

Visegrad Youth

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Visegrad Youth

Comparative review
of the situation of young people
in the V4 countries

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Executive summary

The **Visegrad Group** (also known as the Visegrad Four or simply V4), formed on 15th February 1991, is constituted by the Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (HU), Poland (PL) and Slovakia (SK). Young people constitute about 1/5 of the population in the V4 countries, but the ageing of the population will cause shrinking of the young cohorts in the future. Participation in schooling is very high, with most of the young people being in formal education until the age of 18 and with growing numbers of those in tertiary education. The risk of poverty of young people differs between the V4 countries (ranging from about 20% to almost 40%), but in all of them the economic crises cause widening of poverty or stagnation in improvement of young people's economic situation. Targeted assistance is directed at selected groups of youth. Among the ethnic communities, most activities are directed towards Roma young people.

Employment and entrepreneurship

Unemployment in the V4 countries is relatively high, with Slovakia having the highest unemployment rate. Issues indicated are, among others, skills mismatch, frequent occurrence of temporary contracts (PL), and little preparation for job search by the educational institutions. Difficulty to find jobs in the locality and low salaries remain young people's concern. The situation of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) in PL, HU and SK indicates the difficulties in transitioning from education to work. Young people from the V4 countries declare to be willing to move for a job. Many of them, mostly from Poland and Slovakia, migrated to Western European countries after EU accession. The good practices aim at supporting young people's entrepreneurship, recognition of non-formal skills on the labour market as well as at career guidance.

Voluntary activities and their international dimension

Young people from the V4 countries are relatively rarely involved in voluntary activities compared to other EU countries. The lack of recognition of volunteering, its low profile, the ex-

isting career model, economic situation of young people, little NGO resources and capabilities in involving volunteers are among the reasons of this low participation. On the other hand, the analysis shows that there is a strong basis developing for the new attitude towards volunteering. European Voluntary Services as one of the tools for abroad experience of volunteering is increasingly more used. The investments of the V4 countries in local volunteering projects, promotion of volunteering as well as building structures for volunteering are shown as best practices.

Participation and decision-making

Even if young people from the V4 countries believe that to make one's voice heard it is important to participate in debates with policy makers, the protests are being increasingly used by young people as a political tool. In each of the V4 countries in 2012, young people demonstrated against certain political decisions. Other actions, which are considered important to ensure that one's voice is heard by policymakers, are: signing a petition, being a member or supporting an NGO or joining a political party. On the top of this, new forms of participation are appearing which include activities involving interactions of young people and policy makers, private and artistic expressions, city movements and new media involvement. Two structural solutions which aim at ensuring young people impact on policy decisions are national youth councils, which exist in all the V4 countries, and the European structured dialogue. The latter involved both national youth councils as well as informal groups and online consultations. The good practices presented concentrate at involving young people in decision making on the local level (through capacity building and mentoring) as well as involving wider range of young people in policy debates through new tools, structures and methodologies.

Non-formal learning

Participation in the activities of diverse organisations is higher than membership. About 10-15% of young people are members of organisations, while about 30-45% of them take part in activities as such. International experiences are not so common compared to other EU countries, still about 13-18% of young people in the V4 countries stayed abroad for education or training. Some students studied abroad as Erasmus students or interns (in total about 27,000 people from the V4 countries in 2010/11), participated in Youth in Action projects or other activities fostering cooperation with youth from other countries (about 10%). Diverse forms of non-formal learning are indicated by young graduates as useful in their future job search. Good practices involve recognition of non-formal learning of youth workers, as well as improving of non-formal learning of young people e.g. through raising quality of leisure time education, staff training, and new innovative projects.

Introduction

This report is written within the Poland's Presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4), which takes place between July 2012 and June 2013.¹ The **Visegrad Group** (also known as the Visegrad Four or simply V4), formed on 15th February 1991, is constituted by the Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (HU), Poland (PL) and Slovakia (SK). The group "reflects the efforts of the countries of the Central European region to work together in a number of fields of common interest within the all-European integration."² The four countries, basing their collaboration on common cultural and intellectual values, aim at strengthening the regional collaboration at different institutional levels (from national ministries to local civil society organisations) and in different sectors. The collaboration takes place in areas such as culture, environment, internal security, defence, science and education, transportation, tourism, energy or information technologies.

The Polish Presidency of V4 includes the cooperation in the sector of Education, Volunteering, and Youth. The work within this priority included working meeting 'V4 Youth Roundtable' representatives in April 2013, with the participation of directors for youth, experts, youth representatives (from youth councils) and NGO together with Eastern Partnership countries with aim to support cooperation and sharing best practices in implementing the Conclusions of the EU Council on the Eastern dimension of youth participation and mobility; elaborating a common position on the Erasmus for All programme as proposed by the European Commission, and organisation of a seminar with the V4 representatives on education systems and their future development in the V4 countries.

The aim of the report is to provide the reader with a **comparative analytical review of the situation of young people** in these countries for the prospective development of youth policy in the region of the Central Europe. The report is to present the specific situation of this region and indicate some good practices from the region for consideration of the other countries.

¹ More information at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/2012-2013-polish>

² More information at <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/about>

As the V4 countries, similarly to other European countries, are faced with new challenges caused by economic and financial crises, they continue to search for varying solutions to appearing issues. Therefore, the exchange of ideas within youth policy field appears critical.

The report was prepared in collaboration with the representatives of the V4 countries working in the field of youth, to whom we would like to thank for their contribution and expertise. The special thanks go to Aleksandra Karlińska who, on behalf of the Polish Ministry, coordinated the work on the report. The analysis was based on the documents and information provided by the countries, fact sheets provided in the EKCYP (European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy) <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/ekcyp/Countryinformation2.html> in the areas of general youth policy, volunteering and participation, national reports on first cooperation cycle of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012, country reports from the Study on Volunteering in the European Union, Europe 2020 documents, secondary data (e.g. EURO-STAT, Eurobarometer), and other available sources. The examples of good practices were mostly provided by the adequate Ministries of the V4 countries.

Young people situation in the V4 countries

– background information

Among the four Visegrad countries, Poland (PL) is the biggest with the population of 38.5 million. Hungary (HU) and the Czech Republic (CZ) have a population of around 10 million inhabitants and Slovakia (SK) of 5.5 million inhabitants. The **demographic structure** in all four Visegrad countries is rather similar, indicating the occurrence of post-war boom and then the echo of this boom in 70s/80s. **Youth population** (counted as those aged 15-29) in those countries is relatively large – young people constitute around 22% of population in PL and SK and about 19% of CZ and HU populations (see table 1).

Table 1: Youth population in the V4 countries

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Number of inhabitants	10,505,445	9,957,731	38,538,447	5,404,322
Ratio of young people in population 15-19 years old (%)	5.2	5.7	6	6.1
Ratio of young people in population 20-24 years old (%)	6.4	6.4	7.2	7.3
Ratio of young people in population 25-29 years old (%)	6.9	6.8	8.4	8.1
Total: Ratio of young people in population 15-29 years old (%)	18.5	18.9	21.6	21.5

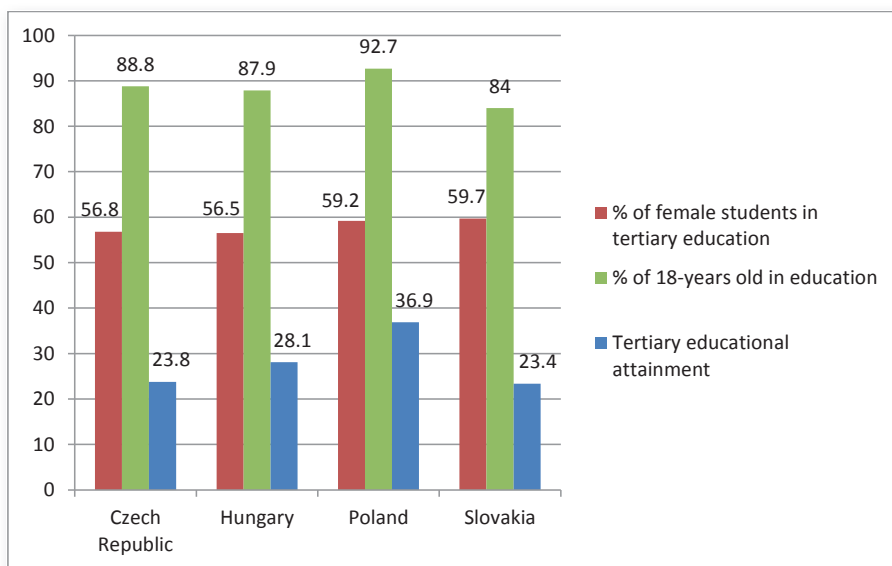
Source: Dashboard of EU Youth Indicators, Eurostat 2012.

The age pyramids anyhow indicate advancing of the **processes of ageing** of the V4 societies, as the children population is diminishing with time. The ageing process is illustrated also

by the growing old-age dependency ratio,³ which will rise sharply when the post-war boom generation will reach retirement age. The **low fertility** is notable in all the V4 countries, with about 1.4-1.5 children per women in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, 1.3 Poland, and 1.2 in Hungary in 2011. The V4 countries follow the European trends of **delaying motherhood** and the mean age of women when their children are born is about 29-30 years.⁴

Education participation trends suggest that participation in schooling at different levels is becoming more popular and inclusive. About 90% of all 18-year-olds are in education, with a bit lower numbers in Slovakia – 84%, as schooling remains compulsory until the age of 18 in PL and HU (in HU, lowered to 16 in 2012), and until the age of 15 in CZ and SK (see figure 1). Early school leavers, so those among the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training, constitute about 5% in CZ, PL and SK and 11.2% in HU. The percentage of early school leavers is low compared to other EU countries.⁵

Figure 1: Participation in education



Source: Eurostat 2010. Tertiary attainment – Eurostat 2011.

Concerning the number of **students in tertiary education** – their presence in the V4 countries was constantly growing in the last 10 years.⁶ The growth was really intensive in all countries, e.g. in the Czech Republic in 2000 there were about 253,700 students and in 2010 already 437,400, in Hungary the number grew from 307,100 to 389,000, in Poland – from 1,579,600 to

³ This indicator is the ratio between the total number of elderly persons of an age when they are generally economically inactive (aged 65 and over) and the number of persons of working age (from 15 to 64). Eurostat 2012.

⁴ Eurostat 2011.

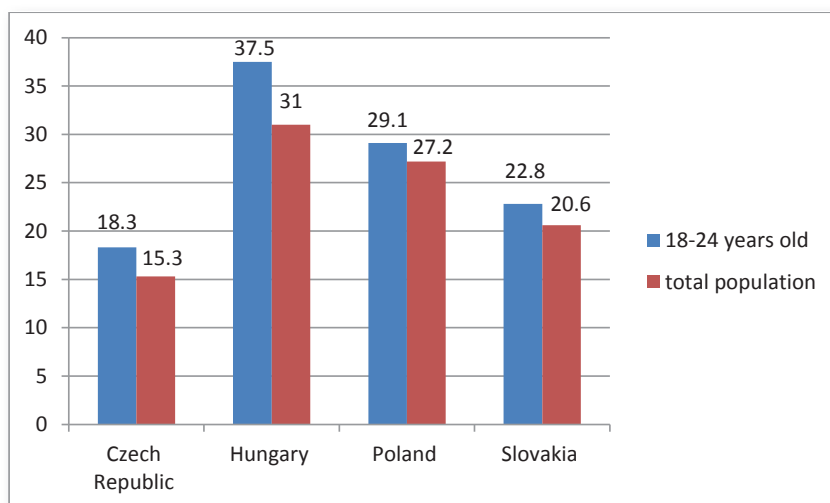
⁵ Eurostat 2011.

⁶ Eurostat 2010.

2,148,700 and in Slovakia – from 135,900 to 234,500. Around one-fourth of those aged 30-34 have **successfully completed university** or university-like (tertiary-level) education in CZ (23.8%), HU (28.1%), and SK (23.4%). In Poland the tertiary educational attainment equals 36.9%. In all the countries, number of **female students in tertiary education** is greater than of male students (see figure 1). In the opinion of young people in the V4 countries, the most important reason for going into higher education is higher wage level among graduates.⁷

At the same time, as shown by the study on apprenticeship supply in the EU,⁸ **vocational education and training** is rarely considered by young people in the V4 countries as a way to improve one's job opportunities, e.g. in Poland. "in the view of 70% of pupils, vocational schools are designated for those who fail their entry examinations to the general upper secondary school". The negative image of VET in general coexists with low participation numbers. Still, in the school year 2009/10, in three of the V4 countries, most of upper secondary level students attended vocational programmes (CZ – 74%, HU – 63.6%, SK - 71.6%).

Figure 2: The percentage of those at risk of poverty (or exclusion)



Source: Dashboard of EU Youth Indicators, Eurostat 2011.

The **risk of poverty or exclusion rate of 18-24 year old young people** in all V4 countries is a bit higher than that of the general population, still, the percentage of those at risk differs considerably between the countries, being the lowest in the Czech Republic and the highest in Hungary (where there is also the largest gap between the rate for the young people and the overall population).

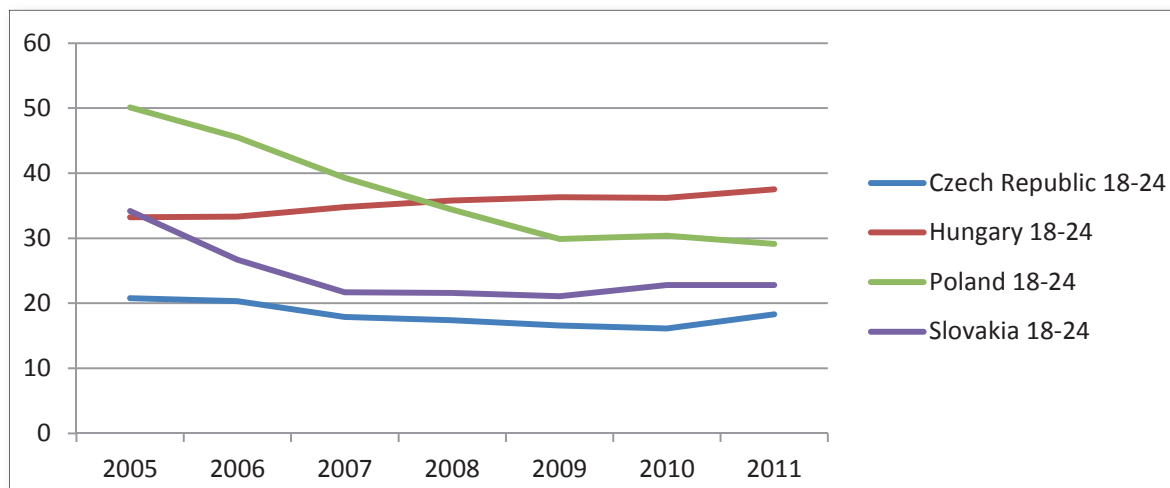
If we track the trend from 2005, the risk of poverty rate for group 18-24 year-olds fell down for all countries apart from HU, where there was a growth in this group. The drop was most evident in

⁷ Eurobarometer 2011b.

⁸ European Union 2012, p. 381.

Poland, where the rate fell down by 20%. As the author suspects, this can be due to the drop in unemployment of this age group (see figure 4) matched with an intensive post-accession emigration and, in general, improvement of living conditions. On the figure 3, one can see an impact of economic crisis on poverty occurrence, which in recent years caused stagnation in eliminating poverty or growth in the percentage of young people at risk of poverty (e.g. HU).

Figure 3: At-risk-of-poverty or exclusion rate for 18-24 year-olds



Source: Dashboard of EU Youth Indicators, Eurostat.

In each of the V4 countries' youth policies, there are identified some groups of young people that need targeted assistance and to whom special programmes are designed. The analysis of EKCYP sheets shows that these groups include young people without parental support (including orphans and people from dysfunctional families), young people with disabilities as well as Roma young people. Through the developed system of social services much support is directed to the young people without parental support as well as orphans. These people are taken care of by adequate structures, as well as granted support in the transition to adult life (e.g. through secured housing or scholarship for continuing education). The second group receiving targeted support are young people with disabilities. Third, in all V4 countries there are programmes directed to Roma community and its young people, often faced with poverty, housing and health problems.⁹ The policy initiatives aim mostly at supporting education of young people and the social integration, particularly in the sphere of work and housing. In Slovakia, Roma population consists of about 330,000 people, of which about 67% are people under 30.¹⁰ The Right Way – Roma Reform is being prepared by the Plenipotentiary Office for Roma Communities of the Slovak Government and the Home Office of the Slovak Republic.¹¹

⁹ Read more at <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/02/en/1/EF1202EN.pdf>

¹⁰ Read more in 'Report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia', by UNDP in 2011, available at: <http://europeandcis.undp.org/uploads/public/file/2A5FACD7-F203-1EE9-B9D24B3ABF4BE773.pdf>

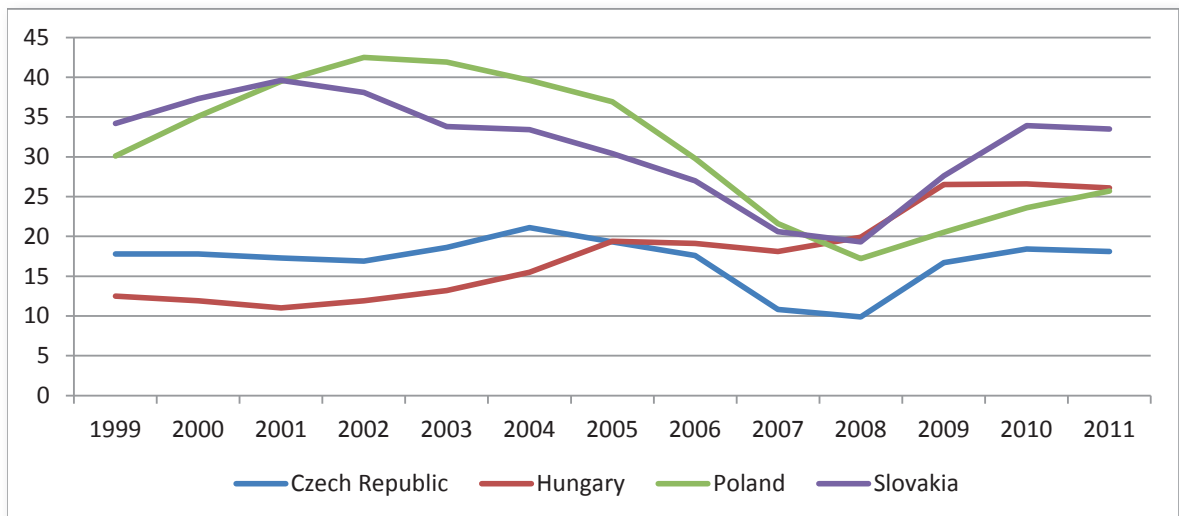
¹¹ www.minv.sk

Employment and entrepreneurship

Employment of young people, its quality and security remain a challenge for all European countries. The occurrence of unemployment at the start of the professional life career might hinder further career development, and might cause marginalisation, poverty or even social exclusion.

The height of **youth unemployment** in the V4 countries has been fluctuating in the last decade. The unemployment for PL and SK was the highest in the beginning of the 2000s, reaching level of today's unemployment rates for the southern European countries. In case of these two countries, the drop in unemployment could be assigned to some extent to the outflow of young workers to other EU countries, but, in general, it can be due to a positive economic climate of that period. The rise of unemployment was observed after 2008 as an effect of economic and financial crises. Similar trend is visible in the Czech Republic, but the general level of unemployment remained relatively low, coupled with much less intensive work emigration. In Hungary, unemployment rate is the highest in the last 10 years. This situation stimulates emigration from Hungary¹², but if the unemployment in other V4 countries continues to rise, the new migration waves might occur also from these countries.

Figure 4: Youth unemployment rate (annual average for those below 25 years of age)



Source: Dashboard of EU Youth Indicators, Eurostat.

In 2011, unemployment of young people in the V4 countries is in general below the rates of Southern European countries or Ireland, but still relatively high. The average youth unem-

¹² Kahanec, Kureková 2009. As informed by the Hungarian Ministry, the government's 'Future of the New Generation Programme' aims to motivate young people to stay in Hungary and/or motivate them to return from migration abroad.

ployment in 2011 in EU-27 was about 21.4%, and only the Czech Republic had a rate lower than this. Poland's youth unemployment and Hungary was on the level of about 26%, and in Slovakia it equalled 33.5%. Additional issue in Slovakia is the frequent occurrence of **long-term youth unemployment** (of 12 months or more).¹³

Concerning the opinions of young people on the challenge of getting a job after finishing education, in the V4 countries **lack of jobs available in the locality** was quite often cited by the respondents (excluding Czech young people). The **low level of salaries** was also very often mentioned, most often in PL (see table 2).

Table 2: Situation at the labour market of young people in the V4 countries

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Youth unemployment rate (annual average for those above 25)	18.1%	26.1%	25.7%	33.5%
Long-term unemployment (12 months or more) as a percentage of the total unemployment, by sex and age	29.2%	35.9%	26.4%	54.4%
Opinion: Jobs are available but they are very poorly paid (salary not adequate for a reasonable standard of living)*	47%	52%	61%	54%
Opinion: No jobs available in their city or region (might have to move)*	42%	63%	59%	55%
Young employees with a temporary contract**	22%	23%	65%	18%
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) among 15-24 year-olds**	8.3%	13.3%	11.6%	13.8%

Source: Eurostat 2011, *Eurobarometer 2011b, **Eurofund 2012.

Concerning the occurrence of **temporary contracts**¹⁴, in Poland about 65% of young employees is on such kind of contracts that do not assure to them different social security measures such as unemployment benefit or maternity/paternity leave. Temporary contracts, on one side create unstable condition of young people and risk of job loss, on the other hand, might be attractive to employers in the times of crisis and economic uncertainty. While in other three V4 countries their number has risen during the economic crises, the percentage of temporary contracts in Poland remained stable between 2007 and 2011, which would

¹³ Slovakia was among the countries to which the pilot project from the European Union combating high youth unemployment was directed. It includes support for SMEs in a focus on job creation as well as projects in regions with highest unemployment. See: Tackling youth unemployment: using EU structural funds to help young people (provisional outcome as of 21 May 2012, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/pdf/council_dinner/youth_action_team_en.pdf)

¹⁴ Eurofund 2012.

indicate that this is already an established practice. The big share of young people employed with temporary contracts leads to the labour market division into two segments: one with stable, indeterminate contracts and second with those who have temporary contracts and little advancement perspectives. Usually the number of temporary contracts would fall down after five years upon graduation, but in Poland it remains at high level, which means that young people remain trapped in temporary employment.¹⁵

The number of **young people not in employment, education or training** (NEET) in PL, HU and SK is rather of average level, compared to other EU countries – with relatively low level in CZ.¹⁶ The NEET in the Czech Republic are mostly unemployed, medium-skilled, with work experience, which indicates some difficulties in finding work, but not as much as in other EU countries more harshly suffering from the economic crises. The NEET's characteristics in the three other countries (PL, HU, SK) indicate the difficulties in transitioning from education to work, as these young people are more often inactive on the labour market, have high skills and a good education level, but no work experience. As they are more often female, this might indicate the process of pushing women off the labour market in connection to childbearing. As noticed, these young people have usually no or little work experience.

Skills mismatch in the V4 countries between 2007 and 2011 decreased, but still remains very high.¹⁷ For example, in Poland the reforms of higher education were introduced to raise employability of graduates and to adjust educational system to labour market needs – introduction of qualification frameworks stressing the effects of learning, monitoring the graduates' careers, introducing more linkages between employers and universities in developing of curricula. Still, a big share of students believes that studies are not enough for finding a job and that a diploma does not guarantee a career – more than half of graduates from the Central Europe believe that the university did not prepare them well for the professional duties.¹⁸ In effect, 81% of Polish students and about 50% of Czech and Slovak students acquired professional experience through internship, job or self-employment¹⁹ (see subchapter IV, table 9, for different forms of experience acquired by students).

All the V4 countries are taking concrete measures to develop **career guidance and counselling services** to young people.²⁰ As in three out of four countries young people encounter difficulties in the transition from education to labour market, there seems to be a clear need to develop the career guidance services. Additionally, students of the new member states rated universities negatively as far as preparing graduates for the process of looking for a job is concerned (see table 3). The opinions on guidance and counselling on future em-

¹⁵ Młodzi 2011.

¹⁶ Eurofund 2012, p. 28, 40.

¹⁷ Europe 2020 2012b.

¹⁸ Deloitte/Touche 2011, p.5.

¹⁹ Deloitte/Touche 2011, p.7.

²⁰ EU Youth Report 2012.

ployment opportunities that the young people have received during their school education differed among V4 countries, with Czech young people rating it relatively the highest, followed by Hungary (higher number of answers 'satisfactory') and Slovakia, with Polish students rating it the lowest.

Table 3: *Young people transition to the labour market*

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
% of graduates that acquired professional experience through internship, job or self-employment*	54%	Not available	81%	53%
Opinion: How well do universities prepare students for the process of looking for a job? (% of negative opinions)	70%	Not available	71%	79%
Opinions on guidance and counselling that the young people have received during their school education on future employment opportunities (% of positive evaluation: very good, good and satisfactory)*	71%	71%	52%	61%

Source: Deloitte/Touche 2011, *Eurobarometer 2011b.

As indicated by evaluation reports for Europe 2020, **public employment services** should be strengthened in the V4 countries in order to improve the transition to employment. Attention should be paid to the provision of more individualized services, taking into account particular situation of the groups disadvantaged on the labour market. Poland is planning to design new tools for provision of counselling, which would provide each unemployed person below 30 with individual tutor assistance immediately after registration as unemployed. Similarly, all the V4 countries are making efforts to promote **quality internships and apprenticeships** to facilitate entry into the labour market.²¹ In Poland there is a programme of subsidizing the salaries of interns below 25 years of age to provide them with the first job experience, similarly to graduate practice in Slovakia. Slovakia prepared additional employment programme to support employment of about 14,000 young people as well as those aged over 50.²² In Hungary, the social security of young employees is subsidised by the State since 2013.²³

Interesting question concerns **the participation of women and men in the labour market**. In all V4 countries women are less often active at the labour market (this concerns espe-

²¹ EU Youth Report 2012.

²² <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/news/slovak-employment-121031>; as informed by the Slovak Ministry, the first projects were launched in November 2012 with two pilot projects lasting until 2015. Special jobs opportunities will be established in transport, small and middle sized companies and in the municipal structures.

²³ <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/news/hungarian-government-to-120919>

cially women with low education attainment²⁴). In the V4 countries there exists relatively wide gender gap as far as 'economic participation and opportunities' are concerned (this includes: the participation in the labour market gap, the remuneration gap and the advancement gap). In the 'economic participation gender gap' ranking of countries, HU is ranked 68, PL - 72, SK - 82, and CZ - 95 out of 135 countries (the most equal country takes the top position).²⁵ All the countries declared that they took effort to facilitate **reconciliation between professional and private life** for both young women and young men. In Hungary, the issue is a part of National Youth Strategy and the actions that have been launched include encouraging employment while raising kids through flexible working style, training system for parents taking care of the child or operating child care support system – the strategy does not take into account gender discrimination's impact on the situation of young women at the labour market. Poland is planning to assure the usage of paid parental leave (in place of maternity leave) to both women and men for a maximum length of one year upon the child's birth, as well as accessibility of care infrastructure, in order to support women's professional involvement as well as to abolish gender discrimination at work which is due to the perception of women as a sole care giver to small children.²⁶ In the Czech Republic, maternity leave is only given to a mother which, together with low usage of care infrastructure, might be one of the reasons of the difference between employment rate of women (aged 20-49) with and without a child is the highest in the EU (about 35 percentage points).²⁷ The countries that follow are Slovakia and Hungary (where the difference is about 30pp), and Poland with a relatively small difference of about 10 pp.

The intention to **set up a business** differs between young people of the V4 countries. In Poland 2/3 of young people (62%) would like to set up their own business in the future, and in Slovakia such intention is shared by almost half of them – 48%. This attitude is not so frequent in Hungary – 28% and the Czech Republic – 35%. Still, the number of those who actually set up a business is quite similar and amounts to about 5-7% of young people who said they already did set up their own business (PL 6%, CZ 6%, HU 5%, SK 7%).²⁸

The event experienced by the new EU member states, including to some extent also the V4 countries, **was the post-EU-accession migration**. It occurred most intensively in the years 2004-2008. From the V4 countries, Poland and Slovakia were main emigration sources. The size of migrations is hard to estimate, but "average inflow (net immigration) of EU-8 into EU-15 quadrupled to around 250,000 people a year since 2004"²⁹. The migration resulted, among others, from high youth unemployment rates (see figure 4), relatively

²⁴ Eurostat 2009.

²⁵ The Global Gender Gap Report 2012.

²⁶ Slany, Ratecka, Krzaklewska 2012.

²⁷ Europe 2020 2012.

²⁸ Eurobarometer 2011b.

²⁹ Kahanec, Kureková 2009, p.6.

higher wages in the receiving countries, demographic boom³⁰, and unfinished process of urbanisation. Compared to previous migration flows, the migrants were most often young and rather well educated, with many of them with tertiary education.³¹ The migration was also mostly of temporary character, not leading to settlement choices – called incomplete migration (according to Eade’s study, only 22% of Poles intended to settle in UK³²; according to Hungarian research, those aged 25-29 migrated on average for a period of 18 months³³). The migrants were employed generally in low-skilled and low-paid jobs, with earnings not reflecting their educational attainment. Due to high educational attainment of migrants from the V4 countries, we might say that to some extent there occurred the brain drain from the regions; on the other hand, the local markets were not able to accommodate high numbers of educated workers. Today, still many young people **would like to emigrate for work**: e.g. 36% of young Poles (18-24 years old) plan to search for work abroad. 10% of them already had worked outside Poland in the past decade.³⁴ From the perspective of individual migration decision, there existed two ‘migration stories’: the need to migrate (caused by high unemployment, lack of jobs in the region, low salaries) and the opportunity (better work opportunities and better wages, learning a new language, exploring a new country).³⁵ In the Czech Republic, young people migrated intensively to Ireland between 2001 and 2005, not due to lack of job opportunities in their home country, but in order to improve their English and gain international work experience.³⁶ Similarly, in Hungary, the reasons for migrations are also fitting into the two types of motivations: young people would migrate abroad as for looking for better living conditions (66%), learning a foreign language (22%), and gaining foreign experiences (20%).³⁷

Summing up, in general young people from the V4 countries **are willing to be mobile** on the labour market, about 2/3 are willing to move to another city and about 2/3 are willing to move abroad to take up interesting job offer (for CZ, SK, PL³⁸). 49% of young Hungarians (aged 15-29) plan to work abroad once in the future, 10% of them plan also to study abroad. Only 12% can imagine leaving Hungary forever.³⁹

³⁰ Demographic boom may cause intensification of migrations. Due to large age cohorts entering the labour market, a country might not be able to accommodate the raising numbers of young workers, even with high qualifications, what leads to emigration of these cohorts. Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009.

³¹ As above.

³² Eade 2007.

³³ Kutatópont kft 2012

³⁴ <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/news/one-third-of-young-poles>

³⁵ Krzaklewska 2009.

³⁶ Information from the Czech Ministry.

³⁷ Kutatópont kft 2012.

³⁸ Deloitte/Touche, 2011, p.10.

³⁹ Kutatópont kft 2012.

Good practices: Employment and entrepreneurship

Czech Republic: 'Personal Competence Portfolio'

Personal Competence Portfolio provides the opportunity of having the competences acquired through non-formal education recorded and enables its future presentation as an appendix to the CV. The purpose of this instrument is not only to show that competences for life and labour market are acquired in the area of non-formal education, but also expressing these competences in a language intelligible for both job providers and job seekers. www.okp.nidm.cz

Hungary: 'Career Guidance' initiatives

Substantial developments have taken place in the scope of career information tools, as part of the programme for developing a lifelong guidance system in Hungary. Among others, the National Career Guidance Portal has been developed, with new functions and tools continuously being added to it. The new portal has several innovative components, which include a wide range of self-assessment questionnaires addressed to different target groups as well as databases covering all sectors of education, training and employment opportunities. In addition, a Virtual Community of Career Guidance Professionals will also be set up in order to help professionals to get and keep in touch with one another. The Portal is managed and supervised by the National Employment Office. www.eletpalya.munka.hu; www.munka.hu

Poland: 'Academic Business Incubators'

The mission of Academic Business Incubators (ABI) is to facilitate the advancement of entrepreneurship among the younger generation in Poland. ABI assist new businesses by providing the logistical support – for a monthly fee they offer access to office infrastructure as well as legal and financial administration. They also run trainings, counselling and promotional activities encouraging entrepreneurship, as well as support companies in applying for external funding. Starting up a business in an incubator lowers the costs, risk and administration burden for new entrepreneurs. ABI exist at 31 top higher education institutions in Poland, and provide facilities for about 1500 businesses. <http://www.inkubatory.pl/en/about-us/mission>

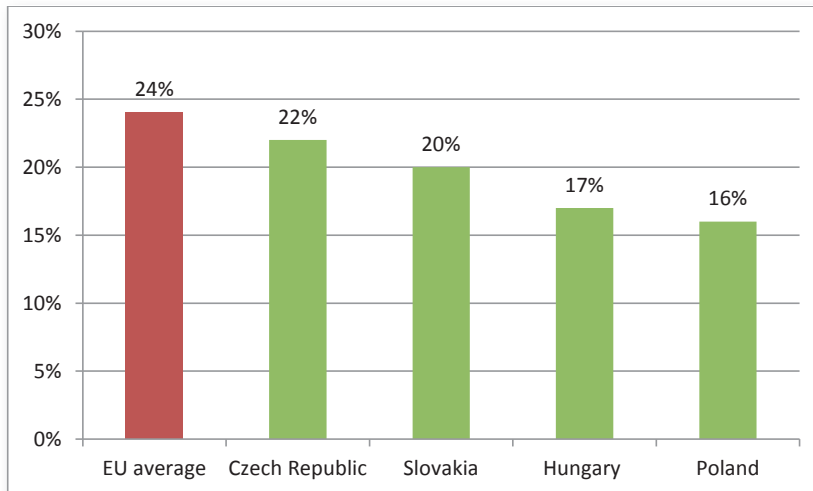
Slovakia: 'Student Company of the Year'

'Practice/Training firms' exists at all types of secondary vocational schools - in 2011/2012 the project involved more than 160 secondary vocational schools. Students engaged in the training firms are 15 to 19 years old. The goal of this project is to promote competition, imagination, creativity, education and preparedness of students for their future profession. It aims at encouraging students to work on their business during their studies. The participating students are motivated to be self-employed after completing education or to form companies with their own employees. Project is organised by the National Institute for Vocational Training. <http://www.siov.sk/slovenske-centrum-cvicnych-firiem/9429s>

Voluntary activities and their international dimension

The common concern for the V4 countries is **a low level of participation in the voluntary activities** by young people when compared to other European countries (compared to EU average of 24%, and some countries having participation rates of about 30-40%, see figure 5). As the forms of volunteering can vary extensively, starting from very informal one-time volunteering to long-term sustainable schemes of participation, all data on volunteering has to be treated with a reasonable caution (see also table 9 for involvement of graduates).

Figure 5: Participation in volunteering in the V4 countries in comparison to EU average. (Q: "Have you been involved in any organised voluntary activities in the past year?")



Source: Eurobarometer 2011a.

The **lack of recognition of volunteering and its value** by the society seems to be a common issue of the V4 countries matched with **low profile of volunteering**. In Hungary, volunteering is hindered by the existence of career model emphasizing the utmost importance of paid work after finishing school. Volunteering is then not seen as an element of participation in the society. To change this attitude, there was a government initiative aimed at making volunteer work compulsory for every high-school student.⁴⁰ In Slovakia, besides low awareness and lack of recognition of volunteering, the economic situation of youth makes them prioritize paid employment. Additionally, little NGOs' resources and lack of paid staff in NGOs disallow the assurance of high quality of volunteering experience.⁴¹ In Poland, the most

⁴⁰ EKCYF Volunteering Hungary 2011.

⁴¹ EKCYF Volunteering Slovakia 2011.

important challenge is low prestige of voluntary activities among Poles and undervaluing its importance e.g. by NGOs and even employers. There is also underdeveloped support for volunteering development (no comprehensive approach toward managing the volunteers, need of training for volunteers' coordinators, weak structures of volunteers' activation and support).⁴² In the Czech Republic, there is identified lack of understanding of volunteering, its potentials and benefits matched with the concerns about connection of volunteering to post-totalitarian society residues.⁴³

The change of generations, with new ideas on participation and little memory of previous political system, constitutes a basis for establishment of **new attitude toward volunteering**. There are also other opportunities appearing in the V4 countries such as development of corporate initiatives and business engagement in voluntary activities, information on volunteering being easier accessible through new media and internet, raising fashion for volunteering, including volunteering in big sport events and school programmes, together with political engagement and interest (also at the local level).⁴⁴ Also, almost half (46%) of graduates who gained volunteering experience in the new member states said that it was useful in looking for jobs later in life.⁴⁵

Additionally, concentrated actions seem to be organised in V4 on **promoting volunteering and its benefits to society** as well as individuals. The European Year of Volunteering in 2011 was an important opportunity for the V4 countries to promote volunteering. The legislative initiatives have taken place in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (symbolically the Act on Volunteering was adopted in 2011). In Poland, the Long-Term Policy for Volunteering Development was established. In Hungary, volunteering became an element of the National Youth Strategy. Additionally, the V4 countries included voluntary activities as an important element of the European Year of the Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.⁴⁶

European Voluntary Service (within the Youth in Action Programme) is one of the most renowned programmes providing opportunity for a long-term volunteering abroad. In many countries, it remains the main tool for long-term volunteering. Concerning the numbers of EVS volunteers in V4⁴⁷, in 2011 a total of 242 Hungarian volunteers took part in the EVS. They completed their service most often in Germany (43 volunteers), Spain (18), France (15), Holland (16) and Turkey (14). At the same year, 204 foreign volunteers were hosted in Hungary. Most of the volunteers arrived from Turkey (54), Germany (33), Romania (17), Greece (15)

⁴² EKCYP Volunteering Poland 2011.

⁴³ GfK: Country Report on Volunteering, Czech Republic.

⁴⁴ According to national reports in GHK study on volunteering.

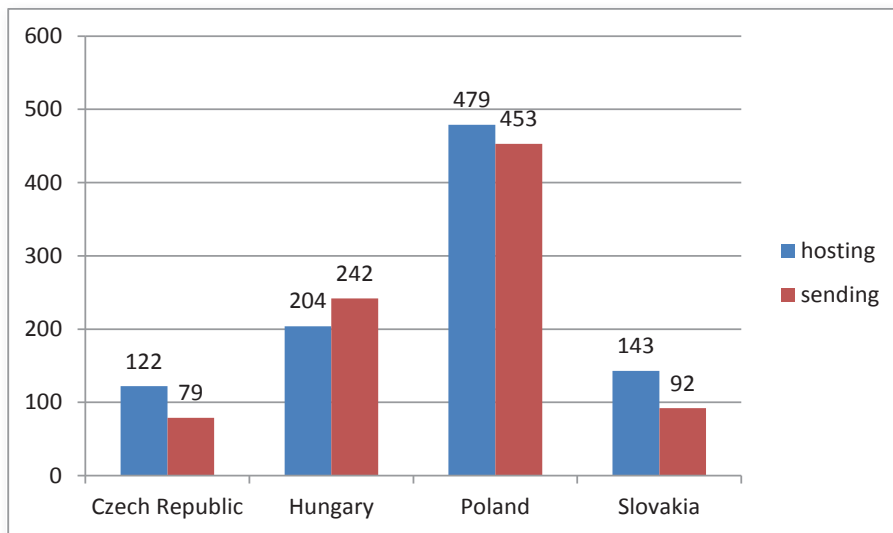
⁴⁵ Deloitte/Touche, 2011, p.8.

⁴⁶ In the Czech Republic, within this Year, a working group on volunteerism was one of four working groups covering the aims of the Year. One of the final results of this Year is a draft document on the "National Programme of Preparations for Aging 2013 – 2017" in which supporting volunteerism and intergenerational cooperation within volunteerism are stressed as one of the priorities.

⁴⁷ Information on EVS was provided by the adequate Ministries. For Poland, see http://www.mlodziej.org.pl/sites/mlodziej.org.pl/files/page/1325/ogolne_2011.pdf

and France (13). In 2011, 453 volunteers from Poland were sent to other countries as EVS volunteers, while 479 were hosted in Poland. The most popular destinations for Polish volunteers were Ukraine, Georgia, Spain, Germany, Turkey and Italy. The countries that sent highest numbers of volunteers to Poland were Turkey, Germany, France and Spain. In the Czech Republic, 79 volunteers were sent abroad and 122 hosted in the country. In 2011, Slovak National Agency of Youth in Action sent 92 Slovak volunteers abroad and 143 young volunteers came to do volunteer service for various organisations and institutions. In general, in three V4 countries the number of hosted volunteers is higher than of those being sent from a country, with Hungary showing an opposite situation (see figure 6).

Figure 6: European Voluntary Service participation – numbers of EVS volunteers hosted by and sent from the V4 countries in 2011



Source: Information from Ministries.

Besides EVS, there exist **additional tools for supporting long term volunteering** e.g. Polish Aid Volunteering Programme, implemented by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2008, creates opportunity for volunteers to work for min. 3 months to help citizens of developing countries.⁴⁸ In Slovakia, to link volunteering activities with labour market, people searching for the job as well as the graduates might receive a grant for being active in volunteering services in order to gain some work experience.⁴⁹ Similar scheme is being developed in Poland – long-term volunteers will receive financial assistance. In the Czech Republic, the long-term volunteers, often young people who work in hospitals, get extra financial support on the top of their unemployment benefits. Moreover, the long-term voluntary activities are taken into account when unemployed people apply for unemployment benefits.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Volunteering,Programme,810.html>

⁴⁹ Information from the Slovak Ministry.

⁵⁰ Information from the Czech Ministry.

Good practices: Voluntary work

Czech Republic: 'I Love Nisa Project'

The I Love Nisa Project, run by a youth-lead NGO Liberecká občanská společnost, is a complex youth-initiated and youth-lead reaction to the main challenges impeding the development of voluntary and civil society activities in the Euroregion Nisa. The project consists of 9 different activities clustered around an interactive web-portal (www.ilovenisa.eu) presenting the cultural, educational and civil society activities on three sides of the national borders in 3 respective national languages. The activities include youth exchanges, NGO networking (both within the Czech region and cross-border with PL and DE), happenings, group volunteering weekends with cultural and environmental workshops, individual volunteering, action planning cross-border conference and others. Project used synergies between different programmes/campaigns and various funding streams. It took advantage of innovative methodologies - e.g. Living Library, language animation, happenings, short-term work camps combined with cultural and environmental workshops and events.

Hungary: 'EVS LIVE'

In the European Year of Volunteering 2011, the Hungarian National Youth Service (Mobilitás), as National Agency of Youth in Action Programme organized for the first time an EVS event called EVS LIVE. The one-day event had two main goals: firstly, to promote EVS program and involve new participants, secondly, it was the ex-volunteers' evaluation meeting (EVS event). As part of the EYV events, the visitors had the opportunity to learn about various national volunteer programs beside EVS and meet representatives of volunteer organizations. A similar event has been organized in December 2012. <http://www.mobilitas.hu/evslive>

Poland: 'Projektor – student volunteering'

Projektor is a programme encouraging university student voluntary service in small towns and villages. Students prepare educational projects for children and create opportunities for children's self-development while sharing knowledge. Students can develop and share their skills and passions with other people, while children in small towns get inspired by older students and see that learning can be exciting. The projects are using methods of non-formal learning, are based on practical experience, and must link to a specific field of knowledge (e.g. languages, environment, and art). Project takes place in the school-free periods (e.g. in the summer), as well as during the school year. Volunteers are granted the logistical support and work usually in teams of 2-3 people. www.projektor.org.pl

Slovakia: '72 hours'

The biggest youth voluntary project is 72 hours. It is a 3-day marathon of voluntary work. During these days many volunteers around Slovakia engage in voluntary work of all kinds. The project aims to involve as many young people as possible and to show them that in order to achieve a lot we do not need to spend lot of money and effort. The Project also helps to convince young people that they can change things they do not like, and teaches them to work together and be more sensitive to their environment. In 2012, 4,592 volunteers participated in 169 projects and they worked for 36,736 voluntary hours. The Project's fun page on Facebook has over 26,000 fans. The results are: more beautiful surrounding, smiling people and many other positive results. www.72hodin.sk

Participation and decision-making

The participation of the southern countries in the protests against the government's austerity measures is a recent example of the fact that a will for young people to have a say on the country's politics is very strong. While the Central and Eastern European countries are historically known as sites of intensive and effective youth protests during the communism years, it seems that the younger generation has been much less of protest spirit. Still, recently also young people of V4 moved to the streets. The recent cases include the Polish protests against ACTA in January 2012, which gathered thousands of young people (also in the Czech Republic). In December 2012, the Hungarian students protested actively against the plan of reduction of state funded places in higher education in Hungary.⁵¹ Throughout December 2012 and January 2013, the Czech students in regions where communist candidates elected in regional elections in September 2012 were charged to govern education issues continue to protest actively against communists in regional governments, organise protest meetings and symbolic hunger strike.⁵² In Slovakia, as a response to Gorilla scandal in the beginning of 2012 young people have protested actively on the streets against corrupted practices of politicians. Moreover, Slovak pupils and students from secondary schools supported the teachers' strike that took place in the end of 2012. These reactions are not the only events in which young people participate – active presence of young people in different civil initiatives, also on leadership positions, is notable as well, and these indicate the growing willingness of young people in the V4 countries to use protest as a political tool.

As we continue to see that the **importance of active protests** is raising also in the V4 countries, in 2007, young people of the new EU member states (NMS12) were less frequently of the opinion that demonstration is a good way to make one's voice heard compared to the young people from the EU15 (see table 4). They also believed more rarely that joining political party or signing a petition is a good tool. They tended to more often believe that being a member of or supporting an NGO or a trade union can ensure that impact.⁵³ In both groups (EU15 and NMS12) joining a trade union was most often believed to be an effective way to ensure that one's voice was heard. Beyond this belief, as the data in this chapter will show, young people in the V4 countries are rarely members of trade unions.

⁵¹ <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/12/18/278721/hungarian-students-protest-education-cuts/>, after the protest some partial agreement has been reached between government and students representatives.

⁵² Information from the Czech Ministry.

⁵³ Eurobarometer 2007.

Table 4: Political actions that are most important to ensure that one's voice is heard by the policymakers (% of all respondents)

	To participate in debates with policy makers	To join a political party	To take part in a demonstration	To sign a petition	To be a member or support NGO	To join a trade union	Don't know/ NA
EU15	11	17	15	12	10	28	5
NMS12	12	13	8	8	15	33	9

Source: Eurobarometer 2007.

The young people from V4 countries as well as other young Europeans believe most strongly that to make one's voice heard it is important to participate in **debates with policy makers** (see table 5). Signing a petition followed by joining a political party is considered important in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, while in Poland and Hungary there is more belief in NGO structures followed by petition signing.

Table 5: Political actions ensuring that one's voice is heard by policymakers (3 most common answers)

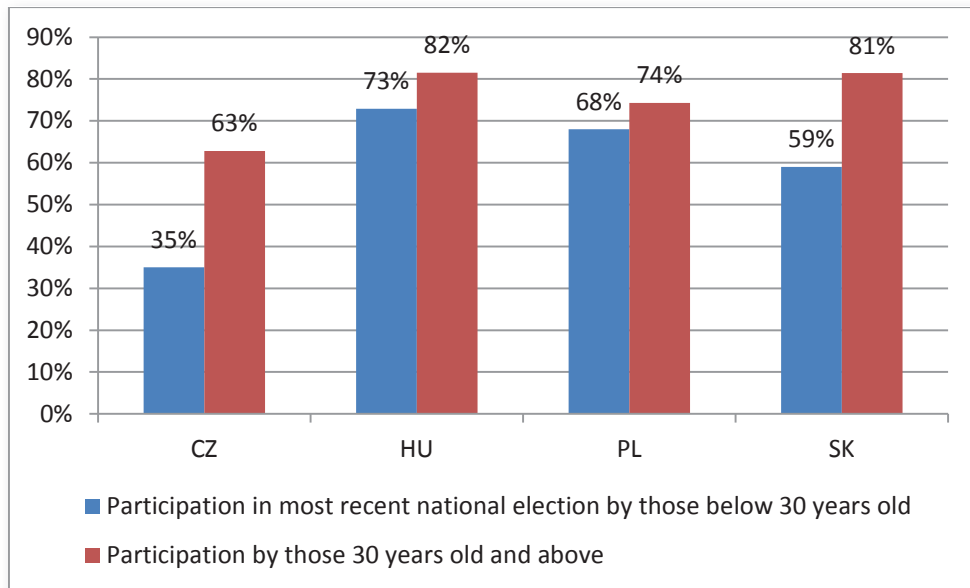
CZ	HU	PL	SK
Participate in debates	Participate in debates	Participate in debates	Participate in debates
Sign a petition	<u>To be a member or support an NGO</u>	<u>To be a member or support an NGO</u>	Sign a petition
<u>Join political party</u>	Sign a petition	Sign a petition	<u>Join political party</u>

Source: Eurobarometer 2007.

The **decline in the political participation traditionally understood as voting** in national elections is notable in the Czech Republic and Slovakia – the number of young voters is relatively much lower than those of voters aged 30 or more (see figure 7). These numbers, however, have to be interpreted with caution. It is important to say that **the interest in political life** is still declared to be strong – 83% SK, PL and HU, and 77% CZ young people are interested in politics and current affairs in their countries.⁵⁴ There are cases in the political life when non-voting could be interpreted as a political statement of being fed up with politics in general. In the Czech Republic, young people believe non-voting to be a sign of lack of trust towards politicians and disapproval towards the way political negotiations take place.⁵⁵ It is important to mention here that young people dissatisfaction with injustice of some social arrangements, traditions and established practices (reflected by e.g. refusal of participating in elections and voting) are often mistakenly interpreted as a lack of responsibility towards society and community from the side of youth. These should be considered rather as a sign of protest.

⁵⁴ Eurobarometer 2007.

⁵⁵ Information from the Czech Ministry.

Figure 7: Participation in elections

Source: European Social Survey 2008, after Zentner 2012. Percentages of the eligible voters.

There is a perception that **new forms of participation** are more attractive to young people (e.g. flashmobs, artistic actions), while traditional forms such as joining a political party are no longer that much appealing (only 4% of young people in HU, PL, SK are members of political parties, in CZ 1%).⁵⁶ For example, in the Czech Republic, a project 'Hrajeme o náš kraj' ('We are working for our region') in the Liberec region, aims to support interest and active participation of young people in decision-making processes. A group of young people organized for other young people **discussions with local politicians** that took place on a tram or on a boat; they organized football matches with local politicians, as well as prepared and printed an election guidebook for young people.

One of the most known forms of civic participation is **active participation in the work of non-governmental and other civic organisations** (see table 6). Youth membership in NGOs is not so common in the V4 countries – CZ 15.5%, HU 12.8%, SK 11.5% and PL 9.1%.⁵⁷ Young people are usually members of sport clubs or associations, but in HU the youth organisations are also very popular. In HU and PL one can notice quite a strong interest also in artistic organisations, while in CZ and SK in hobby clubs. Membership in trade unions is most popular in HU and SK, and in SK also in religious or parish organisations.

⁵⁶ Eurobarometer 2007.

⁵⁷ Eurobarometer 2007. Other studies show different level of engagement. E.g. in Poland 37% of young Poles declared that they are members of different clubs, groups or associations (Młodzi 2011, p. 283).

Table 6. Membership in different kinds of organisations (%)

	Sport clubs/associations	Youth organisations	Trade Unions	Political parties	Religious of parish organisations	Cultural or artistic organisations	Hobby or special interest clubs
CZ	49	11	1	1	4	5	10
HU	23	26	8	4	2	11	3
PL	26	15	5	4	7	10	7
SK	29	12	9	4	9	8	10

Source: Eurobarometer 2007 (among those who declared that are members).

In the Czech Republic, a popular form of youth participation is the involvement of young people into **community planning**. Community planning is based, above all, on the principle of open communication between different groups of people (municipal authorities, civil society organisations, school teachers, library staff, etc.). Young people take an active part especially in solving problems that concern them directly (building sports grounds and skate parks, arranging school surroundings, etc.).⁵⁸

In Slovakia, it is noticed⁵⁹ that more and more emphasis is placed **on private expressions of social policy issues** and the style of 'do it as you feel it' is preferred by young people. For young people the anonymous forms of participation are becoming increasingly attractive. These include, for example, petitions, charity activities, ethical consumerism lifestyle and environmental behaviour. These forms of participation are not yet perceived by public and policy-makers as the activities with political message. The same applies to the artistic subcultures which are often ideologically influenced or affected. But at the same time they also innovatively and creatively express civic opinions of the authors on injustice or intolerance.

Internet is considered to be a space where young people's social and civic participation could be developed and strengthened – the anti-ACTA demonstrations showed that the internet is a critical space to young people. There is a growing engagement of young people in the civic processes in the virtual space, such as usage of the social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter for community activities, virtual protests, petition signing, and commentaries concerning social and political life. Young people use also emails for sending their opinions or commenting on activities of the Members of Parliament or different institutions. As far as statistics are concerned (see table 7), every fifth young person in the Czech Republic **uses internet for discussing civic or political issues**, while in the rest of the V4 countries it is a bit less frequent. Concerning the usage of **internet for interaction with public authorities**, in Slovakia 40% of young people use internet to this end, while in other V4 countries it is much less frequent.

⁵⁸ Information from the Czech Ministry.

⁵⁹ Hulin, Mihalikova 2012.

Table 7: Usage of internet in participation of young people

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Poland	Slovakia
Young people using internet for accessing or posting opinions on websites (e.g. blogs, social networks etc.), for discussing civic and political issues (in the last three months), aged 16-24 (2011)	20%	16%	12%	10%
Individuals using internet for interaction (contact) with public authorities, aged 16-24 (2010)	11%	22%	21%	40%

Source: Dashboard of EU Youth Indicators, Eurostat.

As far as structured participation in decision-making is concerned, in two out of four countries, there exist fully established **National Youth Councils** – in CZ and SK. In Poland this structure has been developed bottom up by youth organisation and its gaining its position within national youth policy. In Hungary, the setting up of the youth council has taken place recently – in December 2012.

National Youth Councils in V4

Czech Council of Children and Youth⁶⁰ (Česká rada dětí a mládeže) is a democratic, voluntary association, independent of any political parties or movements. It was established in June 1998 by eight organizations of children and youth. It is the national youth council in the Czech Republic and a reliable partner of government administration. It is composed of almost 100 non-governmental children and youth organizations with more than 205,000 individual members – the organizations range from very small to the biggest ones, 6 regional youth councils are members of ČRD M as well. www.crdm.cz

The National Youth Council of Hungary (NIT) was set up on 1st December 2012.⁶¹ It was formed as an umbrella organisation, by 104 youth organisations and will represent interests of young people in Hungary. The NIT aims at achieving candidate membership status in the European Youth Forum at its next general assembly in April 2013.

<http://ifjusagitanacs.hu/>

Polish Council of Youth Organisations (Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych – PROM) was founded at 2011. The Polish Council of Youth Organisations was founded as a result

⁶⁰ EKCYP sheet general

⁶¹ <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-public-administration-and-justice/news/next-spring-hungary-will-be-able-to-become-a-candidate-member-of-the-european-youth-forum>

of over one year of efforts of the Ginger Group, involving over forty youth organisations and youth unions – from small local associations through to the largest ones, with dozens of thousands of members. The Ministry of National Education has supported the process of establishing the Polish Council of Youth Organisations and offered full freedom to the social organisations to form the Federation as an organisation independent of the state structures. These activities confirm involvement of the Polish Ministry of National Education in establishment of the European social dialogue standards. The remaining challenge is cooperation with the non-formal youth groups and preparing activities to stimulate increased participation of individual units. www.prom.info.pl

The Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS)⁶² is an umbrella organisation – an association of nongovernmental not-for-profit children’s and youth organizations. Today it covers 33 children’s and youth organisations with more than 40,000 children and young people. RMS was founded in 1990 as a civic association. From the beginning of its existence it is working nationwide and covers children’s and youth organizations, regardless of their political beliefs, religion, nationality or ethnicity. RMS represents and coordinates the interests of its members, especially in communicating with the state and public administration. It aims to contribute to creating an environment that allows children and youth organizations efficiently and unhindered to pursue their activities. RMS pays great attention to networking organizations and associations active in the youth sector, promoting the exchange of information and experience between them, organizing trainings, seminars and conferences on specialized topics, often with foreign participation. www.mladez.sk

Structured dialogue is also a new form of engagement of young people in influencing politics, organised on the European level by the European Youth Forum.⁶³ Structured dialogue is in its essence the **consultation process with young people and national and European policy makers**. It has been introduced as the permanent part of European Union youth policy in 2009⁶⁴ and its coordination is ensured by the presidency trios. From the V4 countries, two topics within structured dialogue have been elaborated: during Hungarian presidency from January to June 2011 – ‘Participation and active citizenship’, and during Polish presidency from July to December 2011 – ‘Youth and the world’. For both countries, the process was very important, since Hungary and Poland – as members of the EU presidency trio – took part even in the planning phases of the structured dialogue implementation. Hungarian

⁶² EKCYP sheet general.

⁶³ <http://www.youthweek.eu/european-youth-week/structured-dialogue/>

⁶⁴ Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) [Official Journal C 311 of 19.12.2009].

National Working Group⁶⁵ made efforts to find creative ways for involving young people in national consultation, creating, besides survey, also peer-to-peer dialogue opportunities. The open-to-everyone circle of young people called 'Youth Consultation Crew' was the most important tool in reaching young people and their opinions. Similarly, the Polish Council of Youth Organizations (PROM) plays an active role in the implementation of the structured dialogue at national level. At the end of 2012 new Infopack on Structured Dialogue was prepared by the National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme and PROM. This short guide shows how the process works and how it could be implemented on a local level – how to prepare meetings in schools, universities or how to facilitate them in a youth organization.⁶⁶ The Czech website 'Let's chat about it' (described below) helps to gather opinions for the EU structured dialogue, but it is mostly concerned with discussing domestic issues important for young people.

Good practices: Participation and decision-making

Czech Republic: 'Let's chat about it – a structured dialogue of young people'

This project of the Czech Council of Children is one of the instruments for the implementation of a structured dialogue with young people. Within the project young people conduct online discussions on the web page www.kecejmedotoho.cz, on Facebook and on other social networks. The comments act as a basis for workshops during which young people draft a stand on the issue concerned. The draft opinion is finalised in public discussions with experts and decision makers and shared with relevant stakeholders. The first topics discussed were: Tuition fees at universities, State-organised secondary school-leaving exam, and Legalisation of marihuana. The project uses internet technologies in combination with practical youth work and face-to-face contacts, engages volunteers in organisation of debates and workshops, involves non-organised youth, e.g. at the Open Air Festival for Youth, and uses media and social networks. It is supported by the Youth in Action Programme and the national working group established at the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. www.kecejmedotoho.cz

Hungary: 'Szólj bele! (Have your say!)

The main aim of the project of the Demokratikus Ifjúságért Alapítvány (Foundation for Democratic Youth) was to strengthen the participation of young people in the local, regional, national and European processes affecting their lives. Nine consultation days

⁶⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/20120203_compendium_en.htm

⁶⁶ http://www.mlodziez.org.pl/sites/mlodziez.org.pl/files/news_programme/2146/infopack_irlandia.pdf

were organized in Hungary as part of the European Structured Dialogue process in different locations. These involved more than 320 young people aged 15-25, youth workers, non-profit youth organizations and decision makers. Five topics were discussed: Transition from school to work; Harmonization of work and private life; Social security; Information, guidance and support for youth; Youth work. Facilitated discussions, panel debates and workshops created the right framework for the participants to develop their key competences through non-formal learning. Those young people, who did not attend the consultation, could express their opinions through the focus group survey. The results of the survey and the consultation days were summarized in a document which served as a basis for the Hungarian report of the Structured Dialogue process sent to Brussels in January 2011. <http://www.i-dia.org/>

Poland: 'Fundacja Civis Polonus'

The aim of this organisation's activities is supporting adolescents in being active at the local level and in learning how to influence local public life. Recent projects focus on: strengthening youth councils in their consultative role to province authorities, city or districts (<http://www.mlodziejowarada.org.pl/>), in strengthening school councils and providing pupils with civic competences. The organisation projects are directed at diverse actors: authorities, adults who should facilitate youth participation (e.g. teachers), and young people. The organisation supports creation of youth councils and provides target groups seminars, conferences, workshops as well as individual coaching or consulting, as well as educational material on developing civic participation in schools or at local level. <http://www.civispolonus.org.pl>

Slovakia: 'PARTNERSHIP'

Slovak youth institute IUVENTA organized a long-term training called 'PARTNERSHIP' dedicated to municipality workers who has youth in their agenda. Main aim is to build strategy of youth policy development in the city or village with participation of young people and youth organisations. In Slovakia there are around 50 youth parliaments active in different towns. They have different forms, mostly of advisory bodies of the municipalities or non-governmental organizations. They are mostly consulted on issues related to youth but there are also few examples in which they are consulted on more general issues of community. In period 2008 – 2009 over 570 people were involved in this training and linked activities.⁶⁷ <https://www.iuventa.sk/sk/Projekty/Participacia.alej>

⁶⁷ EKCYF sheet on participation; information from the Slovak Ministry.

Non-formal learning

As defined by Chrisholm⁶⁸, non-formal learning is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations, for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity – non-formal learning can take place during volunteering, active participation in NGO, trainings, extracurricular activities, project preparation and participation, structured online learning, conferences or seminar participation, language courses etc. This very wide definition disallows to ‘count’ the engagement in non-formal learning as such; therefore, in this chapter we will discuss participation in some of the specific learning initiatives.

Non-formal learning takes place through an **active participation in the work of youth or other civic organisations**. As shown in the previous chapter (see table 6), the membership in organisations was not very common among young people from the V4 countries. More young people participate in the organisations’ activities. Around 40% of young people participate in different kinds of activities (CZ 43%, HU 40%, PL 33%, SK 46%).⁶⁹ Participation in sport clubs is again most popular, as well as participation in leisure or youth clubs and cultural organisations.

Table 8: Participation in different kind of organisations’ activities (among all young people)

	Sport clubs/as-sociations	Youth club, organisation, leisure club	Cultural organisation	Local organisation	Any other NGO	Human rights and global development organisation	Political organisation or party	Climate change or global warming organisation
CZ	25	14	19	8	6	4	3	2
HU	23	11	10	10	5	1	3	2
PL	15	9	11	9	7	3	2	1
SK	29	13	20	6	5	3	4	2

Source: Eurobarometer 2011a.

Participation in activities or projects aimed at **fostering cooperation with youth from other countries** was most often declared by young people from Hungary – 13% (CZ 9%, PL 7%, SK 7%).⁷⁰ For example, Youth in Action projects in 2009 were participated by 10,000 young people from PL (aged 13 to 30), 3000 from HU, 2500 from CZ and 2000 from SK.⁷¹ In 2011, the number of participants in YiA projects has increased compared to 2009 (see figure 8).⁷²

⁶⁸ Chrisholm, L. (2005) Bridges for Recognition Cheat Sheet: Proceedings of the SALTO Bridges for Recognition: Promoting Recognition of Youth Work across Europe, Leuven-Louvain.

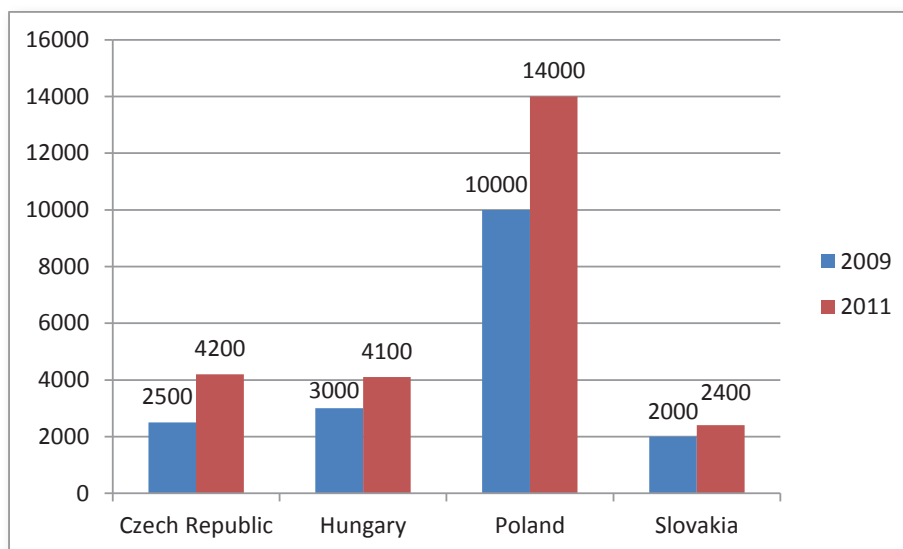
⁶⁹ Eurobarometer 2011a.

⁷⁰ Eurobarometer 2011a.

⁷¹ Youth in Action Programme 2010.

⁷² Information for the Ministries.

Figure 8: Young people (13-30) who participated in Youth in Action



Source: Youth in Action Programme 2010, and information from the Ministries.

Many projects of young people where they can collaborate with their peers from other countries are supported through the **Visegrad Fund**, which provides financial support for youth exchanges, scholarships for students and young researchers, and diverse international projects.

Visegrad Fund provides financial support for “the development of closer cooperation among citizens and institutions in the region as well as between the V4 region and other countries”. The grants support the realisation of cultural, scientific and educational projects, youth exchanges, cross-border projects, tourism promotion, as well as individual mobility. By the end of 2011, the Fund has supported more than 3,500 grant projects and awarded over 1,500 scholarships and artist residencies. <http://visegradfund.org/>

Among young people from the V4 countries **experience of staying abroad** for education or training is not so common – in CZ 14% of young people stayed abroad, HU 18%, PL 13% and SK 16% compared to EU average of 14%.⁷³ E.g. the number of students who went to study abroad or did an internship through **Erasmus Programme** (academic year 2010-2011) are as follows:

- CZ sent 6,433 students (including 844 interns), arrived 5,198;
- HU sent 4,164 students (including 817 interns), arrived 3,211;
- PL sent 14,234 students (including 2,662 interns), arrived 7,583;
- SK sent 2,458 students (including 406 interns), arrived 1,181.⁷⁴

⁷³ Eurobarometer 2011b.

⁷⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc/stat/1011/students.pdf>

In the study of students and graduates in the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, **diverse forms of learning experience** were listed as potentially useful in their future professional life (see table 9). As far as participation in these learning activities is concerned, the participation was the highest in job/internships in the home country related to the field of study (63.4%) as well as temporary or seasonal jobs in the home country (56.2%). Also, almost half of the respondents participated in the additional education programs offered by employers. Among the V4 countries (besides Hungary which did not participate in the study), Polish respondents were most active as far as job/internships in the home country related to the study, participation in the special interest groups, volunteering and student organisations are concerned. Czech students and graduates were most active particularly in student mobility programmes and self-employment, and Slovak in temporary jobs abroad.

Table 9: The percentage of respondents who have acquired a given form of work experience

	The average for the region	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Poland
Student mobility program (e.g. Erasmus)	21.5	26.8	23	20.4
Additional education program offered by employers e.g. workshops, case studies etc.	49.8	34	28.6	58.9
Job/internship in the home country, related to the field of study	63.4	39.7	31	75.5
Job/internship in the home country, unrelated to the field of study	37.3	36.5	37.3	39.4
Job/internship abroad, related to the field of study	6.9	8	8	6.4
Job/internship abroad, unrelated to the field of study	11.9	10.2	14.6	12.7
Temporary or seasonal jobs in the home country	56.2	58.2	55.1	57
Temporary or seasonal jobs abroad	25.7	21.9	29.6	27.2
Volunteering	31.5	25.4	23.3	33.2
Self-employment	9.8	15.6	9.1	6.4
Special interest group	35.9	12.4	5.2	46.3
Student government	8.6	5.4	3.1	8.7
Student organizations (e.g. AIESEC)	24.2	17.9	16	28.3

Source: Based on Deloitte /Touche, 2011, p. 6, with changes. In original, data for Latvia and Lithuania is also included. Hungary was not included in the survey.

Out of all of these experiences, job or internships in the home country as well as similar experiences abroad related to the field of studies were **perceived as most useful for looking for a job** (91% and 88% considered them useful), followed by the additional educational programmes (considered useful by 78%) and self-employment (69%). Around half of the respondents considered useful other forms of activism, such as volunteering, participation in organisations, special interest groups. The least useful for graduates seemed temporary jobs both in home country and abroad.

Recognition of non-formal learning is an important issue, as it allows to recognise diverse forms of learning besides formal education, underlines their value and outcomes, as well as provides certification for those activities that can be used later e.g. when searching for a job. This might, in return, popularise the participation e.g. in the civic initiatives or organisations' work. In the V4 countries, some young people who participated in volunteering did receive a **certificate or diploma for voluntary activities** (CZ 23%, HU 23%, PL 39%, SK 16%).⁷⁵ While in Poland the percentage of those with certificates is the highest, one can see that the fact of receiving the diploma does not seem to impact on the participation rate which in Poland is still very low. Concerning the policy efforts, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are actively working on recognition of non-formal education in youth work thanks to national projects supported from European Social Funds (see good practices). In 2013, two major events are prepared promoting the importance of non-formal education dimension of youth work.

Good practices: Non-formal learning

Czech Republic: 'Keys for Life'

The Project is implemented by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute of Children and Youth. The 4-year project is aimed at approximately forty five thousand workers of leisure time centres, after-school care centres, school clubs and non-governmental organizations throughout the Czech Republic. These are leisure time pedagogues, child-care workers, and volunteers working with children and young people up to 30 years of age in their leisure time (children and people up to 30 years of age represent more than a quarter of the entire Czech population). The goal of the project was to create a system that would support sustainable development of leisure-time and non-formal education, to increase the quality and extend the range of the offer of leisure-time and non-formal education in the Czech Republic. Activities include training of the youth workers and management of facilities, setting up quality standards for youth work, strengthening recognition of youth workers competences and knowledge sharing, also through publications.

<http://www.nidm.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot/klice-pro-zivot-2009/project-keys-for-life-2009>

⁷⁵ Eurobarometer 2011a.

Hungary: 'Job Club'

Csoport-téka Association designed a complex service for the unemployed and job-seekers within the frame of non-formal education. The Association provides mentoring (personal consultation) combined with half-day and one-day trainings that develop key competencies. The main field of the association's work covers, among others, Educational and job searching programs, Collective occupations, Counselling, Labour-market information for businesses and organisations, Creative team work. Last year, the Association helped several registered job-seekers to find an occupation.

<http://www.csoportteka.hu/>

Poland: 'KORBA'

This project supports development of young leaders aged 13 to 19 that are pupils of Middle schools and upper-middle school in Voivodship of Silesia, Opolskie and Lower Silesia. The main components of the project is to train young leaders and then to encourage them to conduct their own projects in their local communities. The projects are realized fully by young people and based on their initiative and ideas. The organizers are the Siemacha Association and the Foundation of Civic Development DEMOS.

<http://www.projektkorba.pl>

Slovakia: 'KomPrax'

Project KomPrax – Competences for Labour Market (2011-2013) was supported by European Social Fund. KomPrax uses the youth work as an area for non-formal education of young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers aiming to provide further opportunities for better employability and development of key competences.

<http://www.iuventu.sk/sk/KomPrax/Home.alej>

Conclusions and recommendations

The comparative analysis of the situation of young people in the Visegrad countries indicates common issues to be tackled by the countries, but also the need to take into account in each case specific situation of a given country. Unemployment of youth appears today as the most critical issue to tackle by the Visegrad countries, similarly to many other EU member states. On the other hand, the participation of young people has to be assured also in other diverse spheres of the social life – in education, civil society, decision-making and political sphere, as well as in the development of youth policy.

As the report has shown, the employment of young people, but particularly **quality employment**, remains the first sphere of needed actions from the countries concerned. While a lot of initiatives are being carried out by the V4 countries, there is still a need for more support for employment of young people. The **internships** (or job) remain the most valuable experience for the graduates when looking for work. Still, their quality and professional relevance has to be assured. Similarly, while subsidised traineeships reveal a good tool for inserting young people into the labour market, they might be exploited by employers avoiding employment costs. Therefore, the incentives scheme could be designed for the traineeship providers, so these would lead to further employment. In order to support young people in job search, **individualized counselling** is needed for allowing them better reflection on the past learning experiences, as well as prospective opportunities. The public employment services should invest in the provision of personalised services, similarly to university career offices. As positive attitudes towards **entrepreneurial activity** are very common in Poland and Slovakia, the programmes encouraging and supporting the start-up initiatives should be made more available. In Hungary and in the Czech Republic more initiatives towards stirring up entrepreneurial spirit, also within the formal education, should be considered. Possibly, the good practices encouraging the start-up activities within the educational establishments should be considered there. The childcare provision needs to be assured in all V4 countries in order to improve **participation of young women** in the labour market. The enrolment rate in pre-school education in all countries is quite low. The policies should be based on the vision of partnership in family, where the child care is provided by both mother and father, otherwise

the traditional division of parental roles as the basis for policy might cause discrimination of women at the level of recruitment, promotion, and remuneration.

As the analysis has shown, however many barriers to **voluntary engagement** appear, young generation has nevertheless a great potential to become further engaged in diverse forms of social participation. The activities being run by the Ministries aim at promoting voluntary engagement of different nature – short-term/long-term, local/international, spontaneous/organised, as well as cross-border. Voluntary service of students shown as a good practice in parallel developing skills of engaged volunteers, also contributes to social inclusion of children and young people from small towns.

There are fears expressed by one of the National Ministries, which are also noticed by many researchers and young people themselves, that participation of young people in decision making is in many cases only 'decorative' gesture of authorities which allow young people to present their ideas or needs. Paternalistic approach of local and regional authorities to 'take care' of young generation is still present and accepted. This is possibly why young people choose now **alternative ways of influencing the political decisions**, and turn to the protests more often than previously. Internet appears also as the space of young people activity and a good share of them engages into discussing of civic or social matters in the **virtual space**. The question still remains if these new forms of participation, being often creative and really directed by young people, will have a power to impact the policy-making and influence relevant decisions? Within the good practices presented, the projects directed at strengthening the capacities and competences of young people for the **active participation in decision-making**, as well as building structures e.g. in forms of city youth councils are the valuable contribution to ensure that young people's voice will be heard. On the other hand, there are presented good practices which aim at finding new ways of 'gathering voices' from young people e.g. through face-to-face workshops or online chatting. The remarkable numbers of young people take part in these initiatives, which now need to assure that the voice of young people is not only **heard**, but also seriously considered and possibly **impacting** the policy making.

Finally, the **recognition of non-formal learning** is a topic being considered within national youth policy lines. Many young people of the V4 countries participate in organised activities of clubs or youth groups or organisations, while much less of them are actually the members of them. While the question on the value and meaning of membership remains valid, the efforts towards the stronger engagement of those who participate in organisations' activity should be undertaken. Possibly, the **leadership schemes and trainings** would allow some of the activities' participants to become further engaged in activities' development. Also, more young people should be motivated to participate or organise activities which involve **intercultural and international encounters**. It is actually encouraging that students do value diverse learning activities in the future job search, which matches with the results

of research by the European Youth Forum suggesting the **high importance of non-formal learning for employability**. The great example of connecting labour market and non-formal education are projects in the V4 directed at recognising the potential of leisure time activities and youth work for skills development. While many young people in the V4 countries are engaged in diverse forms of non-formal learning, the projects aiming at recognising and strengthening the value of youth work start to be of particular importance. The good practices presented not only show how the learning process of youth and their initiatives could be strengthened and supported, but also show the concentrated **investments into the youth workers' competences**.

To sum up the list of suggested actions, it is worthwhile to underline the importance and added value of **close cooperation within the V4 youth sector**. Sustainable contacts between ministries for youth and other stakeholders would have a potential to create unique regional cooperation which is in line with the current European trends of mutual learning and exchange of good practices via the open method of coordination.

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