



# Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union

## Country Report Slovenia

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# **Working with young people: The value of youth work in the EU**

**Country report: Slovenia**

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**This report presents the situation as of February 2013**

# 1 Introduction: tradition, definitions and concepts

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
Definition for youth work	Yes
Legal definition for youth work	Yes
Approximate length of youth work tradition	21 years (since Slovenia declared independence)
Approximate length of formal / professional youth work tradition	21 years (since Slovenia declared independence)
Overview of relative importance of youth work in supporting young people	Increased
Main sectors/fields of formal / professional / statutory youth work	Autonomy of youth – supporting young people in to independence/Informal learning and training and increasing the competences of youth/Access of youth to the labour market and enterprise development of youth/Care for youth with fewer opportunities in society/Volunteering, solidarity and intergenerational participation of youth/Mobility of youth and international integration/Promotion of healthy lifestyle the prevention of various forms of youth dependencies/Access of youth to cultural activities and the promotion of creativity and innovation among youth/The participation of youth in managing public affairs in society. <sup>1</sup>
Main sectors / fields of non-formal / third sector led youth work	Non-formal education/Volunteering/Participation of youth/Promoting creativity among youth/Care for youth with fewer opportunities/Mobility of youth

## 1.1 Definitions

In 2010, we saw the adoption by government of a new Act on Public Interest in Youth Sector, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport and the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth. This came about following a period of wide public debate and is the first law which systematically regulates the youth sector. Article 3 defines the particular terms used in this Act, and also provides a legal definition for youth work, combining formal and non-formal aspects of youth work:

**“Youth work” is an organised and target-oriented form of youth action and is for the youth, within which the youth, based on their own efforts, contribute to their own inclusion in society, strengthen their competences and contribute to the development of the community. The implementation of various forms of youth work is based on the volunteer participation of the youth regardless of their interest, cultural, principle or political orientation”.**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (2010), *Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Prior to this, Slovenia did not have any national legislation relating to youth work nor a central definition of youth work. This has led to the proliferation of a range of definitions in existence across Slovenia with many youth organisations often using their own definitions.

The new definition of youth work in Slovenia as established through the Act on Public Interest in Youth Sector provides a framework for all youth organisations and organisations working with young people. The definition adopted through this Act is broadly similar to the European definition in terms of its focus on activities, both by and young people with an emphasis on voluntary participation. Although the Slovenian definition does not directly mention that youth work belongs to the area of "out of school" education, the content of the whole Act carries this meaning and reinforces the importance of "non-formal education".<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Tradition and development of youth work

Up until 1991, Slovenia was part of Yugoslavia and within this context there was a relatively strong youth movement, which helped form the basis later on for the development of youth work. For example, there were social movements in the late 1960's, which, followed by student protests in the 1970s, led to the formulation of civil society movements and the development of a strong youth scene. In the 1980's we then saw a very intensive period for youth movements both formal and informal, focusing on "all that was different" i.e.: different cultures, new forms of entertainment, new knowledge and changes in political culture.<sup>4</sup>

A formal approach to youth policy and support for youth work began in 1990, with the establishment of the National Youth Council. This was developed further through the work of the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth by the Ministry of Education and Sport. With the declaration of independence in 1991, Slovenia also began to have access to European Union policy frameworks for the first time. In this context, new concepts of youth work were formulated with young people and in cooperation with the Council of Europe, Directorate for Youth and Sport. During these early years, a range of approaches and practices in working with and for young people, were developed. Youth work at the local level developed at a rapid pace, including the further development of those that already existed and the creation of entirely new ones including: local youth organisations; local youth councils and youth centres.

In 1999 and led by the Slovenian National Agency MOVIT NA MLADINA we saw the participation of Slovenia in a number of EU programmes for young people (such as the Youth in Action Programme). The EU framework has been one of the key drivers for supporting and developing youth work in Slovenia.<sup>5</sup> For example during this time we saw the proliferation of youth centres and in 2000 we saw the adoption of the Act of Youth councils, which led to the establishment of many local youth councils.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the subsequent EU White Paper on Youth published in 2001 created crucial incentives for the introduction in Slovenia of a Youth programme at a national level. In the wake of this, and as part of the preparation of the 2010 Act, the Office of the Republic of

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<sup>3</sup> The Council of the European Union (2009), *COUNCIL RESOLUTION of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for the European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)*, Council of the European Union.

<sup>4</sup> Nastran Ule, M., Renner, M., Mihelj, V., Kurdija, S. In Metka Mencin Čeplak (1996). *Predah za študentsko mladino*. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, Urad RS za mladino, Zavod RS za šolstvo.

<sup>5</sup> Pazler, N. (2009), *Profil mladinskega delavca v Sloveniji danes in v prihodnosti*, Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Science.

<sup>6</sup> The Register of the National Youth Council of Slovenia has 45 local youth councils

Slovenia for Youth published in 2005 their first Strategy for Support and Development of Youth Work for the period 2005-2010. The strategy focused on different measures with overall aims being:

- To develop different youth actors at local and national levels.
- To introduce national legislation.
- To recognise youth work more generally.

Overall, and in more recent years, there has been a growth in the funding and support of publically funded local government-led youth centres mostly as an: ***"Answer of local governments to the needs of young people (specially the non-organised youth) in the local community."*** In 2009, for example, we saw the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth successfully bid for a special tender to support the project on the social, civil and cultural competences of youth for the period 2009-2012. Financed by the European Social Fund (4 million EUR), this resulted in the establishment of seven different consortium networks. In the same period, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, oversaw a co-financed initiative worth 6.6 million EUR with the European Regional Development Fund, resulting in the creation of ten new youth centres with accommodation facilities. Most recently, in 2012 and in response to growing unemployment among young people, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, through the National Employment Office, provided special support measures targeted towards the employment of young people aged under 30 years. This measure will continue to be funded in the years 2013 and 2014.

In this sense, it is possible to see that there has been continued commitment to the development of youth work both nationally and by the local municipalities. Indeed, the Act on Public Interest in Youth Sector in particular gave a new push and clarity to the development of the youth sector in Slovenia in terms of defining "who's who" and providing the formal legal basis for the preparation of the National Youth Programme at both at the national and local levels. Nevertheless, due to the financial crisis and cuts in the national budget, there was a decrease in 2012 of 10% in the annual budget (from 1.466.000,00 EUR to 1.280.000,00 EUR) for the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth in terms of co-financing youth work.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, there have been a number of identifiable phases in the development of youth work in Slovenia, beginning with a focus on participation of young people, followed by a focus on preventive and/or therapeutic youth work, with most recently a focus on the competences as defined by EU priorities. With the economic climate, we have also seen a general decline in youth work that delivers leisure activities, with much more of a focus on active citizenship and social help.

### **1.3 The current situation: the delivery of formal and non-formal youth work**

In Slovenia it is very difficult to compare 'formal' and 'non-formal' youth work mainly because youth work has not developed in this way but also because official definitions **do not make this distinction. Further still, the profession of 'youth work' does not exist** in official documentation nor is it currently possible to study youth work in Slovenia. In this sense, interviewees struggled to answer questions relating to formal and non-formal youth work delivery.

Using the definition of formal youth work as set out for this study, it is possible to observe that the majority of formal youth work is delivered through publically funded

<sup>7</sup> Murn, K., (2011), *Youth centres in Slovenia*. Ljubljana: Youth Network MaMa.

<sup>8</sup> Office of RS for Youth, Results of open call, <[www.ursm.gov.si/si/javni\\_pozivi\\_razpisi\\_narocila/javni\\_razpis\\_za\\_sofinanciranje\\_mladinskega\\_dela\\_v\\_letu\\_2012/](http://www.ursm.gov.si/si/javni_pozivi_razpisi_narocila/javni_razpis_za_sofinanciranje_mladinskega_dela_v_letu_2012/)> date accessed: 4th of November 2012.

youth centres or youth councils and some other youth organisations and institutions. They are focused on all fields of youth work; with larger organisations focusing more on education, and smaller ones on leisure and cultural activities. Youth councils in particular serve to unite youth organisations in a given locality with the requirement that at least 90 percent of members are aged up to 29 years and that 70 percent of members of the management are aged between 15 and 29 years.<sup>9</sup> Youth centres are more of an organised functional centre provided within a local community.<sup>10</sup> In recent years, we have seen a rise in the number of youth centres and a corresponding decline in youth councils. In 2012, the number of active youth councils in Slovenia was just 18, compared with 45 in 2000. The number of established youth centres, however, in 2012 was 54.<sup>11</sup>

All other organisations active in the youth sector that are not publically funded, including national youth organisations, NGO-run youth centres, other youth NGOs, and youth councils can be defined, according to this study, as organisations implementing 'non-formal' youth work. All these organisations, across formal and non-formal - however, are generally speaking, focused on the same areas of work. While both types of provision support young people aged 15-29 years, perhaps, the main difference between formal and non-formal youth work delivery in Slovenia, is that the former offer universal provision and the latter tend to be membership based organisations.

## 2 Legislative context and governance

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
Legislative framework for youth work	Yes
Level of regulation for youth work	National/Local
Body(ies) with a responsibility for governing youth work	<p>National public authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (Youth Department in the Ministry)</li> <li>■ The Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth; Governmental consulting body in making decisions on matters in the field of youth and the youth sector.</li> <li>■ The Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia: Committee for Culture, Education, Sport and Youth</li> </ul> <p>Local public authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The role of local communities in Slovenia varies and also depends on the size of the respective local community. Bigger communities, for example: the municipality of Ljubljana (the capital of</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (2010), *Youth Council Act*. Ljubljana: the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

<sup>10</sup> The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, (2010), *The Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector*. Ljubljana: the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

<sup>11</sup> Murn, K., (2010), *Youth work and youth policy on local level*. Ljubljana: Youth Network MaMa.

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
	Slovenia), has a structure within the city administration - youth department. Others have a person within the city administration, responsible for youth issues, but most of the local communities do not have a youth office nor person for youth issues, but cooperate closely with organisations in the local community working in the field of youth work, usually these are youth centres that take over part of the tasks that a local community should provide. <sup>12</sup>

## 2.1 Legal background

Previous to the 2010 Act (described above), Slovenian youth policy was indirectly governed by the Act of Youth Councils and the Student Association Act, based on a range of international and national guidelines and regulations (e.g. the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the European Union). With the coming into force of the 2010 Act, we saw for the first time, the introduction of a national law that formally regulated the youth sector.

The Act defines at a national level the youth sector, determines the public interest in the youth sector and sets out a method for implementation. According to the Act (Article 6)

*"The public interest holders in the youth sector shall be the State and the self-governing local communities and the self-governing national communities in the areas where the autochthonous members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities live."*<sup>13</sup>

The Act also clearly defines the *Fields of the Youth Sector* which, according to Article 6, relate to:

*"autonomy of youth, informal learning and training and increasing the competences of youth, access of youth to the labour market and enterprise development of youth, care for youth with fewer opportunities in society, volunteering, solidarity and intergenerational participation of youth, mobility of youth and international integration, a healthy lifestyle and preventing various forms of youth dependencies, access of youth to cultural goods and promoting creativity and innovation among youth and participation of youth in managing public affairs in society."*<sup>14</sup>

The 2010 Act, in line with the EU Strategy, is broad and covers all sectors and opportunities for development of youth work, to be implemented through the National Youth Programme (2012 – 2021). Currently subject to public debate, this programme is expected to be adopted by the National Assembly by the end of 2012 or beginning of 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Zgonc, A. (2011), *Country sheet on youth policy in Slovenia*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

<sup>13</sup> The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, (2010), *The Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector*. Ljubljana: The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

## 2.2 Governance

As stated above, Article 6 of the 2010 Act identifies that responsibility for governing the youth sector lies with the State, self-governing local communities and self-governing national communities, where relevant. More specifically, it states that:

*"The body responsible for implementing the public interest in the youth sector on a national level shall be the administrative body responsible for youth. In implementing public interest in the youth sector, other administrative bodies responsible for particular fields in the youth sector shall participate as well.*

*For participating in the making and implementing of the youth policy, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia shall appoint a consulting body for youth. The bodies of the self-governing local community shall be responsible for implementing public interest in the youth sector on a local level."*<sup>15</sup>

According to 2010 Act, therefore, the **administrative body responsible for youth on a national level is the** Office of The Republic of Slovenia for Youth which sits within the Youth Department in the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. According to Article 7 of the Act the main responsibilities are:

- To prepare the regulations and measures in the field of the youth sector.
- To provide the financial support to youth programmes and programmes for youth (programmes in the youth sector).
- To provide for and execute supervision for the implementation of regulations and measures in the youth sector.
- To monitor the situation of youth and the impact of measures in the youth sector; cooperate with the responsible bodies and other subjects in the youth sector.
- To participate in representing the State in the bodies of the European Union and the Council of Europe and at an international level in the matter relating to youth.
- To perform other tasks in accordance with the law.<sup>16</sup>

The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth also coordinates works for Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth which is governmental consulting body responsible for making cross-departmental decisions on matters in the field of youth and the youth sector. The Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth consists of twenty representatives from both Government (ministries) and youth organisations. These include representatives from:

- The Minister of Education and Sport (president).
- The Ministry for Education and Sport.
- The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.
- The Ministry for Culture.
- The Ministry for High Education and Science.
- The Ministry for Environment.
- The Ministry for Health.
- The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth.
- The Office of the Prime Minister of Slovenia.
- The Ministry for Local and Regional Development<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of The Republic of Slovenia for Youth, Working Field, Youth Policy, <[www.ursm.gov.si/si/delovna\\_podrocja/mladinska\\_politika/svet\\_vlade\\_rs\\_za\\_mladino/](http://www.ursm.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/mladinska_politika/svet_vlade_rs_za_mladino/)> date accessed: 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2012.

According to Article 8, the Council is responsible for performing the following tasks:

- Monitoring, determining and assessing the situation of youth in society.
- Monitoring and assessing the consideration of the proposals of youth relating to social changes.
- Proposing measures in the youth sector and monitoring the implementation of interests of youth in other policies at the national level.
- Considering the proposals of acts and other regulations and measures of the Government relating to the field of youth work, youth policies and the life of youth in general, and giving opinions on the act proposals.
- Discussing the current issues of youth and giving opinions to the competent institutions on these issues.
- Giving incentives and proposals for settling particular issues in the field of youth.
- Giving proposals and recommendations relating to financing the activities of youth.
- Considering the trends of programming and financial plans of youth organisations and other organisations participating in the youth sector.
- Giving the Government and the competent ministries the proposals, incentives and recommendations for implementing the commitment of strengthening the youth dimension in particular sectoral public policies.
- Stimulating the participation of youth in various consulting and decision-making bodies at the national and local levels<sup>18</sup>.

However, it is important to note that since the change in Government in February 2012 and the subsequent reorganisation of the Ministries, the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth has not yet convened.

On a local level public interest holders are the self-governing local communities. The role of local communities in Slovenia varies and also depends on the size of the respective local community. Bigger communities for example: the municipality of Ljubljana (the capital of Slovenia), has a structure within the city administration i.e. a youth department. Other municipalities, for example, have only a single person within the city administration responsible for youth issues. Most municipalities, however, do not have a youth office or a dedicated role responsible for youth issues. Instead, they cooperate closely with organisations in a local community working in the field of youth work (usually these are youth centres).

There is no analysis available of the proportion of public funding (of GDP) in Slovenia that is dedicated to youth work, either at the national or local level. On the national level, different ministries support different measures according to their field of work. For example: Employment of young people is under competence of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs which implements and co-finances different programmes for the support of (social) youth work. Similarly, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, publishes annual tenders for the co-financing of youth work strictly for organisations working in youth sector. (In 2012, it provided 1.280.000,00 EUR for 131 organisations).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of The Republic of Slovenia for Youth, (2010), *The Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector*. Ljubljana: The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of The Republic of Slovenia for Youth, Working Field, Youth Policy, [www.ursm.gov.si/si/javni\\_pozivi\\_razpisi\\_narocila/javni\\_razpis\\_za\\_sofinanciranje\\_mladinskega\\_dela\\_v\\_letu\\_2012](http://www.ursm.gov.si/si/javni_pozivi_razpisi_narocila/javni_razpis_za_sofinanciranje_mladinskega_dela_v_letu_2012)> date accessed: 4th of November 2012.

### 3 Policy and programme framework

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
General level of political commitment to the issue of youth work	Medium/Low
Dedicated policy / strategy on youth work	No (But a National Youth Programme is due to be launched at the end of 2012, with a proposal currently under public debate)
Programmes on the development of youth work	Yes
Net impact of economic crisis on funding for youth work	Negative

#### 3.1 Policy commitment

Currently there is no national youth strategy in place in Slovenia, but the aforementioned 2010 Act has formed the basis for the preparation of a new National Youth Programme. A draft document, currently under debate, is due to be finalised and adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia by early 2013.

The draft National Programme for Youth signals a policy commitment to supporting young people and includes specific reference to youth work in the Chapter: *Youth in Society and Importance of the Youth Sector*, which defines the priorities and measures that underpin the youth sector. The National Programme for Youth contains: details of the programmes, the financial plan with the costs and sources, the providers, the expected development impact and the impact assessment indicators, and the period and the time limits of implementing this programme. It is expected that the Government shall adopt the plans in accordance with the adopted national budget.<sup>20</sup>

According to the interviewees for this study, the level of national political commitment to youth work ranges from low to medium. Some interviewees argue that youth work is still “hidden” within formal education and is not transparently presented nor properly addressed within the political discourse. Despite the 2010 Act, it is only a recent development, and, therefore, some interviewees feel that in practice there is still no clear national youth policy and that recognition and support for youth work is low.<sup>21</sup> For example, while there exists the Office of Republic of Slovenia for Youth under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, its role is perceived as weak. On the other hand, however, some interviewees reported that when looking back over the last ten years, it is important to note that some crucial developments have been made including the 2010 Act itself and the co-financing of a new youth centre infrastructure.<sup>22</sup>

#### 3.2 Policies and programmes to develop youth work

As explained above, while there was a 2005-2010 Strategy of the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, a national youth strategy in Slovenia currently does not

<sup>20</sup> The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of The Republic of Slovenia for Youth, National Youth Programme proposal, <[www.ursm.gov.si/nc/si/medijsko\\_sredisce/novica/article/10404/5529/c86617b64d7783427156ef39e1cdec74/](http://www.ursm.gov.si/nc/si/medijsko_sredisce/novica/article/10404/5529/c86617b64d7783427156ef39e1cdec74/)>, date accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Source: Interviews

<sup>22</sup> Source Interviews

exist. There is a draft National Programme for Youth in place, with the final version scheduled to be launched beginning of 2013. Concrete measures and programmes including budgets for implementation have yet to be agreed and coordinated.

The economic crisis has had a negative impact on the funding of youth work programmes. Cuts to the national budget have led to reduced funding available for youth programmes. As already mentioned, there has already been a 10 per cent decrease in the budget of the Office of the RS for Youth for youth work programmes with further cuts to be announced for 2013. At the same time, however, a number of ministries are introducing new open funding calls for special measures in 2013 and 2014, which include some programmes in the youth sector.<sup>23</sup>

## 4 Youth workers: training, status, population and profile

KEY FACTS	RESPONSE
Minimum qualifications standards for youth workers	No
Youth worker as a recognised profession / occupation	Yes (only for public sector)
Availability of formal, dedicated qualifications for youth workers	No
Education background of the majority of youth workers	No formal education for a youth worker. Diverse education of Slovenian youth workers (from high school graduates, social workers, sociologists, economists, etc.)
Number of youth workers	Between 1000-1,250 ( <i>estimation</i> )
Trend in the overall number of youth workers	Increase

### 4.1 Training and qualifications

There are no minimum qualification standards for publically funded youth workers or for volunteer/unpaid youth workers. There is also no formal education for a youth worker. Available evidence, although limited, does suggest that the majority of youth workers are trained via other professions. A one-off research study, for example, was conducted with 263 youth workers from 101 organisations in Slovenia in 2006. This found that 12% of youth workers finished High School, 11% finished Social Work, 9% finished Economic High School and 7% of them were sociologists. The research also showed that among the 263 people interviewed, 76 different occupations were reported.<sup>24</sup>

Although there is no formal education or accredited qualifications for a youth worker, there are many different generic training opportunities available for youth workers and for volunteer/unpaid youth workers such as basic training in project management,

<sup>23</sup> Source: Interviews

<sup>24</sup> Kern, B. (2006), *Zasnova integrativnega modela programov mladinskih dejavnosti v sistemskem okolju – primer Slovenije. Doktorska disertacija*. Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty for social science.

communication skills, public relations, intercultural learning, intergeneration cooperation, fundraising and organisational management.<sup>25</sup>

## 4.2 Status of youth worker profession

The development of a professional occupation status for youth workers in Slovenia is still underway. Although, the office of the RS for Youth has run a number of activities in the last ten years for the development of the profession of a youth worker, the youth worker role is still not (fully) recognised as a professional occupation. Some progress was made in 2008, when four occupation categories for the youth work role were specified, but these were only for those working in publically funded youth centres:

- Youth worker I, (IV level education).
- Youth worker II, (V level education).
- Coordinator of youth programmes (VI level education).
- Head of youth programmes (VII level education).<sup>26</sup>

## 4.3 Youth worker population

As there is no formally recognised profession for the role of 'youth worker' there are no official statistics for how many youth workers there are in Slovenia.

The Office of the RS for Youth as part of its annual open funding call for youth work programmes collects some data, albeit limited, on the number of employees working in youth organisations. See Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1 Number of regularly employed workers in youth organisations, 2011.**

Type of organisations	Number of regularly employed workers 2011*
National youth organisations	No statistics gathered
Youth centres	No statistics gathered
Other youth organisations	601

\*Source: *The Office of the RS for Youth (7.11.2012)*

A research study conducted by Network MaMa in 2010 with 28 'formal' youth centres across Slovenia estimated that around 490 youth workers were employed in these centres either on a full or part-time basis.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the information set out here and the views expressed by the interviewees for this study, it is estimated there are approximately between 1000 and 1250 youth workers in Slovenia. There also appears to be a trend where numbers of youth workers over the past 10 years have increased, based on the fact that there are now more organisations active in the youth sector.

<sup>25</sup> Cepin, M. (2011), *Neformalno izobraževanje mladinskih voditeljev in delavcev v Sloveniji: pregled stanja in možnosti razvoja*, <[http://www.mladinski-delavec.si/index.php?option=com\\_sobi2&Itemid=11](http://www.mladinski-delavec.si/index.php?option=com_sobi2&Itemid=11)> date accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Pazler, N. (2009), *Profil mladinskega delavca v Sloveniji danes in v prihodnosti*. Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Science.

<sup>27</sup> <[www.mreza-mama.si/static/images/usrupl/E-PUBLIKACIJE/11.pdf](http://www.mreza-mama.si/static/images/usrupl/E-PUBLIKACIJE/11.pdf)> date accessed: 14th of November 2012.

## 4.4 Profile of youth workers

As explained before the role “youth worker” does not formally exist and as such information on the profile of youth workers is limited. While some work has been done to establish occupational categories for youth work as outlined in the previous section, these do not influence or state the requirements for a particular educational background. Beyond those statistics listed above, there are no official statistics collected of the number of youth workers that are employed in the public sector.

In recent years, there have been some attempts made to establish study programmes for youth workers at two universities, but these have yet to become operational. Consequently, youth workers are trained via other professional routes as described above in Section 4.1.

More broadly, interviewees for this study were not able to identify any major challenges facing youth workers in Slovenia.

# 5 The role and value of youth work

## 5.1 Education and training

Examples include:

- The Office of the RS for Youth publishes annual open funding calls for youth work programmes. This includes funding for non-formal education and training. Indeed, all 131 organisations, co-financed by the Office of RS for Youth in 2012 are implementing programmes related to non-formal education and training.
- At a local level youth centres deliver a range of non-formal education activities including information and counselling services and support with volunteering.
- The promotion of learning mobility among young people through a range of EU programmes including the Lifelong Learning Programme and especially the Youth in Action and its National Agency. The latter, in particular, played a crucial role in the development and recognition of the non-formal education sector in Slovenia.
- The development of the National Occupational Qualifications; a system for the recognition and assessment of non-formally obtained knowledge for young adults aged 18 years and over.
- A range of organisations provide non-formal learning opportunities for young people including: the Nefiks project which provides an index of non-formal education in Slovenia - a tool for 14 years+ young people to record their non-formal learning; the National Agency for the Youth in Action programme (MOVIT) which provides training for non-formal learning; and Youthpass and the Office of the RS for Youth, which in 2012 introduced awards for outstanding young people in the field of non-formal education.
- The programme, Project Learning for Young Adults (PLYA), which offers opportunities for young people, who have left school before graduation, to access and experience learning, beneficial work, and different jobs in an interesting (non-formal) way. The PLYA programme is financed by the European Union through the European Social Fund and the Ministry of Education and Sport.
- Between 2009 and 2012, the funding of seven networks aimed with strengthening the NGO youth sector. This included projects such as Youth

Worker, Active citizenship.si, Forever Young, Youth Opens the Space, Intergenerational Coexistence Network, Social Capital Network, National Network for Developing Research Values for Youth, and Young Ambassadors of the Intercultural Dialogue. These are funded jointly by the European Social Fund and the Ministry of Education and Sport under the framework of the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development for 2007-2013.

- The continued funding of career guidance and counselling services provided through Career Centres within Slovenian universities, as part of the 2007–2013 Operational Programme of Human Resources Development.
- European Social Fund support for human resources has facilitated the establishment of a research and development group, which, building on the work by the Office for Youth in the 1990s, is concerned with promoting the 'youth worker' profile. The main stages of the work are to:
  - Define youth work standards in Slovenia.
  - Define key competencies relating to youth work in Slovenia.
  - Develop the models of non-formal, formal and optional education programmes for youth workers.
  - Test the models in relevant social practices in Slovenia.

The project is being mainstreamed into the youth work field in Slovenia, in light of increasing demands to regulate this sector.

## 5.2 Employment and entrepreneurship

It is only in recent years with the onset of the economic crisis, that youth work has become viewed as a means for supporting young people into employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. The Financial Perspective (2007–2013), the Lisbon Strategy, and the 2005 annex to the strategy (European Youth Pact), which calls on the EU Member States to improve the employment opportunities, education and reconcile work and family life, all provide a framework for various measures aimed at improving the employment opportunities of the young people. In Slovenia we have seen the implementation of the Active Employment Policy Action Plan 2010/2011, which provides a substantial increase in the funds earmarked for active employment policy. While young people are not specifically targeted, they are not excluded either and can access a range of support measures including: counselling and job-seeking assistance, training and employment/self-employment incentives.

Other examples include:

- The establishment of new information and vocational counselling centres (CIPS) in 2009.
- In 2010/2011, a number of initiatives funded jointly by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the European Social Fund in the areas of the active employment policy and scholarship. These included camps for Zois scholarship holders (high achievers) and clubs for job seekers; employment fairs and on-the-job training opportunities for graduate candidates; and subsidies for the employment of graduates and graduate candidates (the 'Be active and find employment' project).
- Targeted employment initiatives for young people such as in 2011 - 2012 the introduction of subsidies for the employment of the young people under 30 years of age.
- The inclusion of young people as a named target group in the Act on the Social Entrepreneurship, which, among other things, promotes socially useful activities and the improvement of the socio-economic situation of people in vulnerable target groups.

Despite these numerous measures, Slovenia has not yet succeeded in eliminating the structural labour market problems. Slovenia has a well above-average share of young people engaged in 'flexible' employment.<sup>28</sup>

### 5.3 Health and well-being

Key points to note are that:

- The health of young people is one of the funding priority areas for the Office of the RS for Youth.
- At the local level, there are a number of good practice examples of projects connecting youth organisations with health based organisations, contributing to the promotion among, and training of, young people of healthy lifestyles.
- At the national level the issue of alcohol abuse, tobacco and other drugs is addressed in the Resolution on the National Health Care Plan for 2008–2013 and the Programme for Children and Youth 2006–2016.
- In 2010, the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Slovenia published the Slovene translation of a handbook for the promotion of health among young people. This is basically intended for teachers and health education teaching in schools, but it is also useful for all who work with young people in this field. The training of youth workers in the field of youth health was introduced in the youth sector by the National Agency for the Youth in Action programme.
- Peer mediation projects within the Slovenian Network of healthy schools are an example of good practice. The program »Peers and me – let's talk« was created in 2003/2004. It is aimed with promoting good relations and the prevention of violence in school using the method of peer learning or peer mediation.
- For some years, a national youth association named 'Brez izgovora Slovenija' (No Excuse Slovenia) has been successfully carrying out awareness-raising projects dealing with active and passive smoking and the unethical marketing strategies of the tobacco industry. By 2011, the association raised the awareness of 15 592 young people between the ages of 12 and 15. Through 633 peer-to-peer workshops, the organisation has reached 40 % of their target group, which accounts for 39 029 young people according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia data for 2010. Their programmes are supported by public funds, primarily via the Ministry of Health and the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth.

### 5.4 Participation

Key points to note:

- In general, youth participation activities have been relatively unregulated. However through the Youth Councils Act and Student Association Act, young people are empowered to enable to participate in adopting laws and regulations that affect the life and work of the young people. For example, Article 6 of the Youth Council Act, allows for the cooperation between the **government and the national Youth Council or Local Youth Councils: "Prior to preparing the proposals of acts and other regulations having a direct**

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<sup>28</sup> More about youth unemployment in Slovenia, can be found in the policy paper on this topic. National Youth Council of Slovenia (2010), Policy paper: Youth employment. Ljubljana: National Youth Council of Slovenia.

*impact on the life and work of the young people*".<sup>29</sup> However it has been highlighted by youth representatives of the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth that there are no incentives for the actual use of article 6 and the application of this article has not - as yet - become a common practice.

- Zavod MOVIT NA MLADINA- the National Agency of the Youth in Action plays an important role in encouraging and promoting youth participation. The Youth in Action programme is an important instrument in developing the youth policy at national and local levels and plays an important role in involving (especially unorganised) young people in Slovenia. For example one of the similar projects in 2008 (under Action 5.1 of YiA programme) named Act Locally and implemented by Youth Network MaMa, involved the running of 12 regional events, which brought together young people, youth workers and local decision makers to debate youth work and youth policy.
- There is an inter-ministerial working group set up as part of the 2010 Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector. This group is a consultative body at the national level that proposes measures and monitors the consideration of youth interests in various public policies.
- **There are also examples of good practice in relation to young people's participation within decision-making processes at the local level as developed by some local municipalities.** For example: The Commission for Youth at municipality level, which, appointed by the mayor as his consultative body on youth issues, consists of young representatives and those from the local community; and The Board of the Local Community Council for Youth a forum bringing together citizens to discuss municipality level youth issues as regulated by law. This board monitors and identifies the needs of young people, provides recommendations to the Local Community Council on youth matters and participates in the budget-planning of assets for youth programmes.

## 5.5 Voluntary activities / volunteering

A substantial contribution towards volunteering in Slovenia has been made by Slovene Philanthropy, the Association for the Promotion of Volunteering, which is also the leading partner in the Slovenian network of voluntary organisations. This network also includes many organisations from the youth sector. The network activities are aimed at promoting volunteering in general but also focus on the various target groups (such as migrants and NEETs.). The youth organisations members play an important role in promoting the voluntary work of young people, particularly the Youth Council of Slovenia, which presents a widely publicized Volunteer of the Year Award. Similarly, the National Agency of Youth in Action programme plays an important role in promoting the international volunteering of young people.

It is also important to highlight that volunteers are crucial for the entire youth sector, as without them many youth organisations would not exist.

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<sup>29</sup> The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (2010), *Youth Council Act*. Ljubljana: The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

## 5.6 Social inclusion

Slovenia has adopted a number of national programmes, strategies and resolutions, individually addressing the issues and challenges faced by young people. For example:

- The National Housing Programme (2000) for example plays an important role in defining young families as a vulnerable group in the housing area. Through this programme young families can get help through the non-profit rental sector.
- In the Programme for children and youth (2006-2016) Slovenia has strategies for several programmes regarding social exclusion, to assure quality of living for youth, and to establish cooperation between social centres, nongovernmental organisations and youth centres.

Support from the European Social Fund has also brought some examples of good practice, such as:

- Project Young Ambassadors of Intercultural dialogue, which aims to set strong foundations for multicultural societies in terms of bringing together different cultural and ethnic groups. This has included support to young people from the Roma community.

## 5.7 Youth and the world

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates an inter-ministerial working group for global education. Under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and coordinated by SLOGA (NGO platform for development cooperation and humanitarian aid), a week of global education is organised every year in cooperation with a number of non-governmental organisations for young people. In 2011, the central topic focused on the responsible behaviour of individuals to our planet and its inhabitants. There is also the support of youth exchanges and youth volunteering abroad mostly supported through the EU Young in Action programme.

## 5.8 Creativity and culture

The draft of the National Programme of Culture 2012–2015 pays particular attention to cultural and artistic education and the encouragement of creativity, especially among children and youth.

Research suggests that compared to 2000, young people in 2010 were devoting less time to keeping up with cultural and artistic content, but significantly more time to cultural and artistic creativity.<sup>30</sup> Cultural institutions, at both national and local levels, as well as in all areas of culture, enable young people to gain access to facilities where they can creatively spend their leisure time, while offering them a number of cultural activities to join and actively participate in their spare time. Such activities are either funded through state or local financial support and/or maintained through the volunteering of creators (artists) and professional workers in cultural institutions. There are several of activities for young people that are entirely free of charge. The majority of such activities take place in the larger urban centres, such as Ljubljana and Maribor, while in the remaining part of Slovenia, the majority of youth activities are provided by local youth centres.

Some examples:

- Youth exchange: Street art, Theme: Social inclusion art& culture. This includes art activities delivered on the streets and discussion workshops in

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<sup>30</sup> Lavrič, M. (2011), *Youth 2010: The social profile of young people in Slovenia*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sports, Office for Youth.

which young people and members of the public exchange views on diversity, social inclusion, citizenship and European art. The highlight of the exchange was a two-day festival, which gave the opportunity to present all of the partner countries and a selection of young local and invited artists. During the evaluation of the project after the completion of the exchange itself and return to the home country, the partners stayed in touch primarily through electronic media and exchanged their improvement in the artistic skills.

- Youth initiative: Video workshops: Coexisting of Diverse World; The association to help homeless people Kralji ulice. This brought together a group of young homeless people and young people to participate in a successful theatre project. In their discussions, they discovered the differences and synergies between their different worlds. The project developed the idea to create short films about their worlds and their mutual connections. They were soon joined by more young people to record short demonstration movies together.

## 6 Outcomes and impact of youth work

### 6.1 Target and reach

#### 6.1.1 Target groups

Article 3 (definition of terms) of the Act of Public Interest in the Youth Sector defines, that “youth” are “*young people* and young adults of both genders aged between 15 and a completed 29 years”. Since 2010, this has formed the basis for defining the target group of youth work in Slovenia.

There are, of course, differences in target groups among different organisations. Firstly it seems that non-formal youth organisations are membership based such as Scouts; while (state funded) youth centres are primarily focused on open access universal provision. Other youth organisations also work to support specific vulnerable groups such as early school leavers or young people from the Roma community.

#### 6.1.2 Reach

The Office of the RS for Youth in its annual open funding call for youth work collects some statistics on the organisations within the youth sector. Table 6.1 below, for example shows the number of active participants by organisation type.

**Table 6.1 Number of participants by organisation type, 2011.**

Type of organisations	Number of active participants in 2011
National youth organisations	46,879
Youth centres	30,005
Other youth organisations	91,632
Total	168,516

*Source: The Office of the RS for Youth (7.11.2012)*

- If we compare this number with the number of all young people aged 15-29 years in Slovenia (which is approximately 400,000) it is possible to conclude that youth work is engaging around 40% of all young people in

Slovenia. However, it is worth emphasising that these statistics are based on information provided by the organisations and that no common criteria are used. Furthermore, there is no proper research available that explores under-served groups of young people. Interviewees for this study however were all in agreement that youth work in Slovenia is generally reachable and open to all young people.

## 6.2 Outcomes and impact

There is little research or literature available that documents outcomes and impacts of youth work in Slovenia, although in recent years this has begun to change:

- The Office of RS for Youth has recently supported and promoted cross-disciplinary research. In 2010 national research on young people was completed - Youth 2010, which is the first comprehensive research on Slovenian youth in a decade.<sup>31</sup>
- Also in 2010, Youth Network MaMa published an analysis of Youth Work and Youth Policy at Local Level.
- In 2011 the Office of RS for Youth funded two analyses of the youth situation, which were carried out by the Youth Network MaMa, the network of youth centres in Slovenia and Pohorski Bataljon. They examined the functioning and impacts of the youth centres and youth field organisation in Slovenia on young people and society in general. Youth Network MaMa through their analysis 'Youth Centres in Slovenia'<sup>32</sup> and Pohorski Bataljon in 'Analysis of the Situation and Potentials of Non-governmental Youth Field in Slovenia'.
- In 2012 the Youth Council of Slovenia published its analysis of the functioning and impacts of national youth organisations on young people and the youth sector in Slovenia.<sup>33</sup>
- The Youth Council of Slovenia in 2012 also published a book about Youth work in Slovenia, including results and impact.<sup>34</sup>

Key findings from this emerging literature include:

- Evidence that suggests that early school leavers, when supported go onto to finish school and become active in promoting the value of formal as well as non-formal education later on in their lives. An especially successful example is the state financed project for early school leavers called *Project Learning for Early School leavers*.
- Young people with a migrant background supported through youth work become more connected to the dominant culture and become a part of wider society but at the same time, they have opportunities to celebrate and present their own culture. Especially welcomed are language courses. Interviewees for this study stated, however that there are not many youth organisations working directly with and for young people with migrant backgrounds in Slovenia.
- In recent years the focus of youth work is changing and youth work is seen as the means for supporting the employability of young people and even more, as a tool for employment of young people. Research shows that young people, and particularly NEETs, supported through youth work

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Baumkirher, T., Snezana, D., Murn, K. (2012), *Anaila Nacionalnih* Mladinskih Organizacij. Ljubljana: National Youth Council of Slovenia.

<sup>34</sup> See: [www.mss.si/sl/publikacije.html](http://www.mss.si/sl/publikacije.html)

gain extra knowledge, meet new people, build social networks, and explore knowledge in practice, thus making them more employable.

- In Slovenia the subject of disability is still taboo, which is reflected in the structure of organisations supporting young people with disabilities. They tend to run their own programmes and infrastructure in parallel to rather than as part of the wider youth sector. *"Nevertheless it is clear that there are examples of good practice in youth work that supports young people with disabilities, such as encouraging interaction and boosting personal confidence."*<sup>35</sup>
- There are also examples of projects effectively supporting 'high achievers' through youth work in terms of providing new possibilities, meeting new people, working in teams and getting a sense of equality. *"Especially welcomed is the interaction between high achievers and, for example, young people with a migrant background or NEETs".*<sup>36</sup>

### 6.3 SWOT

**Table 6.2 Summary of key strengths and weaknesses of the youth work sector in SLOVENIA**

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A range of bodies exist that have responsibility for youth work policy, such as the Office of Republic of Slovenia for Youth within the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, the National Agency of Youth and the National Youth Council of Slovenia.</li> <li>■ Since 2010 there is now a national Act on the public interest in the youth sector that provides youth work with a legal basis.</li> <li>■ There exist a range of different local youth NGOs that are working to support the needs of young people there.</li> <li>■ There is increased support for youth centres from local government including the funding of a youth infrastructure that includes accommodation facilities</li> <li>■ More generally, youth centres are seen as the main drivers of youth work at the local level and as forming the basis for a national implementation structure.</li> <li>■ The Act on local youth councils provides the opportunity to establish and run local youth councils as advocacy organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There appears to be a very high level of self- initiative and creativity of youth actors on local level.</li> <li>■ There are different types of youth organisations and organisations for working with youth.</li> <li>■ Being part of EU brings information and new possibilities for EU funds as well as opportunities for exchange of good practice within the youth field.</li> <li>■ Rising number of youth centres and youth clubs shows interest of local communities for this kind of support for youth work at local levels.</li> </ul>
WEAKNESSES	THREATS

<sup>35</sup> Source: Interview.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Responsibilities for the implementation of youth policy and support for youth work is not clearly set between national level (state) and local levels (local governments).</li> <li>■ Insufficient financing of youth work at national and also on local levels.</li> <li>■ The role of Youth worker is not formally recognised as an occupation and there is no recognised formal or indeed non-formal education for youth worker.</li> <li>■ There are no clear statistics about youth work</li> <li>■ Most youth councils failed to achieve the goals set out by the Act on Local Youth Council.</li> <li>■ The diverse nature of the different local youth NGOs means there is no clear mission or vision.</li> <li>■ Local youth NGOs usually do not have professional staff and their organisational capacity is low. Volunteers are key in running local youth NGOs and because of that, development of these organisations is slower and the focus of their work is locally rather than nationally driven.</li> <li>■ A key challenge for state funded youth centres is how to include young people and to support their active participation.</li> <li>■ Level of support for youth work from local governments is variable; in some local communities, there is a very high level of recognition and support for youth work, while in others, the level of support is very low.</li> <li>■ Local youth councils are not connected through a (national) umbrella organisation, so they do not coordinate or cooperate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Very low cross-sectorial cooperation in implementing youth policy</li> <li>■ Other fields are stronger and have more capacity than the youth sector (e.g. education)</li> <li>■ The next Education and Training programming period of the EU does not specific youth work</li> <li>■ Responsibilities for the implementation of youth policy and support for youth work is not clearly set between national level (state) and local levels (local governments).</li> <li>■ Low participation of young people in political participation and also as citizens in democratic life of their communities.</li> <li>■ The partial interests of youth organisations that focusing on their own needs rather than seeing themselves as part of a wider and coordinated youth sector as whole.</li> </ul>
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## 7 Conclusions and recommendations

- The professional development of youth workers should be one of the main priorities in the future development of youth work in Slovenia. As stated above there is no recognised formal or even non-formal educational role for youth work in Slovenia and the role of youth worker is not formally recognised as an occupation. The Office of RS for Youth should establish and implement a state recognised formal and non-formal educational role for youth workers with clear criteria for quality youth work.
- Responsibilities for the implementation of youth policy and support for youth work is not clearly set between national level (state) and local levels (local governments). Because of this, the level of support for youth work among local governments varies from one locality to another. The office of RS for Youth should focus on changing the Local Government Act, to set responsibilities for the support of youth work at the local level. The role of national government should be to facilitate a cross-sectoral approach to the implementation of youth work nationally.
- Current levels of financing for youth work at national and local levels should be reconsidered with increased emphasis placed on seeking increased funding for youth work.
- The Office of RS for Youth should establish a national system for collecting statistics about youth work and youth workers on an annual basis. Such information could be used for the evaluation of youth work and for the development of the sector.
- Local youth councils should connect through a (national) umbrella organisation, so they can more effectively coordinate their activities and also act as a national body to advocate for the development of youth policy.
- In general youth organisations and organisations for youth do not have professionally trained staff and organisational capacity is low. Youth actors should put more effort into the capacity building of their organisations and the professional development of their youth workers.
- It is crucial that the European Commission recognises the role of EU programmes in shaping and supporting evidence based national policies relating to youth and that different member states operate in very different contexts. The open method of coordination, in particular, provides a useful framework for peer learning and exchange of good practice within the youth sector across member states.

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