

Disadvantaged Youth in Slovenia

Despite transition, Slovenia managed to preserve a relatively stable economic situation. However, during the transition period, the risk of poverty increased, particularly for the unemployed, and social inequalities increased (Stanovnik, 2004: 318-320). It expanded the network of public educational institutions that provide programs ranging from primary education to university undergraduate and graduate courses, as well as various forms of assistance for children and young people coming from socially more vulnerable. The intense problematization of early school leaving during the past decade has led to the establishment of a relatively dense institutional network that offers alternative educational options for early school leavers and also encourages participation in various educational programs. This was one of the factors that influenced the decline in the dropout rate in the past decade. Another important factor is a great significance ascribed to education, so parent's expectations regarding their children's education have increased and, as a result, they have been putting in more effort to ensure the realization these expectations.

Key words: Youth, life situation, uncertainty, drop-outs, education, unemployment, counselling

1. Social vulnerability of young people

The life situation of children and young people is nowadays accompanied with increasing social and cultural uncertainty, particularly as regards the future. The individualization of the growing-up process multiplies the number and extent of risk decisions and life paths for all young people (Beck, 1997, Baethge, 1989). The most, concentrated risk is faced by those young people who do not enjoy suitable economic and social support from their families, those who dropped out of school or face long-term unemployment (Ule, 2000). While in the past social disadvantage was the 'fate of the class,' it has now become an individualized, personal fate. This leads to new forms of the social exclusion of young people creating new experiences and forms of poverty (Heckman, 2006). In addition to the lack of material means and unemployment problems, this new type of poverty is also determined by the lack of alternatives and imagination as regards alternative lifestyles. As a result, such a person becomes increasingly excluded on the general level. This means that today socially threatened young people as well as those who face long-term unemployment lack the important agents of social immunity, i.e. the sources of collective socio-cultural creativity, group self-help and peer solidarity.

In contrast to the situation that characterized previous decades, studies in Slovenia showed that young people today face the greatest number of problems precisely within the most important areas of life that affect their social promotion and the growing-up process (Ule, 1995). The intricate web of 'objective ambiguities' of the life situation causes difficulties to an increasing number of young people who try to plan and manage their

lives; it forces them to continually search for the temporary balance between the opposing tendencies, requirements and expectations. All these social contrasts and difficulties confronted by young people increase their *social and psychological vulnerability* (Ule, Rener, Mencin, Tivadar, 2000). Socially vulnerable young people are mainly those with educational or socialization deficits, and those lacking strong links with informal support networks. They lack suitable springboards needed for an independent transition to adulthood.

The social vulnerability of young people intensifies with the increase in the number of difficulties and unsolved problems that feed one another, for example, poor school success, low level of education, poor job prospects, material, social, emotional and health problems. Structural traits of the socially vulnerable young people generally intertwine with cultural and interactional aspects e.g. less emotional and social support in the immediate and wider circle etc. (Ule, Rener, 2001). Despite this, greater social vulnerability of young people does not have only negative implications. It may increase young people's sensitivity to the sources of possible identity and social problems, meaning that they experience greater stress which they have to endure and process positively (Walther, du Bois-Reymond, Biggart 2006). Also, it compels young people to start to develop early the strategies of coping with problems.

2. Educational system in Slovenia

The assessment indicating a favourable situation of young people in Slovenia compared to that in other EU member states is based primarily on the large percentage of young people integrated in the educational system and a large percentage of those who, after completing the compulsory education, gain at least basic qualifications. Compulsory education starts in Slovenia at age 6 and lasts 9 years. After the completion of the 9-year compulsory programme the student selects secondary school. The decision is voluntary in principle. The choice is, however, restricted by the number of available places. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places, the decisive selection criteria are the results achieved during the last three years of compulsory education.

All students who completed a general secondary or vocational secondary education programme and passed the final 'matura' examination may enrol in higher programmes at universities or polytechniques. Roughly speaking, virtually all children who complete elementary school enrol in a vocational or other secondary school programme. However, certain percentage of children leaves school before completion (early school leavers). In 2003, the share of students who enrolled in post-secondary/upper secondary, professional and university courses amounted to somewhat more than 42% of the generation age 19 to 26, and somewhat less than 35% of the generation age 19 to 28. More than 72% of all students were full-time students (1).

(1)
Source: Statistical Office of RS
(2005) - iobračevanje
[http://www.stat.si/doc/statinf/
2005/si-163.pdf](http://www.stat.si/doc/statinf/2005/si-163.pdf)

The majority of children and young people with special needs are integrated into the regular educational programmes which are not

specially modified. One of the key goals of the educational system reform in the 1990s was the introduction of integrated education. Accordingly, regular schools were scheduled to introduce professional assistance and programmes whose implementation would be modified to meet the needs of children with special needs, modified programmes designed to ensure an equal educational standard, specially designed programmes that do not ensure an equal educational standard, special programmes and educational programmes.

Transfer between individual programmes is possible. The education of children and young people with special needs is regulated by legislation for the entire period of schooling, from the pre-school institutions/kindergartens and elementary schools to general secondary schools and vocational and professional schools (including higher professional schools); legislation also stipulates the provision of equipment and tools needed by the students with special needs..

3. Labor market and youth unemployment

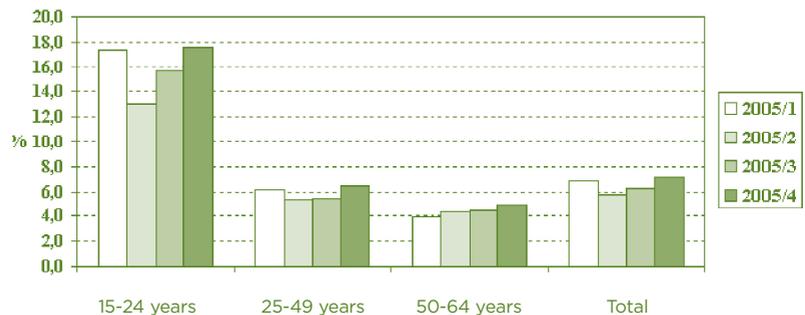
Although in terms of employment policy Slovenia proved somewhat less successful, the unemployment rate among young people in Slovenia is still around the EU average .

Table 1. **Structure of registered unemployed persons by age group (in %)**

Age group	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	July 2006
18 years or less	0,5	0,5	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,2
over 18 to 25 years	21,2	22	21,9	23,1	22,5	20,5	16,9
over 25 to 30 years	11	12,1	13,5	15,1	16,3	17	17,3
over 30 to 40 years	16,6	16,6	17,7	18,4	18,6	18,9	19,3
over 40 to 50 years	23,4	23,2	23,5	22,2	21,4	20,6	20,8
over 50 to 60 years	26,2	24,4	21,7	19,8	19,9	21,6	24,2
60 years or more	1,1	1,2	1,2	0,9	1	1	1,3
Total	100						

Source: Labour Force Survey, SURS

Figure 1:
Unemployment rates by
age groups



Source: Labour Force Survey, SURS

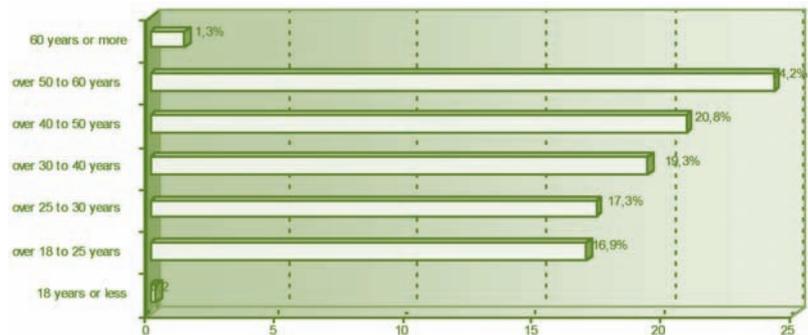
Two issues that continue to be problematic are fixed-term employment (recently, as much as 3/4 of all new employment vacancies, in all age groups, were based on a fixed-term contract) and a large percentage of long-term unemployed young people (in Slovenia, the long-term unemployment is considered to be one lasting more than a year). These

two issues raise the questions of how the labour market should be regulated and whether the measures arising from the active employment policy have been effective.

Slovene labour market is in comparison to other European markets relatively inflexible. For many years lifelong full-time employment was the only existing form of employment, however, recent changes introduced into the legal framework and active employment policy are directed towards increasing the flexibility of the labour market. Whatsoever, the self-employment is the most common form of flexible employment (11.1% of all employment in 2001), followed by temporary employment (i.e., fixed-term contracts) which figure is constantly growing and has reached 10.5% in 2001. By contrast, the share of part-time employment is still relatively low, only 6.6% (Kanjuo-Mrāela, Ignjatovič, 2004).

Nevertheless, the needed flexibilisation is achieved mainly on account of young people, aged between 15 and 24. Their share is in comparison to other categories importantly higher, especially, in case of temporary employment, whereas the young people represent as much as 37,9% of all temporary employment (in 2001). It has to be added also the fact that temporary employment is becoming the most common form of employment. The data are showing that almost 70% of all new employment is temporary (2). Overall, activity rate of young people aged 15-24 was according to Labour force survey (the 2nd quarter of the 2004) 39.6% and the employment/population ration 34%. The unemployment rate was in the same period 14% (3)

Figure 2:
Structure of registered unemployed persons by age group (in %) July 2006



Source: Labour Force Survey, SURS

Young people entering the labour market do not enjoy special privileges. Although formally they have equal status as adults, their options are limited because of the lack of work experience, which is frequently a requirement that must be met to obtain the job. No studies have been conducted about the transition to the labour market. The modalities of transition described below are based on indirect data.

(2)
Source: Statistical Office of RS (2004)
<http://www.stat.si/doc/statinf/2004/si-150.pdf>

(3)
Source: Statistical Office of RS (2005)
<http://www.stat.si/doc/statinf/2005/si-163.pdf>

(4)
Source: Employment Service of Slovenia, Annual Report ESRS, 2002, 2003

The most frequent mode of transition following all stages of education is a direct transition to the labour market either through fixed-term full-time employment, contractual work, temporary employment or grey economy. According to our estimates, 70% of young people with vocational, general secondary or university education belong in this category. This flexible type of employment, according to rough estimations, lasts from 1 to 3 years. It is highly likely that the following stage is a permanent full-time job (4).

The second type of transition is temporary unemployment, which places these persons in the first-time job seekers group. This transition is especially typical of the redundant labour force i.e. persons with specific types of education (students who completed general secondary school and administrative secondary schools, and graduates in social sciences and the humanities at the university level). The unemployment lasts from half a year to three years on average and it is typical of approx. 20% of young people (5).

Many of those who cannot find a job that matches their qualifications eventually take on any job, which places them into the first category mentioned above. According to the data of the Institute of Macroeconomic Analyses, the share of young people with university education who cannot find jobs is increasing. If they register with the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS), they have the option of being included in various active employment policy measures, on the basis of an employment plan, which is a standard procedure for all unemployed persons. ESS provides counsellors who assist in the preparation of the employment plan, as well as in-depth individual assistance given by professional counsellors-psychologists.

Although the economic growth in Slovenia increases employment opportunities, owing to the excessively low productivity, the impact of economic growth on employment is weak. Our point of view is that the main weaknesses of the Slovenian system of transition arise from the unsuitability of the educational system, which does not change sufficiently fast, and from the dominant preconceptions of adults and young people alike about professional opportunities and social reputation (absence of reputation) of certain types of education and professions.

In connection with this, we should also mention the widespread practise of informal paid work – this is work through Student Job Agency. This option, on the one hand, helps young people to alleviate their financial problems and gain work experience, but since this type of work is subject to different regulations than regular work, they can neither obtain the employed person status nor enjoy the rights arising from that status (e.g. this period of work is not counted as the years of service, they are not insured against unemployment nor entitled to compensation during the maternity leave, the child-care leave etc.). Since this type of “employment” is less expensive for the employers, it is very popular among them, but working students are competitors to regular-job seekers, particularly highly educated first-time job seekers who are a costly labour force. The share of part-time employments among young people has also been on the increase.

Young people do not have a sufficient choice, nor can they freely combine learning contents. Also, the educational systems responds too slowly to new educational needs and new forms of knowledge acquisition. Accordingly, it has been “producing” an increasing number of educated young people with poor job prospects. Other factors that contribute to the inadequacy of transition to the labour market are a haphazard system of traineeship for young, first-time employees, and a rigid hierarchy of job

(5)
Source: Employment Service of Slovenia, Data Basis of Unemployment People for the Year 2004

roles. Consequently, mainly the entry-level jobs are offered to young people, and since they are not interested in these they prefer to wait for a “better opportunity.” As a rule, access to higher positions or better-paid jobs is dependent on the network of informal connections, meaning that education or the quality of applicants is of little relevance. At the moment, self-employment opportunities for young people are few and support for this type of undertakings is similarly lacking.

The issue of transition to adulthood is not particularly emphasized in the public sphere or by policy makers, except in connection with family policy, low fertility, and prolonged dependence of young people on their parents. Similarly, employment of young people is not an issue that attracts much attention, or in other words, it is subsumed into the general effort to reduce unemployment.

Certain problems connected with the transition from education to employment could be mitigated by ensuring that young people are better informed about the labour market demands and by enabling them to develop job-seeking skills. For the time being, this task is left to schools but it is not defined in the curricula. Recently the media have been devoting more space to the debate about the implications of this policy for employment, safety of employment, educational policy and so on. For example, polemical responses were provoked by the presentation of the Minister of Science and Education who announced that the ministry would work towards regulating the enrolment at universities, and towards redirecting young people from social sciences and the humanities to natural and technical sciences. Another announcement that stirred public debate was that of the Minister of Education about the prioritisation of enrolment in vocational and professional programmes.

Critics of this policy objected that it revived the discourse and the mistakes of the former ‘socialist’ educational reform, i.e. ‘directed education,’ which tried to subordinate the educational system to the labour market demands and eventually produced catastrophic results. Critics are of the opinion that educational trends cannot be changed forcefully and with haste. In addition, they argue that changes in the educational system should be accompanied with changes in economy, which would create stable jobs in the technical sector that would be more interesting for young people.

4. Early school leavers

Early secondary school leavers are students who have not completed successfully the secondary education within five years of the enrolment (Gerličina S., Polak M., 1998). Slovenia uses the definition of the European Commission based on the close approximate to the dropout rate, which is an indicator obtained through the internationally comparable Labour Force Survey. According to this indicator, the dropout rate is defined as a share of population aged 18 to 24 who have attained the ISCED2 level of education or lower and are not included in any educational process or training schemes.

Although accurate data on early school leavers in Slovenia is not available, the number of students who have completed education suggests that the dropout rate has been on the decline during the last ten years.

Table 2. **Total drop-out by school type for three generations, (in %)**

	Drop-out gen. 91*	Drop-out gen. 92*	Drop-out gen. 93*
One to two-year vocational programmes (level II complexity)	21.3	29.4	31.9
Two and three-year vocational prog. (level III. and IV. complexity)	26.8	18.6	16.6
Professional programmes and vocational-technical programmes (level V. complexity)	14.9	12.8	11.9
Total: all vocational and professional programmes	20.4	16.2	15.0
General secondary school programmes – gymnasium	5.9	7.0	6.5
Total: all secondary school programmes	17.2	14.1	13.0

*Entering the vocational programm or secondary school programm in the year 91, 92, 93

Source: the report entitled Vocational and Professional Education in Slovenia 2000, p. 7

There are two key factors that influenced this downward trend during the past ten years. First, the issue of early school leaving has been intensely discussed. The result has been the establishment of a relatively dense institutional network that enables early school leavers to re-connect with the educational system. In addition, education is treated as the crucial factor of social mobility and even social security, so parents from all social classes strive to ensure that their children attain a high level of education (according to the 2002 census, 46.7% of all 20-year olds were integrated in the educational system at ISCED 5B and 5A levels (6)).

One symptomatic factor in Slovenia is that the greatest number of early school leavers is found on lower vocational education levels, but this cannot be unambiguously attributed to the low abilities of these children or their socio-economic status. With the exception of lower vocational education, on all other levels male early leavers outnumber female early leavers. According to many indicators, women achieve better school results than men. The share of young women who continue with their education after completing a secondary school is greater than that of young men, and they also complete higher and university level programmes faster than men). The 2002 census data also confirm that women prevail in the group who expressed a wish to complete specialist undergraduate, higher or university studies, and in addition, slightly more women than men wish to complete post-graduate programmes (7). Despite success and educational ambitions, women have less choice on the labour market – unemployment among young women is greater than that among young men.

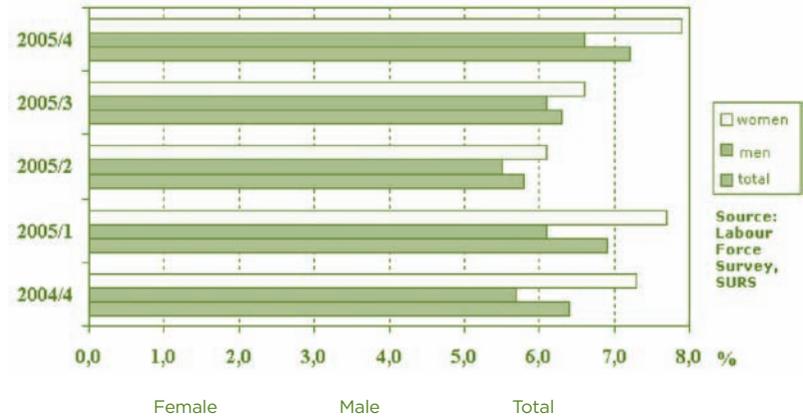
(6)

Source: Statistical Office of RS (2002)
<http://www.stat.si/popis2002/si/default.htm>

(7)

Source:
http://www.stat.si/pub_moskizenske_kazalo.asp

Figure 3:
Unemployment rates
by sex



Source: Labour Force Survey, SURS

Various researchers treat differently the link between early school leaving, on the one hand, and socio-economic background of children and education level of their parents, on the other. However, those studies that do see it as the causality relation point out that early leavers come from larger families, that their parents attained lower educational levels, that their family circles offer less stimulating atmosphere and that their upbringing is less consistent (Ule, Kuhar 2003). Since early school leaving is a consequence of the history of failures, we should point out that one important factor contributing to the failure at school is inability to enrol in the selected programme and it is also the result of it, since success at school is a decisive admission criterion in schools where the number of available places is lower than the number of students who want to enrol.

The link between the early school leaving, unemployment and poverty is particularly conspicuous in the case of the Roma population, who constitute a segment in which the majority of unfavourable factors become combined. Their socio-economic situation is bad; their level of education is low on average; and finally, the majority population is burdened by extremely negative prejudices against the Roma, which represents an insurmountable obstacle for Roma job seekers. Inevitably, the victims of these unfavourable circumstances are the Roma children, since the very beginning of schooling. In addition to these problems, another fundamental obstacle, or rather the key problem, is the fact that the Romany language is not the language of instruction in schools. Education legislation indeed stipulates that schools should employ a Roma assistant, but the implementation of this provision has been slow so far.

The 2002 census data and research findings also show that, in addition to the underprivileged Roma, also the members of other ethnic groups from former Yugoslavia have less favourable position on the labour market. The rate of unemployment among this group is greater than the average unemployment rate in Slovenia. The research data indicate that this cannot be attributed to the lower educational structure of this group. The unemployment rate among women in this category is significantly higher than the rate among the general population (Klopāiā, 2004).

In answering the question about the predictive factors that are associated with disadvantage, we would like to avoid the stigmatisation of specific social groups. Links are not monosemic and, in addition, we do not have reliable relevant data at the. However, there are several qualitative studies that primarily stress the extremely difficult situation of the Roma. They are definitely the most underprivileged group in.

5. Pushed-pulled

Generally speaking, 'activation' has an important role within social and employment policy. It started in late 90s (more precisely in 1998, when revised Employment and Unemployment Insurance Act - EUIA was codified). However, the nature/character of Slovene activation tends to be more 'positive' than 'negative', including both - trainfare/learnfare and workfare (welfare-to-work) elements. The employability of those excluded from the labour market is at the forth and their (previous) labour market position is relatively secured (via legally defined suitable and appropriate employment). Nevertheless, there are also emphases on preventing the abuse and reducing dependency on social benefits.

We could say that Slovene activation is more similar to the one introduced in France (so-called "insertion policy") than in the UK ("workfare policy"). Nevertheless, available information based on statistical data and analyses are showing that activation in terms of activating unemployed people to actively seek employment and participate in active employment policy measures (i.e., so-called activation measures) is more effectively implemented in case of young jobseekers that in case of elder, especially those more difficult-to-employ (Kopač, 2004). That is due to the society's perception (and also of employment advisors) that young people can find a job and has to accept it, even though it might be of 'lower' quality. Sanctions for not complying to the 'activation' requirements are the same for all categories and are related to the erasure from the unemployment register, which in turn has consequences for the entitlement to unemployment benefits, social assistance, health insurance and participation in employment policy measures. Nevertheless, more effective implementation of activation in case of young people is also related to more frequent use of sanctions.

An unemployed person registered with the Employment Service has the obligation to draw an employment plan with the assistance of counsellor within two months of registration at the latest (8). The employment plan defines the goal of employment, job seeking activities and the type and form of needed assistance. In addition, the employment plan determines the form of mandatory reporting to the Service and times and address at which the unemployed person will be available. By signing the employment plan, the unemployed person accepts all agreed obligations. Failure to fulfil these obligations and agreements defined in the employment plan may lead to the removal of that person from the register; new registration is possible after the period of six months. In this case, the person loses the rights arising from the unemployment insurance policy and is not eligible to receive other types of aid.

(8)

Source: Zakon o socialnem varstvu (Social Security Act) http://zakonodaja.gov.si/rpsi/r02/predpis_ZAKO4082.html

On registering with the Service, all job seekers are invited to visit the counsellor with whose collaboration they draw up the employment plan. The plan includes all job-seeking activities and other activities that could contribute to it. The plan is drawn within two months of registering. The employment plan is based on the employment opportunities determined with regard to the applicant's knowledge, experience and skills. The applicant's wishes and needs are taken into account as much as it is possible. The Employment Plan is a tool used in planning the activities that lead to employment, realizing and monitoring of all activities agreed upon in the plan, appraising the progress.

The Employment Service of Slovenia promotes the individual approach - every job seeker draws up the employment plan in collaboration with the counsellor. Persons who take professional psychologist's service receive individual counselling. Recently, group workshops have been introduced, although every person is invariably treated individually as well. Young people have choice, but it is not unlimited. The decision is dependent on many factors, and the solution must be acceptable for the Employment Service as well, since resources are limited. At any rate, the choice is limited by the demand on the labour market, for example, some jobs are not available (9).

6. Best practices

Like most European countries Slovenia, too, has been facing the problems of increased dropout rates and difficulties in reintegrating young people into education, training and employment. There is also a growing awareness that not all young people find their place in the education and vocational training system.

Our model - Measures for drop out prevention - identifies three major categories of factors significant for dropping out of school. They are pupils related, family related and school related. The likelihood of a pupils dropping out of school increases as the combination of all risk factors. Solution to the complex problem of dropouts cannot be achieved by the schools alone. The problem must be addressed by the whole society. The model provides measures that go beyond the school and require a team approach- partnership of pupils, teachers, family, business, local institutions and the others. Model introduces a wide range of measures aimed at the early detection of possible problems right from the earliest stages; measures specially designed to stimulate the whole personal and educational development of the pupil. Family support play a crucial role in pupils education. Involving families in setting goals, making decisions, monitoring progress and outcomes is one of the model's significant object. Our model so enables a variety of forms for parents to interact with teachers, pupils and also with other parents.

National vocational qualifications and modular education combine the path, which will also derive several new approaches in decreasing number of young people without any vocational qualification in the labour market. Law on National Vocational Qualifications has been approved in 1999. It

(9)
Source: Employment Service of Slovenia, Annual Report ESRS, 2002, 2003)

enables an individual to gain vocational qualification within the certificate system, as also the one gained from the regular school system. Now it seems that the framework has been set - so national vocational qualification can be achieved, based on previously obtained knowledge and skills of an individual. Beside that, foundation for the preparation of educational programmes within lower secondary and secondary vocational educational system has been approved in 2001. One of the main new outcomes of this foundation is the modularisation of the educational programmes. We can acknowledge that quite large number of young people cannot complete existing vocational education programmes, mainly because programmes are too demanding, or we cannot motivate them enough to complete the education. With this module-based platform we will be able to encourage both adults and young without any formal education to successfully obtain new qualifications.

• Total Counselling

The basis for the Total Counselling program, aimed at young people who left (or quit) school early and have not subsequently joined active employment policy programs, have been laid down by the project with the same name, part of the Leonardo da Vinci project funded by the EU. The new service is taking young people's whole life-situation into consideration while providing the service. In addition, the aim of the programme is to provide a common platform where specialists from different fields of work, can go beyond the usual boundaries of their professions and work towards the common goal of assisting young people.

The target group are young people between 16 and 25 who have dropped out from the educational system and have not registered with the Employment service, so called young people with the 'status zero' position (in numbers, 5000 every year). The responsibility for the implementation of total informing and counselling has been undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Sports (10). The Centre for Vocational Education and Training is responsible for the coordination and development of activities on the national level. The organizations implementing these activities on the regional level were selected through a public tender. Total counselling activities comprise information, counselling, representation, evaluation, monitoring and training, and various methods of work.

On starting his/her work, a counsellor establishes contacts with all important institutions that could lead him/her to the target group, or could be of assistance later in dealing with the target group. During the initial two months, the counsellor establishes contacts with counsellors working for primary and secondary schools in the region, the Centre for Social Work, the Employment Service, Counselling Centres, sports clubs, youth organizations, health institutions and governmental and non-governmental organizations. The counsellor maintains and expands these contacts continually. Individual counselling consists of the following stages:

- The counsellor establishes the first contact, meaning an appropriate counselling relationship with the early school leaver.

(10)

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports
http://www.mszs.si/slo/solstvo/posebne_potrebe.asp#predstavitev

- The counsellor and the client reach an agreement about the inclusion (verbally or in a written form) and thus also about the duties and the rights, goals and expected results.
- The counsellor helps the client to identify the obstacles and his/her strong points, i.e. potentials that can be mobilized in resolving the existing situation.
- The counsellor helps the client to define the goal and shape activities that should gradually lead to that goal.
- The counsellor monitors the entire process of counselling and assesses the success (or lack thereof) of each counselling process as a whole.

Counselling proceeds from the relationship established between the counsellor and the client, and this relationship is based on an equal footing (meaning that each may object if disagreeing with a proposal of the other). The counsellor and the client commit themselves to confidentiality. The role of the counsellor is to create room and a suitable atmosphere, and to empower the client to consider all the options and thus take the best decision possible in the given moment.

The program covers the period from September 2004 to the end of 2006. The sum earmarked for the implementation of these activities is 321.666 €. The monitoring of the service is carried out every three months. The first data based on the monitoring in implementation period (March-September) show that there were 143 organizations included in the ISM network; there were 852 information-oriented interviews conducted and 372 counselling sessions. All in all 920 young people were reached by the service in the first six months. Young people continually evaluate the work of counsellors and report on how their needs were met during the counselling process. They also propose changes that would make them fully satisfied with the counselling service. The monitoring group collects these suggestions and upgrades the concept. Evaluation looks into the wider effects of these activities on the inclusion of young people in the educational system and the labour market.

• Program 10.000+

Program 10.000+ is an active employment policy program formulated on a yearly basis by the ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Sports, in cooperation with other key institutions responsible for human resources. Program was designed to enable unemployed persons to receive formal education and national vocational training (certificates), and in this manner to enhance their employment prospects, to enhance employment opportunities, educational level and skills, and to reduce professional and structural disparities (11). The strategic goals of this program is the reduction of the percentage of long-term unemployed persons to 40% and the percentage of unemployed persons without vocational education to around 25% until 2006.

The priority is given to unemployed persons without vocational education, especially young people up to 26 years of age, unemployed persons with

(11)

Source: The Report Vocational and Professional Education in Slovenia 2000

vocational or professional education, who cannot find a job in their field and have been registered with the Employment Service of Slovenia for more than 6 months. The basic condition for inclusion was the formulation of an employment plan prepared by the unemployed person and professional employment counsellor. A proposal to include an unemployed person in this program could be put forward by the Employment Service or the unemployed person himself/herself. The Employment Service is also responsible for the assessment of the justifiability of such an inclusion.

The funding for this governmental program is provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The Ministry of Education and Sports covers the costs of the vocational and professional educational programs for departments consisting of unemployed persons, as well as the costs of the primary education for adults. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs covers from its budget the costs of school fees for the participants, then the costs arising from the rights to which they are entitled, other costs of the implementation of the Learning Assistance program and the costs of the program promotion, evaluation etc.

In the school year 2003/2004 the costs for one department were 15.732 EUR for one school year for secondary vocational education and 15.188 EUR for one school year for secondary professional or technical education and grammar schools. The minimal number of participants required to set up such a department is 15 and the maximum is 25; in the case of primary education for adults and vocational education with the employer (the dual system), this number is 15. The minimal number of participants required to obtain funds from the said ministries is 20, or 15 for the primary school programs and vocational training with the employer (dual system).

In the school year 2003/2004, 7,525 participants were included in the Program 10,000. Of these, 4,265 persons were younger than 26 years. Of the total number of 7,351 unemployed persons included in formal educational programs, 5,221 (71%) participants were successful. Of these, 2,495 (34%) acquired a new vocational or professional education, 30.7% found jobs (767 persons), and 2,726 (37%) successfully passed all exams in the past year. The number of successful participants increased (data are based on the date of program completion), which is a result of better monitoring on the part of expert team and the quality of the Educational Assistance programme.

Among the activities carried out by the Employment Service in preparation of the inclusion of unemployed persons in the Program 10,000, especially worthy of mentioning are the following:

- group informing and motivation of unemployed persons,
- in-depth individual counselling and assistance with the planning of professional goals and employment plans for newly registered unemployed persons;
- team-based approach to unemployed persons with the participation of employment counsellors; owing to the low self-confidence and their

negative experience with past schooling, it is usually difficult for unemployed persons to re-enter educational programs.;

- the regional branches of the Employment Service and employment offices, working in cooperation with employers, organized introductory presentations of various occupations.

In accordance with the Employment and Insurance Against Unemployment Act, by joining this program the unemployed person acquires the status of a participant of an educational program. This means that such a person is no longer registered as an unemployed person and his/her rights ensuing from the insurance against unemployment. Learning assistance is an integral and necessary part of Program 10,000, since the majority of participants who are unable to overcome the obstacles on their own would lose their hearts. Experience shows that participants postpone the most difficult exams as long as possible. The participants of the program will have to be continually encouraged to seek employment by training them to develop job-seeking skills and by stimulating self-initiative.

7. Conclusion

The educational position of young people in Slovenia is relatively favourable for the time being, although data on completed education and participation in educational programs obscure certain specific problems. However, the position of young people on the labour market is rather unfavourable, as is obvious from the data showing a large percentage of long-term unemployed young people and those employed part-time or for a limited term. This assertion is also supported by the trends on the labour market, the characteristics of active employment policy, and the fact that unemployment is related to a high risk of poverty. All this calls for a careful consideration of the future regulation of the labour market and a thoughtful planning of social security policy. Since the number of unemployed persons who are also first-time job seekers has been increasing during the past few years (as has the number of highly educated persons in this group), it will be necessary to revise the active employment policy program by adding the programs targeted at this category of the unemployed.

According to the research findings in Slovenia (Ule, Kuhar, 2003), education is increasingly resembling a serious work process; it comprises increasingly greater portion of childhood and youth and extends beyond the limits of formal schooling to the areas of leisure time and various out-of-school activities. Investment in the education and development of young people is becoming an increasingly larger item in the family budget, while the performance at school and out of school has become the main criteria of family success. Thanks to protective networks created by parental support, young people become increasingly dependent and non-autonomous. Young people in Slovenia are characterized by increasingly longer period of economic dependence on the family, caused by difficulties related to employment and a prolonged period of schooling. Alternative types of employment and part-time jobs cannot protect young

people from socio-economic dependence on adults, because these forms of employment are time-limited and available only to a small number of young people.

Consequently people perceive the social world as incomprehensible, unpredictable and full of risks which they experience as individual, particular crisis rather than the effects of the processes beyond their reach. In line with this, a loss of job appears as individual responsibility, failure at school as a result of insufficient effort or abilities, youthful deviations as a lack of firm family upbringing or values. Similarly, young people do not perceive social exclusion as an objective or given state, but rather as a lack of social recognition and their own inability to change the situation. Such feelings are typical of those who have no their own source of income, are unemployed, have experienced the disintegration of the family and have no quality social networks to rely on. The concept of social exclusion, as it has become widely accepted today, does not imply any interpretative challenge to the global structures of power and distribution of social wealth.

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