



Youth Employment and the Future of Work

Report of a Research Seminar

**organised in the framework of the Partnership in the Youth Field
between the Council of Europe and the European Commission
in the European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 21st - 24th May 2007**

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1. Background to the Research Seminar and Introduction to the Key Themes

The Partnership in the Youth Field between the Council of Europe and the European Commission is organised around the triangle of youth work practice / training, youth research and youth policy as well as those horizontal activities with a regional focus – such as Euromed, South East Europe, and Eastern Europe and Caucasus. The Partnership's commitment to research includes a programme of seminars, the facilitation of research networking and knowledge production through the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy. Such events and activities aim to promote dialogue between young people, youth organisations, researchers, policy makers and practitioners. The youth research seminars are typically organised around key themes of relevance to young people in Europe that have been identified by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. It was against this background that the research seminar on *Youth Employment and the Future of Work* was staged.

The Research Seminar was convened and administered by a Team comprising the following individuals: Ms. Marta Mędlińska, Research Officer (Council of Europe), Dr. Jonathan Evans (University of Glamorgan, Wales, United Kingdom) and Mr. Wei Shen (University of Loughborough, England, United Kingdom). Team members shared the responsibility of chairing and facilitating Seminar sessions along with Mr. Joachim Schild (Partnership in the Youth Field between the Council of Europe and the European Commission) and Dr. Andreas Walther (University of Tübingen).

Participation of young people in the labour market has traditionally been regarded as a positive indicator of longer-term employment prospects as well as being associated with the successful accomplishment of related social transitions to independent living. However, it has long been recognised that for many young people the route from formal education to the labour market is far from being straightforward: it now tends to be delayed, complicated and – in some cases – fractured. Moreover, some groups of young people are particularly disadvantaged in these risk-filled journeys. It is also widely acknowledged that young people are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in economic trends. The subject of youth employment has received especially close attention because of its correlation with social exclusion and the destabilising effect this can have on society at large. It has been noted that there have been diverse policy responses across Europe to this common concern with youth unemployment (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007: 42): initiatives based on guarantees of employment, education or training; incentives and subsidies offered to companies employing young people; 'relaxation' of minimum wage requirements and other conditions of employment; programmes of socially useful work; the extension of vocational education; extended provision of apprenticeships and pre-vocational education; extended provision of apprenticeships and pre-vocational courses; and various internships and apprenticeships. In some cases 'youth activation' programmes have also been accompanied by a move away from automatic *entitlement* to social protection benefits. Income is thus only typically available to young people as a *condition* of their participation in such schemes. The rise of 'workfare', 'learnfare' and 'trainfare' programmes in some countries perhaps reflects a trend towards linking 'rights' with 'responsibilities'.

Whilst youth-targeted employment policies tend to combine both demand-side and supply-side approaches, it is also important to recognise that traditional notions of ‘work’ have been challenged and continue to be the subject of contested re-conceptualisations. The old assumptions of ‘job security’ and ‘planned careers’ have been disrupted by the profound economic and social changes of recent decades. This was demonstrated in spring 2006 by the massive protests and public discussions related to the new ‘flexible’ youth employment contracts in France. To a great extent the old beliefs and orthodoxies concerning the labour market have been replaced by such concepts as ‘lifelong learning’, ‘re-skilling’ and ‘flexibility’. The latter concept can, moreover, be considered in terms of the multiple ‘flexibilities’ required in a variety of key areas: skills; attitudes; time/working hours; conditions of employment; work-life balance; and the corresponding commitments of domestic labour and caring responsibilities – an area in which the renegotiation of traditional gender roles is a critical issue. The current policy discourse concerning ‘flexicurity’ is also closely related to these afore-mentioned concerns. Meanwhile, the need to simultaneously ‘learn, earn and live’ has been identified as a particularly vital issue in the case of young people (Williamson, 2006: 14-15). Whilst all of these ‘flexibilities’ are subject to ongoing negotiation, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that most young people are likely to find themselves in comparatively weak negotiating positions in these labour market transactions. The issue of youth empowerment and agency are therefore central to any discussion of youth employment and the future of work.

The European political context within which the Research Seminar took place should be noted. *The White Paper – A New Impetus for European Youth* (2001) and the *European Youth Pact* (2005) are key documents within the European Union and, arguably, influence thinking beyond the existing member-states. Young people in Europe are an integral part of the ambitious Lisbon Strategy. The European Commission (2005) clearly recognises that the Strategy depends upon “*the support of young people to succeed.*” The communication to the Spring European Council (2005a) expressed the view that “*...young people should be targeted within the framework of certain key areas such as employment, the conciliation of family and professional life, investment in human capital and research and development.*” The Commission (2005a) indicates that the Strategy must “*...ensure that the reforms proposed help to give young people a first chance in life and equip them with the skills needed throughout their lives.*”

It is also important to acknowledge that the Council of Europe’s programme of International Reviews of National Youth Policy represents a significant body of work in respect of the analysis of youth employment and the related fields of education and training (Williamson, 2002; 2006). Moreover, these fields are addressed by the Treaty of the Council of Europe and the European Social Charter (1961; 1996), which guarantee fundamental social and economic rights for all citizens. These substantial and politically influential documents represent important reference points that go well beyond the borders of the European Union. Despite their significance, however, it is not implied that such documents should be accepted uncritically. Indeed, it was recognised that part of

the rationale for holding a Research Seminar on the subject was to challenge intellectual orthodoxies and explore new ground.

It was envisaged by the Seminar organisers that papers would be grouped within broad, but coherently themed, Panels. In order to avoid being overly prescriptive, those Panels were not assigned working titles in the Call for Papers. The view was taken that it was best to develop subject headings for the Panels on the basis of the strongest papers that emerged from the Call. Nevertheless, given the nature of the partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, there was particular interest in those papers that contributed something towards policy development within the field. It was envisaged the Seminar would provide an important opportunity to share ideas, strategies, policies and practices that had been developed in diverse national and regional settings. Therefore, papers of varied geographical focus as well as theoretical, youth work practice and youth policy orientation were welcomed. Papers on the following themes and subjects were duly invited:

- Youth Employment: macro-economic policies; micro-economic policies (including those that target particular groups of young people; social and environmental impact assessments of different economic policies; analysis of careers and trajectories; part-time work; 'secure' and 'insecure' employment; casualised labour; low income; gender; minority ethnic communities; migrant labour; young people with disabilities; the role of trade unions; young entrepreneurs; co-operative enterprises; the public sector; personal and career development in the workplace; regional disparities (economic 'hotspots' and depressed areas); flexicurity; 'learning and earning'; work-life balance; work and family commitments; mobility and ethical employment practices.
- Youth Unemployment: analysis of causes of unemployment amongst young people; differentiated experiences of unemployment; social exclusion; social security and social protection; activation programmes; individualised advisory services on employment, education and training; social inclusion strategies; groups vulnerable to unemployment; voluntary work; regional disparities; gender; minority ethnic communities; young people with disabilities; vulnerable young people; and the shadow economy.
- Education, Training and Youth Access to the Labour Market: formal education; non-formal education; informal education; vocational education; higher education; strategies to reduce school exclusion and truancy; youth work; lifelong learning; mismatches between employment opportunities and skills; individualised advisory services on education, training and employment; widening access to high quality education and training; tackling discriminatory mechanisms and processes within educational institutions and training agencies; and voluntary work.
- Youth Mobility and Inter-Generational Solidarity: the relationship between social policy domains concerned with youth and older people; economic 'hotspots' and depressed areas; accommodation and health needs of mobile youth labour; new opportunities and old responsibilities; youth 'flight' and ageing populations; and migration and the emergence of social tensions with host communities.

- Youth Participation: the contribution of young people to policy formation; political engagement; and social movements, protest and other expressions of civic involvement.

Participants were required to fall into at least one of the following categories:

- Established academic researchers in the field;
- Researchers with, or about to complete, Masters or PhD studies in relevant academic disciplines;
- Researchers interested in contributing to the development of thinking in the specific field of youth with regard to Seminar themes;
- Practitioners with a theoretically informed and analytical approach to the subject; and;
- Policy makers actively involved in addressing the issues relevant to the topic.

Whilst the Seminar was most definitely research-oriented, it was felt that inclusion of some participants in the latter category would facilitate a fruitful dialogue between those drawn from the respective domains of research and practice. Accordingly, the following types of paper were invited:

- Research papers;
- Papers describing, analysing and conceptualising practice experience of specific projects and / or activities;
- Papers describing youth policy initiatives; and
- ‘Tandem papers’ presenting projects involving co-operation between researchers and practitioners and / or policy makers.

The Call for Papers for the Seminar attracted responses from a broad range of research and policy interests. It should be noted with regret, however, that the Call failed to attract responses in some significant research areas (economics, for example). The Seminar Team made efforts to address some of the lacunae in the programme by inviting distinguished speakers to cover some of the issues not covered by those presenting papers. This strategy met with notable success in some areas, but regrettably it was not possible to secure the presence of expert speakers in all of the desired fields. Consequently, the Research Seminar programme inevitably had a somewhat eclectic feel. Nevertheless, the view of the Seminar Team was that those who had submitted the strongest abstracts should be selected for participation. In the last analysis, the guiding principle of quality was applied. Thus, the selection of a diverse, interesting and robust set of papers was favoured at the expense of achieving a spurious balance. Given that the publication of a book based on the Seminar papers was one of the principal aims of the Seminar, the guiding principle of ‘quality’ was quite properly paramount. It is to be hoped that the final quality of the edited book will justify the decisions taken by the Seminar Team.

2. The Research Seminar

2.1: Introduction

The stated aims of the Research Seminar can be expressed in the following terms:

- To strengthen the relationship between youth research, youth policy and youth work practice / training.
- To analyse the nature of the problems, challenges and opportunities that relate to youth employment and the future of work.
- To generate recommendations in the linked domains of research activity, policy and practice.

These aims were to be realised in the fulfilment of the following objectives:

- To produce a Report of the Research Seminar that includes recommendations in the areas of research, policy and practice.
- To upload the presented papers to the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.
- To publish a book based on selected papers from the Research Seminar.

What follows should not be regarded as a detailed transcription of the Seminar's proceedings. Rather, it seeks to represent the main themes that arose from the presentation of papers, key addresses and resulting discussions. As everyone who has ever attended a conference or seminar will know, many of the important debates, ideas and insights take place outside plenary sessions: in the coffee breaks, over meals and in rare moments of free time away from the venue. Hopefully, a sense of these discussions will be reflected in this document. Inevitably, perhaps, what is reported here is subject to the personal biases and selective attention of the author. Although feedback has been sought from other Team members and participants, any misrepresentations or omissions in the reporting of the Seminar are entirely the responsibility of the author.

The full Seminar Programme and participant list are reproduced in the appendices. Sadly, not all participants were able to attend. Some others, meanwhile, were unable to attend the whole programme. Nevertheless, as will be noted from the substantive narrative, the difference between the planned programme and what actually took place is not too great.

One important point should be made about the Seminar programme. As has already been noted, the design of the programme was determined on the basis of the papers selected rather than a pre-ordained set of named themes and subject titles. This was, as previously argued, the right decision in the circumstances. It did, however, present the Team with a problem in terms of how best to group the papers for panel sessions. Whilst some of the papers complemented one another very well, others proved more resistant to being defined in terms of the panel session title to which they had been ascribed. This did not prove to be an insurmountable problem, however. Indeed, as the Seminar Programme

unfolded it was possible to detect hitherto unseen connections running between papers – sometimes in notionally different panel sessions. In summary, then, it needs to be understood that whilst the titles of the panel sessions sometimes proved to be somewhat artificial, there were also common themes that transcended ostensibly different topics.

Finally, it should be noted that when reporting the contributions of individuals, the author has not only drawn upon his own notes but also on such documents as abstracts submitted, draft papers and PowerPoint presentations.



2.2: Introductory Session

The opening session involved a welcome to the Seminar from representatives of the institutional partners: notably, the Council of Europe, European Commission and the European Youth Forum. Participants and members of the Research Seminar Team also introduced themselves. Following these introductions, the session was divided into two main parts: brief introductory addresses from both representatives of the institutional partners and members of the Research Seminar Team; and small-group discussions between participants on the identification of national and common European issues.

The opening contributions of individuals from institutional partners and the Research Seminar Team are summarised below.

Mr. Andre-Jacques Dodin (Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe) welcomed participants and explained the role of the Directorate within the Council of Europe. In an honest appraisal of recent trends, he went on to make the following points.

As the European Union enlarges to include more European member-states and widens its competences, so the Council of Europe needs to redefine its role within the continent. Youth policy, for example, is no longer the exclusive preserve of the Council of Europe. This leaves the Directorate of Youth and Sport in a vulnerable position. Whilst it is

considered reasonable for the Council of Europe to focus on such core areas as Human Rights, Democracy and the promotion of the Rule of Law, it is important not to define these areas too narrowly. The Directorate of Youth and Sport represent the practical operationalisation of the Council of Europe's core values and principles. Such activities as training in non-formal education, youth policy monitoring and youth policy development are essential pre-requisites for the inculcation of values supportive of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. They will also hopefully help to deliver a more peaceful future for Europe. If this aim is to be realised it is therefore also necessary to be concerned with young people's material living conditions and social inclusion; and this includes a concern with the issue of employment. The Council of Europe therefore needs to work closely with other international organisations, including the European Union, United Nations and World Bank.

It is beyond doubt that the Council of Europe must increase the efficiency of its operations in the coming years. The Directorate therefore needs to set out a clear agenda for action. At the present time Mr. Dodin is working together with Dr. Gavan Titley (National University of Ireland) on developing a strategy for the Directorate of Youth (*Agenda 2020*). It will include the following elements: human rights education; formal and non-formal education in citizenship; European youth campaigns (building on the success of such campaigns as *All Different – All Equal*); social inclusion, including youth policy responses to the youth un/employment situation; and maximising the impact of the funding provided by the European Youth Foundation.

Ms. Jovana Bazerkovska (European Youth Forum) gave an overview of the aims, composition, structure and work of the European Youth Forum. This includes its role in representing its perspective in all of the relevant youth policy domains: notably, education and training; employment and social inclusion; human rights and equality; sustainable development; health; and mobility. The attention of the Seminar participants was also drawn to a Forum publication on education, employment and European youth (European Youth Forum, 2004).

The mission of the European Youth Forum is to empower young people to participate actively in the shaping of the societies within which they live and, by logical extension, Europe as a whole. It also aims to improve the living conditions of young European citizens.

It was against this background that the above-mentioned Report was commissioned. Its three principal aims were to: analyse policy development and implementation from a youth perspective; collate statistics, research and policy documents in the subject area; and demonstrate to policy makers the contribution that the involvement of youth organisations and young people can bring to the field. The Report itself is structured around an analysis of recent European youth policy developments, education, employment and social inclusion.

In terms of recent youth policy developments, the Seminar was reminded that the *White Paper – A New Impetus for European Youth* (2001) identified five areas for action:

education, life-long learning and mobility; employment; social integration; the mobilisation of young people against racism and xenophobia; and youth autonomy. The development of the Open Method of Co-ordination was identified as a significant development in recent years along with the increasingly integrated and cross-sectoral nature of youth policy in such areas as education, employment and social inclusion.

Formal education in the European Union is, of course, a central concern of European youth policy. The appropriateness and effectiveness of formal education has a profound effect on success in other aspects of young people's lives, including employment. It is important to adapt the education and training systems to the demands of the knowledge economy. There is an urgent need to improve employment levels amongst young people and the quality of their experience in the workplace. The objective is to reduce the number of young people who fail to complete secondary education satisfactorily. Additionally, it is important to increase the number 18-24 year-olds in further and higher education. The implementation of the Bologna reforms is an important part of achieving the latter objective. There is certainly a trend towards more young people spending longer in the education system than previously. Whilst this has led to an increase in the acquisition of formal educational qualifications and an enhanced position in the labour market (graduate unemployment being comparatively low compared with those with 'no or low' qualifications), it is worth noting that more women complete tertiary education than their male counterparts. The Seminar was reminded that the objectives arising from Lisbon include: increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems across the European Union; facilitating access to education and training systems for all young people; and opening Europe's education and training systems to the wider world. Whilst developing sound formal education and training systems is a high priority, there is a corresponding need to recognise the value of non-formal education for young people. The acquisition of 'soft skills' is vital. Unfortunately, the formal education system often fails to foster such skills. The role of youth organisations in providing opportunities for non-formal education and 'learning by doing' is therefore of continuing importance.

Securing appropriate and high quality employment is an ongoing challenge for young people, policy makers and society at large. The 1997 Euro-barometer study revealed that 75.7% of young people identified unemployment as the priority area for action by the European Union. The transition from formal education and training into the labour market is fraught with obstacles and difficulties. It was mentioned that there is a need to gather more data at a European level on the operation of internship schemes. It was noted that young people experience a variety of forms of discrimination in the labour market. An area of particular concern is the gendered form this discrimination can often take: although women generally enjoy a higher level of educational achievement, this is not reflected in correspondingly successful labour market outcomes. Moreover, the disparity in income levels between young men and young women remains a major concern. Common problems facing young people in the labour market include job insecurity, poor working conditions and acute problems in reconciling the worlds of employment, personal and family life. It should be noted, moreover, that young people

are very often discriminated against in terms of the nature of their employment contracts. Many do not enjoy the same rights and protections as their older counterparts.

Employment policies must therefore operate within a framework of measures that enhance the prospects of social inclusion: adequate social protection; decent and affordable accommodation; high quality education; and access to personal social services. Moreover if young people are to enjoy the same status as other members of society, it is important that they share the same rights of citizenship and rights of access to resources and services.

Other issues highlighted in the presentation included the need to ensure that young people secure employment commensurate with their qualifications. Many young people are over-qualified for the jobs they perform. Such mismatching represents a waste of talent. It is also important to reach consensus on how to achieve decent employment rights and social security in an era of globalisation. Through a process of social dialogue there needs to be a balance struck between flexibility and security. The imposition of flexible working contracts in France, for example, was not preceded by a proper dialogue with young people, trade unions, government and other key social actors.

Madame Sylvie Vlandas (European Commission, Directorate of Education and Youth) provided a comprehensive and wide-ranging overview of the European Commission's work in the area of youth policy and related domains. She also described the fruitful collaboration between the respective Directorates of the Commission and the Council of Europe. Moreover, the input of youth – particularly as mediated through the European Youth Forum – was especially valuable in terms of policy monitoring and development. She spoke at length about the Lisbon Objectives and the European Youth Pact, most notably the three chapters: employment and social inclusion; education and training; and family life and working life. Key action in these linked areas include: the reduction of youth unemployment; the development of strategies to promote social inclusion; a reduction in school drop-out rates and early school leaving; increased access to vocational training; validating non-formal learning through the development of appropriate qualification frameworks; and spreading the Youthpass initiative more widely. Young people are very much the target group within the Lisbon process. Youth employment strategies need to be actioned on both the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels; the latter level involving such initiatives as encouraging and supporting young entrepreneurs. The guidelines to support the strategy are integrated and include coverage of the following issues: the elimination of gender gaps in educational achievement, pay and labour market outcomes; the reconciliation of work and family life through, for example, the provision of high quality and affordable childcare; and integrating competences within the education and training systems. Ultimately, the European youth employment strategies need to address global trends; the development of national, regional and local responses to international economic conditions; and, as far as is practicable, individually-tailored policy packages for young people. The Open Method of Co-ordination is the favoured mechanism for developing youth employment policy across Europe. This enables broad agreement to be reached at the pan-European level whilst at the same time supporting the key principle of subsidiarity for member-states.

This approach has the potential to combine continental unity of purpose with national flexibility in terms of more localised mechanisms of implementation.

Dr. Jonathan Evans (Centre for Criminology, University of Glamorgan, Wales, United Kingdom) spoke about the specific aims of the Research Seminar and introduced some of the key themes and questions. The Research Seminar aimed to strengthen the relationship between youth research, youth policy and youth work practice / training; analyse the nature of the problems, challenges and opportunities that relate to youth employment and the future of work; and, whilst research was certainly not the deferential servant of policy, it would hopefully, generate recommendations in the linked domains of research activity, policy and practice. In terms of objectives, there was a commitment to: producing a Report of the Research Seminar that included recommendations in the areas of research, policy and practice; uploading the presented papers to the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy; and publishing a book based on selected papers from the Research Seminar. The Seminar would, to varying degrees, touch upon the salient themes of youth employment; the future of work; youth unemployment; education, training and access to the labour market; youth mobility and inter-generational solidarity; youth participation; and various forms of inequality and discrimination.

It is widely acknowledged that young people are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in economic trends. To that end we need to interrogate the position of young people across a range of themes in the domain of youth employment. What are young people's experiences of being employed? What are the commonalities? How are their experiences differentiated in terms of income, conditions of employment, job satisfaction and training? What are their future prospects? Finally, how do European governments and European institutions respond to the challenge of developing coherent and youth-friendly economic and employment policies?

There are, of course, also fundamental questions to be posed about the future of work; not just in terms of where the work is to be located geographically, but also in relation to the different sectors of the economy. Not all young people will be accommodated in the hi-tech knowledge economy: there are buildings to be constructed, taxis to be driven and sick, vulnerable and older people requiring care. There are also crucial issues to be addressed in respect of work / life balance; particularly the often gendered relationship between work and family commitments.

In terms of youth unemployment, what are the experiences of young people? How does unemployment impact on both the material circumstances of young people and the social capital, resources and life opportunities that influence identity formation? Moreover, what are the various strategies used by government to address youth unemployment? How effective are youth activation programmes and how are they 'received' by young people?

It is well documented that young people's route from formal education to the labour market is less straightforward than was once the case. These transitions are now often delayed, complicated and – in some cases – fractured altogether. There has also been a

trend away from collectivised transitions to more individualised trajectories. In many cases, moreover, young people ‘yo-yo’ between employment and unemployment.

A young, flexible and mobile workforce that is prepared to move for work to the economic ‘hotspots’ also creates challenges. For young people themselves there are issues of securing decent and affordable accommodation and, in some cases, also accessing health and social care. For the departed country of origin there is often also the question of who will support the ageing population back home. Youth mobility and inter-generational solidarity are two sides of the same coin.

When the issue of youth employment is raised, there is always the danger that young people will be constructed as passive subjects. To what extent, though, are young people themselves involved in policy formation? How do we move beyond a situation where youth is merely the object of concern and the source of anxiety for nervous policy makers? How can young people be most effectively engaged in the decisions and processes that affect them?

Finally, how do we address or even re-balance the inequalities that undoubtedly exist: inequalities based on geography, gender, social class and ethnicity? And how do we include, protect and empower those who are especially vulnerable? These may include those with disabilities, mental health problems, troubled family backgrounds and public care histories.

Research Seminar participants split into randomly **small discussion groups**. The groups were tasked to identify youth policy issues in both the individual nation-states in which they were based and Europe as a whole.

Group 1 comprised participants based from Finland, Poland, Turkey and Macedonia. The issues identified included the following:

- In Finland there are too many young people staying in the ‘university tube’ for possibly too long. For many young people the graduation process is extremely protracted. This is not, however, true for all countries.
- In Finland young people receive support (including in higher education). This is certainly not the case in some other countries. In Poland and Turkey, for example, only needy students receive financial support.
- There was a commonly identified problem of aligning the education and training systems with the needs of the economy and demands of the labour market.
- High levels of youth unemployment were cited in Macedonia. To some extent the problem of youth unemployment in Turkey and Poland is masked by youth migration to those countries where labour demands are higher. Many young Polish people, for example, migrate for work to the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.
- A common problem of unemployed youth is that they are not organised and cannot, therefore, make a cogent input into the relevant youth policy domains

- (including employment). The challenge is therefore to help facilitate the development of organisations for unemployed youth.
- A common issue is the insensitive way in which the mass media often represents unemployed youth.

Group 2 included participants from Estonia, Germany, Morocco and the United Kingdom. The issues identified can be summarised in the following terms:

- In Estonia the effects on young people of the transition to a post-Soviet society were described. The country has witnessed high economic growth. The education system is described as good. Many economically inactive people have re-entered education.
- In the United Kingdom the experience of many young people is characterised by temporary spells of employment interspersed with periods of unemployment.
- It was noted that in the United Kingdom there are some significant skills gaps.
- In the United Kingdom there exists a large group of unqualified young people.
- Activation programmes occupy the heart of German youth employment policy.
- There remains a significant division between the experiences of young people in the Western and Eastern parts of Germany.
- Although Morocco is not part of Europe, its economy and society is inextricably linked with the continent. Many young people migrate to Europe, especially France, for work.
- The experience of young Polish people in Britain needs to be explored more closely.
- The gendered experience of youth in the labour market was noted.
- In some societies women appear to choose an early marriage as a route out of unemployment.

Group 3 comprised participants from Turkey, Macedonia, Portugal and the United Kingdom. The following issues were identified:

- The gendered experience of education and the labour market was discussed in relation to Turkey and the other countries.
- The informal sector and the shadow economy are very important in Turkey.
- It was noted that Turkey has the youngest population in Europe.
- In Macedonia the lack of alignment between the education system and the labour market was noted.
- In the United Kingdom it was noted that there are enormous regional variations in levels of youth employment. There are also regional variations in terms of culture (which, of course, influences expectations and attitudes in relation to education and employment). Such local cultural factors, moreover, impact upon gender roles.

- Concern was expressed about the experiences of young migrants across Europe. There is a need for more research in this area.
- On a European level there needs to be proper recognition of non-formal education.
- Whilst it is important to encourage young people to become better educated and more highly skilled, the result is that many will be over-qualified for the locality and / or country in which they were born. This means that they will have to depart their homes if their potentials are to be realised. The paradox of an 'educate for export' policy is that it may benefit individual young people financially, but it undermines the sustainability of many 'local' cultures and societies throughout Europe. It should also be recognised that many young people will rightly perceive their own local culture as a source of support and sustenance. Consequently, some may value and choose the support and sense of security associated with staying at home rather than deciding to negotiate the individualised risks inherent in migration to a foreign country.
- The group questioned whether European identity and values really existed in any meaningful sense. It was suggested that local and regional identities are possibly more relevant for many young people. This has implications for European youth policy and practice.

Group 4 included participants from China, Serbia and the United Kingdom. The following issues were identified:

- The legacies of the various European post-communist societies continue to influence the economies of Council of Europe member-states. There are commonalities and shared resonances involved in the common experience of 'transition', but there are also significant differences between countries. The prospects and experiences of young people still depend very much on the way their respective societies organise their economies.
- Migration patterns will depend largely on the specific labour demands of particular countries, be they in professional, agricultural, service or construction sectors. It may be that some societies have a 'skills gap' which they are failing to meet or else there are sectors of the economy in which local citizens are reluctant to work. Many Polish young people, for example, are apparently engaged in work that most British citizens do not wish to undertake.
- The way in which youth transitions are theorised now tends to involve an individualised account. This represents a shift from predictable transitions to those that are less predictable and therefore riskier. This places a greater sense of personal responsibility on individual young people to navigate their own personal social transitions.
- Young people's involvement in shadow economies is an important issue.

- More needs to be known about how young people succeed, or indeed fail, in their efforts to become entrepreneurs.
- There is a common challenge across Europe on how best to plan, reform and adapt the education / vocational training systems in light of shifting trends in the economy.
- The massification of the higher education system has had the unintended consequence – in some countries, at least – of lowering the status of qualifications. Increasingly, there is pressure on young graduates to attain Masters degrees in order to distinguish themselves from their peers.
- The completion of the Bologna process will inevitably result in a quicker throughput of students. Thus, graduation will be achieved in three years instead of six. Can the labour market absorb this glut of graduates?
- When job opportunities are restricted, the education system tends to become a convenient warehouse for unemployed young people.
- The success of the minimum of wage as an anti-poverty measure and instrument of social protection has been exaggerated. It has been suggested that the business community has actually set the level for the minimum wage.
- In the United Kingdom the number of NEETs (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training) has increased. The reasons for this continuing trend need to be investigated further.
- Given the rapid social changes that have taken place in Europe in recent years - including, in some cases, the transition from communism to free market liberal or social democracies – it is important to identify the new mechanisms of social reproduction. The roles of political and economic elites need to be considered in relation to new social class formations.
- Despite the influence of de-traditionalising social and economic forces at work in most societies, the corresponding decline of the state has reinstated the importance of the family (albeit in sometimes new and diverse forms) for young people. The family is a source of support for difficult youth transitions and a source of refuge in troubled times.
- Youth labour migration was identified as a substantive theme in contemporary Europe. It takes diverse forms: brain drains; skills gap fillers; and cheap, flexible unskilled and often seasonal labour. Migration covers a complex set of interrelated issues and policy challenges. How do the often poor ‘labour donor’ countries retain their young people or, at the very least, ensure their eventual return? As the migration pattern very commonly involves a movement to large urban centres of population, how are rural communities to be sustained? This is not only an economic issue, but also a cultural one. The migration of young people from such communities can often affect adversely the future of local identities: local languages, dialects and cultures can be lost in a generation or two. The lines of continuity

- and, increasingly discontinuity - between the local, national and European need to be appreciated.
- In Serbia there is a need to develop a set of cogent and integrated policies to support youth employment.
- In some countries civil society is weak and democracies are extremely fragile. The success, or otherwise, of youth employment policies will affect the future peace, health and stability of these societies and – by logical extension – Europe as a whole.

The next section contains brief summaries of often quite complex papers based on detailed empirical research. Most of these papers can be read in full in the forthcoming book and / or can be downloaded from the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.

2.3: Education-to-Work Transitions and European Labour Mobility

Dr. Katariina Koskinen (Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, University of Turku, Finland) presented a paper entitled *Labour Market Success of Young European Graduates*. Permanent contracts, well remunerated positions and reasonable correspondence between education and employment are not self-evident for European graduates in the 21st century. The purpose of the paper was to analyse which factors help graduates to succeed in the European labour market. By utilising logistic regression analysis, three European countries are compared in order to explain which factors are characteristic to each region in providing graduates with substantial labour market success. The results suggest that the country of origin is the most crucial factor in defining graduates' labour market success. Nevertheless, demographic factors, field of study and type of degree also have an influence in this equation.

Dr. David Cairns (Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal) presented a paper entitled *Fight or Flight? Exploring Employment Uncertainty and Geographical Mobility amongst Youth in Portugal and Northern Ireland*. Young people in Europe today live within a context of increasing uncertainty and fragmentation in respect of their education-to-work transitions. Within their biographies we can observe the educational and occupational choices they make in response to their circumstances. Thus, for example, their plans for a future in which they may be required to accept increasingly flexible and insecure working conditions. The main aim of the paper was to explore the impact of perceived uncertainty in imagined future careers amongst young people in two different European regions, namely Northern Ireland and Portugal. From the results of recent empirical research we are able to observe trends in relation to employment and mobility, and explore the relationship between fear of unemployment and future life plans. A number of studies also illustrate various responses to uncertainty: 'fight' responses, typically involving prolonged residence within the parental home, and 'flight' responses, such as making recourse to geographical mobility in educational and occupation trajectories. The evidence presented here would suggest that young people from Northern Ireland are more likely to preference geographical mobility whilst those from Portugal generally choose to remain in the parental home. Part of the explanation

for these findings lie in the relative strengths of family relationships in the different societies along with the culturally specific norms supportive of these contrasting responses to unemployment.

Dr. Laszlo Kovacs, Budapest College of Communication and Business, Institute of Economy, Hungary) was due to present a paper entitled *Demographic Implications of Youth Unemployment – Policy Considerations*. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, he was unable to attend. Nevertheless, he kindly forwarded the paper to the Seminar.

Professor Abdelfattah Ezzine (Academic Institute of Scientific Research, University of Mohamed V, Souissi, Rabat, Morocco) presented a paper entitled *The Young and the Market of Employment in Morocco*. The paper gave an overview of the realities of young people's lives in the job market. It also considered critically the policies developed and implemented in this area by the Moroccan government since 1990. The majority of these policies are actually not dissimilar to many of those deployed in other countries, including those in Europe. Despite the application of these policies, the social exclusion of some sections of the youth population persists.

2.4: Youth Employment: Policy and Practice

Dr. Heike Behle (Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, England, United Kingdom) presented a paper entitled *The impact of active labour market programmes on young people's mental health: possibilities and limitations*. To date, addressing the changes in the mental health of participants in an active labour market programme (ALMP) aimed at young people with problems in school-to-work transitions has been under-researched. Mental health in this context is defined as the ability to cope with external and internal needs. The paper addresses this research gap by evaluating an active labour market programme in Germany (JUMP). It does so by drawing on two disciplines: sociology and psychology. A theoretical framework to explain changes in mental health in general is established, followed by an analysis of the effects of ALMPs on health. By using data on JUMP participants, the methodology of the evaluation has been explored. The results of this analysis can be summarised in the following terms. The impact of ALMPs on mental health is constrained by the realities of the labour market at a given point in time. The evaluation method focuses on changes in mental health which can be used to provide valuable additional information about ALMP. Future expectations about labour market opportunities are found to have the strongest impact on changes in mental health. Perceived future prospects therefore have a major stabilising influence on the mental health of young people, especially in a labour market within which jobs are scarce. This indicates that changes in mental health are closely related to the levels of uncertainty faced by young people with problems in the school-to-work transition.

There can certainly be an improvement in mental health after programme participation. The example of West Germany shows that in a labour market where job entry is problematic due to a low level of qualifications, programmes can increase the level of qualification and build up work experience and connections to potential employers. Programme participation can lead to job entry and better future prospects, which again can lead to improved mental health. The vicious circle of unemployment and poor mental health can thus be turned around. The research can therefore be used to support current German and European Union policy to offer unemployed young people at least some kind of programme.

The East German example, on the other hand, shows that in a denser labour market the situation looks rather different. Young people are denied entry to the labour market because there are insufficient apprenticeship places and training positions available. Programme participation does not appear to result in a significant improvement in mental health; although it could be argued that deterioration might have occurred had they not participated in the Programme. This remains untested, of course. ALMPs in a dense labour market do not necessarily improve young people's prospects in the labour market. Nevertheless, improving mental health – or maintaining it at a reasonable level of functionality – would seem to improve the employability of the young person. The distinction between employability and actual employment remains an important one, however.

Dr. Anna Musiala (Adam Mickiewicz, University of Poznan, Poland) presented a paper entitled *Youth Employment – The Polish Regulations*. The rate of youth unemployment is much higher than that of adults in many countries of the world. Young people are also much more likely to be employed under the terms of temporary contracts. In the European Union approximately one third of young people are working in such circumstances, compared with 11% of adults. Trends in the youth labour market tend to reflect changes in the adult labour market, although the effects of any shifts are often magnified and appear to be more serious in the employment situation of the young. The decline in skilled jobs in the manufacturing sector, together with the increased demand for professional specialists and unskilled labour in the burgeoning service industries, has led to the phenomenon of a ‘hollowing out’ of the youth labour market. New opportunities tend to cluster at the top end, in the professional and advanced technical sector, and at the same time at the bottom end, in the low-tier service industries. An increasing number of youth are also finding work in the informal economy, where jobs are usually characterised by insecurity, poor wages and bad working conditions. In Poland the unemployment rate is approximately three times higher than the overall national average rate of unemployment. It is against this background that the government introduced a vocational activation programme entitled ‘First Job’. The programme comprises five strands: small and medium-sized enterprises; self employment; education; voluntary work; and information, vocational counselling and labour market / employment services. The paper represents an evaluation of the ‘First Job’ Programme.

Ms. Kristina Velkovska (Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, Macedonia) presented a paper entitled *A Youth Employability Programme for European Macedonia*. The paper presented an overview of the work of the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation in respect of a Youth Employability programme in Macedonia. The Programme’s twin priorities are economic development (the promotion and support of youth entrepreneurship, youth employment and employability) and empowerment (the promotion of youth leadership). The guiding principles of the organisation are described as positive and continuous youth development; youth participation in society; intercultural learning; and networking. The actual programme comprises a number of different strands: small loans to assist the establishment of small businesses for young people; training and mentoring programmes for prospective entrepreneurs; the promotion of non-formal education; internship programmes in companies and other public institutions; cross-border co-operation; and the exchange of good practice. The Programme has been supported by the Clinton Global Initiative, the Open Society Foundation and Studio Modena (a Slovenia-based private company). The paper stimulated a particularly fruitful discussion about the challenges of securing funding to support such valuable youth programmes. The role of donor organisations and private sector companies in both funding and capacity building in poor countries was debated. Those working in non-governmental organisations had to secure funding whilst at the same time ensuring that young people’s welfare was properly protected.

Mr. Krzysztof Nowaczek (Research Unit on European Governance, Turin, Italy) presented a paper entitled *Mainstreaming of the youth dimension in EU employment policy: Better governance for higher employment and enhanced participation*. Through

the introduction of the European Employment Strategy, the European level joined together national and local tiers in the co-ordination and management of employment policies. After the recent adoption of the European Youth Pact, the youth employment dimension of the Lisbon Strategy for Jobs and Growth has become more visible. The paper considered this development with a particular focus on the youth-related elements of the European Employment Strategy. Against this background, to what extent can youth stakeholders be said to be able to contribute to policy formulation at European Union level? EU policy makers promised more ‘youth-friendly’ policies and the European Youth Pact and the Open Method of Co-ordination have been, to some extent at least, successful stories in this respect. They have brought a crucial focus on youth employment and helped Member States to reflect in a systematic and more harmonised manner on the issue. National governments have been required to give some attention to common objectives and consult non-governmental actors. Although this new form of governance has facilitated the sharing of good practice and stimulated a process of mutual learning between key players at all levels, there is no common system of mainstreaming the youth dimension into the European Employment Strategy. Consequently, ensuring common standards and easily measurable outcomes is difficult. That said, the advantages of OMC are undeniable. Developments likely to influence future European Youth Employment strategies include: mobility within Europe; changes in the labour law; demographic changes in the European Union; the strengthening of measures to counter discrimination on various grounds (this is particularly important given the vulnerable position of some migrant and minority ethnic communities); and the possible impact of the European Year of Poverty and Social Exclusion in 2010.

2.5: Gender, Family and Work

Dr Gary Pollock (Department of Sociology, Manchester Metropolitan University, England, United Kingdom) presented a paper entitled *Youth Transitions in the South Caucasus: Connections between employment, housing and family*. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia occupy a corner at the far periphery of Europe. For centuries this has been a contested area, sandwiched between Russia, Turkey and Iran. The recent history of the region begins with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the subsequent socio-economic upheavals. These are therefore the most far-flung European transition countries. Of interest are the experiences of the young people who grew up during the transition from Soviet control to national independence. These young people witnessed the dying days of an empire and the turbulence which followed. Now at an age when one would expect maturing careers and families, this cohort are a bridge between memories of the old system and the lived experiences of young people today growing up under post-soviet administrations. This transition generation are modern day pioneers in the sense that they have not had the trajectories of their parents to assist them in thinking about their own futures. Describing youth transitions as individualised, insecure, fractured, broken and risky has become routine in Western European countries. In South Caucasus these words have a particular resonance given the scale of changes of the past two decades and the particular problems which result from the complex political geography of the area. We are only now beginning to understand the contemporary socio-economic context of life in

the South Caucasus through representative sample surveys: the Data Initiative (DI) surveys of 2004, 2005 and 2006. These surveys show that there are greater regional variations both between and within countries with regard to education, employment, migration and social and political attitudes. This paper explored the experiences that have resulted in contemporary social 'destinations'. The DI surveys tell us that young people are now more likely to complete education, but are also likely to experience significant bouts of unemployment. At the present time it is unclear who the real winners and losers are in these societies. Seasonal, employment related migration appears to be increasing and the length of time spent abroad also appears to be lengthening – the effects of this on family formation and having children are not yet known. Informed by a belief that one can best understand social processes which develop through time using a range of related longitudinal measures, a survey has been undertaken of this transition generation with a view to describing and understanding their lives. A sub-sample of young people from the DI 2005, those born between 1970 and 1976, has been surveyed in early 2007. The focus has been to collect detailed data on employment, education, housing, family and leisure histories. This allows the examination of the interconnections between each of these ongoing processes. The methodology applied in this study will be of interest to youth researchers in Europe and beyond. What is of particular interest is the way in which the methodology has capacity-building potential in terms of empowering local researchers on the ground.

Dr. Kezban Celik (Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Turkey) presented a paper entitled *Unemployment Experience of Youth in Turkey*. The paper was based on empirical research conducted for a doctoral thesis (*Unemployment Experience of Youth in Ankara and Sanliurfa in Turkey*). The aim of the study was to analyse how joblessness is experienced by unemployed youth; which factors are involved in this experience; identifying young people's coping strategies; and the results of those coping strategies. Moreover, it is important to try to understand the relationship between waged work and adulthood for young people who are in the process of learning how to be 'adult'. In this study it is argued that there are three agents that define the experience of unemployed youth: the state, the labour market and the family. In order to understand the role of each agent on youth experience, methodological triangulation was used in this study: interviews were conducted in Ankara and Sanliurfa with 329 young people who had registered with ISKUR (Turkish Employment Centre) in the last quarter of 2003 and who were approached after six months of registration; 30 families of unemployed youth; and 21 decision-makers in both provinces. The research found that family is by far the most important institution in the experience of unemployed youth, due largely to the scarce welfare state provision and the limited number - and low quality - jobs created in the labour market in Turkey. Therefore, family resources are crucial in the management of the experience of youth unemployment. Youth, who are heavily dependent upon family support, cope with unemployment in two main ways: rapid movement into early adulthood or postponed / delayed adulthood. The former leads to the reproduction of earlier family patterns and the consequent inter-generational transfer of poverty; whilst the latter leads to the postponement of adult rights. Given the heavy dependence on family, unemployed youth learn to be 'good family members', This has the effect of eroding trust and respect towards the state and its institutions. As one interviewee

expressed it: “...my state is my father”. As a result, the capacity to become active, participatory, responsible, self-starting and entrepreneurial individuals – as required by wider society – is diminished considerably.

Mr. Bright B. Simons was due to present a paper entitled *Social Enterprise and the Second Generation: Novel Perspectives on Ethnic Youth Employment Mobility*. Regrettably, travel problems prevented the attendance of this participant.

2.6: Guest Lecture: The Lisbon Strategy and its implications for European Union Youth Policies

Professor Janine Goetschy (CNRS, University of Nanterre and Institute for European Studies, University of Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium) delivered a lecture entitled *The Lisbon Strategy and its Implications for European Union Youth Policies*. The principal aims of the Lisbon Strategy were expressed in the following terms: a catch-up strategy for Europe *vis-à-vis* the USA and Japan, in terms of economic growth, employment, labour and product market reforms; to help complete the implementation of the internal market; to ensure a better balance between economic integration and social integration; and to introduce a new mode of governance to resolve potential areas of conflict, especially in those areas that are outside the EU’s competence.

In 2004 there was severe criticism of the Lisbon Strategy: it represented an overloaded programme; there was insufficient co-ordination and divergent priorities; and lack of political will on the part of some member-states. The political and economic context of 2004 was also very different from 2000: there had been the events of 9/11; economic stagnation, an oil crisis; the emergence of new competitors such as China and India; the effects of EU enlargement; the weakened position of the Franco-German ‘engine’; divisions within Europe on the Iraq war; and significant differences of opinion on the Constitutional Treaty and the EU budget. The 2005 Lisbon Strategy Reform involved: the development of national action plans by member-states; more effective involvement of national parliaments and social partners; the simplification of economic and employment objectives within three year timeframes; and better policy co-ordination.

An important feature of the Lisbon Strategy is, of course, the use of the Open Method of Co-ordination. The strengths of this approach to governance can be expressed briefly in the following terms: the iterative nature of the process enables a meaningful dialogue between European, national and regional levels; it engages with all of the key actors (parliament, the state, business, social partners and civil society); the policy agenda is clear; there is management by objectives and this necessarily entails regular evaluations; it allows the enlargement of the EU agenda on national priorities without involving wholesale transference of competences; it requires co-ordination between the different domains of policy; it facilitates the development of networks between policy makers and practitioners; and respects both national sovereignty and national diversity in terms of the implementation of common policy aims.

The weaknesses of OMC, meanwhile, include: legitimacy deficits (an inadequate role for social partners in the process); the involvement of 'experts' rather than elected politicians; lack of proper integration with national priorities; its non-compulsory nature; the risk of 'responsibility confusion' between the different levels; and a tendency towards 'agenda overload'.

Apart from an OMC on youth, the Lisbon Strategy covers a range of issues relevant to young people: employment; social inclusion; and education and training. The European guidelines on combating youth employment include the 'employability pillar', which covers such areas as activation policies, unemployment benefits, employment service reforms and aligning education systems and qualification frameworks with the needs of the market. The 'adaptability pillar' covers contracts, collective agreements and geographical mobility. Enterprise creation is, meanwhile, encouraged through employment friendly tax policies. Finally, the issue of gender balance addresses issues of discrimination and measures designed to enhance women's employment rates (including the provision of childcare facilities, for example). One of the significant intellectual developments in relation to the European Employment Strategy is, of course, the ongoing debate on the nature of flexicurity.

The European Employment Strategy has set a number of benchmarks for 2010. These include: reaching 25% of the unemployed with appropriate training measures; the development of an EU-wide system of job offers; increasing the average pension age by five years. A set of linked benchmarks in the field of education and training comprise: a 50% reduction in school drop-out rates; increasing participation in secondary education to 85%; increasing lifelong learning to 12.5% of the working population; increasing by 15% the number of graduates in the natural and applied sciences; reducing illiteracy levels by 20%; increasing investment in research and design by 3%; and ensuring that 90% of children receive pre-school education.

The Lisbon Strategy on youth issues is multi-dimensional in that it embraces labour market reforms, social inclusion, education, training and the reconciliation of family life and work. It is worth mentioning, moreover, that some measures targeted at older people (such as pensions policy) will also have an impact on young people. Youth policies have been gaining momentum at EU level since the advent of the 2000s, particularly with the publication of the White Paper in 2001. It is also manifested in activation policies and the introduction of flexicurity measures; greater investment in education and training; strategies to tackle the social exclusion of young people; and the development of youth policies that are more closely linked with labour market issues. Increasingly youth policies bear the imprint of EU concepts and methodologies: benchmarking, management by objectives, reporting and evaluation of performance indicators are just a few examples. If the Lisbon Strategy has given a new impetus to youth policies, it has also imposed some constraints. In the fields of education, training and employment the right to work is mediated through the prescribed routes of incentives for the study of the sciences, labour activation programmes, flexicurity, mobility and adaptation to the needs of the market.

2.7: Locality, Identity and Inclusion

Dr. Tracy Shildrick (School of Social Sciences and Law, University of Teesside, England, United Kingdom) presented a paper entitled *Poor Work and Social Exclusion – The global, the local and marginalised youth transitions*. The rapidly changing demands of the global economy have brought new opportunities and it has been argued that the importance of locality has declined as people are (forced to) become more global and cosmopolitan in their outlooks and experiences. Economic restructuring and rapid de-industrialisation has, at the same time, served to entrench and widen structural inequalities, perhaps most starkly in countries like Britain.

This paper draws upon findings of qualitative research projects with young adults in the North East of England and highlights some of the contradictions that blight young people's lives as they negotiate the transition to adulthood in a de-industrialised labour market. Despite growing up in poor neighbourhoods, the interviewees could *not* be described as economically *excluded*. Whilst all experienced unemployment, the majority had substantial experience of employment. They were not, as is often depicted, part of a disconnected, 'can work, won't work' underclass. These young people worked, but for the most part, jobs were insecure, with few decent training opportunities. Interviews were replete with instances of exploitative and punitive employers. Globalisation produces an increased demand for highly skilled workers, but it is the corresponding expansion of insecure, non-progressive work for which many young people are destined. Whilst a strong commitment to the 'work ethic' prevailed, perversely it only served to propel them through a succession of 'poor jobs' and ultimately, in some instances, to *exacerbate* young adults' experiences of poverty and social exclusion.

It is argued that in places like Teesside widespread collapse and the accompanying restructuring of labour market opportunities has resulted in the virtual disappearance of traditional working class routes to employment and social mobility. For the young people in the studies, there were few opportunities to secure the sort of 'respectable'; working class jobs undertaken by many of their parents and grandparents. Thus, for them, repeated and often long-term engagement with 'poor work' signalled a more fundamental process of downward social mobility.

Mr. Bo Sundstrom (The County Board of Municipalities in Gavleborg, Sweden) presented a paper entitled *The Face of Youth Unemployment – Victim from the Past Triple X Process or a Sparking Plug for the Future?* Gavleborg County has experienced the highest rate of youth unemployment since 2000. It was against this background that a conference was convened in 2006 in order to bring together key stakeholders – employers, school principals, vocational guides, politicians and young people – and develop a proactive strategy to address the problem. Four main strands form the basis of the strategy: listening to youth; reforms to the formal education system; the further development of non-formal learning; and the design of a marketing strategy aimed at attracting inward investment from private companies.

Dr. Siim Krusellm (Statistical Bureau in Estonia) presented a paper entitled *Young Estonians and Non-Estonians in the Labour Market*. Drawing upon extensive statistical data, the paper compares the labour market trajectories of the young people from Estonian and non-Estonian ethnic backgrounds between 1995 and 2006. An historical overview was presented of the social, economic and cultural changes that have taken place since Estonia established its independence from the former Soviet Union. The collapse of heavy industry, a decline in trading relations between Russia and Estonia, and the requirement to know the Estonian language initially weakened the labour market position of non-Estonians (mainly ethnic Russians). Between 1997 and 2000 the employment of young Estonians was almost at the same level. The employment of all young people declined from 38-39% in 1997 to 31-32% in 2000 as many young people remained in - or returned to – formal education and training. In 2005 the unemployment gap of 15-24 year old Estonians and their non-Estonian counterparts was the highest of the last nine years. This was as a result of a significant decline in the unemployment rate of young Estonians in the past year. In 1995 young non-Estonians experienced an unemployment rate of 18% compared with an Estonian youth unemployment rate of 14%. In 2006 the unemployment rate amongst young Estonians was 11% whilst it was 19% amongst young non-Estonians. The average wage of Estonians and non-Estonians aged between 15 and 24 years is 5, 583 Kroons for the former and 5, 260 Kroons for the latter. The reasons for some of these differences can be accounted for to a large degree by the degree of command non-Estonians have of the Estonian language. Further analysis of the social processes at work is, however, required.

Dr. Serdar M. Degirmencioglu (Department of Psychology, Beykent University, Istanbul, Turkey) presented a paper entitled *Assessing and Developing Youth Employment and Work Policy in Turkey*. The paper was co-authored with a colleague at Beykent University, Dr.Hakan Acar. The paper is based on two studies: a desk review of youth policy and empirical research conducted in a total of 15 cities across Turkey. These studies are particularly relevant for the Seminar because they focused on youth policy development in Turkey.

Before reporting the results of the studies, some important preliminary general points were made about young people and youth policy. With broadened opportunities for better education and healthcare young people can acquire the life skills to navigate adolescence and young adulthood safely, while improved vocational training will help them to compete in the workforce. Youth political participation and involvement in social organisations are also essential for fostering young people's civic life in their own communities. It is also vital for good governance. Providing information to young people and developing their decision-making skills, especially to stay healthy and appreciate continued learning, is important. Armed with the right information and incentives, young people can make good decisions. The provision of 'second chances' is also extremely important. Countries need targeted programmes for young people who have fallen behind due to difficult circumstances or poor choices: examples of 'falling behind' might include dropping out of school, drug addiction, criminal behaviour or a prolonged period of unemployment. Second chances help young people rebuild their future, which also has a long-term beneficial effect for society as whole. Rehabilitation is

costly, but the payoffs are highest for young people who still have a lifetime of potential productivity ahead of them.

The components of a policy that is supportive of youth employment should include: equal opportunities; access to quality education; support for learning; guidance, mentoring and other types of special support (whenever needed); open horizons; social security; flexicurity of skills and opportunities; and lifelong learning. Policy and practice in relation to children and young people should, however, be informed by a developmental approach. This should include an appreciation of the process of maturation, developmental stages and the timing, sequence and impact of key events and transitions. For policy makers this means being acquainted with child and adolescent development, occupational choice theories and other related conceptual frameworks.

The studies on which the paper was based found that there were weaknesses and limitations in some areas of youth policy. These included: youth participation and empowerment – the capacity of youth to influence policies and employment issues was limited; an imbalance between central and local mechanisms; issues that are often regarded as time and / or place-bound (extreme fluctuations in the economy, for example); a failure to integrate policies from different domains; and a poor relationship between research and practice. However, those areas that did seem to work included the following: targeted training programmes run by the local government or by chambers of commerce with integrated support mechanisms; public education centres with dedicated staff; autonomous youth centres with dedicated staff; vocational counselling centres (ISKUR); co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Council of Higher Education (an alignment of vocational schools with vocational colleges that results in properly integrated programmes); and the delivery of human-scale services – ‘small’ appears to be well received by young people.

2.8: Reflections on Themes

On the final day of the Seminar participants had an opportunity to reflect on the themes discussed during the course of the whole event as well as introducing issues that had not been covered. The written comments of participants have been collated by Wei Shen and appear in full in the appendices. As some of these comments inevitably appear a little cryptic, summarised below are slightly fuller versions of the ideas that emerged from this session.

Education to Work Transitions

- The mass media has a role to play in communicating good practice in this area. It is also important to present young people in a positive light with regard to this key transition.
- The need to provide high quality jobs for young people.
- It should not always be assumed that mobility is a good thing.

- Young people can experience fatigue because of the amount of education and training they are expected to undertake.
- In many cases the education system and the market are not aligned properly.
- It is important to understand young people's perception of education (including its aims and objectives).
- A variety of social institutions need to address their respective roles in assisting young people with their transitions.
- Young people should always have the option of working outside their communities.
- Young people should have a direct say on education-to-work transition policies.
- Young people should have access to guidance and counselling with regard to this area.
- School-to-work transitions need to have policies integrated at all levels: European, national, regional and local. These policies need to be supported by an institutional infrastructure: a continuum that includes government ministries at one end and local youth clubs at the other.
- Youth employment issues need to be firmly embedded in economic policies.
- The issue of migration – and its impact on labour markets – is absolutely crucial.
- Good practice in the area of youth mobility needs to be shared.
- The role of peer groups in labour market mobility needs to be researched.
- The relationship between social class, material resources, social capital and education-to-work transitions requires further research. Appropriate action by social policy makers on how best to address inequalities in life chances needs to be considered.
- Explore and develop youth retention strategies in countries prone to outward migration.

Family and Work

- Further work needs to be done on women's access to the labour market, especially in respect of those residing in rural areas.
- Government remains an important partner in this area of policy. It can be a major driver of policy and has a role in setting the agenda.
- There needs to be more support provided for young people with special needs.
- Women need more support in the acquisition of skills that will help them navigate their way in the labour market. This is especially important for women re-entering the labour market after a break in employment (especially as women remain the principal carers of children, sick family members and older relatives).
- Employment means more than just paid work: it is an agent of socialisation and can be an important source of support, structure and identity formation.
- It has been argued that any job is better than no job. Even precarious or low quality jobs can provide positive benefits.
- Outreach programmes need to be developed in relation to marginalised groups (such as certain minority ethnic groups in some countries). The use of role models can be part of a wider strategy for reaching and influencing the attitudes of such groups.

- Parents in difficult situations need access to appropriate support at an early stage.
- Whilst the importance of family support should be recognised, it is important that this consideration is balanced against young people's need for autonomy and independence.
- Whilst families can be a source of positive support, they can also be the site of unfair constraints, oppression and abuse.
- Mobility is an issue for both individual citizens and their families.
- Local government has a responsibility to provide assistance with organising and, where possible, providing substantial funding of childcare facilities as this will release many people back into the labour market (especially women).
- It is important that children and families policies are developed in a complementary alignment with youth policies.
- Policies need to take full account of both women's employment trajectories and the gendered nature of the life course.
- More research needs to be undertaken on the mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion that operate in relation to particular social groups in specific political, social and cultural contexts.

Locality

- Young people from poor neighbourhoods require positive action measures.
- Young people need to be assisted to identify themselves as citizens with rights as opposed to being members of stigmatised social groups in poor neighbourhoods.
- Further research need to be conducted in relation to social, political and cultural concepts of Europeanism. How does this affect young people's employment trajectories?
- The nature and place of leisure in young people's lives needs to be explored further.
- The active involvement of the 'local community' in providing services, activities and support for young people can make a huge difference to their sense of self-worth and subsequent employment trajectories.
- Locality is the site upon which identities are formed and contested. Racism and xenophobia are issues that need to be tackled at a grassroots, neighbourhood level.
- Effective local processes of democratic governance need to be established in order to instil a sense of empowerment amongst young people. This will help them realise that they need not be the passive victims of powerful social, political and economic forces.
- Youth participation needs to be encouraged in the local neighbourhood. Young people need to be exhorted to join local non-governmental organisations.
- Young people living in peripheral and / or rural areas need to be encouraged to participate in European activities that will expose them to new experiences (including a sense of the cosmopolitan diversity that exists in much of Europe).

Inclusion

- Young people need to be treated as a resource rather than as a problem.
- Greater consideration needs to be given to young people outside of higher education.
- Participatory research with young people needs to be encouraged wherever possible. Young people are too often treated as research 'subjects'. As far as is practicable they should be engaged as co-researchers. They can be involved in devising research questions and strategies as well as interpreting and analysing data.
- Best practice needs to be identified and shared.
- The minimum wage needs to be raised.
- Social inclusion requires a high degree of policy co-ordination and good communication between different domains.
- Good careers advice is required.

Miscellaneous

- Environmental perspectives need to be incorporated into the economic policy and employment agenda.
- The EU can learn from bad practice (such as the 'hire and fire' culture of the USA).
- A clear political vision is required in the youth employment field.
- Greater financial, technical and skills support is required for young people establishing their own businesses. Education and training are as important as financial support.
- Young people need to learn to think of themselves as international citizens.
- Greater co-operation with the private sector is required in the youth policy field (especially in relation to employment).
- There is a need to improve information and knowledge dissemination services.
- The individualised nature of child and adolescent development needs to be appreciated more fully by policy makers.
- It is important to appreciate that the creative and cultural industries (design, conceptual economy, *etc.*) is a growth area. Young people are very often in the vanguard of creative and cultural change. As such they need to be assisted to take control of their ideas and generate wealth for themselves and others.
- The rise of online lending and business matching highlights the need to ensure that young people have access to, and are equipped to use, the new technology.
- The need to identify trends that will help us predict the 'future of work'. What are the implications for education?



3. Conclusion and Recommendations

It will by now be clear that there were a number of themes and issues that emerged very clearly from the Research Seminar. Equally, there were silences and absences on important matters. This was because the Seminar could not cover every issue in the broad subject area of youth employment and the future of work. Summarised below are a set of recommendations that have been developed by the Report author. They are based on the contributions made by participants – individually and in group discussions - and in consultation with members of the Seminar Team. Inevitably, the recommendations will be influenced by the author’s own perspective, but hopefully what follows is not wholly unrepresentative of participants’ views. It will be noted that the recommendations relate to the linked activities of research, policy and practice. In most cases the recommendations have implications for all of these activities. In others, they are confined to only one or two of the activities.

- Some groups of young people are particularly disadvantaged in their education-to-work transitions. Those who find themselves in a vulnerable or disadvantaged situation will vary between, and within, countries. Such groups may be disadvantaged on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, language, disability, sexuality and social class. Further research is required on the social processes of marginalisation and the mechanisms of discrimination at work in these different contexts. Additionally, robust evaluations of programmes that reach such groups and challenge discriminatory practices need to be shared with policy makers and practitioners. Successful positive action programmes need to be identified. The importance of sharing good practice in this area cannot be over-stated.

- Further research and the sharing of good practice needs to take place in the area of ‘youth activation’ employment and training programmes.
- Research Seminars, and the publications that flow from such events, can make a valuable contribution to the development of policy and practice. In order to maximise their effectiveness it is proposed that their organisation should be characterised by the following features. Firstly, the Seminars should be advertised in good time (at least a year in advance) in order to attract the widest possible range of participants. To that end it is also important for the Seminar to be advertised as widely as possible. Secondly, the timing of the event should take account of the likely commitments of university-based academics. Thirdly, Seminar participants should comprise invited speakers to deliver keynote addresses and those selected following the submission of abstracts. Finally, where appropriate, it would be helpful to develop a Call for Papers that has a clear focus. Whilst a broader Call for Papers can make for an interesting event and generate a great deal of good material, the overall impression can be rather diffuse. In such circumstances it can make it difficult to generate clear recommendations and guidance for policy makers and practitioners.
- There needs to be further discussion on the different theoretical models of ‘flexicurity’ and how these are being developed in practice in diverse national contexts. A seminar bringing together researchers, policy makers and practitioners might be considered at some stage. The challenge of developing a model that permits labour market flexibility, provides appropriate education / training and guarantees a proper level of social protection is one that is shared by all European countries.
- At some stage a Research Seminar should be organised to address different economic policy approaches to youth employment. It should include a critical consideration of ‘flexicurity’. Also, ‘taken for granted’ assumptions about economic growth, international trade and travel could be critiqued from environmentalist perspectives. As many young people are aligned with various ecological movements, green perspectives should be represented in such a forum. Finally, it would be extremely useful to attract papers on policies and practices that appear to succeed in nurturing and sustaining young entrepreneurs (including those engaged in co-operative forms of enterprise).
- Migrant labour emerges as a substantive theme in the area of youth employment. Further research and discussions with policy makers and practitioners need to take place. Research also needs to be undertaken on the experiences of those who migrate. Moreover, consideration should be given to the economic and social effects of migration on the countries that export young people. What, for example, happens to inter-generational solidarity when a country exports a significant proportion of its youth? It should be borne in mind that migration occurs both within Europe and across continents. The patterns of migration between North Africa and southern Europe, for example, need to be analysed more closely.
- Whilst youth employment is widely accepted as a positive indicator of wellbeing, it is also recognised that the lives of young people at work are often characterised by poor wages, inadequate training and vulnerability to exploitation. A seminar

- that brought together researchers, policy makers, practitioners, employers' organisations and trade unions could usefully explore such issues as casualised patterns of work, the minimum wage, trade union organisation and the shadow economy.
- The education-to-work transition of young people with disabilities is a neglected area. It would be extremely useful to collate information on policies, action plans and initiatives from across Europe and conduct a comparative analysis. These findings could be published. A decision based on this analysis could then be taken about the most appropriate follow-up action (seminar, campaign, *etc.*).
 - It is commonplace to exhort politicians and civil servants to ensure that there need to be 'joined-up' or 'integrated' policies in relation to governmental responsibilities to children, families and young people. It would be extremely valuable to conduct a comparative policy analysis of practice across Europe along with any evaluative supporting evidence. Affordable high quality childcare, initiatives that support parents to work more flexibly, family-friendly policies and practices that challenge traditional gender roles are all areas that require closer inspection. This is an area, moreover, that needs to be foregrounded in all future International Reviews of National Policy.
 - The alignment of education and vocational training systems with labour market needs is a common refrain that echoes across most youth policy reviews. This is not to suggest that the labour market should determine the curriculum and ethos of schools, colleges and universities. However, there does need to be a clear relationship between the education / training systems and the economy. What goes on in schools, colleges and universities will have an impact upon wider society: the subjects taught, the transmission of 'soft skills' and the research conducted in institutes will all have ripple effects on the wider economy. Examples of successful alignments between the domains of education and employment need to be identified, celebrated and shared. The ongoing programme of international policy reviews and seminars can play a part in assisting the process of 'faming' good practice.
 - Young people are perhaps more commonly constructed as the objects of policy rather than as shapers, decision-makers and deliverers. It is important to identify exemplars where young people actively participate in youth employment policy formulation and delivery. Such examples could be brought to a seminar that addresses the challenges of developing good practice in this area. It should be noted that, ironically, unemployed young people tend to be under-represented in youth employment fora. In the circumstances it would be helpful if trade unions and NGOs that work with the young unemployed could be represented at such a seminar. Given the current prominence of the Open Method of Co-ordination in European governance, it is vital that youth participation continues to occupy a prominent position in the employment field.
 - In peacetime, at least, young people tend to be represented in a negative light in the mass media. They are commonly associated with declining moral standards, hedonism, sexual promiscuity, substance misuse and crime. Ideally, a Youth Media Watch should be established in every country in order to monitor and analyse the coverage of young people in the print, radio and television media.

Within such a media monitoring strategy youth employment issues should be a discrete category of analysis.

- The gendered nature of trajectories across the domains of education and employment need to be analysed closely. In some countries, for example, girls and women outperform their male counterparts in the classroom and in the labour market until they reach their mid-twenties. Thereafter they lose their position of dominance to men. This can be accounted for partly in terms of women taking breaks from the workplace to give birth and raise children (hence the need to integrate child and family policies into the domain of employment), but this is by no means the sole reason. Different patterns obtain in different countries. As such, more research is required to inspect the socially and culturally specific processes and institutional mechanisms that continue to disadvantage women in the labour market.
- It is important to break down the barriers between researchers, policy makers and practitioners. To that end, a programme of research and evaluation training sessions for policy makers and practitioners should be organised. Such workshops cannot offer comprehensive training in research and evaluation methods, but they can assist individuals to develop key skills to conduct small-scale research projects, review empirical data critically and evaluate competing truth claims on available evidence. Policy makers and practitioners need to be research-minded if they are to develop and deliver evidence-based policies. Ultimately, it is to be hoped that such research training programmes will form a core part of the proposed MA in European Studies. In the intervening period, however, such training Seminars could be organised. Moreover, on completion of a course, participants could be allocated a mentor: an experienced researcher who would maintain email contact and advise on any research issues with which they were grappling in the field. One of the value-added features of Seminar events is that they can provide the opportunities for networking. This could, perhaps, be formalised by e-newsletters and follow-up events. There is much that can be learned from the practitioner-researcher movement in social work and other professions.
- Data on internship schemes across Europe need to be collated and, resources permitting, evaluated. Again, examples of good practice need to be publicised.
- Vocational training practitioners and careers advisors need to be familiarised with the salient features of child and adolescent development in order to assist them in their work with young people.
- Advice services in curriculum choice, vocational training and careers need to commence in the early years of secondary education (11-12 years old).
- As a general principle, policy discussions concerning youth employment should include researchers, policy makers, practitioners, youth non-governmental organisations, trade unions and employers.
- Researchers, policy makers and practitioners must be exhorted at every opportunity to register and make use of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.
- Research Seminars need to be held in languages other than English (such as French).

The above recommendations read rather like a ‘wish list’. It is understood that resource constraints mean not all of the above proposals can be implemented immediately. There is a debate to be had about which proposals should be prioritised. The view of this author is that future planning should be subject/theme-driven rather than event-driven. In other words, the first step is to make a decision about the subject, theme, issue or question that needs to be addressed. The second step is to decide how best to service that subject, theme, issue or question. Not all questions need to be answered by a seminar event. A range of options are available to answer the questions we may wish to ask. These include the following:

- Commissioning a desk-top literature search.
- Commissioning a critical review of the existing research literature.
- Commissioning Key Messages from Research and Good Practice Guidelines books/publications on given subjects (e.g., Flexicurity; Supporting Young Entrepreneurs and Co-operative Enterprises; Aligning Education and Training with Labour Markets; Achieving Gender Equality in Labour Markets, *etc.*).
- Establishing, facilitating and maintaining Networks on specific issues and interests.
- Training Workshops in Research and Evaluation for policy makers and practitioners.
- Commissioning discrete pieces of research.
- Commissioning edited books (that do not have to be based on papers given at Research Seminars).
- Identifying and appointing mentors to assist with specific projects in the fields of research, policy and practice.
- Appointing temporary Research Fellows / Officers to work on specific research projects or publications (these could be taken as sabbaticals by academics from universities).
- Data collation tasks on specific topics.
- Comparative policy analyses.
- Research Seminars (followed by a Seminar Proceedings Report and edited book).
- Symposia on issues of common interest to researchers, policy makers, practitioners and other key actors.
- Research Presentation Conferences at which researchers present digestible and usable findings to an audience of policy makers and practitioners. Plenary sessions can be supported by more interactive workshops and focus groups (the conference thus also becoming an active research event).

This list could be much longer. It is certainly not intended to undermine the position of the Research Seminar, which should continue to play a key role in future plans. However, there other options available and these should also be considered.

This Report is not intended to be the final word on the subject of *Youth Employment and the Future of Work* or, indeed, on future research activity in this area. Rather, it is hoped that it will be the beginning of a dialogue on the issues raised.

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