

Draft recommendations Belgian young people

1. In order to better support the integration of young people into the labour market, which policy measures do young people recommend on the following key questions:

a. How to improve information, guidance and support for young people to ease their access to the labour market as an employee or an entrepreneur?

- **Schools should provide young people better with information** about several aspects of the labour market: how to look for a job, which kind of jobs offer good job opportunities due to a shortage of labour force (it is important to provide complete information on those jobs, including the reasons why these jobs are lacking workforce as well as the conjunctural nature of such situations), how to do a job interview, student jobs and guidance in general. School should also provide young people with necessary social competences, guidance and trainings. **Employment agencies should assist schools in providing accurate information.** This will make sure that education is more future oriented.
- The **information and guidance has to be tailor made** to the needs of young people. This will, rather than controlling young jobseekers, make sure that young people are positively stimulated to enter the labour market.
- Information networks have to be more tailor made networks. Therefore the **information channels should be tuned to each other and grouped in one reference website.** Consequently, a larger information network (through e.g. internet) about the search for a job or information about entrepreneurship will be created.
- Invest more in a **peer-to-peer approach of the spreading of information.** Young people are best placed to inform other young people (through schools & non-formal education providers).
- **Governmental employment agencies should provide tailor made guidance** for young people.
- **Support programmes to engage young people should be better conceived** (through a better control of employers that benefit from these programmes) in order to avoid abuse.
- **Encourage entrepreneurship by putting in place programmes at school through which entrepreneurs pass on their experiences** to young people. It is, however, important to keep these programmes commercially neutral.
- The **rights and status for self-employed and employees should be equal.**

b. How to ensure the recognition of the competences gained from non-formal education and mobility experiences?

- Due to the great number of tools for the recognition of non-formal education, **there is a need for harmonisation of these tools.**
- **Tools for the recognition of non-formal education have to be promoted** among employers, but also among young people. Youth organisations should use these tools and, if they do, be supported by the government (not only in the development but also the use of the tool).

- **(European) certificates** have to make sure that what young people learn in non-formal education (volunteering, summer/student jobs, traineeships...) is formally recognised. This could be done for example through the **promotion of the Youthpass**. These tools, however, should be in line with the European Qualifications Framework.
- **Create an attractive website** to share information and experiences, and **create decentralised information points** (kind of 'volunteering centres', just like 'employment centres').
- National employment **authorities should recognise volunteering** as a way to gain competences, especially for young job seekers.
- **Volunteers could inform pupils and students** in education systems about the rights of volunteers and possibilities.

c. **How to prevent young people from entering into precarious situations and ensure their access to social protection?**

- The **use of precarious contracts** (interims, fixed term contracts, imposed part-time, ...) by employers **should be better controlled**. Engaging young people through permanent contracts should be promoted. These contracts provide more security, stability and social rights. Authorities should lead by example.
- There should be an **upward harmonization in Europe** in terms of wages, decent working conditions and social protection.
- **Second-chance education** has to be improved and promoted. This could be done by making scholarships available for people who have already been working.
- **Invest more in prevention and guidance**: school and university should provide young people with more information on how to deal with money, how to find a job, how to apply, what is a trade union and what can they do, how does social health care work ...
- **Young people born in precarious situations deserve a personal approach**, adapted to their needs and interests, in their access to the labour market.
- Provide young people with a **quick access to the labour market**. This can be realised by reducing administrative barriers and moving towards an automatic access to the labour market (no registration would be needed anymore).

d. **Which measures should be taken to ensure a smooth transition from education to the labour market, including through quality internships?**

- In order to involve all young people in the labour market, it is not enough to sanction those who don't participate. It is also necessary to proactively stimulate young people to participate in the labour market. The longer the period between education and labour market, the more difficult it is for young people to integrate in the labour market. Therefore, **governments should actively lead young people to a first job**. This could be done through the provision of relevant transition working places for starters, through financial stimulation, through technical support or through creating new jobs.
- In order to have a first working experience, it is important that **all young people have done an internship when they graduate**. This internship is preferably linked to the subject of their studies.

- **Internships should be better regulated** by introducing a legal framework for internships, a social statute and the remuneration of interns and a formal recognition of gained competences.
- Establish, improve and promote a **fund for the remuneration of interns in social profit organisations**.
- **Stimulate taking individual initiative** through youth work and schools. Education should enable young people to acquire several competences, rather than merely reproducing facts and figures.
- Authorities should set up structures aiming at **supporting the organisation of language exchanges and language immersion** stays for all kinds of schools (primary, secondary, high schools, social promotion education...) and individuals.
- Stimulate companies to have a **youth engagement policy in their human resources management**. On the basis of this youth policy they could get financial support by the government.
- **Parents should get better support in educating their children** in order to let children gain the relevant skills and competences needed for their integration in society.
- **Professionals should inform pupils and students** in education systems **about their rights, studies and job opportunities**.

e. **How to combat discrimination in accessing quality jobs, support programmes and information?**

- Promote **reaching out** to the young people with fewer opportunities, especially for young people with a disability, jobless young people and young migrants. Authorities should lead by example and provide job opportunities for these minorities.
- There should be **equal rights for all**: individualisation of rights (a stronger social security, to be financed by a fairer tax system), equal pay for equal work, upgrading low wages, equal chances for people with learning difficulties.
- **All financial barriers for higher education have to be removed**.
- Young people should be given a **common civic education course** comprising the history of immigration and of the different communities and cultures in order to give insight in the origins of the multicultural society.
- **Raise awareness among employers about competence based hiring**.
- **Companies and schools should develop a diversity plan** including measures for young people with (learning) disabilities. This plan should also provide training on how to deal with people with (learning) disabilities.

f. **How to ensure the participation of young people in the social dialogue?**

- **Involve young people, including those in precarious contracts such as interim, in already existing participative structures** such as trade unions and councils on the level of the enterprises.

- The **information for young people on the rights of workers and on the possibilities of participating in the social dialogue needs improvement** (for instance by inviting all trade unions in schools).
- Stimulate the participation of young people by **enhancing the recognition and support for independent and democratic youth councils and youth organisations**.
- **Install a permanent structured dialogue on youth employment** with young people, for instance by creating a national/European youth advisory council on employment, bringing together all organisations dealing with youth employment.

g. Which measures should be taken to help reconciling private and working life?

- There have to be **more child care facilities** for single parent families, shift workers and young people in general. They also have to be made financially affordable for young people with children.
- Promote the access to **information on the rights of workers**, for example through providing judicial and psychological advisory services.
- Develop **preventive measures against mobbing** through teambuilding and assertiveness sessions and anti-discriminative measures.
- **Adapt the availability of services** (administration, culture, social services, sports...) to the needs of (young) people.
- **Stimulate the professional mobility** of young people of rural areas.
- **Enable working part time**. This will enable young people to choose their appropriate working time. It will improve their living conditions and the quality of work. However, young people have to be informed that working part time will have an impact on their salary and pension. Make sure part time contracts are contracts of high quality.

2. How can youth work contribute to the implementation of the measures proposed above?

Youth work can contribute to the implementation of these recommendations. However, even for youth workers it is not always clear how they can contribute. Youth workers have to find out which role they can play in those fields related to youth employment, taking into account their target group and the methodology of youth work.

Concerning the role of youth workers, a distinction has to be made between their role and the role of education/school and social workers. However, youth workers often contribute to the functions performed by education and social workers.

Nevertheless, youth work could contribute as following:

- Youth workers should be more aware of the current situation of youth employment as well as of the competences young people can gain through youth work.

- Youth work can contribute by raising awareness in the society about the current situation on youth employment and by influencing the government and the labour market.
- It is also important to raise awareness among employers about the competences that young people can gain through youth work.
- Youth workers can play an important role in the implementation of those measures aiming at supporting the integration of young people into the labour market. This role is inherent to their work, not as an end but rather as means to reach it. Indeed, as field workers, they often stand in the front line. For instance, they contribute de facto to the guidance of young people seeking information, to the participation of all young people – which is the key of youth work –, to preventing young people from entering into precarious situations and to combat discrimination. Youth work can also play a big role in the transition between education and work.