in terms of lack of qualifications and employment, and subjective risks such as lack of motivation and personal experience, transversal abilities. The diversified access to flexibilization of work reinforces the existent segmentation lines: more financial, cultural, educational, social resources mean an easier adaptation to flexibilization, with more productive individual choices; those with fewer resources face a higher risk.

Transition policies have to favour systemic measures, and at the same time not ignore the effects of these policies on individual decisions. Therefore, integrated youth policies should focus on two main objectives: avoiding that risks during transitions become a social exclusion risk and helping young people to face the risks and manage them successfully. Therefore, referring to social policies as part of Transition Policies includes social protection in terms of material resources, as well as social support in terms of counselling and mentoring; both aspects are crucial for an active *personal negotiation* of transitions.

The growing complexity regarding the direction of biographical transitions – due to flexible labour markets and the fragmentation of inter-linked transitions – requires social support directed to the needs of young people in terms of guidance. Instead of being diagnosed as disadvantaged, in the sense of having personal deficiencies, in a formal counselling process (mainly paternalistic and clientelistic) to later being “derived”, “directed” towards compensatory measures, young people should be able to access mentoring possibilities that offer more freedom and less standardised forms, where they can choose and the result is not measured by standardised and formal results.

Traditional counselling for young people often fails because concepts differ significantly on how young people really see themselves. Young people do not want to be treated as a problematic group, they often see institutional support as a stigma, and at least they want to define their

problems by themselves. At the same time they need support, not only because they are not able to take the appropriate decisions, but also because these decisions are more and more complicated.

The articles presented next gives different *answers to the new situations* that young people have to face in current society: individual contracts/deals between the Administration and the young person (“New Deal”, United Kingdom); financial support in form of “basic income” (United Kingdom); creation of new structures for individual counselling (Denmark, Slovenia); create and reinforce the role of a professional counsellor/adviser (“Connexions” - United Kingdom, Slovenia); offer educational options in the non-formal area and acknowledgement of these practices (Spain); reinforce the education system and the transitions to employment (Austria, Bulgaria); integrated support options directed to young people that seek a job (“One-stop” office - Finland).

These are all integrated youth policies that include structures and (personal, financial) resources in order to create a different type of social support, where young people can feel completely accepted as “negotiators of their own matters”.



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