



JobNet



**Active citizens
combating youth
unemployment**

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Impress

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Introduction

The European labor market is facing alarmingly high rates of youth unemployment, which is marking the largest annual increase over the 20 years of available global estimates from 2008 to 2009 according to International Labor Organization (ILO). The European youth unemployment rate increased to a greater degree than the general unemployment rate supported by the classic premise that youth are more vulnerable to economic shocks. In some EU states this rate is extremely high, e.g. youth (under 25) unemployment hit 48% in Spain, 43,5% in Greece, 32,7% in Latvia, 30,7% in Slovakia and 23,1% in Hungary according to the EUROSTAT (October, 2011).

Across Europe on the local or regional level there are several outstanding initiatives, programs and methods mainly generated and applied by or in cooperation with civil society organizations handling youth unemployment. Due to limited capacity, resources and lack of information these are rarely known neither in-country, nor on the international level.

Reflecting to this scarcity the main objective of this publication is to present the main outputs, results and participants of an outstanding project in which youngsters from 6 European countries have been engaged in a comparative, international research focusing on how to find answers and applicable, concrete, bottom-up focused solutions related to the tremendously increasing tendency of youth unemployment in Europe.

Through this publication we would like to present the participating NGOs, civil society organizations implementing the project, the recruited volunteer youngsters, who concluded the research, the main findings and recommendations of the research, and best practices discovered by the youth researchers.

Through this publication we also would like to raise the attention of policy and decision makers, institutions, organizations concerned and interested in this topic, and also the wide public to the importance of the local-level approached treatment of youth joblessness.

Hopefully with our joint work we can contribute to the decrease of decreasing youth unemployment in Europe.

Respectfully,

Boglárka Bata

director
Carpathian Foundation-Hungary
on behalf of the project implementers

Partners

Name of the NGO:



Agency for Migration and Adaptation AMIGA

Address: Záhřebská 539/15, 12000 Prague, Czech Republic

Web-site: www.amiga-migrant.eu

HISTORY:

a civic association founded in 2010 by few migrants living in the Czech Republic. Now it is a reknown NGO functioning mostly on a volunteer basis.

MISSION:

to promote and develop mutual adaptation and communication between migrants and host society and promoting a healthy, harmonious and happy life at the international, national, community, family and individual level.



KEY STRATEGIES:

- Strengthening of rights of migrants in the Czech Republic, improving their competencies, leadership and participation in community and political life,
- promotion of inter-generational and inter-cultural dialogue and mutual support.
- intensive collaboration with local NGO's and community representatives and authorities
- recruiting of migrants for participation in different social and education programs organized by other NGOs and Czech state and community institutions.

RELEVANT PROJECTS:

- Involvement of migrants into volunteering activities in local volunteer and community centers as a tool for integration and empowerment.
- An informal group of youngsters of migrant origin "Express yourself" that started their own projects on education, networking and mutual help of foreign and Czech students (dialog clubs, workshops, informational meeting, education support and psychological help).
- Series of educational and psychological trainings for migrants and 3-months course on psychological self-help for migrant women
- "All together on labour market" – education of migrants in the field of Czech legislation (AMIGA was a partner from non-governmental sector).

Name of the NGO:



Local Democracy Agency Sisak

Address: S. I A. Radića 2A, 44000 Sisak, Croatia

Web-site: www.Lda-sisak.hr

HISTORY:

nongovernmental and non-for-profit organisation established in 1996 by Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Council of Europe with aim to support local democratic processes and promote human rights and active citizenship. Since 2006 is working as a domestic organisation. LDA Sisak a statutory member of Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), one of the biggest European networks dealing with active citizenship, and gathering, among others, 13 LDAs in the Western Balkan and South Caucasus, www.alda-europe.eu.

MISSION:

Local Democracy Agency Sisak by promoting human rights, preserving peace and strengthening local democracy contributes to local community development and active citizenship, and by implementing non-profit programs, connecting and networking responds to the needs of individual, local government and wider community.



RELEVANT PROJECT; IMPLEMENTED IN 2013:

- "Volunteering for Cross-border Local Community Development" and "Cross-border Volunteers' Networking for Local Development" – establishment of 9 local voluntary services in border line of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, development of 6 local voluntary policies, organisation of 4 cross-border voluntary work-camps, educational trainings for volunteer' management and establishment of cross-border civil society network of 9 organisations dealing with active citizenship;
- "For Community without Domestic Violence"- contribute in reducing domestic violence in Sisak-Moslavina County area by: 1) providing first aid and strengthening the victims of domestic violence, 2) more quality protection of domestic violence victims in and out of the institutions, and 3) sensitising the public on issues of domestic violence and society's responsibility in providing help for the victims;
- „Strengthening local capacities for the implementation of the European social model and access to European social networks“ - strengthening the capacities of local stakeholders in 5 Croatian regions to better understand and apply the concepts advocated and promoted by the European social model that will be implemented into designing and development of their local social agendas;
- "Youth for EU" – contribute to spread information about the European Union, its policies, programmes and financial instruments in high schools and through young people in the 3 Croatian regions, so to have informed citizens aware of the benefits of EU enlargement and supportive to Croatia entering the EU. Youngsters developed and conducted a survey among youth on their needs and created a document „Voice of Youth“ delivered to regional governments;
- „DECIDE - DEMocratic Compact: Improving Democracy in Europe“ - development, through the establishment of a thematic network of towns and by adopting a bottom-up approach, a democratic compact, namely a set of measures that are needed in Europe to increase the quality of democracy and citizen participation. These measures are identified, exchanged, further elaborated and tested by all 24 project partners from 14 countries.

KEY STRATEGIES:

In our work we are using specific methodology of multilateral decentralised cooperation in partnership with local and regional self-governments and other nongovernmental organizations in and out of Croatia. Our activities are carried out through the following programmes: 1. Volunteer program, 2. For Community without domestic violence, 3. Local democracy, 4. Active citizenship and 5. Organisational development.

Name of the NGO:



Valmieras Novada Fonds Region Community Foundation (VRCF)



Address: Gara Street 10, Valmiera, LV-4201, Latvia

Web-site: www.vnf.lv



HISTORY:

The Foundation was founded in 2005 for Valmiera city and its surrounding regions.

MISSION:

to improve life quality of local the community in wide spectrum of issues. VRCF could be described as: fund-raising and grant-making. It serves as a philanthropy leader for Valmiera and its surrounding regions, by looking for new society's needs through research and by organizing appropriate fundraising activities.

MAIN ACTIVITIES:

1. Strengthening philanthropy traditions and raising money from local businesses and inhabitants.
2. Support initiatives of local people, by contributing money grants from raised donations to them.
3. Social help for the disadvantaged is currently actual topic in our activities.
4. Youth issues and engagement has become an important part of the foundations' agenda.
5. To complete mentioned tasks, understanding local community needs and motivations is crucial. Thus, research and regular communication with the community is important part of our job.

ANNUAL RELEVANT PROJECTS:

- Yearly local project competitions for local people (both adults and youngsters) to realize projects and ideas for the local community;
- VRCF donors' club to support projects and ideas from local people
- Lab of Youth Ideas (Latvian's Youth bank) to teach youngsters about local philanthropy in a practical way, as well as fund-raising and grant-making activities
- Social help with Charity Store-Room where anybody could bring their unneeded things and others could take them without pay; Charity packs and tasty presents for lonely seniors in Valmiera city and its surrounding regions.

LAST RELEVANT PROJECTS:

- IT application "DEEDin" for volunteers to register their voluntary activities and achievements (see www.deedin.com).
- European Seminar of Youth Banks to share knowledge and competence about YB activities in Europe (Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Latvia, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Turkey and Ukraine).

Name of the NGO:

Carpathian Foundation - Hungary

Address: 53. Felvégi Str., 3300 Eger, Hungary

Web-site: www.karpatokalapitvany.hu/en,
www.carpathianfoundation.org



MISSION:

The mission of the Carpathian Foundation-Hungary is to improve the quality of life of people living in the Carpathian Euroregion, and to preserve the social, ethnic, cultural and environmental values and sustainable development of the region.

ACTIVITIES:

The Foundation acts as a cross-border regional community foundation and primarily provides financial and technical assistance to NGOs and LSGs (local-self-governments) operating in the Hungarian part of the Carpathian Euroregion (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar, Heves, Jász- Nagykanizsa, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties).

Carpathian Foundation-Hungary encourages co-operation among non-profit, governmental and profit-oriented organizations, in the areas of rural community development, human resource development, preservation of cultural and environmental values, heritage, social integration by its programs and projects. Its goal is to strengthen social consciousness and regional identity by strengthening inherent values of the region.

The Foundation engages in both grant-making and programmatic activities, and since the beginning it has granted totally 15 million USD to hundreds of NGOs and LSGs.

Currently the Foundation runs its programs to fulfill the following main objectives: to support local development initiatives of NGOs and communities; to support disadvantaged rural areas and vulnerable groups; to raise social awareness and to support disadvantaged youth.

YOUTH IN THE FOCUS

The Carpathian Foundation-Hungary is committed to support the underprivileged youth as its main aim so that the qualified youth utilize their acquired knowledge in the region, get to know the problems of their narrow and wider environment, find solutions for the challenges with the usage of their studies. The Carpathian Foundation-Hungary is a member of the prestigious International Carpathian Foundation Network which serves as a platform for effective international collaboration and transfer of know-how.



House of open doors



Name of the NGO:

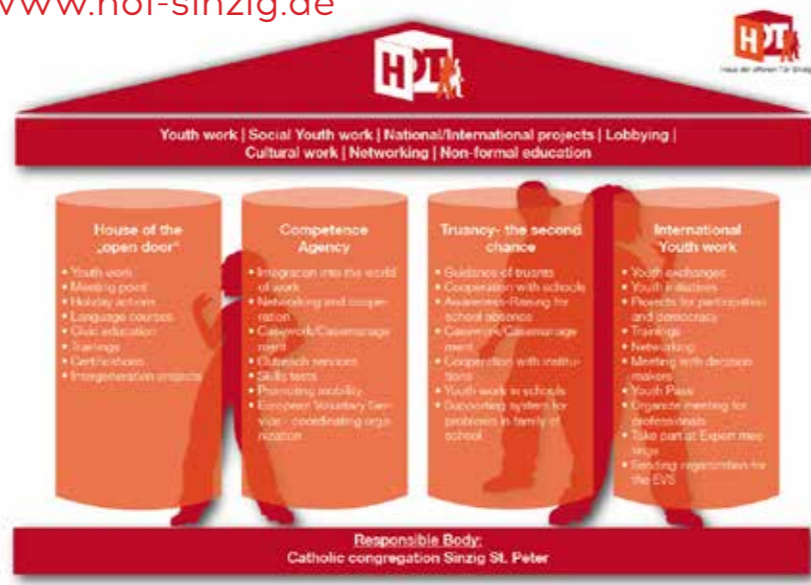
Address: Barbarossa str. 43., 53489 Sinzig, Germany
Web-site: www.hot-sinzig.de

HAUS DER OFFENEN TÜR (GERMAN NGO)

The „House of open doors“ (HoT) is an organization of open youth work in maintenance of the catholic church St. Peter in Sinzig. The house in the middle of the town Sinzig offers an open space to everybody, especially for young people, to meet each other, to play and to have fun.

The house accommodates the Kompetenzagentur, a place where young people with or without fewer opportunities are supported in the transition from school to work and the Schulverweigerung the 2.Chance, an organization for young school refuses, helping them getting back to the education system and to have success.

Moreover HoT offers different European projects, exchanges and initiatives to the youth, supporting their mobility and their personal development. The "Haus der offenen Tür" is a place for everybody!



Name of the NGO:

Carpathian Foundation - Slovakia

Address: Letná 27., 040 01 Košice, Slovakia
Web-site: <http://karpatskanadacia.sk/en/>

The Carpathian Foundation is a unique regional non-profit organization, and the only one serving Eastern Slovakia - Košice and Prešov administrative regions for twenty years. The Carpathian Foundation was created in 1994 and, since its creation, has been providing financial support, training and advisory services to active people and non-profit organizations in order to help improve living conditions in Eastern Slovakia. The Foundation's flagship themes are community-based poverty alleviation and corporate social responsibility concept development. The Foundation understands that youth unemployment is a pressing problem which contributes to the poverty in the region affecting one of the most vulnerable groups. To address this problem it seeks to improve opportunities for educated but disadvantaged youth by developing their key skills, knowledge and social capital.

The Foundation's grant programs seek to support development of the region in a variety of areas. The Foundation supports collaboration, partnerships on the local level and community engagement into solutions towards local issues. Since its creation, the Foundation funded hundreds of projects with a total amount of over 1,8 million EUR. The Foundation is a member of the prestigious International Carpathian Foundation Network focusing its attention on disadvantaged areas of five countries - the Carpathian region composed of Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania.



Czech team

The Czech team is represented by 3 young researchers who study in Prague Sofiya Yudenko (20), Liudmila Larionova (27) and Elizaveta Nechaeva (22) and the coordinator Elena Tulupova (38) who is the leader of Agency for Migration and Adaptation AMIGA.

The research interest of the team broadly lies in the sphere of labour economics. Our research interest is motivated by the desire to promote the fundamental understanding of the driving forces behind important labour market variables.

Being interested in gaining the research experience in the field of labour economics we were fascinated by the opportunity to be involved in the JOBNET project. It was the inevitable step in our research activity as it gave us a chance to improve our skills, to get additional knowledge and to contribute to society.

The research project gave us an invaluable opportunity to combine the theoretical study and the conducting of research activities. Moreover, the experience provided us the opportunity to practice different forms of scientific communication, deal with the overall of scientific subjects and to develop the capacity of interacting with different actors: public, scientists, journalists, scientific and governmental institutions. We wish to continue research in this field which will result in great personal, professional and social gains.



Croatian team



Marija Cvetković (21) is a student in the Economy Faculty in Zagreb. She is also volunteer in student organisation "eSTUDENT" as a member of the IC team (International cooperation). Her hobby is sleeping in a train and she has lovely dog Buco (Chubby). During this project she volunteered as one of the researchers.

Sanja Novaković (24) is a preschool teacher and she really adores her job. She has been dancing folklore dance for 13 years. Her hobby is cycling. She loves nature, spring and fun. Also, she really likes to sing all the time. She also volunteered as a researcher in this project.

Goran Čurčija (28) is currently working on a local TV news station in Croatia as a video editor and cameraman. His professions are: electronics technician, web programmer, and CAD specialist. He volunteered to offer his skills and expertise in this project. In free time he likes to run, exercise, sing and play the acoustic and electric guitar.

Sonja Seferović is 24 years old. She is studying at The Faculty of Economics in Zagreb. She has some volunteer experience at local culture events. She's been playing basketball for 12 years in Sisak. As well as playing basketball she enjoy travelling and reading.

Dragica Treusić Uljanić is coordinator of this little team. She is a 29 years old and she is a psychologist very interested in professional orientation and the problem of unemployment in Croatia, with some work experience in Croatian Employment Service. Privately, she is married, has two little sons and her hobbies are yoga, flute and rollerblading. For all of us this was first big project and we thought it would be great experience to take a part in such a big research. Now we know we did not make a mistake by joining this big international team because we met many different and interesting people, had a lot of fun and travelled a little bit. But the main thing is that we all gained some new useful skills and will remember this experience for our whole lives.

Sanja: „Volunteering is the best way to make big changes in your life. Don't be afraid of it.“

Sanja: „Meeting people, making friends, travelling, team building, working, gaining new skills, experience, having fun. All of this you get from volunteering!“

Dragica: „I realised that there are many great young people among us with great ideas and many solutions for combating youth unemployment. And that we have to listen them!!!“

Marija: „When I applied for this project, I did not expect such cooperation and such a wonderful people. I didn't know that I would meet people who have so much positive energy in themselves. I think that most of these people are able to change the world“

Marija: „Volunteering can help you to get more connections, make beautiful friendships and it can help you in the future, but the final goal is the way in which we build our lives and select the best decisions.“

Marija: „When you love something the time is going to fast. Do not allow your first project to be also your last one. Move on, be active and continue volunteering!“

Latvian team



Hi dears! We are 3 Latvian volunteer researchers – Egita Podniece, Liene Goļča un Līga Zariņa as well as our coordinators Gundega Siliņa and Ansis Bērziņš. We all are studying or finished our studies in quite social fields – Egita is studying creative photography, Liene and Līga – the political sciences, Gundega and Ansis – communication and public relations.

Why are we involved in JobNet? Because it was an opportunity to work together in the international project with different European countries as well as to set up and strengthen relationships with other institutions in the Vidzeme Planning Region. Also it was a chance to use our theoretical knowledge! And all the above mentioned absolutely fulfilled! Even

more – we also visited different countries, got to know with their culture and got new friends from different places! So the our suggestion for everyone who wants to participate in such kind of research or project is – just do it because you never will know where these roads going to take you away! :)

Hungarian team



OUR MOTTO IS:

„What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.” – Henry David Thoreau

The research was not easy but worth it! It makes us happy that we could add something valuable and in return we gained lots of experiences. The problem has not been solved yet – but hopefully our work can help with combating youth unemployment. There is a need for more cooperation, more research and more ideas, that is why do not hesitate to start your own research in the topic.

The Hungarian research team also has 3 volunteers: Flavián (23), Gabriella (23) and Gergő (26). When we volunteered we were college/ university students. Flavián studies Geography (MSc) with regional management specialization, and he is an intern at the Carpathian Foundation – Hungary. Gabriella studies International relations (BSc), had an internship at Carpathian Foundation – Hungary and at another NGO, and now she is a student worker through a Student Job Agency. Gergő is an International relations expert and he also gained a postgraduate specialist training course in translating social sciences and economics. Now he is working for a Financial Consulting Firm. The coordinator of our team was Anikó. Multitasking is not unknown for her: She runs a family business and she is familiar with tourism and pedagogy, too. She accomplished a Master Degree while she coordinated the research team. We can say Anikó was the engine of the research team: she led and supported us through the whole process.

All of us have experience about unemployment: we have family members, friends who struggled with this problem; some of us have worked with unemployed, so we all saw the problem. We want changes, and to emphasize that we wanted to take part in the research, so we could look for possible solutions. We are interested in the rest of the world how can solve the problem of unemployment, what programs or methods they use.



THE HUNGARIAN TEAM (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT):
GERGŐ, GABRIELLA, ANIKÓ AND FLAVIÁN

German team



Hello, we are the German Team. Svenja Schmitz(22), student of social work, Anna Klein(25), master of education and Andreas Klein(25), student of social scientists. Next to Ramon Martinez(27), coordinator of international projects in HOT and Kim Michelt(22), our expert for the dual vocational system.

MOTIVATION:

Svenja: I wanted to join the project, because in the future I want to work with young people and I am interested in their situations and solving their problems.

Andreas: The problem of youth unemployment isn't a big topic in Germany. For me it was very interesting to discover our problems in this case and to speak about that with people from other countries.

Anna: Sharing best practices about youth unemployment at the conference in Eger was inspiring and useful for all participants.

Ramon: As a young unemployed myself until just a couple of months before the Jobnet research started, this was a very interesting topic for myself to get into and be able to build a research showing, from the youth view, the reality of unemployment in Europe.

Kim: I like international projects, because of the exchange of ideas, knowledge and feelings with all the different participants.

Slovak team



Then and now: We all joined the project because we wanted to gain new information and experience with an international research. The second reason why we joined the research is that our region suffers from the second highest rate of unemployment in Slovakia, and we consider this an issue of utmost importance. Our motivation to take a part in the project was to help to find some solutions to tackle youth unemployment in Eastern Slovakia and, additionally, to help to formulate specific recommendations for relevant policy makers.

From the research, we all received a plenty of experience about how a research like this is conducted. Also, we learned how to coordinate a group and its work on an international level. We met lots of interesting people from all walks of life – non-profit organizations, businesses, unemployed youth, etc.



Mirka Petrova, 28
Milena Pšáková, 28
Igor Kupec, 28
Tomáš Török, 25
Mária Biľová - coordinator

MOTIVATION:

All young people need to be active, they can't just sit at home and wait for a job. They have to stand up and if it won't work for the first time don't give up but try again. This is the only solution towards employment.

JobNet - Active citizens combating youth unemployment

The “JobNet- Active citizens combating youth unemployment” (EACEA 529171-EFC-1-2012-1-HU-EFC-CSP) was an international research focused project about Youth unemployment in Europe with the support of the European Commission (EACEA).

The main goal of the project was to highlight and promote innovative bottom-up solutions Europe-wide aimed at combating youth unemployment. The main objective of the project was to build a transfrontier network of non-governmental organizations to identify, share, discuss and encourage initiatives successfully tackling youth unemployment in different European countries which can be deployed in other EU states as well.



In the frame of the project six civil society organizations from Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Germany, Latvia and Slovakia closely cooperated with each other and all key actors to raise public awareness on the importance of active citizenship, citizens', civil organizations' initiatives tackling youth unemployment.

The transfrontier network of wide stakeholders explored the background of the problem of youth unemployment and successfully applied practices fighting against youth joblessness in the involved countries by conducting an **international interactive, comparative audiovisual research**. The research was done by 3 member teams of young volunteers in each of the 6 countries between November, 2012 and February, 2014 based on the principle of “Nothing about us, without us”.

KICK-OFF MEETING

On 29-30 November 2012 the project started with an **international kick-off meeting** at Kosice, Slovakia. At this event the young volunteers and their coordinators got to know each other and started their cooperation and teamwork. They were prepared for the audiovisual research by Dr. Gergely Guszmann (expert of the research programme), who presented the research plan in details. The most popular part of the event was the ‘cultural night’ when the participants had the chance to get to know each other’s cultural specialties presented by the country groups in an innovative way.

RESEARCH

The main objective of the research was to provide scholars, decision-makers with an in-depth understanding of the current issues of youth unemployment. All the young volunteers from the involved six countries followed the same method during conducting of the research. The research was divided into 3 main parts: literature review, questionnaire and interviews. The literature review is the summary of the literature relevant to the youth unemployment. In this session the young researchers wrote a critical assessment of the relevant literature. They read empirical reports, theoretical studies, sociological and political accounts, historical overviews etc. and wrote an overall report about it. They also examined the legal background (employment policy), the current mainstream versus alternative theoretical or ideological viewpoints, and analyzed maps, statistical data, diagrams and tables. The next session of the research was the questionnaire part. Research teams visited the most influential cities to get representative population. Therefore, the target groups of this survey were young people at age 16-24. This was done by an online form. The number of the respondents was minimum 300 (according to each country) from 3 groups: employed, unemployed young people and college/university students. After the finalization of the survey the researchers wrote a report about results of the questionnaire. In the final session the volunteers made 25 audiovisual interviews in each country with 5 main target groups: employed and unemployed young people, employment policy experts, members or civil actors of the non-profit sector and profit-oriented and public sector. After conducting the interviews they wrote a report, similar as the questionnaire report. After all sessions the researchers wrote a final report of their findings obtained during the whole research phase, and prepared a short movie about their work including the main findings, best practices and recommendations discovered by researching.

Conference



An international conference was organized (with additional support from the International Visegrad Fund) on 13-14 November, 2013. Besides presenting and debating the main findings of the youth research with the aim to provide opportunity for the participants **representing 17 European countries to exchange information and knowledge on efficient practices handling youth unemployment**, e.g. entrepreneurship, skill development, internships, guidance & mentoring, combating early school-leaving, youth banks and youth involvement, empowerment techniques.

The event intended to serve as a platform and resource-base to disseminate practices on how to help young job-seekers to understand labor markets, economic and job crisis, and methods of pioneering solutions to stimulate job growth and job seeking techniques.

The conference aimed to deepen the knowledge of the participants (NGO representatives, experts, practitioners, youth workers, researchers) about the current and expected future situation and needs of young people and all the relevant stakeholders in Europe in order to reduce youth joblessness.

The conference also targeted to discuss what role may and should youth policy, and youth work play, on different levels, in the current context of youth employment crisis and beyond, to enhance the perspectives for young people in Europe.

During the event firstly the youth researchers presented the situation of youth unemployment and the results of the international research. A round table discussion was organized on trends of youth unemployment from another part of Europe with involvement of the following

non-profit experts: Alina Bernecker, executive director of the Center For Rural Assistance, Romania, Ramón Martínez, youth worker of Zink Asturias, Spain and Irmantas Sujeta, NGO Mžeikių “Versli karta”, Lithuania.

Agnieszka Klucznik-Toro from the International Center For Entrepreneurship, Poland.; Feliciana Rajewska from the Vidzeme University, Latvia along with Michael Schneider, Youth Politician speaker from Germany were talking about the view of academic and political sphere’s view on youth unemployment and its effective treatment.

Also best practices combating youth unemployment by indirect tools were presented by excellent experts, such as: David Plumtree, Chairman and Youth Social Enterprise Development Coordinator, Voluntary Action, North Lincolnshire, United Kingdom; Petra Klein, Director of the institution Haus der offenen Tür (HoT), Germany and Jozef Jarina, Bardejov Community Foundation, Slovakia.

On the second day of the conference primarily speakers representing the for-profit sector presented successful *carrier, mentoring and guidance programs* (Elena Todorova, operations manager at Manpower, Bulgaria and Csudinka Csudutov, Mimox Ltd. – IT Recruitment Services Company, Hungary) and *innovative initiatives of youth empowerment – as helping tools for labor market entry* (Lem Treursić, secretary and founder of Arena Rugby Club, Croatia; Elena Tulupova, AMIGA, Czech Republic and Ansis Berzins, Valmiera Region Community Foundation, Latvia).

The conference was closed by a commonly formulated recommendation of the participating youngsters about how to decrease youth joblessness.



Final evaluation meeting

At the end of the project (14-15 February, 2014) a two-day-long evaluation and closing event was organized for the project participants (coordinators and researchers) to sum up the project, its achievements and results in Remagen, Germany. The participants evaluated their performance and shared their experiences gained through the project implementation, and decided on the dissemination strategy of the results and specific materials of the project (brochures, study, DVDs), they debated the follow-up and sustainability actions of the project, too.



With the additional support of the **International Visegrad Fund** we were able to involve an organization from Poland into the conference phase of the project in order to share experience in a broader sense related to youth unemployment and its possible treatments.

The European Cooperation Centre

The European Cooperation Centre was founded in 2001. It has been an organization of people always willing to work for the sake of citizen participation. The main goals of the association are: undertaking activities aiming at implementation of the citizen society, promoting the idea of citizen participation – an active way of citizen involvement in public life. The association realizes its aims predominantly through preparation, publication and dissemination of social science materials, preparation and coordination of learning programmes, organization of conferences, seminars, studies, information campaigns and constant cooperation with media, public institutions and private organizations concerned with similar problems. The association consists of the respected Polish experts, who participate in numerous projects and take an active role in building the modern citizen society.

The activities undertaken by the association have proven successful, mostly due to cooperation with the experts being the best possible specialists in their disciplines. The members of the association are respected Polish experts, taking an active part in successful projects for local authorities, NGOs, journalists, SMEs, academics and wider groups of beneficiaries.

The association has been frequently participating in developing local development strategies for local authorities, organized training, and workshops, both in Poland and abroad. Or manual Islands of Opportunities. How to create local development strategies? is a unique publication among the books concerning self-government issues. Currently it has been recognized unofficial handbook for local authorities and is widely used in every day practice not only by the authorities, but also by the self-governmental higher managing personnel.

WWW.COOPERATIONCENTRE.EU

Dissemination of the final outputs and follow-up of the project

The outcomes of the research were published on DVD, and this publication has been prepared containing the presentation of the involved partners, and stakeholders, in addition the best practices of these countries.

These along with a commonly formulated recommendation will be sent to decision/policy makers of the respective countries and EU besides wide range dissemination to the public and actors affected by, interested in the increasing tendency of youth joblessness.

The established transfrontier network of the participating civil society organizations serves the purposes of informal learning and exchange of ideas, practices continuing in the future. The network serves on a long run as a tool of exchange of experience, as a knowledge-base, a pool of experts, professionals, practitioners, furthermore pool of ideas, methods, initiatives to the solution of youth unemployment, as a motivational source to increase citizens and key stakeholders activity regarding combating youth joblessness. The network also serves as a base for common projects, initiatives in the future on European level.

JOBNET EACEA RESEARCH

Active citizens combating youth unemployment



General aims and project participants

The project intends to generate discussion, debate and cooperation among youngsters and experts across Europe about an alarmingly urgent problem: youth unemployment. This initiative promotes exchange of best practices, methods among youth, decision-makers, researchers and CSOs to raise public awareness and activate and empower European citizens to pay more attention to social, local and educational initiatives' tackling youth joblessness and take part at that.

Observing the recent turmoil, the phenomenon of the growing trend of youth unemployment should and could be treated by similar or commonly developed and shared tools. Civil society organizations have relevant experience in channeling the needs of citizens and developing adequate treatment for fulfillments of the claims primarily at the local level, as a bottom-up kind of approach, it supports subsidiarity, one of the most important principles of the EU.

The project also enhances contributing to an inclusive society and supporting equal opportunities in general due to the reflected topic, and also in practice as the youngsters involved into the project facing this very issue. The research has been conducted in six countries (the Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia) with young researchers (group of 3 in and a mentor in each country) belong to NGOs or education institutions.

Research methods

Young people, career starters or job-seekers are definitely the weakest social groups on the labor market and require particular focus in terms of providing educational, voluntary and labor opportunities. These groups of people are lack in of work experience, market-specific skills, motivation and social capital that make them extremely vulnerable. Companies may hire them for a while considering the low starting wages, however, they will be the first to be dismissed in case of recession or a new human resources policy. On the one hand, young people should acquire more labor specific skills and gain more experience at least within the framework of student work. On the other hand, companies should create more opportunities for young persons by starting apprenticeship/internship/traineeship programs realizing the potential in shaping young persons' attitudes, competencies and effectiveness.

The research includes i) a review of literature on academic findings in each country about youth unemployment; ii) a survey analysis using on-line questionnaires (300 per country) targeted young people at 16-24; iii) interviews with employed young people, unemployed young people, employment policy experts, members of CSOs, members of profit-oriented sector; iv) assessment of good practices offering unique approaches how to tackle youth unemployment.





The Czech Republic

The financial crisis increased involuntary unemployment in the Czech Republic and youth unemployment is definitely linked to the problems of the business sector. Youth labor market is cyclically sensitive but the literature review shows the Czech labor market needs workers with high-quality vocational education (this statement is also confirmed in interviews). The cooperation of local business sector and educational institutions may help to combat youth unemployment in reality but a support from the public sector would make more relevant changes. The importance of career counseling and internship program is evident because it enables young persons to gain occupational knowledge, skills and experience.

Croatia

All young people should receive professional orientation in elementary school to later avoid dropping out from high school and to start early development of required competencies for specific jobs. In Croatia employers should be encouraged to provide opportunities in terms of internship and training programs because these programs are quite rare. NGOs can help young people to find these internship programs and they can also provide volunteer work as a career starter step. Volunteering is a good way to start, but there should be more companies and NGOs where young people can gain experience. Young people, after finishing school, should stay in contact with their school until they find a job within the framework of a follow-up education program. Local schools, companies and NGOs should be connected in some way to avoid the flow of over- or under-educated people into certain professions.

Germany

The situation of youth unemployment in Germany seems to be much better than in other countries. Thanks to the dual system, the idea of apprenticeship in Germany is very attractive and successful. However, it is still needed to promote this dual system and bring more young people into it. Those who cannot complete vocational education can join the so-called 'transition system', where they can follow training programs and try to find an orientation. Nevertheless, these young people are not considered to be unemployed and they do not appear in the statistics. This is only a temporary solution for them so they need more support and attention to get out of this system and being integrated into the labor market. Germany needs more young people from the universities and from the dual system to cover the needs of the society and the economy because the nature of the aging society forces the country to involve all young people into the labor market. There are a lot of structural problems (such as the difference between the eastern and western parts of the country) needed to be solved by a closer cooperation of NGOs, political sphere and experts.

Hungary

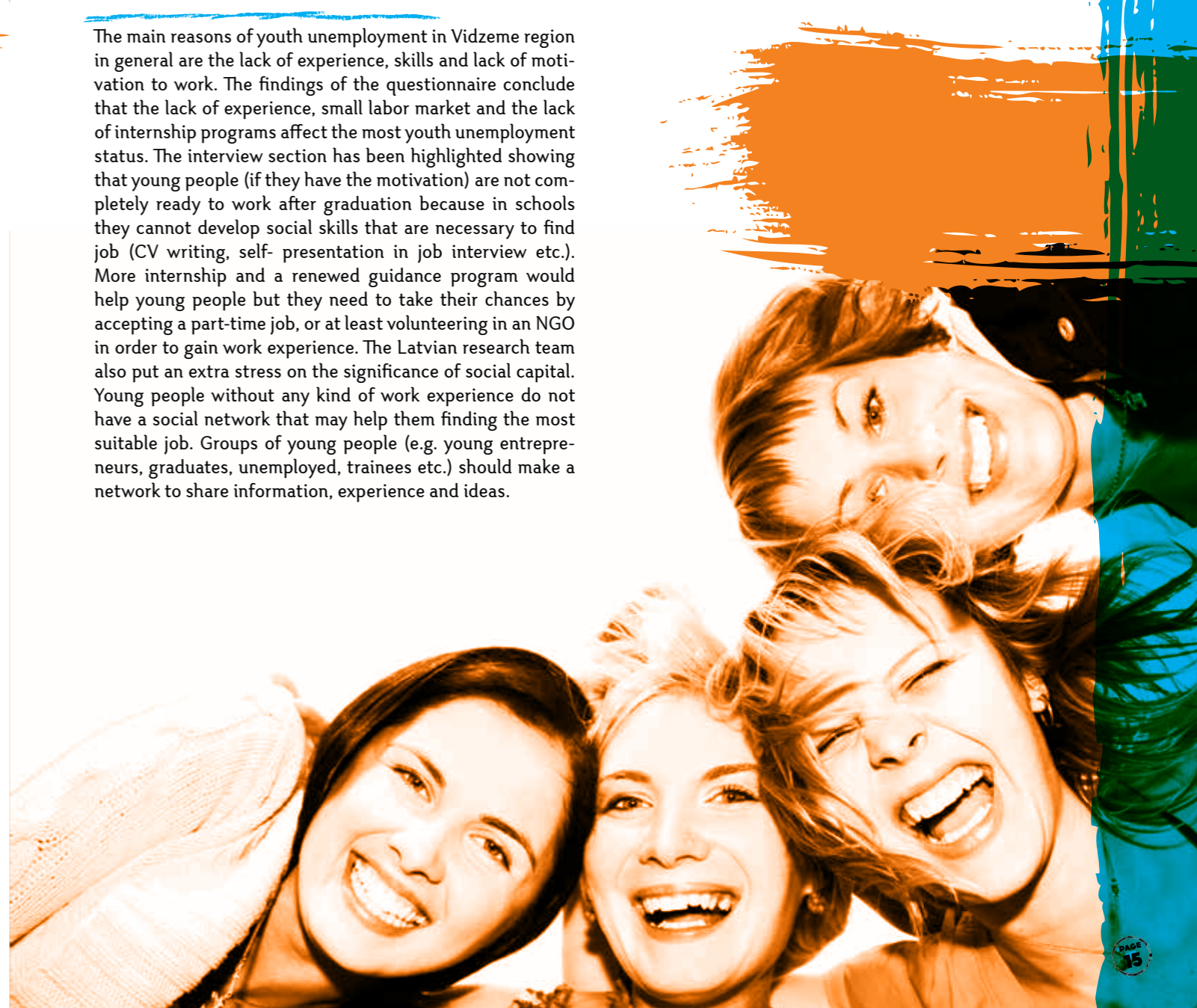
All interviewees (5 target groups) express their concerns about difficulties of youngsters finding jobs after graduation. It seems that because of the lack of experience and skills employers do not give them permanent contracts. It is very important for young people to learn how to approach job-seeking in a constructive way, and to adapt a good attitude towards job-seeking. There is a huge gap between the knowledge gained in schools and skills required by the labor market. Filling this gap can only be carried out by reforming vocational education and commencing start-up programs for young entrepreneurs. The willingness to be entrepreneurs should be enhanced in order to take a new turn in tackling youth unemployment. Another current problem is that young people leave the country hoping to find better salaries abroad. They would rather take a blue-collar job holding an MA, than seeking a job in Hungary. Involving young people in more youth mobility programs can be an excellent opportunity to gain experience abroad and then returning to use the acquired skills as a great benefit in the labor market.

Latvia

The main reasons of youth unemployment in Vidzeme region in general are the lack of experience, skills and lack of motivation to work. The findings of the questionnaire conclude that the lack of experience, small labor market and the lack of internship programs affect the most youth unemployment status. The interview section has been highlighted showing that young people (if they have the motivation) are not completely ready to work after graduation because in schools they cannot develop social skills that are necessary to find job (CV writing, self-presentation in job interview etc.). More internship and a renewed guidance program would help young people but they need to take their chances by accepting a part-time job, or at least volunteering in an NGO in order to gain work experience. The Latvian research team also put an extra stress on the significance of social capital. Young people without any kind of work experience do not have a social network that may help them finding the most suitable job. Groups of young people (e.g. young entrepreneurs, graduates, unemployed, trainees etc.) should make a network to share information, experience and ideas.

Slovakia

Highlighting the most dominant issues about the Slovak labor market we should note that volunteering is one of the easiest ways to get work experience in real-life situations. Young people can be volunteers at civil organizations/associations/foundations, multi or international organizations, government offices or companies. However, young people should be informed about all these possibilities, because there are no active relationships between schools and CSOs. A dual learning program would serve as a great example how to prevent youth unemployment but only a few companies invest to create such programs and state intervention is needed to take this system to another level. Guidance programs exist in Slovakia, but they do not provide effective services for young people. They should prepare them in how to start their career by teaching them practical skills (e.g. how to write a CV) or how to find a direction. Perhaps, career guidance can orientate young people towards internship possibilities because more and more companies offer such programs for students.





Conclusion and findings of the survey

Young people, career starters or job-seekers are definitely the weakest social groups on the labor market and require particular focus in terms of providing educational, voluntary and labor opportunities. These groups of people are lacking of work experience, market-specific skills, motivation and social capital that make them extremely vulnerable. Companies may hire them for a while considering the low starting wages, however, they will be the first to be dismissed in case of recession or a new human resources policy.

On the one hand, young people should acquire more labor specific skills and gain more experience at least within the framework of student work. On the other hand, companies should create more opportunities for young persons by starting apprenticeship/internship/traineeship programs realizing the potential in shaping young persons' attitudes, competencies and effectiveness.

Concentrating on youth unemployment in Europe, it is obvious that those countries with effective vocational education systems and conveyable cross-sectoral skills have the lowest unemployment rates. Among the six countries involved in the research, Germany has special practice forms of vocational training with an inevitably solid focus on labor demands and inclusion of employers. In the survey, it occurred that the German research team had certain difficulties in finding unemployed young persons, which can be interpreted in at least two ways: i) it means the rate of unemployment in the country is low; ii) youth without a job consider themselves in a transitional period (e.g. graduated within a year and looking for employment as career starter).

Different from general vocational schooling, the German 'dual-system' connects with the needs of labor market and

provides trainees to gain occupational skills and knowledge and job experience by collaborating with their training firm. Companies, in return, make their contribution to the system supporting the government in order to get well-trained, skilled and motivated young people. In spite of the undisputed successes of the German system, it would be unrealistic to call for an urgent adaptation of such an extensive system, however, building up an active relationship between vocational schooling and/or tertiary education with company-based internships can be the first stage of carrying out dual vocational training in a more structured way.

In many countries such as Latvia, Hungary and Croatia, it was not necessarily the economic crisis of 2008 that created youth unemployment in the first place but it strengthened all negative tendencies that had already existed. However, the crisis seems to offer the opportunity to depart from old paths and enable young people to develop social capital, gain more occupational knowledge and promote entrepreneurship.

The government or local authorities can also make their contribution by encouraging firms to hire young people with permanent contracts. Young labor market entrants have difficulties in finding jobs because they are considered to be inexperienced and unskilled. In most cases they only get fixed-term contracts that cause higher unemployment rates and frustrate applicants assuming the lack of employment protection does not give them stability. Both uneducated and educated hurt but the latter may be scarred for life spending years without a job because a graduate leaving university with a good degree can easily lose hope of starting an independent life after being rejected.

Best practice in Czech Republic

The young researchers collected the following best practices in their countries as good examples of combating youth joblessness.

ŠKODA AUTO UNIVERSITY

ORGANIZATION ŠKODA AUTO is one of the most important and fastest growing companies in the Czech Republic and one of Europe's largest car brands Volkswagen.

TARGET GROUP

The school is designed for young people who would like to work in the sphere of technology or engineering.

MAIN ACTIVITIES:

- procurement of equipment needed for the introduction or development of technical subjects
- the introduction or modification of curricula for intensive teaching of technical subjects
- programs / activities to popularize engineering and technical fields
- participation in national and international competitions and projects
- extracurricular activities with a technical focus
- individual support for gifted students
- support for students with disabilities in the case of interest in technical schools and other projects



GOALS

- Employability of graduates
 - Relevant professional experience
 - Participation of ŠKODA AUTO experts in teaching
- As result, 56% of Bachelor's degree graduates continue their studies, 40% of them right away have a job. 98% of graduates with Master's degree have a job primary in ŠKODA AUTO Company.
- This year ŠKODA AUTO has a new project which should help to increase the interest in technical fields. The program is primarily an effort to promote the popularization of technology and technical education in elementary schools, where is possible to capture and intensify students' interest in school for subsequent study engineering.



Best practice in Croatia

APPLIED CERAMICS SISAK

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ABOUT

Applied Ceramics is a fabricator of custom-made ceramics, quartz, silicon and sapphire spare parts designed for the semiconductor industry.

NAME OF THE BEST PRACTICE:

Company Applied Ceramics Sisak - average age 28

The company was opened in 2008 by a young entrepreneur team. They employ only young people providing an opportunity to prove their innovative skills. The company is in a close relationship with educational institutions especially secondary schools in the region in order to employ young people from those schools after graduation.

This model gives a positive message to young people that they have a perspective and place after graduation if they follow their studies properly and this practice serves as an example for entrepreneurs to get a team of young people in order to create a successful and innovative company.



Best practice in Latvia

Best practice in Latvia, Vidzeme region Latvia, is Madona municipality's business idea competition for youth „Madona can do it better”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKoGkvpfgug>



BUSINESS IDEA COMPETITION "MADONA CAN DO IT BETTER"

Madona municipality is one of the municipalities that organize business idea competitions for youth.

TARGET GROUP

Young people in Madona district (1/3 of all unemployed persons in Madona district are youngsters).

GOAL

Main aim is to encourage and support the development of business ideas of young people, to motivate young people to set up their own business, make innovative products or create services, thus encouraging new entrepreneurs in Madona district.

ACTIVITIES

- To organize a business idea competition "Madona can do it better"
- Young people have one month to create their business ideas
- 10 authors of best ideas have to present their concepts, a commission selects the best three according to following criteria: originality, economical reasons, product/service, necessary resources, realization in Madona district and presentation
- 3 best youngsters get co-funding for their ideas, totalling more than 4200 euros!

RESULTS

After the competition, in spring 2013, 3 new companies have been established by young people: Sigma Lab Ltd. works with web solutions, Dreamsleeep Ltd. produces unique designs for pillows, but company by Māris Zvērs has engaged in the production of historical bows.

Best practice in Germany

Best Practice: Kompetenzagentur

The competence agencies (Kompetenzagenturen) programme is part of the EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE initiative with which the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth – is sending out a clear message for a strong youth policy and better integration of young people in Germany. The programme is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF)



- ▶ The competence agencies (Kompetenzagenturen) programme will strengthen youth policy and better integration of young people. The EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE initiative links five programmes in more than 1,000 locations across Germany into a strong network and offers youths with poor employment opportunities and young people with an immigrant background expert social, educational and professional support and assistance. The Kompetenzagentur (KA) works mainly with youth with fewer opportunities at the age of 16-27 in multi problematic situations, from family and exclusion problems to monetary, drugs or education challenges.
- ▶ Kompetenzagentur offers a connection and a network for young people and all the different programs, agencies and offers of the Government for them, by individual support for the young persons. The Kompetenzagentur tries also to eliminate prejudice between politics and young people or employees and youngsters, by organizing projects, meetings, coaching and trainings with the different groups together.
- ▶ The competences agency is considered a good practice because of a series of specific elements that differentiate it between other youth work approaches. Youth who take part in the KA process are there because they want to be. This voluntary approach differs from other offices as the Job Agency, where youth must go. All youth are welcome, being those with fewer opportunities a priority, and they are supported in a direct way through individual case work. This personalized support is focused on the individual needs of the young people and a personal plan is created shaping the process to reach the final desired goal.

www.kompetenzagenturen.de

Best practice in Hungary

Job seeking training

Link: <http://tik.ektf.hu/tanacsadas/>
 Target group: Freshly graduated college students

The Department of Political Science (Eszterházy Károly College, Eger) in cooperation with the Agria Universitas Association regularly organize programs both for young people at age 14-18 and university students (at age 19-23). There are three projects that affect the future of young people and provide them with an opportunity to get engaged in non-formal education trainings.

- ▶ 1. Within the framework of the European 'Youth in Action' project, the department enrolls a nation-wide competition for secondary school students. Groups of three participate in the final competition after completing two rounds. The topics vary each year, but basically focusing on the European cooperation and policy-making. The winners of the competition go to Brussels for a week to visit EU institutions, meet decision makers, officials and learn more about the EU. This program helps young people to get acquainted with the basic mechanisms the EU and inspire them to get employed in one of the EU institutions.
- ▶ 2. A talent care program helps secondary schools students (selected and recommended by their secondary school teachers/supervisors) to get specific theoretical knowledge in certain fields of study such as diplomacy, public management, European law, international relations and economy. Meetings are held twice a month in a semester, where students get the opportunity to learn from highly qualified and experienced lecturers e.g. diplomats, ambassadors, economic experts, professors and decision-makers. Students get a chance to have discussions with experts in order to get excellent information or perspective.
- ▶ 3. An apprenticeship program for university students is held to enable them to gain experience in their sophomore year. The department has tight links with companies, embassies, EU institutions, foreign universities, local authorities and civil organization. Students of international relations spend at least three months as interns at one of these places in order to gain work experiences and get socialized into working life. They have the opportunity to continue their studies at the MA level, but they can also go straight to the labor market after finishing the BA. This program serves as a transition from school into labor and provides an opportunity for students to get employed after their internship.

Best practice in Slovakia

Komunitná nadácia Bardejov - Bardejov Community Foundation



The Bardejov Community Foundation works with young people from the north-eastern part of Eastern Slovakia, a region well-known for the highest unemployment rate. The Foundation knows that one of the best ways to tackle youth unemployment is to help young people to acquire experience from real operations of an organization, not only to receive theoretical knowledge at school. Because of this, every year one fresh graduate gets a chance to spend six months with the Foundation as an intern. During this period, the young individual gets a chance to see how the whole Foundation is run. He or she also develops their soft skills, such as how to write their own project, how to communicate with business partners, or how to raise charitable funding.

Everything is supervised by the Foundation's CEO, Mr. Jozef Jarina, who has an ample experience with the work in the non-profit sector. He provides the youth with advice how to behave at a job interview and how to get ready to step out into the labor market. It is Mr. Jarina's personal ambition to encourage young people to start their own businesses and not rely on the labor market. His initiative targeted at young people began in 2005. Since then, 12 fresh graduates have spent six months with the Foundation. Out of these 12, 6 left the organization with their own business licenses as project managers.

Another part of the career guidance program provided by the Bardejov Community Foundation assists young people who have already started their businesses but need support. The training starts with definition of their visions and the goals they want to achieve. Mr. Jarina focuses on giving the training participants his input on what they should pay particular attention to, or on how to develop their personal assets.

Recommendations by the research group



- 1. Internships in companies** – many employers use this practice to recruit new employees from schools. Young entrants into the labor market need to gain experience and a more structured, extensive and longer internship would serve as a perfect opportunity for that.
- 2. Enhancing occupational skills** – non-formal education trainings should be highlighted in guidance programs. Combining vocational training and foreign language learning in order to gain specific labor skills and get into mobility programs.
- 3. Providing voluntary work** – both profit and non-profit oriented organizations can offer voluntary works to students and unemployed young people to provide them experience and some time to figure their future orientation out.
- 4. Improving entrepreneurship** – self-employment related knowledge and skills enable young people to start their own business reducing risks. The involvement of the non-profit and business sectors into this process at an early stage of this initiative is also recommended. Besides, local authorities can also make their contribution to enhance entrepreneurship by supporting young entrepreneurs with certain incubator programs in order to nurture potential ideas. Young entrepreneurs can create a network to help each other with ideas, information and innovation.
- 5. Restructuring vocational education** – the German 'dual vocational system' may serve as a good practice to adapt. This method connects vocational education with companies to train students and provide all required skills. The involved companies accept students to spend their practical training there so theory (provided by schools) and experience are combined. Countries of Europe suffering from youth unemployment can use this pattern to create cooperation between schools and companies in order to provide skills fitted to the requirements of the labor market.

- 6. Preventing early school leaving** – public, business and non-profit sectors are required to cooperate in this regard in order to motivate young people and ensure them that they are facing an independent life with multiple opportunities.
- 7. Taking more responsibility** – young people should also make their contribution and be eager to grab all opportunities such as internship or guidance programs. They should also train themselves how to write a CV or apply for scholarships or take part in youth mobility programs.
- 8. Motivating and inspiring students** – general education should also provide students with career guidance and help them to find a career orientation by informing them about all possibilities available in the job market.
- 9. Gaining cross-sectoral skills** – in training facilities cross-sectoral skills should be provided such as employability, management, leadership, logistics, foreign languages, team working and communication. These marketable skills are supported by all main companies and organizations and vital to the success of any kind of business operations. Lacking these skills may not enable career starters to find a job outside their specific occupational orientation.
- 10. Departing from the old paths** – European leaders need to find new ways in tackling youth unemployment by i) making a plan based on investments in sustainable growth; ii) reforming vocational education and introducing an apprenticeship program with joint companies; iii) elevating the reputation of knowledge-based, intellectual occupations; iv) supporting innovative ideas of young entrepreneurs.

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