

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY OF YOUTH SECTOR IN SLOVENIA

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INTRODUCTION

This is just an attempt to bring the history of the youth sector in Slovenia closer to all those who are today – in one or another way involved in youth work or youth policy in Slovenia. It was written in Slovenian language, intended for Slovenian public and then translated. In fact, the original text was meant just an addition to much larger attempt to create an overview of European and World development of youth movements and structures. This overview, unfortunately at the moment available only in Slovenian language, exists and starts with YMCA in mid-19th century and finish with the end of independent EU youth programmes. The Yugoslav and Slovenian stories were meant in this context only as additional explanation. This is also a reason why a lot of information is simply related to international activities. And – reading the translated text, one thing is obvious. Some of the messages have been simply lost in the translation.

Never the less, it is just a contribution. Could be one of the starting points for further exploration in Slovenia. I hope that present text gives enough stones for anyone to go deeper. For readers outside Slovenia it might be interesting only as an overview to be able to compare it with developments somewhere else.

The overview starts with the end of I. WW and finish with 2013 to be in line with mentioned larger work. Of course, it would be wrong to state that everything started with the end of WW I. Much of what is mentioned existed also before. Movements, largely composed by younger generations and linked either with Slovenian national-awareness process since “spring of nations” in 1848 or pan-Slavic ideas, have been in existence. Never the less, one of important fact is, that territories of what is today Slovenia, have been mainly quite rural areas. Urban areas have been small and quite often dominated by German speaking population. Maribor – as the second larger town today, was predominantly German speaking at the end of WW I. And youth organisations – if we look at broader picture – have been primarily growing up in urban areas.

Quite some space in the text is given to the time of socialism and official youth structures developments in Yugoslavia and Slovenia. At the end, out of more or less 100 years period, half of them are time of WW II. and then socialist period. But I have to say that I tried to bring also other stories into the text. Unfortunately, not many easily accessible written sources exist about other youth initiatives or work with young people outside official structures. With a bit of cynicism one can say that the best source would be remaining archives of former State security service. One can not avoid a feeling that strong rule existed. Do not collect any documentation, keep everything in very private space.

The last part, especially after 1995, is really just an account of most important developments, mainly linked with setting up legal and institutional framework of youth work and youth policy in Slovenia. Never the less, I am more than happy that – in the context of collecting pieces of history of youth sector in Europe – Slovenia has finally made its contribution. Hopefully first one and to be followed with much more scientific and research approach in the future.

YUGOSLAV AND SLOVENIAN STORIES

From 25 to 27 May 1990, the Cankarjev Dom cultural centre in Ljubljana hosted the last congress of the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (ZSMJ¹), which ended with its self-imposed dissolution at the Yugoslav federal level. This fact was not very clear at the conclusion of the congress, mainly because many delegates were of the opinion that the federal youth structure could continue in a new context. Also, a committee for the establishment of a Youth Council of Yugoslavia, headed by Igor Lavš, was established.

A new Student Organisation of Yugoslavia and a new Yugoslav Forum functioning as a link between the political parties that were formed or were to be formed out of the republic organisations of the League of Socialist Youth were planned to be established. The story of this formalised youth structure in Yugoslavia with its roots stretching back to the times before World War II was thus brought to an end. This congress was also attended by a 10-member delegation of the already established Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS²), which was facilitated by the Socialist Youth League of Slovenia (ZSMS³), which relinquished ten delegate posts to the MSS. The actual end of the story of the Yugoslav youth structure took place in 1991, and extended into 1992 only in some minor respects.

THE PERIOD BEFORE THE TWO WARS (1919–1941)

Youth work and youth movements in the Yugoslav state during the period between the two World Wars were initially characterised by different traditions amongst the sections originating in the collapsed Austro-Hungarian Empire, on the one hand, and in the victorious Kingdom of Serbia, on the other. Subsequently, the youth organisation structure and work with young people in youth organisations was closely associated with the Southern Slavic Kingdom⁴ political and social development. Having either a pro-Yugoslav or anti-Yugoslav orientation was thus one of the key distinctions between youth organisations. Another important distinction was between the right and liberal, including left political orientations and was most strongly reflected among the organised student youth. The activities of all organisations in the Kingdom were severely restricted upon the introduction of the royal dictatorship⁵. Practically, the activities of organisations without a pan-Yugoslav dimension came to an end.

In October 1919, there was a failed attempt at establishing a United Yugoslav Youth (JUO⁶) organisation, which the communist students and youth, including some other groups, tried to set up and assume the main role therein. Since this was not successful, a few days later they established the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia (SKOJ⁷). After the enactment of the Protection of the State Act in 1921, the SKOJ was as an illegal organisation and its members, to make at least some public

¹ ZSMJ - Zveza socialistične mladine Jugoslavije:

² MSS - Mladinski svet Slovenije

³ ZSMS - Zveza socialistične mladine Slovenije

⁴ First named as Kingdom of Srbs, Croats and Slovenians (SHS) and then renamed into Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929

⁵ On 6 of January 1929, King Alexander, abolished the Constitution, prorogued the National Assembly and introduced a personal dictatorship with aim to establish one – Yugoslav nation – out of three Southern Slavic »tribes«. Lasted until his assassination in Marseille, 1934.

⁶ JUO – Jugoslovenska ujedinjena omladina

⁷ SKOJ – Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije

appearance, used to set up various educational and cultural societies that also provided cover for the League's illegal activities.

The operation of the Yugoslav Progressive Nationalist Youth (JNNO⁸), established in Split in 1921, led to the establishment of two dissenting youth organisations. The National Radical Party established the Serbian National Youth (SRNAO⁹) organisation and in Croatia, the Croatian National Youth (HANA O¹⁰) organisation was established on 15 August 1922, pertaining to a wider circle of Croatian parties that opposed the centralised organisational structure of the Kingdom of SHS. By some accounts, JNNO was established also as a response to the Italian ambitions in the east side of Adriatic.

The Sokol organisation, which was a strong educational organisation even before World War I, became extremely important in the period from the proclamation of the royal dictatorship until the second half of the 1930s. King Alexander considered it an instrument for spreading the idea of a Yugoslav nation and the organisation was virtually nationalised and incorporated into the school system. Sokol was headed by the Crown Prince Peter Karađorđević. However, there were other "gymnastic" youth movements in addition to the Sokol movement. Under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the Orli (Eagles) organisation began to develop in Slovenia before the World War I., which also represented an ideological alternative to the more liberal Sokol members and a political distinction as regards its perception of the centralised organisational structure of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The Scout Movement was also present in Slovenia and had existed in Ljubljana as a German-speaking organisation even before World War I. The first Slovenian Scout group was established in the territory of the present Slovenia on 22 October 1922 under the leadership of Franc Pintar and was provided support by Scouts from Belgrade in its initial period of operation. In the following year (1923), a Slovenian Scout Parish was established, later renamed the Drava Scout Parish, in accordance with the new state administrative structure. In 1923, Pavel Kunaver joined the Scout movement, who became the chief of the Ljubljana Dragons Section¹¹ and left a strong imprint on the pre-war and post-war Scouting landscape and subsequently on scouting in Slovenia.

In 1925, the organisational sister of the Scout organisation, called the Slovenian Woodcraft Organisation¹² (which, according to some sources was also known as the Association of Slovenian Scouts¹³) was set up, based on the pedagogical approach of Ernest Thompson Seton, which spread from Slovenia to Zagreb; a few attempts at establishing a Woodcraft youth organisation were also recorded in Sarajevo. In 1929, the organisation was renamed the Yugoslav Woodcraft League as a consequence of royal dictatorship. The Krek Youth, as the youth section of the Catholic Socialists (established in September 1921), and the Christian Socialist Worker Youth, established in Celje in June 1926, should also be mentioned among the organisations associated with different political parties.

⁸ JNNO – Jugoslovenska napredna nacioanalistička omladina

⁹ SRNAO – Srpska nacionalna omladina

¹⁰ HANA O – Hrvatska nacionalna omladina

¹¹ (slv) Zmajev steg

¹² (slv) Slovenska gozdovniška organizacija

¹³ (slv) Zveza slovenskih tabornikov

The so-named Catholic Action also included a youth organisation whose structure was organised along the lines of archdioceses. In 1936, new rules were introduced, making it an independent umbrella organisation containing a number of youth organisations focused on different target groups of young people (secondary school students, workers, rural youth, and students). Among the Catholic organisations there were also the Salesians, whose institutions worked with young people and who were among the first to organise summer camps for less well-off youth.

The scout organisation in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes started its activities in 1919 under the auspices of the Sokol organisation and was called “Boy Pathfinders and Girl Hikers”¹⁴, but became independent in 1920. The first “Boy Pathfinders” organisation was set up in Belgrade and then spread throughout the Kingdom. In Serbia, the first scout unit was formed in Belgrade in 1911 under the name of Young Chetniks, because Miloš Popovič, who founded the group, translated the word scout as Chetnik. This unit was called Lasta. In Croatia, the first youth organisation based on the scout programme was set up in schools under the name of secondary student excursion societies¹⁵ in 1913, and the following year the Croatian Scouts Association (HSU¹⁶) was established, which operated until the end of World War I.

In 1921, a state organisation called the Association of Boy Pathfinders and Girl Hikers of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes¹⁷ was established, whom King Alexander Karađorđević became the patron of in 1923. This organisation participated in establishing the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM) and subsequently also became a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). The organisation was later reorganised in accordance with the new state administrative structure following the introduction of the royal dictatorship and was renamed the Scouts Association of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It operated until 1941, when it was dissolved. The scout organisation’s relationship with the regime was corroborated by the fact that for a certain period it was also headed by General Milan Nedić¹⁸; moreover, the scouts’ leaders were trained by the royal army and the state apparatus participated considerably in organising scout trips for participants from all over the country.

The higher education student-organised structures were mostly set up at particular universities, where student organisations, including student clubs or organisations, performed their activities and formed links on an ideological basis. Student organisations at the pan-Yugoslav level also included the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia (SKOJ), on the one hand, and the Organisation of National Students (ORNAS¹⁹) as part of Orjuna, on the other hand.

Before World War I the organisational structure of Slovenian students was bound predominantly to the university centres in Graz, Vienna and Prague. The university student organisational structure in Slovenia began to develop after 1919, when the University of Ljubljana was founded. The first university student organisation was named the Yugoslav Academics Support Society²⁰, but it ceased to exist in 1922.

¹⁴ (srb) izvidnika in planinki

¹⁵ In Croatian: đlačke izletne družbe

¹⁶ HSU – Hrvatsko skavtsko udruženje

¹⁷ (srb.) Savez izvidnika i planinki Kraljevine SHS

¹⁸ Later known as a leader of puppet government of Serbia under German occupation

¹⁹ ORNAS – Organizacija nacionalnih studenata

²⁰ (slv.) Podporno društvo jugoslovanskih akademikov

In 1920, the Jadran Student Club²¹ was established, advocating Yugoslav nationalism, and subsequently a number of Catholic student organisations were established, including the Association of Christ the King's Youth²² in 1923 with Ernest Tomec playing an important role, as was a much more radical Catholic student club named the Guard²³, under the ideological leadership of Lambert Ehrlich. The Guard became an integral part of Catholic Action. At that time, three groups of organisations competed for the attention of university students: nationalist (Yugoslav) organisations, left-wing organisations, and Catholic organisations.

It is interesting that in this period the Slovenian teaching profession was also engaged in working with youth and organising youth, in pedagogical terms. In 1931, Dr Stanko Gogala, a professor at the college of education in Ljubljana, issued a book called "On the Pedagogical Values of Youth Movements" as part of a collection of pedagogical manuals. Quite detailed description of Slovenian political movements among young people and their organisations, including their confrontations during 1920 – 1940 is also available with the work of Anka Vidovič-Miklavčič, published in 1981.

From Young Communist (SKOJ) – to the Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (ZSMJ)

The Young Communist League of Yugoslavia (SKOJ) was founded in 1919 in Zagreb as the youth section of the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia, which was later renamed the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ). After a short period of activity, it was banned (like the KPJ) in the Kingdom of SHS and continued its activities underground.

When the armed resistance against the occupying forces started in 1941, the SKOJ began to establish and organise youth organisations on a larger scale, such as the Association of Slovenian Youth (ZSM²⁴) in Slovenia and the Young Generation Association (SMGH²⁵) in Croatia, which was intended to attract other young people in local environments, in addition to the youth already organised in the SKOJ.

The Association of Slovenian Youth is also presented by some sources as the Youth Liberation Front owing to the fact that it brought together members of various organisations with roughly identical political orientations but all committed to the resistance, a feature which was characteristic of the Liberation Front until the Dolomite Declaration²⁶ (1943).

On this basis, the United Association of Anti-Fascist Youth of Yugoslavia (USAOJ²⁷) was established in Bihać in 1942, operating under SKOJ mentorship and renamed the People's Youth of Yugoslavia (NOJ²⁸) in 1946. In 1948, the two organisations merged into a single organisation that retained the name the People's Youth of Yugoslavia but which was renamed the Union of Youth of Yugoslavia (SOJ²⁹) in 1963. The reason for this merger was supposedly the fear of the Yugoslav political

²¹ (slv.) Študentski klub Jadran

²² (slv.) Zveza mladcev Kristusa kralja

²³ (slv.) Klub katoliških študentov Straža«

²⁴ ZSM – Zveza slovenske mladine

²⁵ SMGH – Savez mlade generacije Hrvatske

²⁶ A moment when Slovenian resistance movement moved from its pluralism of participating actors to political exclusivism of Communists

²⁷ USAOJ – Ujedinjeni savez antifašističke omladine Jugoslavije

²⁸ NOJ – Narodna omladina Jugoslavije

²⁹ SOJ – Savez omladine Jugoslavije

leadership during the conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in 1948, because the former SKOJ leadership was highly pro-Soviet oriented.

The Union of Students of Yugoslavia (ZŠJ³⁰) was formed in 1951, but in 1974 it was forced to merge with the People's Youth of Yugoslavia and the merged organisation was renamed the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (ZSMJ³¹), whose path ended at its last congress in Ljubljana.

In Slovenia, the Communist Youth League of Slovenia (ZKMS³²) was formed in 1939 after the establishment of the Communist Party of Slovenia. During the war and in order to also organise other young people within the Liberation Front, the Communist Youth League of Slovenia (ZKMS) promoted the establishment of the Association of Slovenian Youth (ZSM) in 1943. At its second congress in 1945, the latter was renamed the People's Youth of Slovenia (LMS³³) and was merged in 1948 (as was the case at the federal level) with the ZKMS into a single organisation named the People's Youth of Slovenia. The latter was renamed the Union of Youth of Slovenia in 1963, and was renamed again in 1974, upon its merger with the student organisation, the Socialist Youth League of Slovenia (ZSMS).

The merger of the Young Communist League and the People's Youth in 1948 was primarily based on the assessment of the political leadership of Yugoslavia of the threat posed by the Communist Youth League in view of the *Informbiro* (i.e. Cominform) resolution, because the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia was very pro-Soviet oriented. On the other hand, the punishment approach was demonstrated in the forced merger of the youth and student organisations as a consequence of the student organisation's views held in the period 1968–1974 and was aimed at ensuring uniformity through a single organisation. The merger of the student and youth organisations also followed the reorganisation model of the youth and student structures implemented in Czechoslovakia in 1970. An idea of a single youth structure also included "innovation" of collective membership within ZSM intended for all other organisations with only youth or strong also youth focus.

The organisational structure of the ZSMJ had a vertical and a horizontal dimension. The vertical organisational structure grew from the basic organisations in schools, companies, and institutions, and from the local community level, and subsequently followed the hierarchical organisation of socio-political communities ranging from municipal through republic all the way to the federal organisations. Since 1974, the horizontal dimension consisted of organisations that were collective members of the ZSMJ and of the republic organisations of the League of Socialist Youth. These covered practically the full range of organised youth activities for adolescents and even children, and most of them also had a vertical structure ranging from the municipal to the federal level. The structure of collective members was not the same in all the Republics. In Slovenia, the collective members included the Scouts Association of Slovenia, the Holiday Association of Slovenia, the Association for the Technical Culture of Slovenia, Musical Youth of Slovenia (*Jeunesse Musicales*), Slovenian Literary Youth, the Alpine Association of Slovenia (Youth Committee), the Slovenian Red Cross (Youth Committee), the Slovenian Friends of Youth Association, and the United Nations Club Association. However, it should be noted that in the 1980s many of the territorially local ZSMS organisations existed only on paper.

³⁰ ZŠJ – Zveza študentov Jugoslavije

³¹ In Serbian: SSOJ – Savez socijalističke omladine Jugoslavije

³² ZKMS – Zveza komunistične mladine Slovenije

³³ LMS – Ljudska mladina Slovenije

A special vertical organisational structure of the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia was also set up within the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA³⁴) and followed its organisational structure. The remains of the former autonomous student organisation were present in the functional organisational form, represented by the League of Socialist Youth university organisations and consisting of the basic organisations organised along the lines of university members.

The Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia (ZPJ³⁵) was founded in 1942 together with the United Federation of Anti-Fascist Youth of Yugoslavia, following the example of the Soviet Pioneer organisation. In Slovenia it was founded as late as 1947 and mentorship over its activities was initially provided by the People's Youth of Slovenia, which later passed to the Slovenian Friends of Youth Association (ZPMS³⁶), which was responsible for the activities performed by the Council of the Union of Pioneers of Slovenia. Its activities were especially associated with the primary school system because this was the centre of its actions. The mentors of pioneer organisations at schools were mainly members of the school teaching staff and their mentorship was considered part of their teaching obligations.

Another organisation that was also firmly integrated in the primary and secondary school systems was the United Nations Clubs, which were spread throughout Yugoslavia and involved in ISMUN³⁷ activities. The organisation of the UN youth clubs in Slovenia was part of the United Nations Association of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia until 1961 and then became independent and subsequently ended up as a form of work under the auspices of the ZSMS.

The international activities of ZSMJ and its predecessors

A number of parallels can be found between the international activities of the ZSMS and its predecessors and the official international politics and situation of Yugoslavia. In principle, its activities in the international arena can be divided into several periods.

In the period before the conflict with the *Informbiro* (Cominform), the Yugoslav youth structure supported Soviet views and thus continued to follow the guidelines of the Young Communist League of Yugoslavia (SKOJ) as a member of the former Communist Youth International (CYI). As a member of the United Nations, it was invited to participate in the formation of the WFDY (the World Federation of Democratic Youth) and later the International Union of Students (IUS). After 1948, it found itself in open conflict with both organisations and in 1949 it was excluded from the IUS, whereas its activities in the WFDY were practically frozen. The exclusion of Yugoslav student organisation from the IUS prompted the protest withdrawal of Great Britain's National Union of Students (NUS³⁸) from the IUS.

In the mid-1950s, the People's Youth of Yugoslavia (NOJ) became a member of the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) and in March 1960 it hosted a CCIVS General Assembly in Niška Banja. However, the situation of the Yugoslav structure in the WFDY did not change much even after the relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia improved, since many communist youth movements considered the Yugoslav structures to be traitors to Marxism

³⁴ JNA – Jugoslovenska narodna armija

³⁵ ZPJ – Zveza pionirjev Jugoslavije

³⁶ ZPMS – Zveza prijateljev mladine Slovenije

³⁷ ISMUN – International youth and student movement for UN

³⁸ NUS – the National Union of Students (of the United Kingdom)

and Leninism. With the introduction of the non-alignment policy, the Yugoslav youth structure focused on cooperation with the youth movements generated either as part of liberation movements and/or youth movements in the newly created independent states of Africa and Asia.

Perhaps the most important international initiative of the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (ZSMJ) was the attempt to create a youth and student non-aligned movement at the end of the 1970s, thereby setting up the third global platform. A preparatory meeting for its establishment was held in 1978, while the establishment itself was planned to take place in Malta in January 1979. The preparatory meeting in Belgrade was not conclusive and the attempt to organise a new global youth platform at the meeting in Malta failed, mostly owing to some strong pro-Soviet youth and student movements from the non-aligned countries. Many of the regime organisations from the Non-Aligned Movement and the Soviet bloc advocated a natural alliance between the non-aligned and socialist countries.

Another major failure of the ZSMJ was its efforts in the early 1980s to become an AEYSC³⁹ member after the model of the National Committee of Finnish Youth (SNT). The ZSMJ participated in the final stages of establishing the AEYC, but its membership application was rejected because some of the members insisted that membership status could only be obtained by international organisations. According to the available sources, it can also be concluded that the AEYSC opposed the ZSMJ's membership application also due to the still-ongoing ideological conflict between the Marxist-Leninist socialist youth organisations and the new Yugoslav policy of socialist self-management. This was further corroborated by the fact that the majority of the WFDY members tried to marginalise the Yugoslav presence also on other occasions (e.g. during the World Festivals of Youth).

After such developments the ZSMJ significantly reduced its presence in all multilateral frameworks and/or practically froze its participation therein. Although it took part in the World Youth Congress (WYC) held within the International Youth Year (IYY) framework in Barcelona in 1985, it sent only a single-member delegation there, which represented the Yugoslav Committee for the International Youth Year, and two observers. The only global event still regularly attended by the ZSMJ was the World Festival of Youth. The last such festival in which the ZSMJ participated with a ten-member delegation was the Festival in Pyongyang in 1989.

Notwithstanding the failure at establishing a third global youth platform, the ZSMJ organised international seminars for youth and students in Kumrovec in the 1980s, mainly attended by the representatives of youth movements from non-aligned countries and/or the youth sections of the political parties of various liberation movements. One of these seminars was also attended by a CENYC (Council of European National Youth Committees) representative (May 1986). However, these meetings did not bring any added value since the focus was on the "free tourism" of youth political functionaries and the fellow travellers of the time could also tell that the participants often had family or business ties with the highest government officials in the participating countries.

The ZSMJ and/or other structures within its collective membership continued to maintain bilateral contacts with various national youth structures and international youth or student organisations, and occasionally also organised some joint activities. One of these activities included a seminar entitled "the Non-Aligned Countries and Europe", organised within ISMUN framework by the Yugoslav organisation together with the Young European Federalists (JEF) in Herceg Novi in 1984. The most

³⁹ AEYSC – All European Youth and Student Cooperation framework

genuine among the contacts formed with the structures of the European socialist countries were the contacts with the Romanian youth structure, but only after Romania had adopted a slightly more independent foreign policy orientation within the Warsaw Pact countries. But on the other side, the youth level relations only reflected good state and “ruling parties” good relations. At the end, Yugoslavia even co-operated with Romania in the production of its high tech multipurpose jet fighter “Orao⁴⁰” (Egel).

The ties between the ZSMJ’s international activities and Yugoslav international policy were demonstrated by the working and institutional ties of this organisation. Under the former regime, international activities were coordinated by the former federal Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia (SZDLJ). Assistants working in the international department of the federal youth organisation had regular working contacts with the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs.

With the accession of the SFRY as a signatory of the European Cultural Convention in 1987, the ZSMJ assumed the additional role of the Yugoslav authorities’ representative in the CDEJ (European Steering Committee for Youth), and participated, on behalf of Yugoslavia, in the Third Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth, held in Lisbon in 1990. In 1990, an actual opportunity for the cooperation of youth leaders from Yugoslavia in the educational activities of the European Youth Centre opened up and the selection of the proposed participants from Yugoslavia was performed within the federal structure. The final decision on the Yugoslav participants was taken by the CENYC in accordance with its available quota.

The Esperanto Youth Association of Yugoslavia should also be mentioned among the international activities implemented by the ZSMJ collective members, in addition to the activities of the ISMUN Yugoslav member. The Esperanto movement was prohibited in certain socialist countries (e.g. in the Soviet Union), whereas in others it was permitted. In Yugoslavia, particularly after the conflict of its leadership with the Soviet Union, Esperanto became popular and some sources report that this language was also mastered to some extent by Josip Broz (Tito), which was also the reason why the Yugoslav leadership favoured this organisation. Other sources also speak of Esperanto as the ideal solution for global communication in order to avoid the use of dominant languages, which was in line with the non-alignment concept. The fact is that the TEJO (the World Esperanto Youth Organisation) organised two International Youth Congresses of Esperanto (IJK⁴¹) in Yugoslavia, the first one in Sarajevo in 1973 and the second one in Zagreb in 1988. The International Youth Congress of Esperanto is the largest annual meeting of young Esperanto speakers in the world and is attended by representatives of national youth organisations and Esperanto sections from all over the world. Ljubljana also hosted an international TEJO seminar in 1965, the first in a series of seminars of this international organisation, which led to its opening up and cooperation with other youth organisations.

International activities of ZSMS

The ZSMS represented Slovenia in the Alps-Adriatic Alliance Working Community⁴². This unique alliance of provincial (regional) authorities in Northern Italy, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia from Yugoslavia and Železna Županija from Hungary was practically the only international multilateral framework in which the ZSMS acted independently. On a bilateral basis, as agreed between the

⁴⁰ Known in Romania as IAR 93

⁴¹ IJK – Internacia Junulara Kongreso

⁴² (slv.) Alpe - Adria Delovna skupnost

various republic Socialist Youth League organisations in Yugoslavia, the ZSMS cooperated with the Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth (SSM), the Hungarian Young Communist League (KISZ⁴³) from Železna Županija in Hungary and Komsomol from Soviet republic of Georgia. At the turn of the 1980s, cooperation with partners in the Tunisian province of Sousse and the Socialist Youth of Catalonia was also established. The cooperation with Slovakia, Železna Županija and Georgia included mutual visits of leadership delegations and an exchange of youth work brigades or groups of young people within the youth work actions.

The cooperation with Tunisia, where the partner organisation was the youth section of the Socialist Destourian Party, which was the Tunisian ruling party from 1964 to 1988, took the form of volunteer exchanges until the mid-1980s. After 1982 there were no more mutual meetings of delegations and after 1985 volunteer exchanges stopped as well. The cooperation with Catalonia appears to have remained only on paper.

An important part of the international activities also included cooperation with the youth organisations of the neighbouring countries because the ZSMS maintained regular coordination meetings with Slovenian youth organisations abroad. For the purposes of international engagement, there was a Council on International Relations operating within the Republic Conference of the ZSMS⁴⁴, chaired by a member of the Presidency of the Republic Conference of the ZSMS responsible for international relations. The Council actually consisted of three pillars, i.e. the Commission for International Cooperation, the Commission for Emigrants, and the UN Clubs. The UN Clubs, as a form of ZSMS activity, provided education and training for international cooperation, based on values as solidarity but also “nonalignment” and non-interference into domestic affairs.

The ZSMS collective members entered the international arena primarily through their Yugoslav federal organisations and their membership in international organisations; some of them, however, for example the Scouts Association of Slovenia as part of the Scouts Association of Yugoslavia (SIJ⁴⁵), were not members of any international organisation.

In 1984, the Republic Organisation of the Socialist Youth League of Slovenia (ZSMS) established contacts with the international youth organisation called Service Civil International (SCI) and began cooperating with it in the international exchange of volunteers, whereas the ZSMS became its official partner in Yugoslavia. The decision of the ZSMS in favour of this cooperation was also a consequence of the crisis experienced by the youth work brigades in Slovenia, because fewer people decided to participate in them. On the other hand, there was a growing interest in participating in more specialised activities with considerably fewer participants, from which both the environment and the participants benefited.

However, this cooperation was not supported by the Federal ZSM organisation, which even requested that these activities be transferred to the federal level, referring to its constitutional powers in international relations. Thus the Yugoslav Coordination for the international exchange of volunteers and the organisation of international work camps was established, which acted as a subcommittee of the federal structure for volunteer youth work activities (DORA⁴⁶), with its headquarters in Ljubljana. During this period, the exchange of volunteers with organisations from the

⁴³ KISZ – Magyar Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség

⁴⁴ RK ZSMS – Republiška konferenca Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije

⁴⁵ In Serbian: *SIJ – Savez izviđača Jugoslavije*

⁴⁶ DORA – Dobrovoljne omladinske radne aktivnosti

ALLIANCE began as well and the Yugoslav Coordination also participated in their Technical European Meetings (TEM).⁴⁷).

The developments associated with the planned Transnational Radical Party Congress in Zagreb in 1989, for which the Yugoslav authorities had not issued a permit, were also interesting. As a result, 650 Party members went on a hunger strike in order to make the Yugoslav authorities reconsider their decision. In this atmosphere the Republic Conference of the ZSMS invited the Transnational Radical Party to carry out part of its federal council's meeting in Bohinj, which took place in January 1989, while it also called for a stop to the hunger strike, a request that was granted. However, this event already coincided within the ZSMS's active dissociation from its "youth nature".

In August 1989, a 50-member ZSMS delegation, together with the delegations from other republic ZSM organisations, also participated in the youth event held upon the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution in Paris, which was organised by the European Political Youth Council (EPYC).

There was also some international cooperation at the level of individual municipal ZSMS organisations, particularly in the area of town-twinning. For example, the Ljubljana ZSMS organisation maintained regular contacts with the youth structures in the twinned cities of Wiesbaden and Leverkusen and organised mutual visits to Slovenia and Germany.

The international student cooperation focused on the exchange of professional practices. These activities were implemented by the Coordinating Committee for the International Exchange of Professional Practices (KOMISP), which was an integral part of the University Conference of the ZSMS (UK ZSMS)⁴⁸ Ljubljana.

In terms of missed opportunities, the proposal by the Swiss canton of Jura, put forward in the middle of the 1980s and aimed at educational exchanges, should be mentioned, although the ZSMS in that case was merely an observer, whereas the official player on the Slovenian side was the Institute for International Technical, Educational and Cultural Cooperation of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (ZAMTES⁴⁹). The Swiss proposal was submitted after the Slovenian side had shown interest in such cooperation during its visit to Switzerland. However, the Slovenian side had in mind in particular the exchange of graduate students, whereas the Swiss proposal included exchanges ranging from vocational training to postgraduate studies. For purely operational reasons, associated with the provision of opportunities for the participants from Switzerland in Slovenia, such a proposal was very difficult if not completely impossible to implement, therefore this cooperation never took place.

Other youth initiatives in Slovenia during the period of the Socialist Yugoslavia (SFRY)

The Roman Catholic Church was the only other broad framework that included youth organisation and youth activities. In 1952, the first young people (mostly religious students) gathered around the priest Karl Cankar, who was a brother of the better-known Ivan Cankar, and who had returned from religious service in Sarajevo. Young people were organised mainly on the basis of initiatives made by individual priests or monks, and through the self-organisation of youth groups. In the 1960s, well-known groups gathered around the Jesuits Miha Žužek and Vital Vider. In 1965, a youth movement

⁴⁷ In English: *TEM – Technical European Meeting*

⁴⁸ UK ZSMS – Univerzitetna konferenca Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije

⁴⁹ ZAMTES – Zavod za mednarodno tehnično, izobraževalno in kulturno sodelovanje

called Pot (The Path) was launched, promoted and guided by Vinko Kobal. With its spirituality weeks and days of concentration, it became a pan-Slovenian youth movement, but its organisational structure was far from that of a traditional youth organisation.

In 1971, Slovenian bishops established the Interdiocesan Committee for Students (MOŠ⁵⁰), which was headed by Rudi Koncilija for many years, followed by Milan Knep. The MOŠ issued the Bilten (Bulletin) magazine, which was renamed The Third Day⁵¹ in 1983 upon the initiative of Alojz Peterle, who also became its first editor-in-chief. The MOŠ organisation included both lay and church parts. The lay part was represented by a secretary, elected by the students, and the church part was represented by a MOŠ spiritual assistant, appointed by bishops. The subsequent better-known former secretaries included Janez Podobnik and Ivo Bizjak. The MOŠ maintained regular contacts with International Young Catholic Students, i.e. the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS – IYCS⁵²), but was not a formal member of this organisation.

In the context of the Yugoslav Bishops' Conference, the Committee for Youth was active within the Catholic Church structure at the Yugoslav level as a working body of pastoral institutions within the Catholic Church, whose participants were the representatives of pastoral institutions from Slovenia, Croatia, Vojvodina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.

In the 1960s, there were attempts at reviving the pre-war Catholic scout movement, but they were not successful. In the mid-1980s, an informal group of scouts headed by Peter Lovšin started its activities in Ljubljana, supported by the Italian Association of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts (AGESCA⁵³) and constituting the core of the subsequent Slovenian Catholic Girl Guides and Boy Scouts Association (ZSKSS⁵⁴).

In the second half of the 1980s, a smaller informal group of the Young European Federalists emerged in Ljubljana, working under the auspices of the UN Clubs and maintaining contacts with the organisation of Young European Federalists (JEF). After 1990, they were reorganised as an independent association.

The Coordinating Committee of Youth Councils in Yugoslavia (1991)

The Yugoslav story was concluded after the ZSMJ dissolution congress in Ljubljana. The discussions on the potential establishment of the Youth Council of Yugoslavia started in the middle of 1990 with the participation of representatives from all six republics. The former ZSM republic organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia were more or less merely renamed, but there were also significant differences between them. In Macedonia and Montenegro, for example, the leading role was taken by the former collective members of their ZSMs. On the Croatian side, the discussions were attended by a representative of the HDZ youth section (the Croatian Democratic Union),⁵⁵ because the former ZSM of Croatia disintegrated practically overnight.

⁵⁰ MOŠ – Medškofijski odbor za študente

⁵¹ (slv.) Tretji dan

⁵² In English: *IYCS-IMCS – International Young Catholic Students – International Movement of Catholic Students*

⁵³ AGESCI – Associazione Guide e Scouts Cattolici Italiani

⁵⁴ ZSKSS – Zveza slovenskih katoliških skavtov in skavtinj

⁵⁵ HDZ – Hrvatska demokratska zajednica

These discussions reached a key moment when the participants no longer discussed the potential establishment of the Youth Council of Yugoslavia, but only that of the Coordinating Committee of Youth Councils in Yugoslavia.

In February 1991, the founding charter of the Coordinating Committee of Youth Councils in Yugoslavia (KOMSJ⁵⁶) was signed and was joined by the structures from four republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia). The National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS), however, announced that the decision on potential membership in this association would be adopted within the following three months (Zorko Škvor, the former Vice President of the MSS responsible for international relations, signed the charter on behalf of the MSS). In Croatia, there was no structure in that period that could, even remotely, play the role of a youth council.

Subsequently, the KOMSJ tried to enter the CENYC membership, but the CENYC's general assembly held in Dublin in mid-February 1991 postponed the hearing on KOMSJ membership until the next assembly. That was the last time that the CENYC considered a unified Yugoslav entity and the opportunity for the KOMSJ to enter the international arena was lost. The Yugoslav story nevertheless continued until April 1992, but only in the form of a dialogue between the six youth structures under the auspices of the CENYC's Secretary-General Bengt Persson, with a focus primarily on the division of the property of the former federal youth structure. This process was more or less fictitious and had little substance. The main properties of the federal youth organisation were the flats that the ZSMJ owned and rented out to its functionaries and other staff. These flats were privatised in a similar manner as socially-owned flats in Slovenia. However, it should be mentioned that under the corresponding agreement, Slovenia was left with one eighth of the real property of the former federal organisation.

⁵⁶ KOMSJ – Koordinacijski odbor mladinskih svetov v Jugoslaviji

YOUTH WORK BRIGADES (MDB)

No record of the history of the youth organisation structures in Yugoslavia and its predecessors is complete without at least a short summary of the mass voluntary work activities that took place in the context of the ZSMJ and its predecessors.

A historical overview of the youth work actions can be divided into a number of successive periods. The organisation of young people who carried out work activities mainly in order to supply the partisan units and the population in the liberated territories existed already during World War II. After the war, in April 1946, the Youth Work Actions⁵⁷ (MDA⁵⁸) were launched on a large scale with the construction of the Brčko-Banovići railroad in order to set up transport links with the coal mine in Banovići. The following year, the construction of the Šamac-Sarajevo railroad was started in the context of youth work actions and was completed in seven months with the participation of 217,000 young people from all over Yugoslavia, plus 6,000 young people from various other countries. This period of youth work actions lasted until the mid-1950s and was initially focused on the construction of railways, the Brotherhood and Unity Highway from Zagreb to Belgrade, the construction of New Belgrade and Nova Gorica, as well as the construction of large factories and hydropower plants, such as the Zenica ironworks and Jablanica hydropower plant.

The records often emphasise the voluntary nature of participation in these activities, but such a definition is controversial to many people. Some of the participants certainly participated voluntarily and with enthusiasm, encouraged by the strong propaganda promoting the reconstruction and industrialisation of the country, which was presented as an indispensable condition for a better life. There were also many units of the former Yugoslav Army working on the construction sites, and some records also speak of the presence of prisoners of war and prison inmates. The latter had no choice. On the other hand, young people were pressed to participate in these work activities and refusal to participate could entail exclusion from school or university. Consequently, their voluntary cooperation was more an expression of seeking a way to survive. And finally, this was also a period of settling accounts with all kinds of enemies as identified by the regime, and the lack of cooperation (not only in the MDAs) could very quickly be interpreted as resisting the socialist construction of the country and society.

Brigades and groups of young people from other countries also participated in a large number of the MDAs. Until the conflict with the Informbiro, brigades of volunteers came to Yugoslavia from the countries of the "Soviet half" of Europe, and in turn the Yugoslav brigades participated in their work activities. After the conflict with the Informbiro, small groups of volunteers still kept coming, but they were from Western countries and were organised by their communist parties that followed the teachings of Trotsky and his Fourth International. This was the case with France, where the International Communist Party (PCI⁵⁹) organised brigades in the context of its youth section and sent them to work in Yugoslavia. The conflict with the Soviet Union was supported by these communist parties, since they were also in dispute with the former Communist Party's leadership in the Soviet Union regarding the principles of the world Communist movement. However, this enthusiasm vanished immediately after Yugoslavia supported the military intervention, mainly by the US Army

⁵⁷ The author finds this English translation quite problematic but it is an expression which has been used so far to translate this term

⁵⁸ MDA – Mladinske delovne akcije

⁵⁹ PCI – Parti communiste internationaliste

under the UN flag, in the Korean War with its vote in favour of the respective resolution in the UN Security Council, and the Soviet Union failed to use its veto due to the never explained absence of the Soviet delegation at the meeting.

After the first half of the 1950s, the large-scale federal MDAs began to diminish in scope and were eventually replaced by a number of local campaigns – activities where the volunteers were engaged in building the infrastructure in their cities and towns. The new era of large-scale MDAs started with the invitation made by Josip Broz to the delegates of the Sixth Congress of the People's Youth of Yugoslavia (NOJ) in January 1958 to continue with the construction of the Brotherhood and Unity Highway⁶⁰, which was duly complied with in that same year. By November 1958, the construction of the highway section between Zagreb and Ljubljana was finished, and was followed by the construction of the sections from Belgrade to Gevgelija at the Yugoslav–Greek border, while the entire highway from Ljubljana to Gevgelija was completed in 1963. Throughout the period of construction, over a quarter of a million young people from all over Yugoslavia and abroad participated in the federal MDAs and building the Brotherhood and Unity Highway.

During this period, which in principle lasted until the dissolution of the SFRY, the number of MDAs was increasing. In 1975, there were 15 federal MDAs involving approximately 15,500 volunteers, and in 1981 there were 36 federal and 60 republic and/or regional MDAs with approximately 60,000 participants. With the passage of time, participation in the MDAs became increasingly voluntary and was promoted by various benefits enjoyed by the participants, such as priority in being granted different scholarships and in being admitted to student residences. After 1981, the MDAs began to stagnate also as a result of the economic crisis in Yugoslavia, which reduced investments and thus also the need for (free) labour. Young people were less interested in participating in the youth work brigades (MDBs), which was a growing challenge for the organisers of the MDBs despite the introduction of new incentives, such as salary compensation for young employed workers during their participation in the MDAs. But in 1981, the interest in performing volunteer work was still relatively high and the one of municipal Ljubljana ZSMS organisation planned participation in three MDBs that year (one of them was a Pioneer MDB): in the republic MDAs (Kozjansko, Kras and Brkini) and in federal MDAs (Slovenske gorice, Deliblatski pesak, Vranje), in addition to two local MDAs.

Brigades or groups from other countries continued to participate in the Yugoslav MDAs during that period. The exchange of brigades or groups of participants with partner organisations from the socialist countries was reintroduced in the 1960s, but on a much smaller scale than before 1948. The participation of young people living with their parents who worked abroad temporarily was also encouraged and promoted by Yugoslav societies and associations and diplomatic missions.

A particular feature in Slovenia's organisation of youth work activities was a republic social agreement for the republic and federal MDAs in Slovenia covering particular periods and providing funds for their financing. This agreement was first signed in 1976 for the following five-year period. Such social agreements also existed at the municipal level and provided the necessary funds for the local MDAs and for the participation of municipal MDBs in the republic or federal MDAs. In other parts of Yugoslavia, MDAs were managed more in the manner of social enterprises that concluded business deals with individual investors into infrastructure and other projects backed by political support and they received payment for the work carried out; however, if they created a deficit, the deficient funds were provided by means of political agreements. Large MDAs had permanently

⁶⁰ (slv.) Avtocesta bratstva in enotnosti

employed management whose task was also to seek projects that could be implemented by the MDBs. The length of each youth work activity in a particular year varied. In the early stages, the MDAs started in April and ended in November, but their length mainly depended on the work to be implemented by each MDA. The division into federal, republic and local MDA was associated with the origin of the participating brigades. Thus, only the brigades from a particular republic participated in the republic MDAs, whereas the federal MDAs promoted the participation of brigades from all the republics. Groups from twinned municipalities in Yugoslavia sometimes participated in local MDBs.

The organisation of MDAs and MDBs resembled a military organisation. The brigades and the MDAs were headed by commanders who had headquarters, with various assistants covering different fields. If the brigade was divided into troops, they were led by inferior rank commanders. The coordination of MDA activities in Slovenia was the responsibility of the MDA Centre at the Republic Conference of the ZSMS. The operational organisation of each MDA was entrusted to municipal ZSMS organisations according to their respective territories, duly supported by the MDA leadership appointed by the MDA Centre, which also carried out training for the MDA leadership members.

However, throughout their period of existence, the MDAs did not focus only on the work but also played other roles, depending on the period. In the first period of post-war reconstruction and industrialisation, the MDAs offered opportunities for literacy and vocational training. Industrialisation demanded a growing number of workers and the MDAs also organised training courses that provided the participants with different qualifications in engineering and construction industries and even in agriculture. Moreover, participants could even obtain a driver's license within a month, which was the usual length of an individual's work in an MDA. In any case, the entire MDB and MDA structure focused primarily on ideological education, which was reflected through the iconography of the MDA settlements and the construction site itself, lectures and other political elements. An important point of political socialisation was also dedicated to the consolidation of brotherhood and unity as one of the fundamental postulates of a multinational state and its political system.

SLOVENIA

Changes and new youth organisations

The year 1989 was a troublesome year in Slovenia as the society was preparing to take a decisive step towards changes. Although democratic multi-party elections were held only in April 1990, the year 1988 already brought changes to the youth organisations. The first new organisation was the Slovenian Farmers' Youth Association (ZSKM⁶¹), which was established on 12 May 1988 in Ljubljana as a professional association of young farmers together with the Slovenian Farmers' Union (SKZ⁶²), and received the support of the republic ZSMS organisation upon its establishment and during its first months of activity. In 1993, the ZSKM changed its name to the Slovenian Rural Youth Association (ZSPM⁶³) to attract wider public. In March 1990, the Slovenian Catholic Girl Guides and Boy Scouts Association (ZSKSS) was established.

One of the key events for the later development of the youth sector organisational structure was the ZSMS congress held in Portorož in October 1989. At the congress, a decision to transform from a generation-based organisation into a political party was adopted. However, this decision was not unanimous in all parts of the ZSMS. Students preserved their interests by recognition of their legal continuity in the newly adopted ZSMS statutes, which also meant property and money, and they did not care much about the rest. It is less known, however, that not all municipal ZSMS organisations were in favour of the decision to transform into a political organisation. The Velenje organisation even considered leaving the ZSMS. This is the reason why before the ZSMS congress some leadership members of the republic ZSMS organisation were not in favour of the Youth Council of Slovenia as a new umbrella youth organisation. They wanted to leave all options open, but according to other interpretations, this was more of a legal issue as to how the ZSMS should support the creation of a new organisational structure until the top ZSMS body adopted the decision that the ZSMS was no longer a generation-based organisation.

The first youth organisational structure within the new political parties was represented by the Social Democratic Youth (SDM₁⁶⁴) under the leadership of Matej Makarovič, which was organised under the auspices of the Social Democratic Alliance of Slovenia (SDZS⁶⁵) in October 1989. This was followed by the MLIN (Youth Initiative within the Slovenian Democratic Alliance) and Young Christian Democrats (MKD⁶⁶), which were established by the end of 1990, and later also the Young Greens of Slovenia (MZS⁶⁷), as the youth section of the Green Party of Slovenia. The first organisational structure of young people within the political parties that emerged from the former socio-political organisations was set up within the League of Communists of Slovenia (ZKS) under the name of the Democratic Forum, whose beginnings stretch back into the second half of 1989. Following the merging of leftist

⁶¹ ZSKM – Zveza Slovenske kmečke mladine

⁶² SKZ – Slovenska kmečka zveza

⁶³ SZPM – Zveza slovenske podeželjske mladine

⁶⁴ SDM₁ – Socialdemokratska mladina

⁶⁵ SDZS – Socialdemokratska zveza Slovenije

⁶⁶ MKD – Mladi krščanski demokrati

⁶⁷ MZS – Mladi zeleni Slovenije

parties, this organisation was renamed the Youth Forum of ZLSD⁶⁸ (Youth Forum of the United List of Social Democrats) in 1993 and since 2005 it has been known under the name of the Youth Forum of SD (Youth Forum of the Social Democrats). The Young Liberal Democrats (MLD⁶⁹) were established in 1991 as a youth section of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS⁷⁰).

However, in the period 1990–1995, changes also affected those youth organisations that had been active before the democratic elections in Slovenia. Their main efforts were aimed at their depoliticisation and/or the promotion of the “supra-party” position. In many environments, they were in fact considered to be remnants of the former totalitarian regime. When establishing the National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS⁷¹), some considered that this Council should be established exclusively by new youth organisations and that no former ZSMS collective members should be included due to their relationship with the socialist system. This idea was also related to the idea of so-called *lustration*, which was at that time very much present in the political arena of Slovenia. The second challenge was the issue of the meaning of the term “national”, which some people wanted to understand in a wider context than the borders of the Republic of Slovenia.

Slovenian youth organisations from the neighbouring countries, in particular from Italy, considered the emerging MSS to be an opportunity for the implementation of their activities, but these expectations were not realised. With their admission to membership, the MSS would have technically become an international organisation, which would have closed its path to membership in the CENYC. Nevertheless, the MSS paid a great deal of attention to these organisations at the beginning of its operation and organised a major meeting of youth organisations from the neighbouring countries in Rogla in December 1991. The second meeting was held in Kandrše a year later and attendance was significantly lower. Ultimately, these activities vanished from the MSS programme altogether.

The new student organisational structure which continued the previous organisational structure of students within the ZSMS University organisation was established in May 1990 by the adoption of the Act establishing the Student Organisation of the University of Ljubljana during the first convening of the Student Parliament. That same year, the Student Organisation of the University of Maribor was founded. The new student organisational structure was established in a situation that was not legally regulated (the same as was the case with the MSS). The ZSMS statutes adopted at the ZSMS Portorož congress was the only document that referred to organisations at all. The statutes stated that university student organisations were the legal successors of the ZSMS university organisations.

However, the new student organisational structure, particularly at the University of Ljubljana, had a strong foundation. On the one hand, there was the Student Work Service, which operated within the University framework until 1985 and then moved under the umbrella of the University of Ljubljana UK ZSMS, providing a solid income which did not depend on the budget and was used for the operations of the strong ŠOU (Student Organisation of the University of Ljubljana) apparatus in Ljubljana for the next ten years. Another solid foundation was the political engagement of the UK ZSMS in the period before 1990, when it also financially supported various political initiatives of the new social movements and new political parties, particularly during the public demonstrations against the imprisonment of and so-called *Trial against the Four* before a military court in Ljubljana.

⁶⁸ ZLDS – Združena lista Socialnih Demokratov

⁶⁹ MLD – Mladi liberalni demokrati in demokratke

⁷⁰ LDS – Liberalni demokrati Slovenije

⁷¹ MSS – Mladinski svet Slovenije

However, the fact that after the change in the political and social order fewer new youth organisations were established in Slovenia than in other post-socialist countries is less evident. The major part of the new wave of youth organisations was set up and developed either as youth sections of political parties and/or independent lay organisations (associations) to cover the activities formerly conducted under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church structures. One of the first lay organisations was the Association of Catholic Students (ZKŠ⁷²), established in 1992. An organisation called the Community of Catholic Youth (SKAM⁷³) had the same origin and was registered as an association in 1993. Both organisations included many previously active individuals from the otherwise pastoral institution of the Interdiocesan Committee for Students (MOŠ). The Youth Information Centre (MIC) in Ljubljana also developed from the former MOŠ. Another organisation developed on the basis of the Salesians' work with young people was the Youth Guild in 1992. Pastoral institutions of the Catholic Church were also reorganised: at the state level, there was the Interdiocesan Committee for Youth (MOM) and at the diocese level, there was the Diocesan Youth Board (ŠOM).

One of the gaps in the Slovenian youth sector was organising on the part of students on the basis of the different ideological backgrounds or world-views of individuals. The first among the student organisations was the ZKŠ, which also became a MSS member, but was phased out at the turn of the millennium and was ultimately deleted from the register of legal entities in January 2013. In the early 1990s, the AMOS Academic Students' Association was established in Ljubljana and in Maribor. In 1993, it was organised in the form of an association in Maribor only, but began to stagnate at the turn of the new millennium. In 2011, the Slovenian Academic Union (SAU⁷⁴) student association was founded in Ljubljana, which also became a member of the European Democrat Students (EDS), but in Slovenia it only became a member of the Youth Council of Ljubljana. In the framework of the Jewish Community of Slovenia, there is Kadima, the Jewish student and youth organisation, which is also a member of the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS).

The shortage of new organisations in Slovenia is particularly interesting due to the fact that the priority of all European and/or international youth and student NGOs is their expansion in the post-socialist countries. This was done either by recognising similar existing organisations or by attempts at establishing new organisations. For the purpose of the latter, individuals from the target countries were invited to participate in various international activities and were expected to become the core of the newly established organisations. In this context, a number of individuals from Slovenia participated in these activities and there were also particular initiatives for the establishment of new organisations (e.g. the initiative groups for the establishment of Young Europeans for Security (YES) and the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection (EBCO⁷⁵) in Slovenia), but ultimately, these organisations were not established. With a view to raising interest in the integration of Slovenian organisations in international youth organisations and vice versa, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth even financially supported the implementation of the European Co-ordination Bureau of International Youth Organisations (ECB) general assembly in Bled in November 1993.

The paths of Slovenian youth organisations leading to international youth organisations were different. Youth sections of political parties found their place in international youth political

⁷² ZKŠ – Združenje katoliških študentov

⁷³ SKAM – Skupnost katoliške mladine

⁷⁴ SAU – Slovenska akademska Unija

⁷⁵ EBCO – European Bureau for Conscientious Objection

organisations relatively quickly because, as a general rule, more than one member from each country is allowed. However, organisations that encountered the principle of one member per country had a more difficult time and joined international organisations only after Slovenia had become internationally recognised. The Scouts Association of Slovenia (ZTS) and the Slovenian Catholic Girl Guides and Boy Scouts Association (ZSKSS) had to tread one of the longer paths. First it seemed that both organisations would have to set up a national coordination body in order to become a member of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM). Then, however, the WOSM's policy changed and in choosing between the two organisations, the WOSM opted for the full membership of the ZTS. The ZSKSS received WOSM membership rights on the basis of an agreement concluded between the ZSKSS and the ZTS, which, however, was valid only until 1997 and was afterwards not extended. In 1999, the ZSKSS became a member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

At the end of the 1990s and at the turn of the millennium there was new factor, i.e. the emergence of youth centres first in the form of associations and private institutions, and later as municipal public institutions. Under the leadership of Dominik S. Černjak, the Slovenian Youth Party⁷⁶ was created and gained importance during the 2000 elections, but remained a parliamentary party for only one term.

At the turn of the millennium, there were also changes in the youth sections of political parties, mainly associated with the merging and disaggregation of their umbrella organisations. Thus the Young Christian Democrats (MKD) and the Youth Association of the Slovenian People's Party ceased to exist as the youth sections of the SLS + SKD (Slovenian People's Party + SKD) upon their merger into New Generation⁷⁷. Subsequently, Young Slovenia, as the youth section of New Slovenia – Christian Democrats, was established. In 2003, Social Democratic Youth of Slovenia was renamed Slovenian Democratic Youth and kept the SDM abbreviation.

One of the few national youth organisations that was not established within the framework of political parties or did not originate in the activities of other structures was the youth association called "Brez izgovora" (No Excuse), which built upon public health and the prevention of addiction to tobacco and alcohol among young people, sustainable development, and the active participation of young people.

However, this was not only a period of the formation of new organisations, but also a period when a number of old organisations slowly vanished, some of them with a tradition stretching back a hundred years. One such organisation was the Holiday Association of Slovenia (Počitniška zveza Slovenije), which was deleted from the register of legal entities at the end of 2008. The Holiday Association of Slovenia was established in 1953, although the proposing committee for the reestablishment of part of the former Slovenian Sava Holiday Society (established in 1892) and the Student Holiday Association had been set up as early as in 1945. It reached the peak of its success in the 1960s, when it had more than 20,000 members, organised in the form of more than 300 families throughout Slovenia. The Holiday Association of Slovenia was part of the Holiday Association of Yugoslavia (FSJ⁷⁸), which became an associate member of the International Youth Hostel Federation (IYHF) in 1968 and a full member in 1970. After Slovenia gained independence, the Holiday Association of Slovenia became only an associate member of the IYHF, because it did not have a sufficient number of youth hostels to be able to gain full membership.

⁷⁶ (slv) Stranka mladih Slovenije

⁷⁷ (slv.) Nova Generacija

⁷⁸ FSJ – Ferijalni savez Jugoslavije

There was also new factor the growing number of (private) institutes⁷⁹ (with closed circle of founders or even individual founder) rather than societies, based on open membership, that played an increasingly important role in the youth sector. Thus a former society called MOST, the Slovenian member of Service Civil International (SCI), gradually ceased to exist owing to conflicts in the society's leadership, and its activities were taken over by the newly established Voluntariat institute. The Youth Guild⁸⁰ society, a Slovenian member of Don Bosco family, transferred many of its activities to institutes such as the Social Academy, the NEFIKS Institute, etc. This new movement is particularly problematic in terms of a jump from the membership organisations where the internal dynamics of the organisation's activities and the widest possible participation of its members is important.

The National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS) (1990)

The announcement of the transformation of the ZSMS into a political party encouraged deliberations on a potential new representative structure of youth organisations at the national level. One of them also included the idea of the youth council as an exclusive association of various youth organisations, based on identical or similar youth structures in Western Europe. This idea was presented to a wider circle on 26 October 1989 at a presentation organised by the republic ZSMS organisation. There a core team was formed which further developed the idea and actual organisational and basic substantive guidelines. Based on this team's work, a committee for the establishment of the MSS was set up and the MSS itself was established on 25 April 1990 by a charter signed by 17 organisations. Janez Škulj was elected the first President of the MSS, followed by Alenka Žibert, Anita Štefin, Matjaž Štolfa, Kamal Izidor Shaker and Tea Jarc in the following years. The first secretary of the MSS's Executive Committee was Nataša Zaviršek Žorž, followed by Dominik Lavrič.

The MSS's first contact with other national youth councils was an informal meeting with Johnny Tango, Head of the Danish Youth Council Committee (DUF⁸¹) for International Cooperation, who visited Ljubljana in October 1990. The MSS's first participation in CENYC activities was attendance at a CENYC conference held in Vienna in mid-January 1991. At the end of January 1991, Ljubljana and the MSS were also visited by Rachel Kyte, Secretary General of the CENYC, who rejected the MSS's aspirations for full membership, since the CENYC supported the position of the international community on the desirable preservation of Yugoslavia.

Other major international activities organised by the MSS in the first years of its existence included a study visit by a 45-member group to the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in January 1992, which enhanced understanding of the importance of such a national youth platform even among those who had at first opposed it and who were to blame for the failure of the first attempt at legal regulation of the MSS's status. In October 1992, two international activities took place in Slovenia. At the beginning of the month, there was a seminar on and training for tolerance in Piran, which was co-organised by the CENYC and MSS with the financial support of the European Youth Foundation (EYF), also attended by the representatives of youth structures or organisations from the former Yugoslavia, in addition to the representatives of the CENYC members. In the second half of October, a one-week training course for youth leaders by the Council of Europe was organised in cooperation

⁷⁹ (slv) zavod

⁸⁰ (slv.) Mladinski ceh

⁸¹ DUF – Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd

with the Council of Europe, the EU, the CENYC, the ECB and the MSS and the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (URSM⁸²) at Brdo pri Kranju.

The MSS also devoted a great deal of attention to regional cooperation, where it strove to form a strong Central and Eastern European group within the CENYC, together with the Youth Council of Slovakia (RmS⁸³). The first meeting between the MSS, RmS and MIZSOT⁸⁴, aimed at establishing Central European cooperation, was held in Piran in January 1993. In October 1993, a Central European Youth Week was held in Ankaran, but the participation of Slovakia and Hungary was modest despite the involvement of all three national youth councils in the preparation and convening of the meeting.

The more successful activities in that period also included a study visit to Denmark, co-organised by the URSM and DUF⁸⁵ in August 1993, with 16 participants from Slovenia. This visit is believed to have likely given major impetus to the setting up of the first URSM financial support system for youth organisations in Slovenia, which adopted some Danish elements, but not all of them.

The MSS became an associate member of the CENYC at the general meeting held in Paris in February 1993, and was granted full membership at the following general assembly held in Helsinki in March 1995. In 1992, the CENYC amended its statutes, determining that an organisation could become a full member only after being an associate member for at least two years. In March 1994, the MSS hosted a session of the CENYC's Executive Committee in Bled, attended by the representatives of all CENYC members.

The MSS became an associate member of the Youth Forum of the European Communities (YFEC) at the Forum's general assembly held in Denmark in 1993. In April the same year, the MSS became a full member of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY), but since there was not much to gain in being a member thereof and since participation in its activities entailed considerable cost, the MSS ceased to pay the membership fee and consequently lost its membership.

In 1996, the MSS participated in the process of setting up the current European Youth Forum (YFJ) and became a full member upon its establishment.

The Youth Councils Act (1990/2000)

The newly elected National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia also included a committee for youth headed by Borut Pahor and in December 1990 it started proceedings for the adoption of a Youth Councils Act in order to regulate the legal and material status of the MSS. The MSS could not register under any applicable law because its ranks included both organisations that acted according to the Societies Act and organisations that acted in accordance with the Political Parties Act. In March 1991, all three chambers heard the proposal, which was adopted by the social and political chamber and the associated labour chamber, but was rejected by the municipalities chamber. Due to the dissolution of the National Assembly, the proceedings were not continued. This ended the first attempt to regulate the situation and status of youth councils.

⁸² URSM – Urad Republike Slovenije za mladino

⁸³ RmS – Rada mládeže Slovenska

⁸⁴ MIZSOT – Magyarországi Ifjúsági Szervezetek Országos Tanácsa

⁸⁵ DUF - Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd

Although the MSS had no basis for obtaining a legal personality, a solution was found that allowed the MSS to operate almost normally. Moreover, the MSS was mentioned by some acts, for example by the Radiotelevizija Slovenija Act (Radio and Television of Slovenia Act), where it shared a seat in the Radiotelevizija Slovenija Council together with the Association of Friends of Youth of Slovenia (ZPMS). The two organisations alternately each appointed its own representative in a particular two-year period.

After the deletion of the Youth Council of Slovenia from the register of legal entities, it became urgent to adopt the legal basis for the operation of associations such as youth councils. In 2000, the National Assembly again considered the proposal of the Youth Councils Act on the initiative of MP Roman Jakič, who was the first to sign the Act. The proposal was duly adopted. The adoption of the Act resolved the issue of obtaining a legal personality, but it also had its shortcomings. In accordance with the applicable law, the MSS would have existed also if only one organisation remained an MSS member.

The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (1991)

One of the additional conclusions of all three chambers of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia following the discussion of the proposal of the Youth Councils Act in March 1991 was the initiative for the establishment of a national authority that would cover the field of youth. On this basis, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (URSM) was established in autumn 1991. In practice, this involved the transformation of the former Youth Voluntary Work Committee, acting within the Ministry of Education and Sport. The Committee, which had two employees, was transferred to the Ministry from the ZSMS upon its transformation into a political party and continued with the activities of the Youth Voluntary Work Centre, which operated within the republic ZSMS organisation. Upon its transformation into the Office for Youth, part of the Committee's activities, i.e. the organisation of international work camps and volunteer exchange, was transferred to the newly established association MOST, and later to the Voluntariat institute. Stanko Šalamon became the first director of the Office for Youth and remained in office until 2000. He was followed by Karmen Vnučec (acting director), Boris Tomašič, Dominik S. Černjak, Brane Golubovič (acting director), Sanja Vraber, Zorko Škvor (acting director) and Peter Debeljak.

The URSM entered the area of international cooperation gradually: its first international engagement was within the framework of the Alps Adriatic Alliance Working Community, which included a youth working group, composed of the representatives of regional (provincial government) structures in the field of youth from the participating regions and regions in Italy, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia.

After recognition of the succession of the Republic of Slovenia by the signatories of the European Cultural Convention (of the Council of Europe) following the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1992, the URSM also began to participate in the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), and for the first time Slovenia participated in the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth within the Council of Europe in Vienna in 1993 with a delegation led by the Minister Slavko Gaber. In the mid-1990s, the URSM was very much involved in the campaign launched by the Council of Europe under the title "All Different – All Equal". In the second half of the 1990s, the URSM's Director Stanko Šalamon took over the leadership of the CDEJ and was elected its Chairman.

One of the URSM's multilateral cooperation frameworks was also the Central European Initiative (CEI). During the Slovenian presidency of this organisation, the URSM organised the CEI Youth Forum in Fiesca in 2004. Cooperation within the EU context started with the signing of an agreement on the implementation of preparatory measures for the entry of Slovenia into the Youth for Europe III programme at the end of 1996. Due to the delays in the enactment of the accession agreement caused by the Italian side, based on the issue of real estate owned by so-called *optants*, Slovenia entered the Youth for Europe programme after nearly two years of implementing preparatory measures as late as on 1 May 1999.

The URSM, particularly the Deputy Director Mirko Vaupotič, was very active in the integration of Slovenia into the North-South Centre in Lisbon, so that on 1 January 1997 Slovenia became a member of the Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, and the URSM assumed responsibility for the integration of Slovenia⁸⁶ in the activities of the North-South Centre.

In the first years of operation, the URSM's priorities were strongly influenced by the content encountered by the URSM in the international arena, particularly in the Council of Europe. This also prompted the setting up of a mixed committee, which was co-managed by the MSS and the URSM, and was modelled after the Management Board of the European Youth Centre and Fund. The URSM also paid great attention to the European Youth Card and the development of the first concept and system of information for young people, which was implemented by the establishment of a Youth Information and Counselling Centre of Slovenia (MISSS).

A new period in the URSM's international action started with Slovenia's accession to the European Union, when URSM representatives began to participate in the EU Council Youth Working Party⁸⁷ and in the programme committees of EU programmes in the field of youth. Most of the URSM's activities in this context were carried out during the Slovenian EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2008, when the URSM also organised a meeting of Directors General for Youth from EU Member States at Brdo pri Kranju and the European Youth event in Ljubljana in April 2008. At that time, the EU Council for Education and Youth was chaired by the Slovenian Minister Milan Zver, and the EU Council Youth Working Party by Zorko Škvor. The working group co-ordinated the text of the Resolution on the Participation of Young People with Fewer Opportunities, which was adopted during the Slovenian EU Council Presidency.

The URSM was also active during Slovenia's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2009, when it hosted a conference on youth employment in the countries of Southeast Europe at Brdo pri Kranju as the main event in the youth field during the Presidency.

The Student Association Act (1994)

In 1994, the Student Association Act was adopted, regulating student organisational structures as self-governing communities of students and providing resources for the operation of these organisational structures. With the adoption of this Act, the situation that had lasted from the time when the UK ZSMS in Ljubljana and Maribor became independent after the Portorož ZSMS congress

⁸⁶ The Republic of Slovenia left the list of signatories of the Partial Agreement on 31 December 2014.

⁸⁷ Youth Working Party

in 1989 was legalised, but in accordance with the law, the Student Organisation of Slovenia (ŠOS) was established only in 1997 with the adoption of the Students' Constitution.

The adoption of this Act ran smoothly and the statutory text was also modelled after the Austrian regulation. Nevertheless, the question remains whether some other solution, for example the promotion of the ideological organisation of students and a common platform for various voluntary student organisations, would have been better considering Slovenia's past and democratic development.

The first structures at the municipal level (1995)

Based on the Ordinance on the Organisation and Field of Work of the City Administration and the Secretariat of the Municipality of Ljubljana City Council, the Office for Youth, composed of the Department of Pre-school Education, Education and Sport, headed by Vesna Venišnik Babič during the first few years and subsequently by Mateja Demšič, was established in Ljubljana in 1995. The Ljubljana Youth Council (MSL) was set up two years later as the first local youth council, but was faced with the inability to obtain a legal personality owing to the lack of legislation that would enable the merging of associations and youth sections of political parties. In the initial period, the MSL's activities, financially supported by the Office for Youth in the Municipality of Ljubljana, were therefore financed through the National Youth Council of Slovenia. In 1995, a five-member subcommittee for youth was established in the Municipality of Ljubljana (MOL).

In order to promote the development of youth structures at the local level, the MSS, in cooperation with the URSM, set up a development programme for local youth structures, which took place from September 1997 until 2000 and included various regional activities for the representatives of municipal authorities and youth organisations, as well as other activities. A Slovenian translation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life was also provided within this programme. The focus on youth issues was becoming increasingly important at the local level, which was also reflected in the setting up of a working group for youth in 2004 within the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS).

MOVIT (1997)

MOVIT, the Institute for the Development of Youth Mobility, was established in the middle of 1997 with the aim of becoming the central support institution for international cooperation in the field of youth and in promoting youth mobility. Its mission was to ensure the implementation of intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in the field of youth, the development of the EURO <26 European Youth Card, and carrying out the national agency's tasks in European youth programmes.

The establishment of the MOVIT institution was encouraged by the Office for Youth and although it was established as a (private) institution, it was in fact an attempt at a public-private partnership. This was best reflected by the composition of MOVIT's Council, which, in addition to the three representatives of the founders, also included the representatives of both the Office of Youth and the National Youth Council of Slovenia. However, in 2014, new statutes were adopted without the MSS's representative in the Council. Such a development was a result of a public contract for the

implementation of the national agency's activities of the Erasmus+ programme, which banned the participation of the programme's users in the management of MOVIT.

In 2001, MOVIT started to implement Eurodesk activities within one of the national agency's organisational units and in 2002 it was also entrusted with the implementation of the SALTO YOUTH Resource Centre activities as one of the three European units to support cooperation with the three regions of partner countries (the Mediterranean countries, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus). In the period from 2009 to 2013, MOVIT also performed activities as the information office for the Europe for Citizens programme.

In 2004, the organisational unit for bilateral cooperation was eliminated from the MOVIT institution and continued its activities within the Avantis institution. In 2010, European Youth Card operations were also eliminated from MOVIT and the respective activities were continued within the new MOBIN institution. MOBIN also took over the existing MOVIT membership in the EYCA.

The Youth Information and Counselling Centre of Slovenia (1998)

In 1998, the Youth Information and Counselling Centre of Slovenia (MISSS) was established and was headed by Ljubo Raičević for several years. In accordance with the adopted concept of information and counselling of the Office for Youth from 1995, the MISSS was to set up a system and institutional framework for information activities for young people in Slovenia. The MISSS succeeded in creating a loose network of focal points in the existing youth centres and introduced the idea of the necessity of providing information to young people in many local environments. At the international level, the MISSS joined the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA).

In cooperation with the URSM, the MISSS created a new concept of information and counselling for young people, setting very high standards for the entire activity, which were difficult to attain in practice. In 2009, a new concept of youth information at the national level was launched, based on the transmission of information via the mlad.si portal. The new concept, however, no longer provided MISSS with any special role. The operational editing of the mlad.si portal was taken over by the MaMa Network.

The MaMa Network (2001/2005)

The MaMa Network was set up as an informal association of youth centres at a meeting of 13 youth centres held in Celje in March 2001. The purpose of its activity was to represent the interests of organisations dealing with youth issues and mutual cooperation in the formulation of youth policy. In 2005, its operation was formalised in the form of an institution, which facilitated the participation of all members in the management through the creative solution of the MaMa Network Club.

The Public Interest in the Youth Sector Act (ZJIMS) (2010)

On 18 May 2010, the National Assembly adopted the Public Interest in the Youth Sector Act (ZJIMS) as an organic law regulating the foundations of the youth sector. The Act laid down the definitions of the key terms, established the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth as the central authority for dialogue between the youth and student organisations and the various ministries and the government as a whole, laid the foundations for the recognition of national and other organisations

in the sector and provided the basis for the adoption of a multi-annual National Programme for Youth, which was to constitute a long-term policy framework for the development of youth policy in its vertical and horizontal dimensions (the cross-sectoral dimension).

The National Programme for Youth (2013)

The National Programme for Youth was adopted by the National Assembly in 2013 and constitutes the basic programming document that defines the priorities and measures of public interest in the youth sector. The Resolution on the National Youth Programme for 2013–2022 identifies the fields, objectives and priorities in education, employment and entrepreneurship, living conditions, health and well-being, and the young and society, and recognises the importance of the youth sector, including youth culture, creativity, heritage and media. Naturally, it also includes demographic forecasts and key policies and the method of monitoring such. Although different ministries are responsible for the implementation of the programme, their mutual coordination and hierarchy are not clearly delineated.

The elaboration of this programme was mainly based on the revised strategy of European cooperation in the youth field for 2010 – 2018, but the programme also contains areas that are relevant only in the Slovenian context. One of these is also the housing policy and access to housing for young people in Slovenia. Youth policies in many countries assume that decent employment, among other things, also covers the cost of income-appropriate housing, therefore the issue of accessibility to adequate housing is considered to mainly be an issue of employment.

An integral part of the national programme is integration in international cooperation in the field of youth, and, in particular, the development of international youth work and educational mobility in youth work.

DEPOLITISATION OF THE YOUTH SECTOR IN SLOVENIA

A quick glance at the European youth organisations, the members of the European Youth Forum, and their membership in Slovenia, must give rise to the question of why there are not more youth organisations in Slovenia or why many European youth organisations do not have any members from Slovenia. The fact that the MSS today has considerably fewer full members than signatories of the MSS's founding charter is also very illustrative.

On the other hand, the names of most of the European youth and student organisations indicate the basic idea of their existence and refer to ideological views or broader social and political orientations, but many of these that exist at the European level have not (yet) found fertile ground in Slovenia.

One of the explanations could simply be that Slovenia is a small country and that small numbers in one field do not produce large numbers in another field. However, if this were true, it would also apply to other countries similar in size to Slovenia, but this is not the case.

Personally, I believe that the depolitisation of the youth sector in Slovenia is an area where a lot can be said. Maybe we have not correctly understood the meaning of pluralism in society and that youth organisations with their different backgrounds are in a way important cornerstone of preservation of pluralism in the society.

Certain facts should be noted that may also be part of the answer why there are so few youth organisation members, and, in particular, why their conceptual and substantive range is not as wide as in most other countries.

Even in the days before the change in the socio-political regime in Slovenia, and particularly in the first years after the change and subsequently, after gaining independence, there was a considerable effort on the part of the organisations to distance themselves from any association whatsoever with any ideology.

This is especially true for some of the former ZSMS collective members, which in many environments are understood as the heritage of the previous regime and are therefore unwelcome. Their public image focuses on being non-political and not pertaining to any political party, and in public they have not even promoted any views as regards the situation of young people in society.

With such an approach they have in fact moved away from the desired social recognition of youth organisations as instruments for the participation of young people in society in accordance with their different ideological, philosophical or other activity-based platforms. The emergence of the Catholic youth aggregation was often accompanied by fear of the de-secularisation of society or re-emergence of pre-war clericalism. (this was, for example, the reaction of at least part of the public).

The degradation of the membership concept in organisations as a result of the past regime and its functioning in the 1970s and 1980s, when it was customary to be a member of all kinds of organisations, although in fact one was never a true member in any of them, should also be taken into consideration. Since the age of seven or eight years, virtually all of us constituted the "membership" of organisations and we were not even aware of it. It began with the "Pioneers" organisation, followed by a youth organisation and then the trade unions, and most people were also

included in the Socialist Alliance of Working People, which also covered all organised activities in societies and associations.

The concept of user membership in various interest organisations was the most frequent form of membership in the 1980s due to the benefits it offered since these benefits were not accessible without membership. For example, a person became a member of the Holiday Association of Slovenia because its membership card allowed one to stay in youth hostels around the world. It was the benefits provided by membership and not a desire to participate in the organisation's activities or even its management that prompted a person to become a member. However, it was not always like that – for a number of years, the Holiday Association of Slovenia operated as a systemic provider of organised leisure time activities and it was quite a widespread organisation through its activities and branches.

Another important factor was and has been the actions of various parts of the public aimed at protecting children and youth from any political influence or the dissemination of any ideology, with an emphasis on all young people up to 18 years of age being considered children, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The majority of traditional youth organisations in Europe, however, have always included young persons starting at age 10..

One of the systemic measures in Slovenia that followed the above-mentioned doctrine was the closing of school premises to the activities of youth organisations. Perhaps the measure was intended to prevent any potential organising of political parties' youth sections in schools, but in many environments this measure, for example, also affected the local scouting organisation that had used the school premises for its regular weekly activities aimed at the young for many years. On the other hand, those activities that were generally considered to be neutral in terms of ideology – for example, the activities of sports clubs – remained welcome on school premises.

This situation was (and still is) also caused by a lack of personal experience on the part of parents in terms of their involvement in youth organisations. The majority of traditional youth organisations in Europe start to include the young before the age of 15, i.e. still in the period when parents play the key role in guiding their children. The influence of parents on a child joining a youth organisation can also be seen in Slovenia. Thus, for example, many parents encourage their children to join a scout organisation due to their own positive experiences in their youth.

Today's youth sector has also been influenced by the concept of youth leisure interest activities. This concept began to be developed by the ZSMS, which started to establish centres of leisure interest activities for young people in response to the declining interest of the young in the ZSMS or its organised "political" activities. Centres of leisure interest activities for young people offered the possibility of joining various activities and considered young people primarily as users. The management of such centres was the responsibility of the municipal ZSMS organisation, which hired external staff to conduct various workshops or activities. This concept was basically also adopted by the Slovenian municipalities, which at the end of the 1990s began to establish municipal youth centres whose functioning, particularly in the initial period, was reminiscent of the practices of centres for leisure activities for young people. However, it has to be emphasised that the concept of youth leisure activities is not at all ill-founded and has even been used by many youth organisations as a kind of introductory phase for young people before their involvement in more structured youth work processes. Its negative side in the context of depolitisation is more associated with the nature of the majority of youth centres that are public institutions and must thus avoid a particular ideological

focus or specific social ideas. This has further enhanced the image of the youth sector as being free of any ideology or of various specific integrated value scales.

In fact, how could a pluralism of different organised ideas and ideological views among young people be expected if there is so little pluralism in many other areas of social life and functions in Slovenia? Pluralism in Slovenia is developed only in the arena of political parties, and is much less present even in trade unions. In education and health, pluralism is barely present since in Slovenia, wide-spread public services based on the activities of public institutions are preferred. This is one of the important differences between Slovenia and, for example, Austria or Italy, not to mention Germany. In these countries, there are also strong public services, but the implementation of their activities is based on a pluralism of providers, according to various criteria, but all are obliged to ensure the same professional standards. To a certain extent, this also creates competition, which is also reflected in increasing standards and innovation.

THE STUDENT TAKE-OVER OF YOUTH ORGANISATION

A closer look at the structure of the leadership of youth organisations in Slovenia today clearly indicates that they are mostly, if not entirely, composed of students. Other groups of young people, whether they are unemployed or less skilled individuals, marginalised groups or others, are generally not represented. In a society where far more than half of the annual generation of secondary school students enrolls in some form of higher education, this is hardly surprising. On the other hand, the question arises as to how youth organisations could also attract young people who do not enter tertiary or higher education, how they could assume the role of social instruments for young people from marginalised groups or ensure the social and political participation of all young people. The representative structure of youth organisations should be a clear message that the composition of the leadership of such should also reflect the composition of the target populations. This recognition is also part of the strategy of today's modern European political parties, which know well that their first candidate must be a person with whom the vast majority of the expected electorate can identify.

Being active in a youth organisation is an alternative manner of social and even occupational promotion in many environments. In other words, it facilitates a person's social and professional promotion outside the otherwise standard route. In this manner, it provides promotion also to those from the most deprived circumstances. This fact is a strong magnet for all those who, for personal reasons, do not have many opportunities for social and professional advancement.

A youth organisation that really wants to do something for the integration of young people with fewer opportunities should ensure that this target group "feels" ownership over the organisation. This can also be achieved through the integration of young people from the same target group in the organisation's leadership. The professionalisation of the function of the MSS's president was also intended to ensure that this role be taken up by a person who would not perform it only in his/her spare time.

In other words: How many Roma are involved in today's youth organisations and how many young Roma are involved in the leadership of the local youth organisations operating in the areas where the Roma are present? However, these issues do not apply only to the Roma; there are also very few young people with disabilities in Slovenian youth organisations, let alone in their national leaderships. This is true not only for youth associations but for the entire youth sector. What about other specific groups of young people that are different in other respects? One of the main qualities of youth organisations is their capability to bring together young people from different social classes and situations and enable their mutual cooperation. This quality provides them with the role of being an instrument of the integration of young people and is also the basis for the financial support for youth organisations in the context of public policies.