



# Summary

of the comparative, international research conducted in the  
“Active citizens combating youth unemployment” (EACEA  
529171-EFC-1-2012 HU-EFC-CSP) project

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The research was conducted by the volunteers mentioned in the beginning of each country chapter of the following six NGOs:

- **Carpathian Foundation-Hungary**  
[www.karpatokalapitvany.hu](http://www.karpatokalapitvany.hu); [www.karpatokalapitvany.hu/en](http://www.karpatokalapitvany.hu/en);  
[www.carpathianfoundation.org](http://www.carpathianfoundation.org)
- **Carpathian Foundation, Slovakia**  
[www.karpatskanadacia.sk](http://www.karpatskanadacia.sk); [www.carpathianfoundation.org](http://www.carpathianfoundation.org)
- **Agency for Migration and Adaptation, AMIGA, Czech Republic**  
[www.amiga-migrant.eu](http://www.amiga-migrant.eu)
- **Valmiera Region Community Foundation (VRCF), Latvia**  
[www.vnf.lv](http://www.vnf.lv)
- **Local Democracy Agency SISAK, Croatia**  
[www.Lda-sisak.hr](http://www.Lda-sisak.hr)
- **House of open doors, Germany**  
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1

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I. LATVIA</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Literature review	6
2. Questionnaire	8
3. Interviews	11
4. Best practice	12
5. Conclusion	13
<b>II. CZECH REPUBLIC</b>	<b>14</b>
1. Literature review	14
2. Questionnaire	15
3. Interviews	18
4. Best practice	19
5. Conclusion	19
<b>III. CROATIA</b>	<b>20</b>
1. Literature review	20
2. Questionnaire	21
3. Interviews	22
4. Best practice	23
5. Conclusion	23
<b>IV. SLOVAKIA</b>	<b>24</b>
1. Literature review	24
2. Questionnaire	25
3. Interviews	27

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4. Best practice	27
5. Conclusion	28
<b>V. GERMANY</b>	<b>29</b>
1. Literature review	29
2. Questionnaire	30
3. Interviews	34
4. Best practice	34
5. Conclusion	35
<b>VI. HUNGARY</b>	<b>36</b>
1. Literature review	36
2. Questionnaire	37
3. Interviews	40
4. Best practice	41
5. Conclusion	42
<b>FINAL CONCLUSION</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>51</b>

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# Introduction

This paper was prepared in the frame of the "**JobNet - Active citizens combating youth unemployment**" project.

The project intended to generate discussion, debate and cooperation among youngsters and experts across Europe about an alarmingly urgent problem: youth unemployment. This initiative of conducting a survey also promoted the exchange of best practices, methods among the involved participants to raise public awareness and activate, empower European citizens to pay more attention to social, local and educational initiatives' tackling youth joblessness and to take part at that. Another key 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.

Six civil society organizations (CSOs) from the *Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Germany, Latvia* and *Slovakia* worked together and with all key actors within the framework of the project to raise public awareness on the importance of tackling youth unemployment. The transfrontier network of wide stakeholders explored the background of youth unemployment and successfully applied practices fighting against youth joblessness by conducting an interactive, comparative audiovisual research. The research was conducted by three member teams of young volunteers in each of the six countries between November, 2012 and February, 2014 based on the principle of "*Nothing about us, without us*".

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 enhanced contributing to an inclusive society and supporting equal opportunities in general due to the reflected topic. Although the high unemployment rate of graduated youth is a huge problem in the European countries, the project implementers intended to pay significant attention on the labor market obstacles of socially excluded youngsters and various factors behind that.

The objective of this paper is to provide scholars, decision-makers with an in-depth understanding of the current issues of youth unemployment. This will enable people to apply an evidence-based 'systems approach' to social protection that benefits young people in place of governmental youth programs and training which in most countries currently exist. Given that

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this knowledge is limited and often scattered, the scope of this study is substantial, and therefore includes:

- A situation analysis and literature review of: i) the existing situation and reasons for unemployment and risk affecting young people in the six countries; ii) current social protection systems and programs in Europe and their impact on young people
- A survey analysis based on numbers produced by on-line questionnaires among employed/unemployed young people at 16-24 focusing on i) educational issues related to the labor market; ii) reasons for youth unemployment; iii) best practices; iv) how to reduce youth unemployment
- A conducted interview with five target groups (employed young people; unemployed young people; employment policy experts; non-profit sector; profit-oriented and public sector) using the basic research questions such as i) schools and businesses working together; ii) internship programs; iii) enhancing entrepreneurship; iv) skills and competences required on the labor market; v) best practices; vi) inclusion of disadvantaged young people into the labor market; vii) vocational and dual education; viii) role of civil society organizations in providing training/apprenticeship/ voluntary programs for young people
- An assessment of regional good practices aiming at finding the most effective practices that may serve as adaptable models to all countries of Europe
- Policy recommendations to inform the development of a strategy to promote social protection systems that benefit young people in the six country case studies and Europe at large.

These four components will be informed by a multi-disciplinary perspective, and by drawing on quantitative, qualitative and participatory data draw attention to the complex interplay of macro-, meso-, and micro-level factors that underpin social protection and systems. The results and findings of the research will enable decision-makers to get a unique reading about youth unemployment and a new perspective about solving this acute problem.

The study consists of six main parts distributed by the involved countries. Each chapter contains a literature review, a quantitative and a qualitative part, an interview section, a best practice and a conclusion. All these parts demonstrate the depth of the survey as well as the motivation of volunteers who have conducted the survey in their own country.

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## I. Latvia

Country	Latvia
Organization	Valmiera Region Community Foundation (VRCF)
Research team	Coordinators: Ansis Bērziņš, Gundega Siliņa, Volunteer researchers: Egita Podniece, Liene Zariņa, Līga Zariņa, Video montage: Eduards Ozerinskis.
Location of the survey	Vidzeme Planning region (24% of the territory of Latvia), 26 municipalities, population data - around 240 thousand people
Number of filled questionnaires	666
Interviewed target groups	5 employed young people, 5 unemployed young people, 5 profit-oriented and public sector people, 5 employment policy experts, 5 non-profit sector people
Specific issues and key words	business competitions for youth; tours, excursions and practice in organizations; volunteering; working in holidays to get job experience
Recommended websites	VRCF – <a href="http://www.vnf.lv">www.vnf.lv</a> Madona can do it better (best practice) - <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKoGkvpfgug">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKoGkvpfgug</a> Training seminars for young people how to start a business (best practice) - <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=489ChuxzCCg">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=489ChuxzCCg</a> Virtual Practice (best practice) - <a href="http://www.prakse.lv/virtualapprakse">http://www.prakse.lv/virtualapprakse</a>

### 1. Literature review

The review basically describes the pre- and post-economic crises employment conditions both in the Latvian society and policy-making. One of the findings of the literature inquiring about the impacts of the crisis is that young people had been economically inactive in parts of the Latvian society because they failed to put in enough efforts to find a job. Youth unemployment

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now is among the highest in the European Union, however, the number of job seekers in the country is relatively low, and this number since 1998 has fallen into 13.6%. There are a lot of unregistered unemployed who are not taken care of by the system since they do not want to be getting into the system and apply for the support of the state. (Institute of Social Research/ Socioloģisko pētījumu institūts, 2007:47)

The main difficulties until 2007 were:

- insufficient education and lack of work experience;
- education did not match the requirements of the labor market;
- poorly chosen profession/education by the young persons;
- the Latvian labor market did not support the simultaneous work and study;
- the issue of child care;
- abuse of equal opportunities: employers preferred hiring men instead of women;
- an overwhelming number of young adults wanted to work abroad (*Positive assessment is given to the cases where young adults go abroad to work at skilled, well-paid jobs and, upon their return to Latvia, invest the knowledge and skills thus obtained in the Latvian labor market*);
- skills of young unemployed persons do not match the demand of the labor market.

Most significant issues after the economic crisis of 2008:

- number of unemployed youngsters with vocational and higher education has been rapidly growing;
- the typical unemployed in Latvia today is between 15-24 years of age, has not got a profession, qualification and in case of being hired in the past, only a low level of qualification was required (Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia, 2011:7).

There have been several governmental efforts in order to reduce the percentage of young unemployment. The problem specified projects and policies aimed at providing a new, sustainable system for young people. One of the policies is the *Youth Law* that is promoting the idea of integration of young people through a commercial activity in the labor market. Firstly, within the framework of this law, young people who aim to start any commercial activity will be trained in education centers. Secondly, the state supports career starters doing commercial activities, and thirdly, it gives support to projects promoting the employment of young people, especially, young people with a socially disadvantaged background. The National Development Plan 2014-2020: providing quality education and lifelong learning to help people to be able to match labor market requirements; integrating young people in to the labor market after vocational and higher education graduation and promoting the importance of voluntary work.

Another vital program, the *Youth policy guidelines for 2009-2018* aims at improving young people's basic skills that are necessary for the successful integration into the labor market,

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supporting the financial, methodological and communicational background for young people who want to start a business, it also aims to provide healthy working conditions for young people with the promotion of respect for labor rights, providing qualitative apprenticeship, providing information about employment opportunities and youth-employment rights, duties and responsibilities and also providing student employment opportunities during summer holidays.

The activities of National Employment Agencies are also significant factors in tackling youth unemployment. They run numerous programs such as the *Work Place for Youth* that promotes the creation of a permanent workplace, the *Workshop for youth* that gives three professional fields to young people in an educational center where they work on each field for three weeks in order to learn about their skills and help unemployed youth to wisely choose the field of education and professional activity.

## 2. Questionnaire

66% of the respondents are women and 34% men. The total number of respondents is 666 from 16 years old to 25. Respondents are from Vidzeme Planning Region including 26 municipalities, which means that the whole Vidzeme region has been covered.

According to the responses of employed young people, friends and relatives helped them to find a job (32%) so we can say that social networking can be a powerful tool for integration in to the labor market. 27% responded that they got the job because their boss offered it to them by recognizing their expertise. Since the one-fifth of the respondents has found a job because of the employers' initiative, we can conclude that there are some employers who prefer hiring young people. Employers recruit their staff from educational institutions, but most of the employed young people have certain experiences in the labor market as former apprentices at a workplace.

When it comes to gender, we should note that 31% of women respond that they got their current job by sending CVs, 25% say they have been offered a job by their boss because of expertise and 22% claim that friends or relatives helped them to get a job.

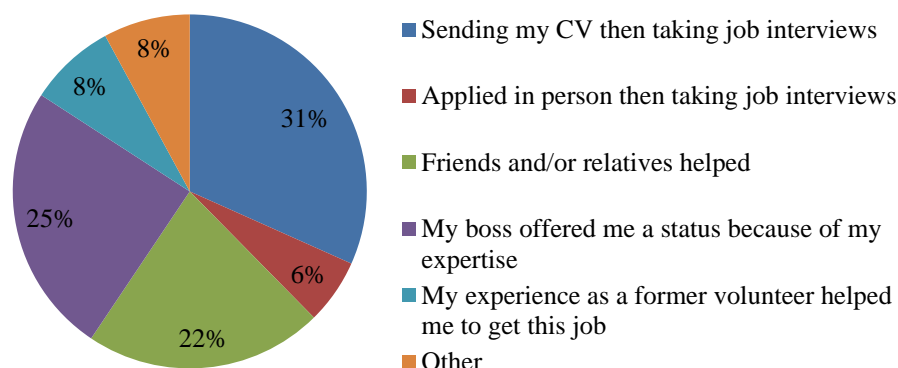


Figure 1: How did you get into your current employment? (female)

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Men usually (48%) got the job by accepting the help of the community (friends, relatives), 20% by sending CVs and taking job interviews and only 14% by being offered because of expertise. Social networking seems to be a key element in finding a job and especially men rely on the help of their macro or even micro community. Women follow the traditional way of getting a job, which takes the issues of equal opportunities into the picture.

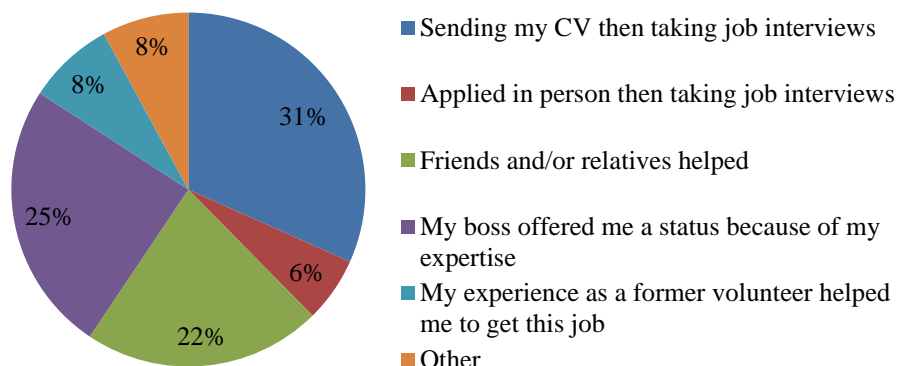


Figure 2: How did you get into your current employment? (male)

Unemployed respondents (26%) claim that one of reasons for unemployment is that there are not enough jobs because of the economic crisis, however, adapting the finding of the literature and the observed good practices, there have been numerous companies and firms founded during the years of the crisis. It is true more companies have been bankrupted than established but still before 2007 unemployment had been also a critical issue in Latvia. Another reason for youth unemployment (24%), also backed up by the literature, is the lack of experience. Others (16%) claim that the competition is high but following the logic of the literature review, the main problem is that young people are lacking in skills.

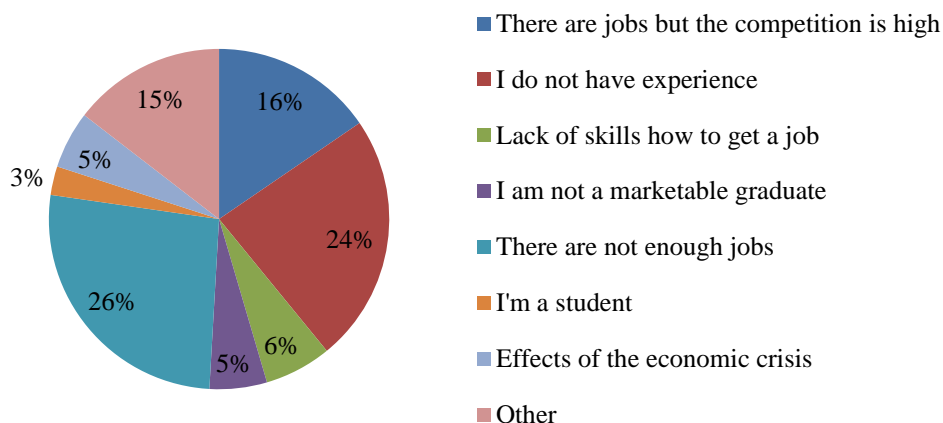


Figure 3: Main reasons for youth unemployment

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53% of employed students answer that friends and relatives helped them to find a job, so again, social networking is a significant factor that may lead to the idea of social capital as being an instrument for a successful integration into the labor market. The second most popular answer is that the “boss offered a job because of expertise” (23%) which means the employers are also in favor of providing job opportunities to skilled students. The respondents’ 15% might take a blue-collar job with the same wages they would earn as graduates and 14% say they are seeking a job abroad. The wage seems to be important for youngsters and the literature also supports this logic by stating that the Latvian young generation would leave the country if they do not find high-paying jobs.

80% of all respondents think that companies and institutions do not employ young people with no experience that the education system cannot provide enough practical experience and skills for young people. It seems that employers are not willing (or simply cannot) to train young people. 47% say that a reason for young unemployment can be the unrealistic salary expectations. 29% blame the effects of the economic crisis but we should take into consideration that research supports that young people had not been motivated even before the crisis so they were economically inactive parts of the society.

73 % say that the public sector should come up with a solution about how to decrease youth unemployment and (being a multiple choice question) 32% choose the political sphere, 29 % the private sector and only 18% the civil sphere.

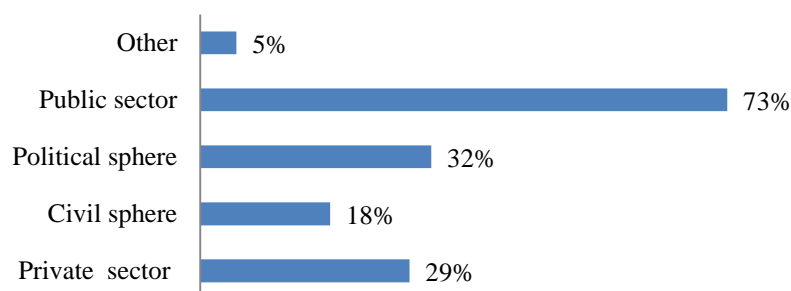


Figure 4: Who should solve the problem?

These results indicate that young people want the public sector to come up with a solution and they have weak trust in the effectiveness of the civil society. Another possible solution can be the cooperation of the local business sector and education institutions to train young people for specific jobs (60%), making the labor market more "youth-friendly" and more internship programs in local and national authorities (48%) as well. The majority of respondents agrees or strongly agrees (66%) that apprenticeship can be an excellent opportunity to prepare young people for the challenges of the labor market. 46% would take a low-income white-collar job rather than a high-income blue-collar job but the 40% will not take that job. It refers to both the high expectation of young people and their desire to get a well-paid job. That finding can be

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related to the question inquiring the willingness of youth to get a job and 61% agree that they rather would stay unemployed than taking a low-paid job. These findings demonstrate one of the key issues of current youth unemployment that is young people being career starters want to get a well-paid job. They remain unemployed and passive waiting for an opportunity to get a well-paid job and do not consider the first job as being the first step in their careers.

### 3. Interviews

There are prior research questions to be answered in this section, such as the cooperation between school and employers. The profit-oriented business sector believes that a dialog between schools and employers is necessary to maintain and improve in order to provide young people the most needed skills that match the demand of the labor marker. The issues of internship opportunities can be related to this argument because interviewed employers think that schools should take the initiative and ask them to establish cooperation. Young employed and unemployed students note that in big cities finding an internship is easy in contrast with the countryside. The benefits of internship for young people are gaining an experience and an opportunity to make a good choice on what to learn and where to work. All subjects agree internship programs would be quite beneficial for both young people and employers. Young people think that it is good for employers to have trainees but employers hold a different stand by claiming in most of the cases trainees are lacking the required skills so that they have to put in extra energy and money to train the interns. They also claim that young people can be divided into two groups, those who want to work and make efforts to improve and those who have a lack of motivation to work. That can be a criticism of the education system coming from the employers, because they often feel that young people are not ready to work and their education continues in the workplace although that takes extra time, energy and money. A well-articulated vocational education would be really welcomed but young people usually underestimate the potential in this career choice. All subjects agree that young job seekers should be persevering, creative, shameless and unstoppable when facing some difficulties. If it is needed one should send the CV everywhere because employers want youngsters to be independent, accurate and responsive. The reasons for early school leaving are varied and among the most obvious ones we should mention that young people often realize that they have poorly chosen their specialization. Higher education costs too much, education centers are located in big cities and combining education with work is too complicated. NGOs can also reduce young unemployment by providing voluntary work as a career starting opportunity or internship programs where young people extend their social network by meeting new people and establishing new contacts. Basically, there is a positive attitude towards business start-ups among society but one of the biggest obstacles is that young people do not have the money for investing a start-up and they also lack experience.

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There are several advantages as well, for they are more motivated, active and enthusiastic and financially they can find sponsors who can provide a fund or at least an opportunity such as the Hipotēku Bank's program (a best practice for us): a competition labeled '*Jump in the business!*' for young people between the age of 18 and 30, who have a business idea and initiative to do it. Interviewees think that the most crucial effect of the economic crisis is the reduction of the number of companies that directly reduced the number of employees so young people are leaving the country looking for job opportunities abroad. Young people who have taken part in a career guidance program held by an employment agency claim that the idea and method is good (e.g. writing a test to know the most appropriate job for the applied skills), but not enough. *They need to be trained in writing a CV, taking an interview and applying for a grant. Most of the interviewees agree that in all cities student councils can represent the rights of students in an effective way but young people do not believe that they can make real changes by articulating their interests so they remain silent and do not want to be active members of the decision-making process.*

Usually, the occupation of parents as well as their level of education takes a serious effect on the future of young people. The traditional way is that children follow the path of the parents so they are enrolled in the same schools, get the same level of education and get the same kind of job or position. However, it seems that in the post-financial crisis (if we agree that it is over) world the next generation should disrupt family traditions and try to find new directions. That needs an innovative, creative and agile attitude as well as labor oriented skills.

#### 4. Best practice

The Vidzeme Planning Region is a project to promote youth entrepreneurship skills and a dialogue about nature-friendly, sustainable and innovative entrepreneurship development opportunities in rural regions. 15 local governments are involved aiming at motivating young people to start their own business and developing entrepreneurial skills of young people from Vidzeme region and creating a dialogue between young people and the business sector. 30 young people (age 18-30) - divided into 6 teams - who would like to start their own business is involved in the project to:

- ➔ participate in a training seminar to develop 5 business plans and later to reduce this number into one potential, one idea
- ➔ test the ideas how to attract investors, potential partners and how to sell/provide their products/services
- ➔ participate a simulation game called '*My new company*'
- ➔ draw up a budget, define the team members' positions in their enterprise
- ➔ create a product or service with all the necessary resources

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During the project the local community is involved in the business idea development process by conducting a survey to find out the viability of the new business idea. The result of the project was 30 trained youngsters and several policy recommendations for decision makers. This virtual practice is a sustainable method for young people to check their skills and gain experience how to start a company.

## 5. Conclusion

The main reason for youth unemployment in Vidzeme region in general is 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 highlighted that young people (if they have the motivation) are not completely ready to work after graduation because in schools they cannot develop the social skills that are necessary to find a 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 in 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.

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## II. Czech Republic

Country	Czech Republic
Organization	Agency for Migration and Adaptation AMIGA
Research team	Coordinator: Elena Tulupova, Irina Yurkevich Volunteer researchers: Liudmila Larionova, Elizaveta Nechaeva, Sofiya Yudenko Volunteer film montage: Ulugbek Matyakubov
Location of the survey	Prague and Central Bohemian region
Number of filled questionnaires	301
Interviewed target groups	4 employed young people, 5 unemployed young people, 7 experts, 5 representatives of non-governmental organisations, 2 employers
Specific issues and key words	Active employment policy, lifelong learning
Recommended websites	<a href="http://www.savs.cz">www.savs.cz</a> , <a href="http://www.cmkos.cz">www.cmkos.cz</a>

### 1. Literature review

Unemployment can be voluntary and involuntary. People can leave their volunteer occupation in order to find another job or just getting fired and becoming involuntarily unemployed. One of the significant problems is definitely the demand side that has been hit by the economic crisis. The first wave of dismissals (layoffs) started during the crisis and considering that youth unemployment is more responsive to the business cycle than unemployment in general we can say that it is one of the most troubling current issues in the Czech Republic. Adapting the findings of the literature, we should make a difference between structural and frictional unemployment. The structural problem of the Czech labor market is that more workers with vocational training are needed than college graduates. Frictional youth unemployment occurs as young people tend to be unsure about what they want to do and so suffer much more from short-term ‘frictional’ unemployment associated with job change (Ryan Bourne).

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Czech young people cannot find a job simply because the labor market is "the completely chaotic, unsystematic approach to the development of the educational system, resulting in a wide discrepancy between companies' requirements and the range of relevant skills" (Sokolovsky, 2013). Employers are likely to select candidates with strong experience and skills over those with little. In the literature there are three major factors of youth unemployment. First, the 'aggregate demand' that is basically one of the effects of the economic crisis, which caused a reduction in job creation, hit the demand side of the labor market and led to layoffs. Second, 'structural changes and labor market mismatches' exist between the needs of employers looking for a potential labor power to fill vacant jobs and the skills of young job seekers. Third, 'individual supply factors' are important to have to impress the employers because in the first place they prefer hiring people with at least six-months' experience.

## 2. Questionnaire

The survey has been conducted in the capital of the Czech Republic – the city of Prague and the surrounding districts ('okres' in Czech language). More female (160) filled the questionnaire than male (140). The majority of men are about 16-18 years old (63), while women – between 21-25 years old.

Age	Men					Women				
	Qty	Employed	Student	Unemployed	Student (employed)	Qty	Employed	Student	Unemployed	Student (employed)
16-18	63	0	36	32	0	32	0	19	12	1
19-21	29	4	13	7	5	57	2	33	11	11
21-25	48	10	12	17	9	71	7	28	12	24

Figure 5: Gender distribution

More than half (51%) of the respondents are secondary school graduates but we should mention that most of the secondary graduation respondents are studying in universities obtaining their degree in the near future (almost everybody in 2014) which means that they are observed as degree holders. 58% of the respondents' fathers have different levels of high school education and 26% secondary school education. 48% of the respondents' mothers have different levels of high school education and 34% secondary school education.

Due to the fact that the majority of the parents have a degree in higher education we can say that parents provide a good example to their children and have created a standard background. 70% of

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the student respondents have been employed previously, 54% of them had a summer job and 48%, had a temporary job as a student.

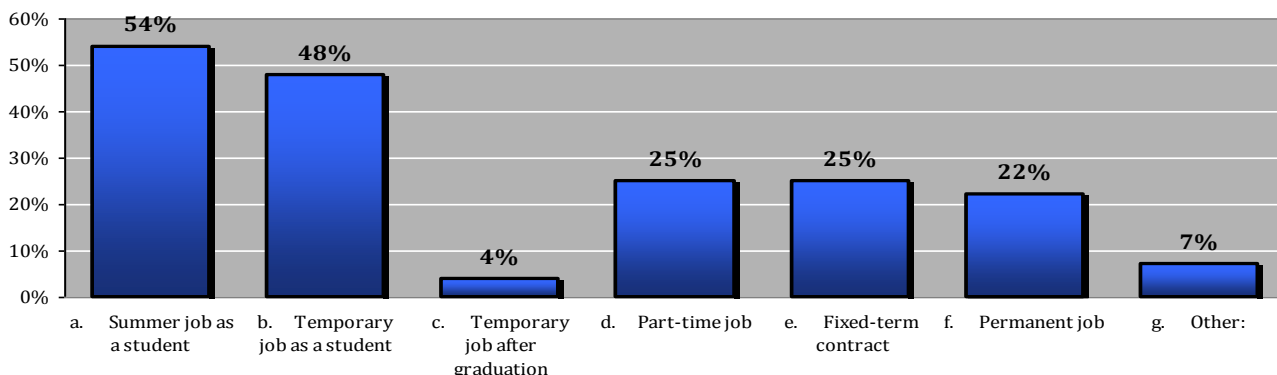


Figure 6: Employment status, experience (Multiple Choice Question -MCQ)

Most respondent students get their work by sending CV and passing an interview (36%), personal contact and the subsequent completion of the interview helped to get a job to 26%.

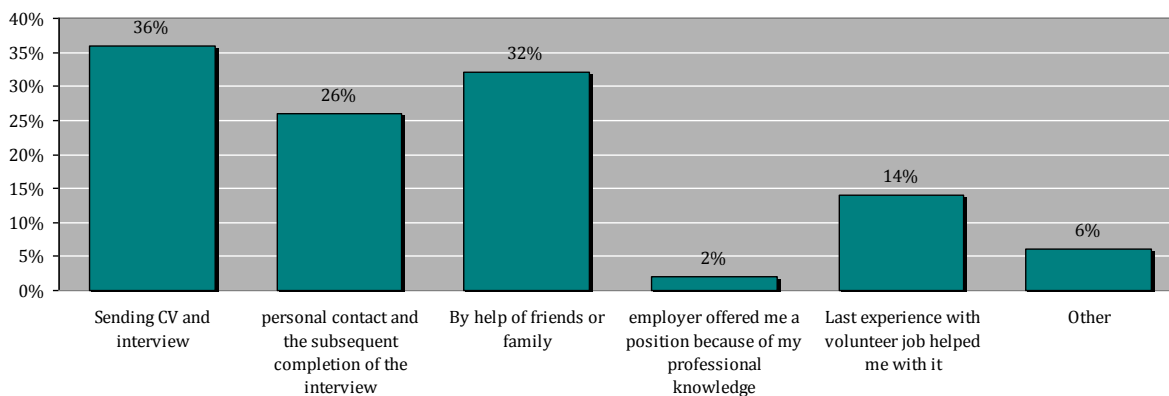


Figure 7: How did you get into your current employment? (Multiple Choice Question -MCQ)

The majority, 63% think that companies and enterprises do not employ young people because of their lack of experience and closely half of the respondents (45%) answer that the economic crisis is the main reason of unemployment. Most of the respondents (63%) think that the public sector can provide alternatives to solve youth unemployment and almost the half (46%) put the private sector in the highlight. The civil and political sphere got only 27% and 23%. The public sector involving government budget has a crucial role in combating unemployment. Public expenditure can be used to stimulate the macro-economic activity at times of low and negative growth. However, at the same time they believe that there should be some cooperation or synergy of public, private and civil sectors to prevent and solve unemployment.

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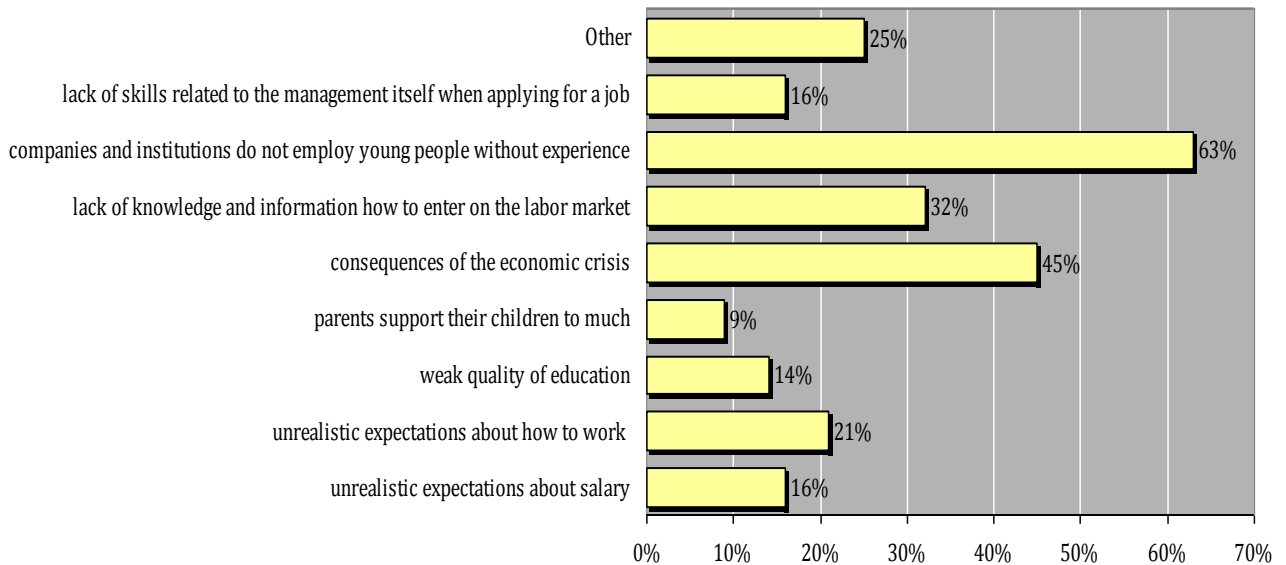


Figure 8: Who should solve the problem? (Multiple Choice Question -MCQ)

The vast majority of respondents (87%) agree with the necessity of internship programs being an effective instrument in the preparation process for work after graduation and (58%) agree with a statement that career counseling programs can reduce unemployment among young people.

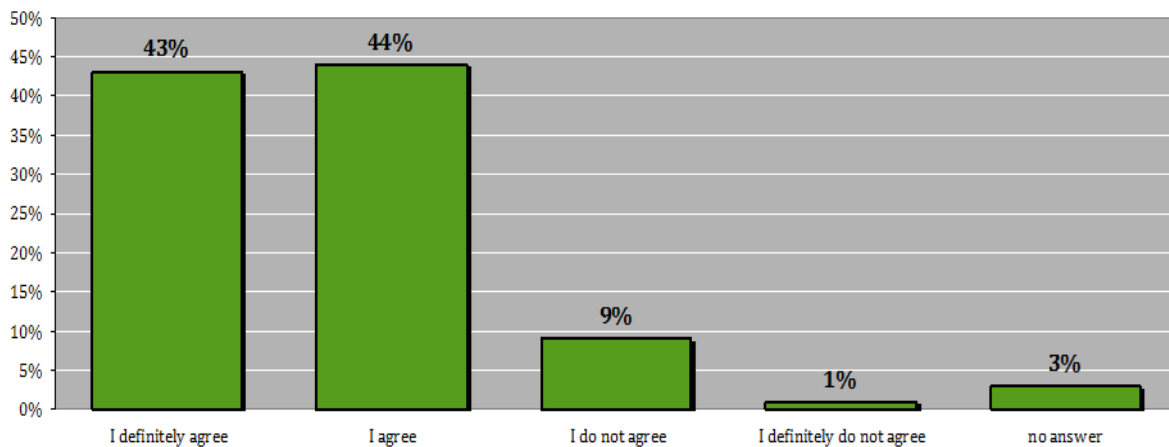


Figure 9: Necessity of internships

53% do not and 44% agree that young people would rather remain unemployed than get a low-wage job. *The Czech legislation would need a change in terms of establishing a reasonable minimum wage in order to motivate young people to get a job as career starters.*

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The main reason of youth unemployment is the lack of experience of youngsters. Another reason is that employers are skeptical about young people's ability to apply the skills they learnt in schools and they also question the social skills and work ethic of youth. Employers seem to be reluctant to train young people when more experienced workers are also available (this idea is also confirmed in the interviews).

### 3. Interviews

Interviews reveal that employers prefer people who have at least six-month practice and easily offer a position that doesn't require any qualification or training. The lack of experience can create an ill-minded circle what we can call as a hysteresis. Hysteresis is the idea that unemployment trends in the past are likely to cause future unemployment by circulating the same issue over and over again. If young people were unemployed in the past, it would be more and more difficult for them to get a job after graduation, not to mention that the lack of jobs may demotivate young job-seekers. The economic crisis affected young people the most because youth unemployment tends to be super-cyclical and therefore the position of the young generation is always the most uncertain.

Structural changes and labor market mismatches mentioned by public and civil group experts determine the rate of youth unemployment. Mismatches are defined as exogenous shifts that occur on the demand side of the labor market to which labor supply is slow to adjust and in this case the Czech labor market is supersaturated by economists and managers and cannot accept more graduates in this field of occupation. Employed and unemployed young interviewees claim that they gained certain knowledge at school but the labor market needs a different set of skills. Young people need to gain more occupational knowledge to catch-up with the changing demands of companies. They would also go to training programs for several months in order to gain work experience along with the required competencies, however the Czech business sector cannot offer such opportunities for masses of youth.

The labor market is filled with job-seekers, consequently the competition is extremely high (hundreds of CV's for one position). Another problem is that young people have no information and no skills about how to get into the labor market. Therefore, either personal skills or the so-called supply factor of labor force should be enhanced to know how to become excellent performers at job interviews.

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#### 4. Best practice

The Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (ČMKOS) has a large number of solutions to tackle youth unemployment by:

- strengthening active employment policy (in terms of financial resources and the conditions for implementing programs for job applicants);
- implementing public services;
- tightening controls and fighting against illegal employment;
- supporting lifelong learning and the development of science and technology to ensure that the Czech Republic economically and socially will not lag behind other EU countries;
- continuing its efforts to establish adult education funds to maximize the access of the unemployed to trainings;
- providing wider involvement of social partners in the decision-making processes and increasing the participation of associations and NGOs in programs supporting employment.

#### 5. Conclusion

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 the 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 counselling and internship program is evident because it enables young persons to gain occupational knowledge, skills and experience.

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### III. Croatia

Country	Croatia
Organization	Local Democracy Agency Sisak
Research team, authors	Coordinator: Dragica Treursić Uljanić and Paula Raužan Volunteer researchers: Marija Cvetković, Sanja Novaković, Sonja Seferović Volunteer film montage: Goran Čurčija
Location of the survey	Sisak, Zagreb, Petrinja, Kutina, Pula
Number of filled questionnaires	370
Interviewed target groups	5 employed young people, 5 unemployed young people, 6 experts, 5 representatives of non-governmental organisations, 4 employers
Specific issues and key words	Professional training for work, structural unemployment; cooperation between local business sector and education institutions
Recommended websites	<a href="http://www.apceramics.com/">http://www.apceramics.com/</a> <a href="http://www.hzz.hr/">http://www.hzz.hr/</a>

#### 1. Literature review

Croatia stands in the third place in terms of the ratio of youth unemployment after Spain and Greece. The number of unemployed persons in Croatia, according to the Croatian Employment Service, has exceeded 350,000. Young people between 15 and 30 make up one fifth of the total population of the Republic of Croatia and only the one-third of them is employed. Croatia, just like the Czech Republic, suffers from structural unemployment. The consequences of mismatches between the supply and the demand sides created a delicate situation where the skills of the unemployed and the requirements of employers do not meet. Another specific problem is the long-term unemployment that causes various psychological barriers, such as unwillingness to further education and hesitation when looking for a job. It is necessary to harmonize the number of places available for certain occupations with future needs in a particular territory, and inform the public about planned developments in the labor market, so in order to decrease unemployment students should be encouraged to finish their education.

The Croatian Employment Service states that approximately every third unemployed person is under the age of 29 and from the total unemployed population 30.7% is young people. The Employment Service finances competence training programs for those unemployed young

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people who have no master exam in occupations (such as architecture, auditory and law) requiring competencies as a precondition for work. The 'Youth Guarantee' is based on the idea that young people after leaving the education system should participate in an apprenticeship or internship program. The Croatian Employment Service has commenced the implementation of this program, along with others like the Youth and Creative initiative this year in order to give a support for young unemployed.

## 2. Questionnaire

The survey has been conducted in three cities Sisak, Kutina and Petrinja with 370 respondents. Most of them are between 20 and 24 and 50% is from Sisak, 20% from Petrinja and 30% from Kutina. 29% are unemployed, and only 22% are employed, but 1/3 of them are still studying. 60% have working experience basically student jobs. Also it is shown that women have more working experience than men. When we look at the highest level of education we can see that there are more women who finished secondary and higher education. Most of the unemployed youth have finished vocational education and they have been unemployed for 2-3 years without any work experience. This data seems to be concerning because craftsmen should have a job immediately after graduation to use their skills and not to lose their knowledge. Unemployed young people think that they do not have a job because there are not enough jobs or because they do not have any working experience. We can conclude that there is need for trainings to educate young craftsmen how to find a job.

Most parents have completed high school (Mother 55%, Father 52%) or any other education at the secondary level. 49% are students, 22% are employed and 29% are unemployed. The majority (60%) of the respondents have work experience, 43% have got a temporary job as a student, but the rate of those with a fixed-term contract is also high (31%). Women have higher rate of work experience (61%) than men (39%). 59% of the employed followed the traditional way to get a job by sending CVs and taking job interviews and only 30% relied on social capital.

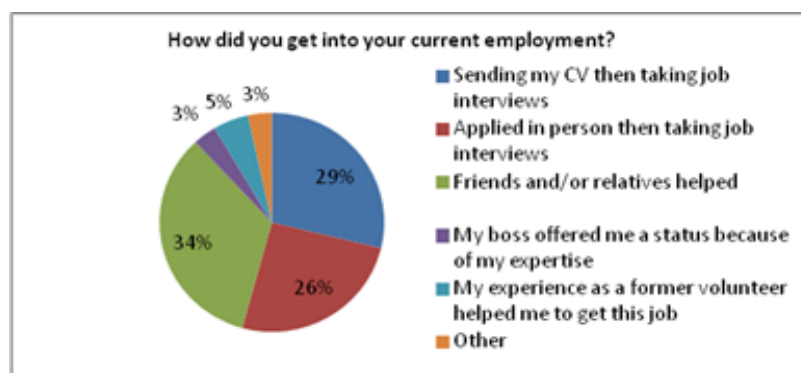


Figure 10: Current employment

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Basically unemployed people say (28%) that lack of job opportunities is the main reason of youth unemployment. 15% say that this crisis is responsible for their situation. It means that unemployed feel that they know how to find a job but they simply do not have enough opportunities to prove themselves but most of the respondents would welcome more internship programs. We can say that in this case a training program about how to get a job will not be necessary but a support from the public sphere definitely is. This statement matches the opinion of the respondents because 72% claims that the public or the political sphere should find a solution.

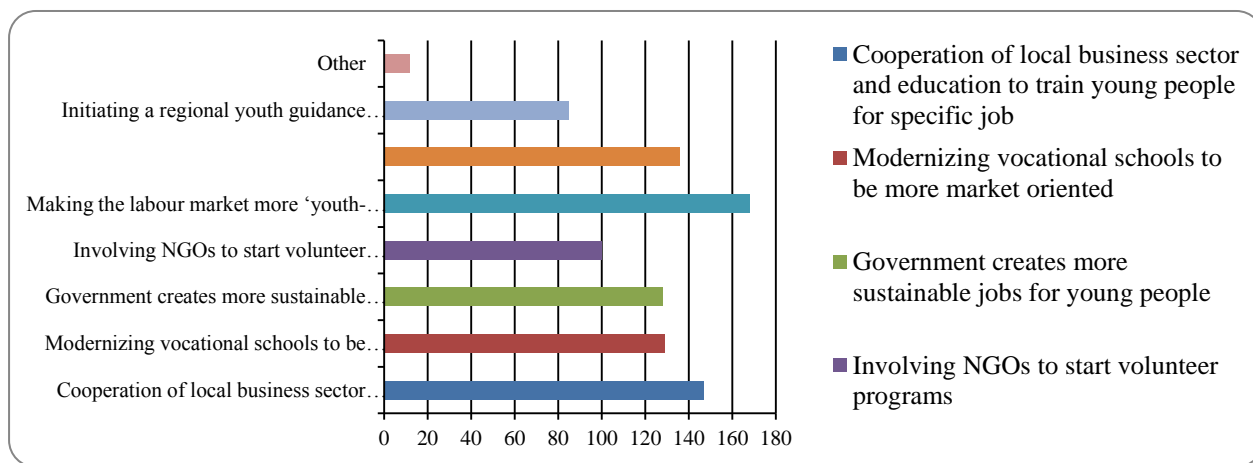


Figure 11: Who should solve the problem? (Multiple Choice Question -MCQ)

They also claim that the labor market should be more youth-friendly and the cooperation of local business sector and education institutions would be also beneficial. Students would not take a well-paid blue-collar job instead of a low-paid white collar but employed do that implicates employed people are perhaps in that situation. The results show people would take a low-paid job instead of being unemployed. There is no difference between men and women and we can also conclude that young people would not be satisfied being unemployed. Most of the respondents think that schools do not provide pragmatic knowledge so education institutions should run more market-oriented trainings and educational programs in order to give a perspective to young people.

### 3. Interviews

To understand properly the problems of the Croatian labor market we should note that it was affected by the war and its aftermath in the 1990's. Certain political events created a poor implementation of privatizations and the decay of numerous enterprises. Mostly, all subjects say that education does not match the requirements of the labor market and the effects of the crisis clearly demonstrated that something is wrong with the current mechanism. Both the structure of

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education and labor market should be changed. One of the required changes can be a shift towards quality vocational education, which will be able to motivate young people to study and prepare them well for the labor market.

Young people are quite educated in Croatia, but given the situation in employment often compete for lower skilled jobs, which in turn takes away jobs for the less educated. Most employers are looking for an experienced working force, but young people simply do not have this, so a professional training and internship would directly solve this problem. However, young people are considered to be cheap labor force and after being trained employers are required to pay more to them so a trained, experienced young employee does not entirely serve the interest of employers. Another basic problem is that young people do not get a job because most of the places have already been filled by an elder generation and employers rarely want to rejuvenate their working staff. Young people can volunteer in NGOs but only a few young people are aware of this opportunity in Croatia. Experts claim that NGOs can really make some changes by promoting their aims among young people and they can fill the gap between employers and employees by organizing trainings and volunteer works.

#### **4. Best practice**

The Applied Ceramics Company in Sisak was started 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.

#### **5. Conclusion**

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.

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## IV. Slovakia

Country	Slovakia
Organization	Carpathian Foundation
Research team, authors	Coordinator: Katarína Šomšáková, Mária Biľová Volunteer researchers: Milena Pšáková, Miroslava Petrovská, Igor Kupec, Tomáš Török Volunteer film montage: Veronika Velesová
Location of the survey	Košice and Prešov region
Number of filled questionnaires	320
Interviewed target groups	3 employed young people, 3 unemployed young people, 5 experts, 4 representatives of non-governmental organisations, 4 business representatives
Specific issues and key words	Volunteer service and career guidance service; gaining work experience; motivating young people
Recommended websites	<a href="http://www.upsvar.sk/">http://www.upsvar.sk/</a> <a href="http://www.t-systems.sk/career/it-academy/651962">http://www.t-systems.sk/career/it-academy/651962</a> <a href="http://www.usske.sk/career/career-e.htm">http://www.usske.sk/career/career-e.htm</a>

### 1. Literature review

The rate of unemployment is rising all across Europe as in Slovakia. The most endangered group of the society is young people (up to 29 years). The government of the Slovak Republic recognized this issue and therefore they are trying to find a solution. 14.5% of the Slovak population is unemployed. The unemployment of young people is more than 34%, so almost every third young person doesn't have a job (appr.79, 000).

The Slovak academic publications seem to be too theoretical and cannot provide a practical solution to the problem so this section will rather focus on implementation of governmental ideas. The main short-term goal of the government is reducing high unemployment ratio with focusing on youth unemployment, graduates from universities by:

- supporting and training young people to be able to enter the labor market smoothly
- creating links between young people and the business sector

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- providing solutions to long-term unemployment by reorganizing the structure of the labor market
- monitoring the demands of the labor market to provide young career starters updated information
- supporting lifelong learning to increase human and social capital
- reducing administrative processes for the business sphere including simplification of the tax system
- supporting regional small and medium businesses
- creating green jobs in terms of water and waste management, green energy, science, development, technology and environment-friendly products

One of the alternative solutions is volunteering. Gaining experiences by volunteering is popular among young people, who can obtain a lot of useful skills and competences in order to find a job.

## 2. Questionnaire

The survey has been conducted in the region of Eastern Slovakia, Košice and Prešov counties. Respondents are from 16 to 26 years old young people who are mainly from bigger cities (77%), with more than 20,000 inhabitants. The population of both Košice and Prešov are more than 20,000. Half of the unemployed subjects have a secondary school education (56%) and second biggest group have a master diploma (31%).

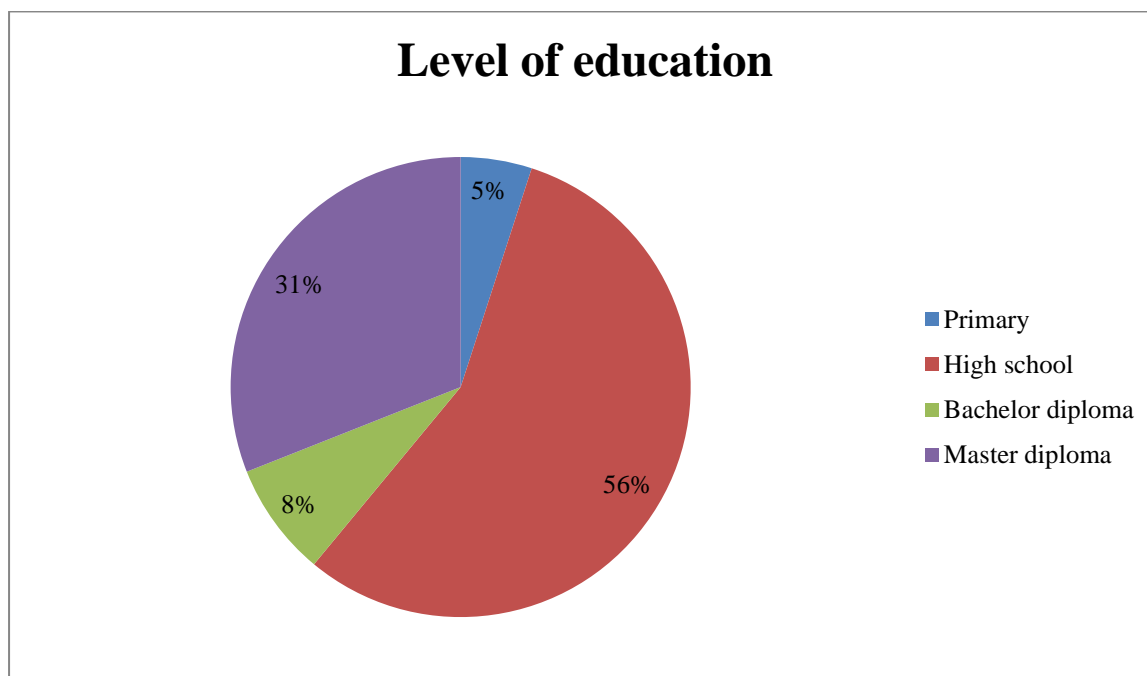


Figure 12: Education

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Most young people would rather take low paid jobs or leaving the country and work abroad than remaining unemployed. 69% of unemployed young people and 81% of students haven't got any work experience.

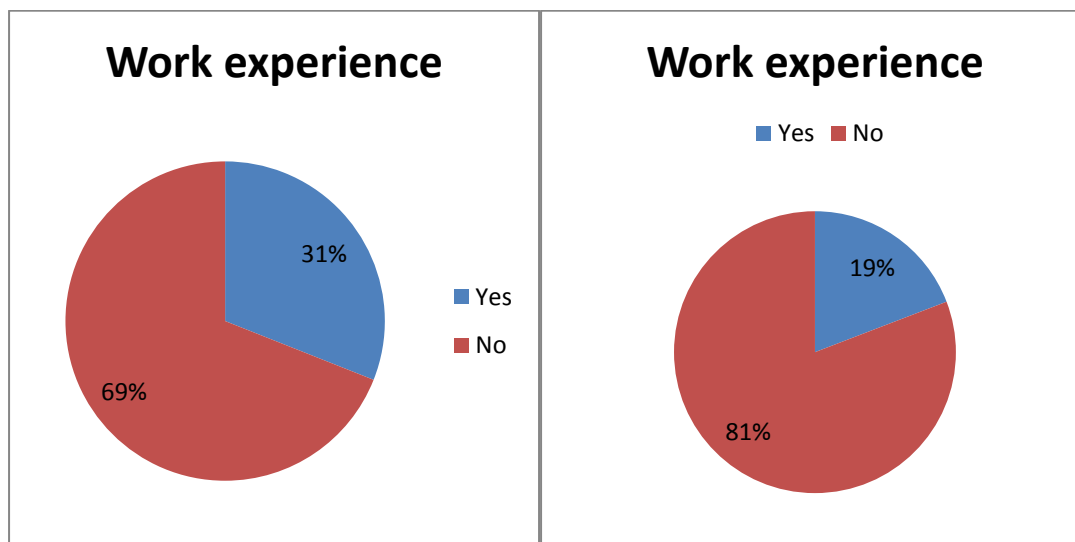


Figure 13: Work experience: Unemployed young people (left); Students (right)

This tendency is getting more and more troubling because employers want their employees to be effective and they hire experienced people rather than career starters. Young employed people consider the cooperation between the local business sphere and schools as a best practice on how to tackle youth unemployment.

Young unemployed people prefer strengthening the role of government to create workplaces and students would update the education system to be able to train the required skills to youngsters. As a possible solution, young employed and unemployed people say that the civil sector should be the one who comes up with something to reduce youth unemployment. Students think that the public and the political sector should tackle youth unemployment. Young employed and students think the biggest reason for early school-leaving is the lack of motivation, whereas young unemployed claim that rather social problems are behind the scenes. Young employed and students say that a career guidance program can help young people to find a job but young unemployed do not believe in such programs. They would rather get a job with lower salaries than staying in an unemployed status.

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### 3. Interviews

Young employed, unemployed and people from NGOs agree that career guidance and mentoring programs are not as effective as they should be so without active help young people don't know what they want to do or how to find a job. Young employed, unemployed and business men find the lack of basic skills such as foreign language skills, entrepreneurial skills, and communication skills affect the ability to propagate themselves.

Non-profit organizations can host students as interns. These internships offer an excellent opportunity to young people to improve their skills and gain experience. To unemployed young people and students such workplaces provide the first experience and a chance to make their curriculum vitae more elaborated. This opportunity provided by non-profit organizations serves as a holistic approach towards motivating youth with these programs and enables them to stay positive. This approach enhances the self-esteem of young job seekers as well as their motivation, practical skills, communication and other skills. Internships of non-profit organizations can also serve as examples for business companies, and, by means of a variety of programs, they may also start internships in connection with schools. However, to accomplish this scenario, the collaboration of all three sectors is needed. Experts, business men and young employed agree that a better connection between theoretical education and demands of the labor market should match. They note that the education system has got a weak link to the labor market and young people should gain more occupational/vocational skills as well as become volunteers or get into an internship program.

Promoting the significance of entrepreneurship is also welcome among the interviewees; however, starting a business in Slovakia costs too much money for young people because of the high taxes and duties. Many people have promising ideas. Nevertheless, after two years of using the state funding allowance, they are forced to end their business operations, get registered at the labor office and manage to finance the company on their own. The problem is that most of the granted fund and earned money possibly have been already spent on duties and customs. Without a profit most of these young firms will be just shut down. Although, there are several start-up or incubator programs in Slovakia, the public sector needs an easement on taxation for more than at least 5-10 years in order to guarantee the financial stability of newly found domestic companies.

### 4. Best practice

The Bardejov Community Foundation aims at providing internships for young people in order to gain work experience. The foundation is located in Eastern Slovakia where unemployment rate is the highest in the country. Young graduates have the opportunity to spend six months as interns in the foundation to gain several occupational skills such as writing applications, communicating with business partners or fundraising sources.

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Under the supervision of a professional and experienced leader, interns are trained how to run an organization, how to prepare for a job interview and how to become a successful businessman. After their training, young people will get acquainted with all basic mechanisms of the Slovak labor market. This program started in 2005 and since then 12 graduates have participated. Out of 12, 6 people have already started their own business as executive managers.

The foundation can also offer support to career starters who have already started a business and need some guidance. Their business plan and aims will be scrutinized in order to reduce risks and become more focused on long-term strategy goals.

## 5. Conclusion

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 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.

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## V. Germany

Country	Germany
Organization	Haus der offenen Tür, Sinzig
Research team	Project leader: Petra Klein Coordinator: Ramon Martinez Volunteer researchers: Andreas Klein, Svenja Schmitz, Anna Klein Volunteer support: Kim Michelt
Location of the survey	Rhineland-Palatine, Sinzig and surroundings
Number of filled questionnaires	366
Interviewed target groups	3 employed young people, 4 unemployed young people, 3 experts, 2 representatives of non-governmental organisations, 2 business representatives
Specific issues and key words	Dual system, transition system, Kompetenzagentur
Recommended websites	<a href="http://www.bmbf.de/de/17127.php">www.bmbf.de/de/17127.php</a> <a href="http://www.kompetenzagenturen.de/">www.kompetenzagenturen.de/</a>

### 1. Literature review

The rate of youth unemployment in Germany is relatively low, which means it was at 7.6% (Eurostat) in March, 2013. This great result thanks to the German ‘dual system’ has not been changed recently. However, there is a discrepancy in the literature about the rates of unemployment: the ILO estimates this number at 8.1% and the Federal Employment Agency at 6%. The ILO result is higher than the others, because this survey considers young people involved in training systems as being unemployed. They are not registered at agencies because they do not consider themselves unemployed just being in a vocational, or transitional system. There is also a group of young people labeled as NEETS (‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’) who are not engaged in any form of employment, education or training.

Young people are the most vulnerable social group in Germany as well and they are also threatened by the changing tendencies of the labor market. Those young people who leave the education system with an approved vocational education can easily find a job, but every year more than 150, 000 youth who failed to attain a professional qualification face an exclusion from regular employment. It means that the VET system operates as a gatekeeper in distributing labor market opportunities and, though this vocational training system is very well structured, the

29

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transitions for career starters into labor market is still challenging. However, the corporate German apprenticeship system serves as an exemplary model:

- tight link between the labor market and educational institutions;
- skilling up the labor force at high qualitative and quantitative standards;
- combination of school-based (theoretical and general education) and firm based training (practical part of the training);
- schools and firms are equal partners by law;
- apprentices will not only be qualified but socialized into working life.

In December 2012, six EU countries signed together with Germany a memorandum, in which the German dual system of vocational education became a role model. In 2013 (14 May) an application was introduced in the German Bundestag by the ruling coalition to export the dual training system. For those, who have not been able to attain a VET qualification or even enter into regular vocational training, a so-called ‘transition system’ has been implemented to manage the transition from schools to training. This system does not provide approved VET qualification, but offers various education, training and labor market schemes. These schemes provide young people with certain skills, practice and competencies in order to prepare them for the requirements of the vocational training. The side effect of the ‘transition system’ is that young people can be stuck in the transition period and cannot make their mind about how to continue their professional life. However, there are new paths for enhancing the apprenticeship system:

- establishing stronger links between schemes of the transition system and the regular training system;
- scheme qualifications should be approved as part of the regular training;
- more effective, labor marker oriented schemes;
- rather focusing on apprenticeship than providing schemes.

## 2. Questionnaire

The survey has been conducted in the cities and surroundings of Mainz, Koblenz and Sinzig. Mainz is the capital of Rhineland-Palatine. The population is 201,000. Koblenz, a city located in the banks of Rhine is the third largest city of the region with 106,000 inhabitants. Sinzig is a rural town with approximately 20,000 citizens. These three areas have been chosen because of their diversity aiming at getting a varied group of young people in the survey. The survey is based on 366 questionnaires. Most of the young people who answered the questionnaire finished the educational level which can be achieved after 13 years of school. It is called *Abitur* (45 %). With that degree students are qualified to continue their studies at the university level. 14 % finished their education after 10 years (*Mittlere Reife*), and 12 % after 9 years

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(*Hauptschulabschluss*). 12% have already finished university studies. 10% of them reached a Bachelor degree and 2% a Master degree. 7% finished a dual education system (*Berufsausbildung*).

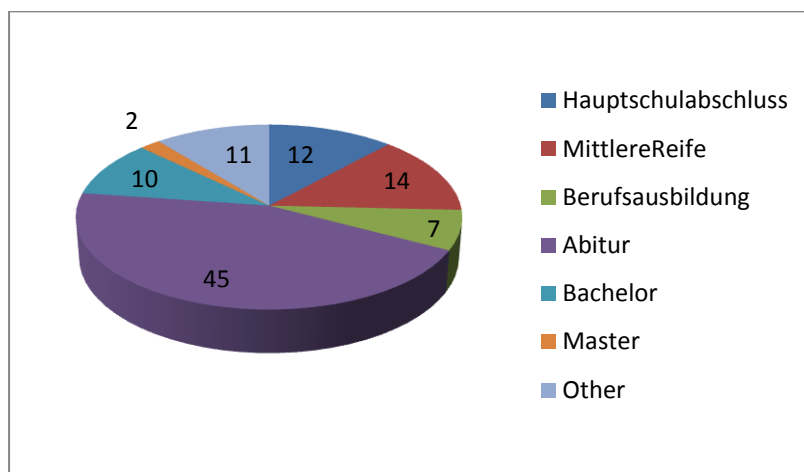


Figure 14: Education

Most of the parents (the 36% of the mothers and the 30% of the fathers) granted a *Berufsausbildung* which means that they were in a dual education system for getting a job.

89% of the respondents have been employed although most of them are students. This implicates that students should work during their studies in order to gain experience. Being a student 61% work during the summer to earn some money.

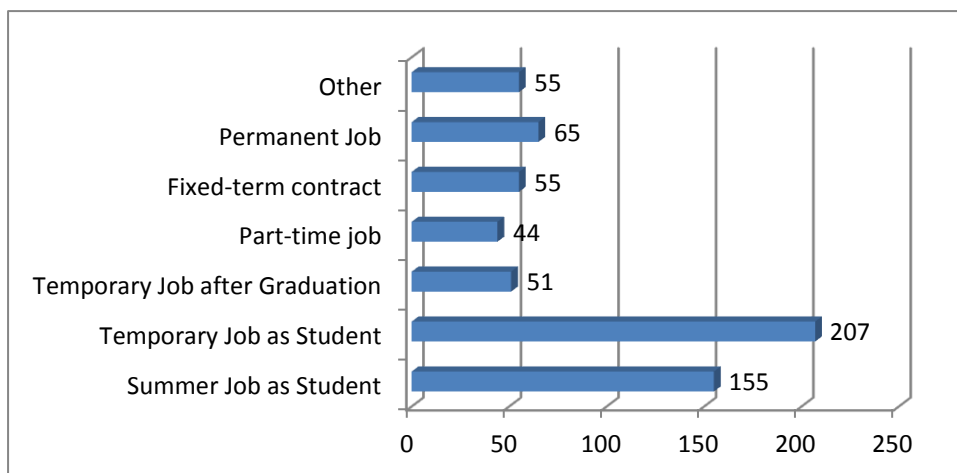


Figure 15: Employment status, experience

Only 7 % are unemployed because it was not easy when conducting the research to find unemployed young people. This fact demonstrates that Germany is in a totally different status comparing to the countries of this survey. Germany hasn't been strongly affected by the

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economic crises and youth unemployment never has been a dominant problem in the society. 42% have been applied for a job in a traditional way by sending a CV and taking a job interview.

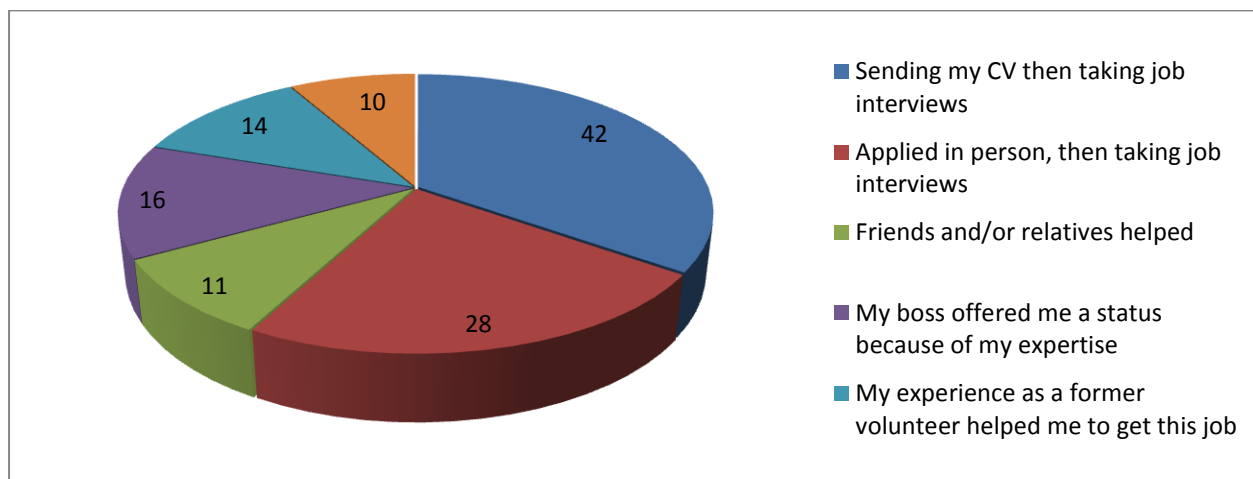


Figure 16: How did you get into your current employment?

The majority of the unemployed young people do not have a job since 2012 but we should note that they are quite young, so it is normal that they haven't been able to find a job yet. Among unemployed the opinion on the reasons of youth unemployment is varied: 29% say there are not enough jobs; another 29% claim that because of the lack of experience and 27% think that the competition is too high. Only 8% think that the financial crises affected the labor market. Students would do vocational training/continue studies or take a blue-collar job with the same wages but 33% strongly disagreed to take a low-income white-collar job rather than a well-paid blue-collar one, though, 28% would take the job.

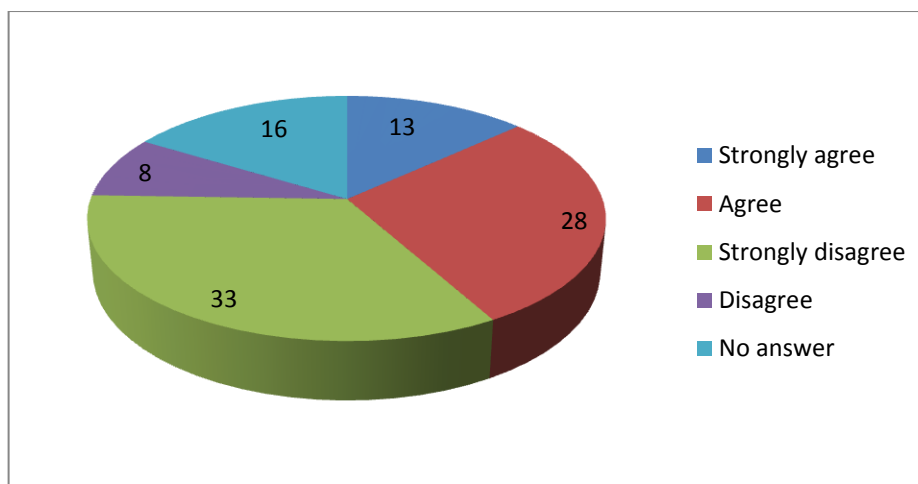


Figure 17: Many graduates prefer to take low-income white-collar jobs rather than high-income blue-collar work.

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About the main reasons for youth unemployment we can find: 1. unrealistic duty expectations (48%); 2. Lack of skills related to self-management when applying for a job (47%); 3. Companies and institutions do not employ young people with no experience (41%). The cooperation of the local business sector and education to train young people is the 'best practice' to solve the problems about youth unemployment.

Cooperation of the local business sector and education to train young people for specific job	235	64%
Modernizing vocational schools to be more market oriented	119	33%
Government creates more sustainable jobs for young people	129	35%
Involving NGOs to start volunteer programs	42	12%
Making the labour market more 'youth-friendly'	134	37%
More internship programs in local and national authorities	136	37%
Initiating a regional youth guidance program	146	40%
Other	32	9%

Figure 18: Main reasons (Multiple Choice Question -MCQ)

It's also interesting that just 12% of the people think that NGOs could solve the problems and rather they choose the political sphere (65%) and the private sector (62%) to fight against youth unemployment.

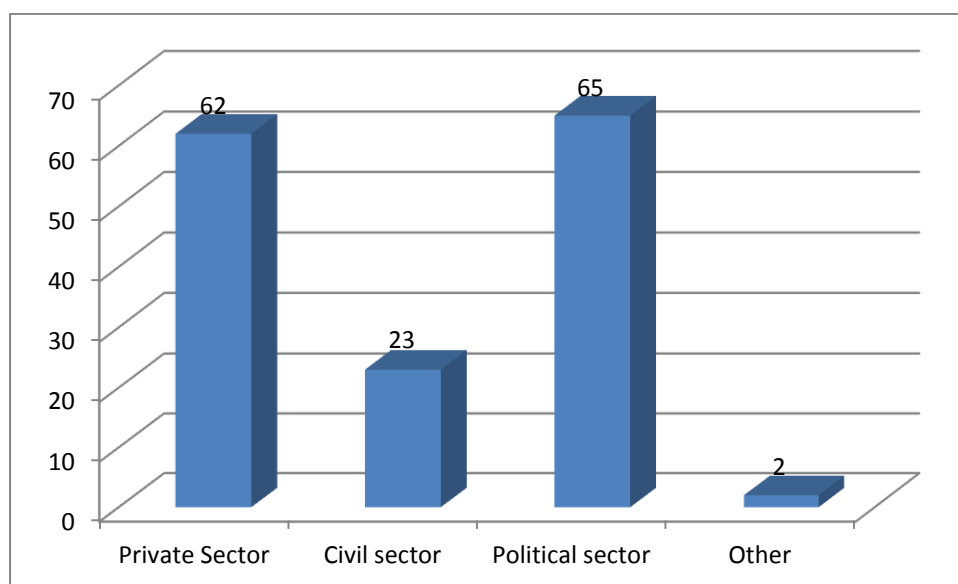


Figure 19: Who should solve the problem?

The reasons of early school leaving are the lack of motivation (80%), social problems (47%), learning difficulties (29%) and lack of skills (22%). An overwhelming 85% agrees that a dual education can be the best instrument to fight against youth unemployment. More than the 60% would remain unemployed rather than taking a low-paid job.

### 3. Interviews

Young people say that one of the main reasons for youth unemployment is demotivation, which starts at school. The pressure is too intense because passing the A-level (exam to access in the university) seems to be obligatory even if most of the young people will not require it for their next level of education. Many young people fail to fulfill the requirements of the rigid school system and have to repeat courses so they just lag behind and in case of being dropped out they have very limited opportunities to find a job. This perspective is also shared by NGO members, who say that these young people are mostly found in the so-called ‘*transition system*’ jumping from one short course to another. Not being in a stable status can be extremely frustrating and they just give up trying after a while. A company manager claims that young people are needed for German industry but companies want to train them to be able to contribute at the maximum level.

There are socially challenged groups of youngsters in Germany who cannot manage societal conflicts well. They are often called as ‘*youth with fewer opportunities*’ who can easily get marginalized because of their inappropriate behavior (e.g. they cannot follow instructions as apprentices).

Competences are also needed to get a job. Apprentices are required to be team players, committed to their job, motivated, open-minded and flexible. A manager of a big regional company explains that they even organize preparation courses connected with the dual learning program. They send their young workers abroad, so they can gain a lot of new experience. Young employed and students also agree with the importance of gaining work experience during the education period. Internship programs or scholarships can guarantee the framework for such aspirations.

### 4. Best practice

The *Kompetenzagentur* (KA-Competences Agency) 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, a network and personal support for young people. The agency also tries to eliminate prejudice between politics and young people, employees and youngsters, by organizing projects, meetings, coaching and trainings with different groups together.

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The competences agency is considered to be a good practice because of a series of specific elements that differentiate it from other methods. Youth who take part in the KA process are there because they want to be there. This voluntary approach and spirit differs from other offices such as the Job Agency, where youth are required to 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.

The slogan *‘Nothing about us without us’* seems to fit in this context. The *Kompetenzagentur* is a best practice in Germany to empower young people, to lead them through the complex labor system, give them self-confidence and a voice to take part of important decisions concerning themselves and their environment.

## 5. Conclusion

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.

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## VI. Hungary

Country	Hungary
Organization	Carpathian Foundation-Hungary
Research team	Coordinator: Anikó Kiss Volunteer researchers: Flavián Füleki Gabriella Szabó, Gergő Tóth
Location of the survey	North-Hungary region (including Nógrád, Heves, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county)
Number of filled questionnaires	300
Interviewed target groups	6 employed young people 5 unemployed young people 5 member of non-profit sector 5 persons of profit-oriented and public sector 3 employment policy experts
Specific issues and key words	interdisciplinary national career advice system; responsibility, motivation, entrepreneurship; agricultural sector; vocational training; guidance program; foreign language skills; mobility programs
Recommended websites	<a href="http://tik.ektf.hu/tanacsadas/">http://tik.ektf.hu/tanacsadas/</a> <a href="http://www.borsodnadasd.hu/">http://www.borsodnadasd.hu/</a> <a href="http://www.etfe.hu/">http://www.etfe.hu/</a> <a href="http://www.kamaszparlament.hu/">http://www.kamaszparlament.hu/</a> <a href="http://www.karpatikum.hu/">http://www.karpatikum.hu/</a> <a href="http://www.karpatokalapitvany.hu/">http://www.karpatokalapitvany.hu/</a> <a href="http://www.mentalcsoport.hu/">http://www.mentalcsoport.hu/</a> <a href="http://www.nak.hu/en/">http://www.nak.hu/en/</a> <a href="http://www.peterkeszaki.hu/">http://www.peterkeszaki.hu/</a>

### 1. Literature review

The number of registered unemployed in Hungary in 2012 was 468,000, and the unemployment rate was 10.6%. This is worse than it was in the previous year by 8,000 persons (1.7%) . The number of young people (between 15 and 25 ) was 93,000, which means that the 20 % of the total unemployed was youth. The rate of unemployment in the region of North Hungary is one of the highest in the country. Young people at age 15-24 were the most endangered category in the beginning of the 1990's when the rate of unemployment was 25.9% and it seems that this number has been recently increased to 35.6%.

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The Hungarian government aims at finding the solution with the Europe 2020 economic reform program to create jobs. Besides this aspiration, state projects are willing to develop a dual education model to combine theoretical and practical knowledge in the education. Within the framework of this qualification young people would get education at schools and experience at work places. Enhancing the effectiveness of career starting, experts claim for the need of an interdisciplinary national career advice system to inform and train young people how to find a job suitable for their skills. Another crucial point is to provide better conditions for SMEs in order to promoting entrepreneurship.

## 2. Questionnaire

The data was collected in the region of North Hungary including all three important municipalities of Miskolc, Eger, and Mezökövesd. The on-line questionnaire was filled by 300 persons from settlements with a population of more than 20,000. Most of them (21.3%) were 25 years old. More females (169) than males (131) took part in the research. The majority of females (19.5%) were 22 years old and basically males were at age 25 (24.4%). Educational factors of the respondents:

- 50.7% secondary school graduate
- 30.7% BA graduate
- 4 % vocational certificate
- 7% MA graduate

The respondents' parents' education level was mostly secondary (mother: 41%; father: 28%) or higher (mother BA/MA: 30%; father: 21%).

To the multiple choice question 'Which sector should come up with a solution on how to decrease youth unemployment?' most of the respondents (74.7%) have chosen the political sphere followed by the private sphere (51.3%) and the civil sphere (15.7%).

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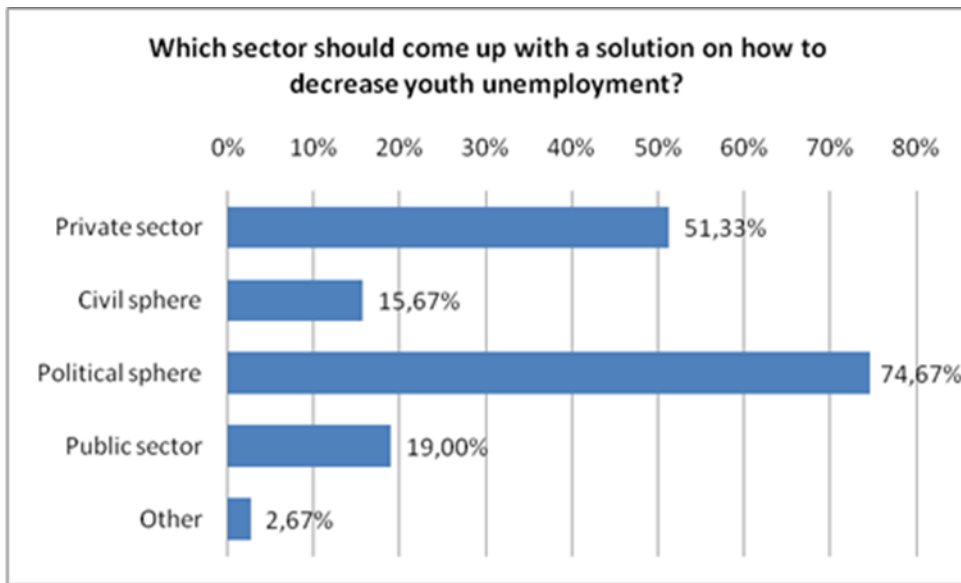


Figure 20: Who should solve the problem? (Multiple Choice Question -MCQ)

This result not only means that a small percent of the respondents think that the civil society is able to make a move but also that the Hungarian young people have a long-standing paternalistic attitude towards the political system. They want the government to solve their problems and make their life more comfortable. This tendency can be extremely deceiving considering the fact that they do not want to take responsibility for their conditions and failures. Most of the unemployed respondents think that their status has nothing to do with the lack of personal skills but the absence of workplaces (64%), the effects of the economic crisis (36%) and the high competition (11%).

An overall opinion about the reasons for young unemployment in Hungary is that companies do not employ young people with no experience (66.7% of all respondents) and the negative employment effects of the economic crisis (56.3%). Another reason can be the poor quality of vocational education (10.67%) and the influence of the parents who aimed at providing their children orientation and prolonged parental care, which causes a negative effect on becoming a self-sufficient young person.

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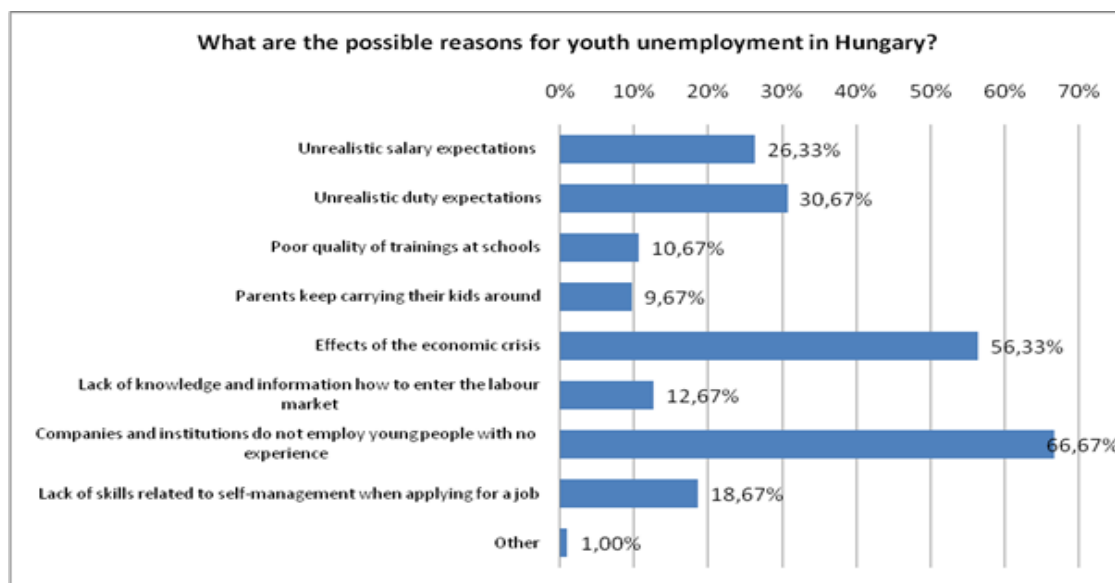


Figure 21: Main reasons (Multiple Choice Question -MCQ)

Most of the respondents (86%) agreed on the necessity of career guidance, and an apprentice or internship program (62%), because they do not have any experience (31%) or they do not have the required skills (14%) to find a job and be a potential applicant for a job. The main reason of unemployment is the lack of workplaces in Hungary; however, we should also note that the 89% of the subjects have already been employed though mainly in student programs.

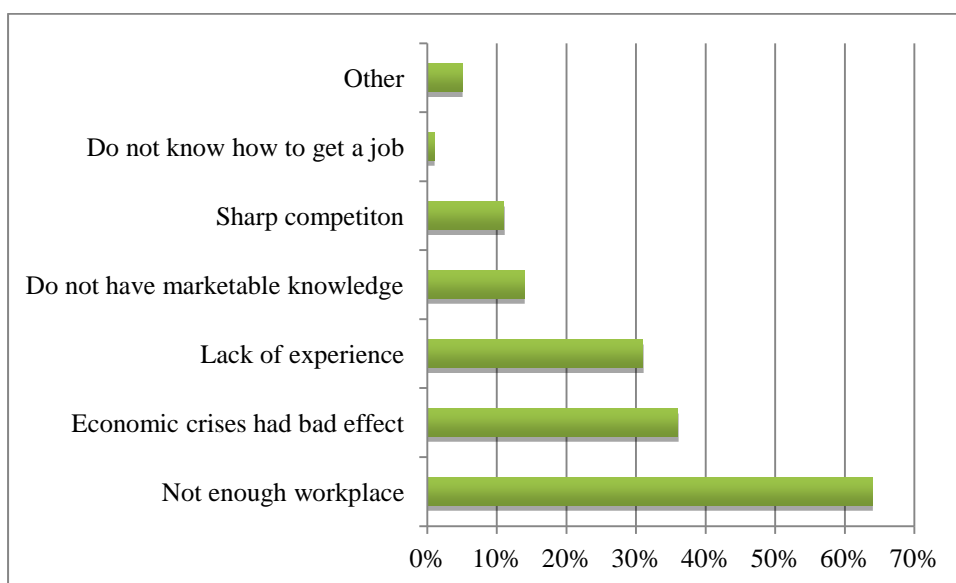


Figure 22: Many graduates prefer to take low-income white-collar jobs rather than high-income blue-collar work. (Multiple Choice Question - MCQ)

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The 89% of employed young people marked that they had worked as students before so they had gained some working experience. The motivation of youth whether to get a job not perfectly suitable for their qualification is detectable considering that highly qualified young people would rather accept a well-paid blue-collar job (53%) than a lower paid white-collar job and 57% would accept a lower-wage job rather than remaining unemployed.

### 3. Interviews

The interview section focuses on certain difficulties of the Hungarian young unemployment such as the lack of motivation of young people, lack of taking responsibility, lack of vocational education and the lack of internships. NGO members claim that young people should take more responsibility for making decisions and being part of the grass-root level of implementation. They should adapt a positive attitude when seeking a job and be persistent. This attitude helps them to get a job, at least a part time or a seasonal one. Employers want them to have an experience of 6 months bottom line.

Unfortunately, young people cannot give up their high expectations to get a well-paid job as career starters, and are not eager to get a temporary job. They easily get frustrated and instead of keep going on they leave the country and get a job abroad. Young people can get a motivation from their parents and community to change the attitude, however, by involving professionals (e.g. community or social workers); they would acquire the required skills more effectively. *According to the claims of NGO members, the coaching of young people seems to be a crucial point in job seeking because youth do not have even the basic skills to find a job.*

Experts point out that in Hungary one of the most significant problems is the lack of entrepreneurship among young people. Both experts and NGO staff members have the same argument about the lack of motivation and skills of young people but, evidently, being an entrepreneur and taking risks, responsibilities and managing finance is a totally different level than looking for a job. Young people are required to use their theoretical knowledge after graduation to start a business; however, they cannot put their thoughts into action because there is a huge gap between the education and the labor market. Skilled workers and entrepreneurs are welcome all over the world and in Hungary there is a need for them, especially, in the agricultural sector.

Young employed interviewees highlight that there are high requirements in the labor market and it is challenging for freshly graduates to fulfill them. They claim that neither vocational nor academic education can prepare young people to find a job and because of the few job opportunities the competition is really high. *Being part of a community or member of a social network can help them to get a job interview but without any experience it is still difficult to keep the job permanently.*

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According to the results of the interviews of unemployed young people, the same problems occur such as the lack of skills, poor vocational training, lack of experience and few job opportunities. They agree with the need for pursuing an apprenticeship to acquire work experience but they claim that even if they want to get a part-time job or an internship, employers do not offer such opportunities. *In social life, that would be a promising trend to help each other but they detect a fragmentation in the Hungarian society.* It is not easy to find a group or a professional who can give good career guidance, that's why a good training or guidance program would make a change and help unemployed people to find at least that their orientation matches their skills.

Entrepreneurs and business men claim that young people need to acquire more sophisticated communication skills to be effective in job interviews. They also need to enhance their *foreign language skills* to express themselves properly at a business meeting, their team working and problem solving skills. It is quite unlikely that all these skills can be acquired in formal education but they should use their spare time to get better. It is easier to help young people when there is a mutual beneficial relationship between the local government and the business sphere. Decision-makers can help young people by providing privileges for local companies when giving a job to a youngster.

#### 4. Best practice

The Department of Political Science (Eszterházy Károly College, Eger) in cooperation with the Agraria 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 of the EU and inspire them to get employed in one of the EU institutions.
2. A talent care program helps secondary school 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

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lecturers e.g. diplomats, ambassadors, economic experts, professors and decision-makers. Students get a chance to have discussions with experts in order to get additional 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 organizations. 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.

## 5. Conclusion

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 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 for finding 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.

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## Final conclusion

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 lack 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 a 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 a 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 to 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 strengthened all negative tendencies that had already existed. However, the crisis seems to offer the opportunity to

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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 a higher unemployment rate and frustrate applicants assuming the lack of employment protection does not give them stability. Both non-educated 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.

Government agencies have a long history of seeking to accommodate youth unemployment issues. We have been witnessing a series of initiatives on how to tackle youth unemployment; however, most of them seemed to be ineffective. The findings of this research propose a more comprehensive and focused perspective on tackling youth unemployment that puts young people in the center and intends to highlight the weaknesses of conventional policy making.

The final conclusion is absolutely positive because alternatives and real (effective and efficient) solutions do exist such as making internship programs more adequate, enhancing occupational and cross-sectoral skills in order to fulfill market demands, providing voluntary work for young people in order to gain work experience, improving entrepreneurship by supporting business start-ups, restructuring (vocational) education by bringing schools and companies closer to each other, preventing early school-leaving by ensuring sustainable career opportunities, inspiring young people to take more responsibility for their lives and departing from the old paths seeking new innovative ideas.

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# Appendix

## Recommendations by the research group

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Motivating and inspiring students** – general education should also provide students with career

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guidance and help them to find a career orientation by informing them about all possibilities available in the job market.

**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.

**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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# Active citizens combating youth unemployment

## Questionnaire

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Age:

Gender:

Location:

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Q1: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- a. Only primary education
- b. More than primary education
- c. Vocational certificate
- d. Secondary graduation
- e. Degree in higher education BA
- f. Degree in higher education MA
- g. Other:

Q2: What is the highest degree or level of school your father has completed?

- a. Only primary education
- b. More than primary education
- c. Vocational certificate
- d. Secondary graduation
- e. Degree in higher education BA
- f. Degree in higher education MA
- g. Other:

Q3: What is the highest degree or level of school your mother has completed?

- a. Only primary education
- b. More than primary education
- c. Vocational certificate
- d. Secondary graduation
- e. Degree in higher education BA
- f. Degree in higher education MA
- g. Other:

Q4: Have you ever been employed? (any kind of working experience counts )

- a. Yes
- b. No

Q5: If, yes. What sort of job did you have?

- a. Summer job as a student

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- b. Temporary job as a student
- c. Temporary job after graduation
- d. Part-time job
- e. Fixed-term contract
- f. Permanent job
- g. Other:

Q6: Current status? How long have you been...?

- a. Employed since...
- b. Unemployed since...
- c. Student since...

Q7: If employed. How did you get into your current employment?

- a. Sending my CV then taking job interviews
- b. Applied in person then taking job interviews
- c. Friends and/or relatives helped
- d. My boss offered me a status because of my expertise
- e. My experience as a former volunteer helped me to get this job
- f. Other:

Q8: If unemployed. What are the reasons of unemployment?

- a. There are not enough jobs
- b. I do not have experience
- c. There are jobs but the competition is high
- d. I am not a marketable graduate
- e. Effects of the economic crisis
- f. Lack of skills how to get a job
- g. Other:

Q9: If student. Your formal education can get you a white collar job, but you do not find one. What do you do?

- a. Take a blue-collar job with lower wages
- b. Take a blue-collar job with the same wages
- c. Not take a blue-collar job, remain unemployed
- d. Start my own business
- e. Vocational training, continue studies
- f. Volunteering
- g. Leave the country and seeking for a job abroad
- h. Other:

Q10: What are the possible reasons for youth unemployment in your country? (more than one options possible)

- a. Unrealistic salary expectations

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- b. Unrealistic duty expectations
- c. Poor quality of trainings at schools
- d. Parents keep carrying their kids around
- e. Effects of the economic crisis
- f. Lack of knowledge and information how to enter the labor market
- g. Companies and institutions do not employ young people with no experience
- h. Lack of skills related to self-management when applying for a job
- i. Other:

Q11: What would be the most relevant 'best practice' on combating youth unemployment? (more than one options possible)

- a. Cooperation of local business sector and education to train young people for specific jobs
- b. Modernizing vocational schools to be more market oriented
- c. Government creates more sustainable jobs for young people
- d. Involving NGOs to start volunteer programs
- e. Making the labor market more 'youth-friendly'
- f. More internship programs in local and national authorities
- g. Initiating a regional youth guidance program
- h. Other:

Q12: Which sector should come up with a solution on how to decrease youth unemployment?

- a. Private sector
- b. Civil sphere
- c. Political sphere
- d. Public sector

Q13: Some young people give up education and training prematurely. What is the main reason?

- a. Social problems
- b. Learning difficulties
- c. Lack of motivation
- d. Lack of skills

Q14: A career guidance program that involves parents and young people can reduce youth unemployment.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Strongly disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. No answer

Q15: An apprenticeship program can leave young people with excellent preparation for the world of work.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Strongly disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. No answer

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Q16: Many graduates prefer to take low-income white-collar jobs rather than high-income blue-collar work.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Strongly disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. No answer

Q17: Young people don't want to do work on a very low wage so they remain unemployed.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Strongly disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. No answer

Q18: The formal education system is also responsible for unemployment because it only provides theoretic knowledge without practical experience.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Strongly disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. No answer

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

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