



PLATFORM FOR  
**MULTICULTURALISM**

Public Policy Document

YOUTH  
UNEMPLOYMENT AND  
**MULTICULTURALISM**





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## FOREWORD

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This policy paper is an outcome of youth activism and cooperation that the Social Democratic Youth, Liberal Democratic Youth and New Social Democratic Youth have engaged in the framework of Youth Platform for Multiculturalism. The political youth organizations are the founding members of the Platform, which aims to increase the influence of young people, to build capacities of grass roots level activists, to promote multiculturalism and to advocate issues the youth themselves find important and that are common to all ethnic communities.

As an initial activity of the Platform, founded in 2013, the members engaged in a process of writing a policy paper on youth unemployment and multiculturalism. These questions were identified as common concerns to all political youth organizations that participated in the work of the Platform.

Youth unemployment is a serious problem, which not only affects the future of the young people, but also determines the future of the country. Macedonia has already faced mass emigration and brain drain, which will escalate if there are no hopes for a better future.

Building a multicultural society in turn requires overcoming ethnic division and distrust, especially among the youth in Macedonia. As young political activists are the future decision-makers, it is important that political youth organizations stand up for and have a vision of a multicultural Macedonia.

The member organizations of the Youth Platform initially agreed on common interests of the participating organizations, tackling youth unemployment and promoting multiculturalism. However, the organizations decided that the policy paper should offer three distinctive approaches to the problems. This is due to the fact, that all these three organizations have different political identities, and they preferred to use their own value-based approach when looking for policy solutions for the youth unemployment and challenges of multiculturalism.

Writing a policy paper is an ambitious task, which serves a basic function of political parties. It is the responsibility of parties to address challenges in society, to find policy solutions and present alternatives. Political youth organizations in turn are expected to educate their members and to help them develop the skills needed in political life, among others how to prepare policies.

By undertaking the writing process of a policy paper, the youth organizations of the Platform as a collective body have fulfilled their role of representing the interests of young people by raising the questions that are important to youth. They have successfully built cooperation across political party lines, and engaged their members in the learning process of analyzing problems and creating policy measures.

As policy-making is always a value-based choice, having political alternatives is crucial not only for sake of democracy, but also for development of society. The youth organizations have correctly acted on the need for policy paper that recognizes ideological differences. At the same time, they have cooperated to raise concern for these issues. This policy paper and recommendations by three political youth organizations aim to increase discussion on key issues affecting the life of youth in Macedonia and introduce measures to improve the situation.

The Youth Platform continues its work not only by advocating for policy recommendations but also by engaging new organizations and integrating the local level activists to the Platform activities. The Platform is supported by the Progres Institute for Social Democracy, Kalevi Sorsa Foundation and FES Office Skopje in the framework of the project *Supporting Democracy in Multiethnic Macedonia – Dialogue and Cooperation*.

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**Public Policy Document**

# **YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND MULTICULTURALISM**

**SDYM**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....   | 4  |
| <b>2. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT</b> .....   | 5  |
| 2.1. Youth Unemployment as a social problem, notion and statistics .....                       | 5  |
| 2.2. SDYM for youth unemployment.....  | 6  |
| 2.3. Measures for dealing with youth unemployment. ....  | 6  |
| <b>3. MULTICULTURALISM</b> .....   | 8  |
| 3.1. Macedonia as a multicultural society.....   | 8  |
| 3.2. The Ohrid Framework Agreement – a first step towards development of multiculturalism..... | 8  |
| 3.3. SDYM for multiculturalism.....  | 9  |
| 3.4. How to achieve a functional multiethnic society? .....                                    | 9  |
| <b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....   | 10 |

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Macedonia is the home of culturally diverse people from different ethnicity: Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Serbians, Bosniaks, Vlachs and other nationalities. Regardless of their age, religious or party affiliation they all share the same sky and walk the same ground.

Multiculturalism is the cultural diversity of communities within a given society and the policies that promote this diversity. According to which different cultures coexist in the same society, as is the example with the Republic of Macedonia. These cultures nurture coexistence, share the daily social problems afflicting the citi-

zens in the society and attempt to find solutions. However, just like any in other society, reality disrupts the ideal image in Macedonia as well, and here multiculturalism has unstable foundations. Hence, it is up to the citizens in this society to solve the problem themselves.

While one social problem divides the citizens on one ground, another one unites them. It is a problem blind to national or religions belonging, sex or age - the problem of unemployment. In the Republic of Macedonia this particular issue has great repercussions on social life and the economic situation and requires attention.

## 2. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

### 2.1. Youth Unemployment as a Social Problem, Notion and Statistics

Unemployment is a socio-economic occurrence, whereupon part of the active labour force in the state is looking for work, but is unable to find it. According to the law, an unemployed person is a person above the working age of 16, able and willing to work, but who cannot find employment.

There is a population of 2 millions living in the Republic of Macedonia, 40.7 % of which are unemployed. Almost half a million (483,448) are young people from different ethnic groups, comprising 23.4 % of the total population, i.e. the unemployment rate for the young citizens of Macedonia is 45.8%.

Member states of the European Union are increasingly focusing on the problem with youth unemployment in an effort to find a solution. High youth unemployment rates are not only a problem for this social group. It is a threat for social care and the retirement system as well. Of course, it is also an obstacle in the establishment of human capital, the main pre-condition for promotion of the economy in a country.

However, before we inquire into the unemployment problem of the young population in Macedonia and the situation on the labour market, we have to better understand the age group categorized as young people. According to the United Nations and the International Labour Organization young people are defined as persons aged between 15 and 24. However, there is an increasing tendency to include persons aged between 15 and 29 in the category of young people. In the process of inspecting the problem of

youth unemployment in Macedonia, our goal encompasses all Macedonian citizens aged between 15 and 29.

In order to determine the politics and propose measures in the direction of helping the young unemployed people in our state, first we have to consider the current state of the labour market and the youth unemployment rate.

The unemployment rate of the young population is significantly higher than the total unemployment rate in the state, a troubling fact. According to the statistics, the young population is the most vulnerable group on the labour market and perspectives for youth employment are quite smaller than for other age groups.

According to the World Bank, youth unemployment in our state is above 50%, which makes us record-holders in the region and Europe. A large percent of the unemployed young people in the state have been unemployed for over a year, a fact that largely decreases the chances for employment.

As a result, in the past few years above 230,000 young people have left the state in search for better future and a job, while as many as 75% of the young people have confessed to envisage their future in another country.

According to the statistics, there is a huge difference in the unemployment rates between sexes, i.e. the unemployment rate for the female sex is higher than the one for the male sex.

The education level has a large role in the unemployment rate. A considerable part of the young people in Macedonia is in the process of acquiring their education or has insufficient

| Age group       | Total number of young people | Active  | Unemployed | Unemployment rate |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---------|------------|-------------------|
| 15 – 19         | 155,100                      | 20,592  | 12,209     | 59,3%             |
| 20 – 24         | 164,154                      | 85,840  | 44,903     | 52,3%             |
| 25 – 29         | 164,194                      | 129,992 | 51,268     | 39,4%             |
| Total (19 – 29) | 483,448                      | 236,424 | 108,380    | 45,8%             |

qualifications for a particular vacancy. In addition, in the search for a job, a significant percentage is focused on the capital of Macedonia or travelling abroad. This fact is instrumental for the large loss of potential work force and the desolation and decrease of potentials in smaller towns and villages.

Our priority is to help young people envision and build their future in their own country.

## **2.2. SDYM for Youth Unemployment**

Pursuant to the socio-democratic principles and policies, from its very formation, the Socio Democratic Youth within the Socio Democratic Union of Macedonia devotes all its capacity and efforts to the wellbeing of young people in the Republic of Macedonia. One of the fundamental principles of socio-democrats in Macedonia is the economic development and establishing stable living standards, as well as struggling with unemployment and poverty in the country. Consequently, SDYM constantly draws attention to the reality of the terrible state the young are experiencing in their daily efforts to find a job and provide quality life and means for their livelihood. Youth unemployment creates another great problem, which is mass emigration of qualified individuals from the Republic of Macedonia. It is more than obvious that the country, slowly but surely is becoming a state without prosperity for the young. State politics represses young people's aspirations, largely demoralizing their values. The most typical example is the opinion among the young people that the best they can achieve is to find employment in the state administration. Therefore, the time has come when we must react in order to solve these problems and increase youth awareness, motivate them and make them understand that the future is in their hands.

## **2.3. Measures for Dealing with Youth Unemployment**

Measures specifically designed for the youth aim to prevent them from leaving the country and provide them with good living conditions and easier access to employment. The measures are real and feasible, while some of them are already a regular practice in the European and other developed countries in the world.

### **2.3.1. High school graduates with vocational education**

High school students, who have chosen to learn a trade in their secondary education and have managed to acquire great knowledge and technique, should be provided with a position in a tradesman workshop.

### **2.3.2. High school students**

#### **● Higher education counselling**

The choice of higher education after high school graduation is usually influenced by the parents' decision or the high income certain job positions offer. Usually these professions are in the economic or law field, which contributes to the great number of law and economy graduates – all unemployed people with higher education. One way to avoid this is for young people to have the opportunity to speak to professionals who would guide them in their choice of career or administer tests in order to find an appropriate field of interest.

### **2.3.3. Students**

#### **● Mentorship**

Another measure is to arrange collaboration with successful companies that will provide scholarships and mentorships for students with the highest average grade in the respectable fields. The students will be appointed with a mentor responsible for their practical knowledge and be able to find a position after graduation with less difficulty.



### ● Volunteering

Volunteering is often considered as a substitution for employment. Volunteers do the same work as employees with permanent working contracts. This leads to segregation on the labour market between the unpaid volunteers and the employed, placing the young people in a strained position. Therefore we propose the introduction of a volunteering programme that will offer the possibility for internship to unemployed young people. Employers will be obliged to pay a monthly compensation of 6,000 MKD a person, personal income tax included, as well as insurance against injuries sustained at work and illnesses acquired as a result of the profession. This might not solve the problem with the high unemployment rate, but the working experience will help young people in their job prospects.

### ● Summer practice

A significant number of the faculties in Macedonia do not employ the methods of practical, rather of theoretical teaching. Introducing a so-called summer practice has the purpose to help the students learn the theory and provide them with the opportunity to apply the knowledge in practice. Once the practice is finished, the employer issues a certificate evaluating the performance and the experience gained. Furthermore, these certificates could be enclosed with other documents in a job application, allowing for extra gravity to the knowledge and making up for the lack of working experience.

## 2.3.4. Trainings and courses

### ● Insufficient education and courses

The population with a lower level of education and fit to work should be considered as well and slowly transformed. The educational system requires reforms in order to include this part of the population in specific courses, i.e. organized training for acquiring qualifications or additional qualifications, in accordance with the demands on labour market.

### ● Additional qualification trainings

Continuous courses with the purpose for maintaining permanent and sustainable employment is necessary. This would help monitor the changes and innovations in working procedures and decrease the number of young unqualified staff dismissed from work.

### ● Information society

An additional step is a web portal displaying information about the demand and supply of labour, details regarding the required qualifications for a certain position, as well as possible courses for those not qualified for a specific position.

## 2.3.5. Socially endangered groups

### ● Inclusion of vulnerable groups on the labour market

Another measure is the provision of state-subsidised employment for vulnerable groups, such as children without parents and young people with handicap. This involves financial support for training courses and acquiring qualifications for positions suitable for this group. Additional training is required in order to raise the awareness of the environment and thus alleviate the working conditions of this specific group.

### ● Day centres

Day centres for minors would have the task to attend to children with problems. Instead of being on the streets from an early age, facing problems with the law, they would be cared for prior to being sent to correctional institutions. Professionals working with them would ensure they make the right choices, have the opportunity to socialize and learn to tell good from bad. This would also prevent children from falling under bad influences and contribute to their inclusion in society. Such centres could create a large number of positions for psychologists and pedagogues.

### 2.3.6. Measures on a local level

#### Creating job positions with consideration to the demands of the environment

Despite being a small country, Macedonia abounds in unused potentials for creating new job positions. Whether a touristic place, a fertile agricultural land or a place suitable for crafts the potential could be put to good use with the appropriate training. Specific projects could help raise the consciousness of the population on the lack of such positions, their potential and the qualifications required.

## 3. MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is the cultural diversity of communities and the policies promoting this diversity. It is politics in which different cultures coexist in the same society.

### 3.1. Macedonia as a multicultural society

Macedonia is a multicultural society. Apart from Macedonians, the territory is the home of: Albanians, Bosniaks, Turks, Serbians, Vlachs and other ethnic communities. Their fundamental freedoms and rights are defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia from 1991, with additional amendments adopted in 2001. They have the right to free expression of identity, the right to respective and proper representation in the state authority organs, the right to use the symbols of their communities, the right to establish institutions and organizations, the right to teaching in their native language and its use as the official language.

### 3.2. The Ohrid Framework Agreement – a first step towards development of multiculturalism

The principle purpose of the Macedonian model is to maintain the integrity of the state and simultaneously provide citizens from different communities with the opportunity to achieve the highest possible level prescribed by the relevant international documents on the protection of human/minority rights. Establishing such legal frame in the Republic of Macedonia was a difficult process in a time of conflict and under the crucial influence of the European Union and the U.S.A. On August 13th 2001, the largest political parties signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement. According to the Secretariat, its primary goal is the promotion of peaceful and harmonious development of the civil society, while observing the ethnic identity and the interest of all citizens in the Republic of Macedonia.

In conclusion, the Ohrid Framework Agreement as a legislation act is a synonym for peace and equal rights and opportunities for all ethnic groups living on the territory on the Republic of Macedonia. It is considered as the first step towards development of multiculturalism.

### **3.3.SDYM for Multiculturalism**

SDYM believes that a lot has to be invested in the development of the multicultural society in Macedonia. We believe that we are all the same and equal in the society regardless of ethnicity. We are all the same in the face of law and this should be applied in practice as well. The competent institutions must be unbiased towards the problems, not choose sides according to ideology or political affiliation. We, the young people have to tackle and solve the problems concerning us as young citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and provide a safe and prosperous future regardless of ethnicity.

### **3.4.How to Achieve a Functional Multiethnic Society?**

In order for a multiethnic society to function, first we have to comprehend the situation in the society. Namely, young people in the Republic of Macedonia are not open towards other social and ethnic groups. According to the statistics, only 2.97% of the young people would feel safe if an Albanian family moved next-door, 2.63 % if the family was of Roma ethnicity and 3.16 if the family was of Serbian ethnicity.

This image and stereotypes have to be changed and the only way to do this is to raise the awareness of every individual.

Despite the considerable finances invested, the Government's advertisements and campaigns have born no fruit. Finances should be invested in a campaign supporting collective life, a campaign everyone can identify with. This type of campaign would most successfully and easily be implemented on a local level. Therefore, we suggest a campaign with workshops and exhibitions, which apart from spreading the message

will inform the citizens on the cultures of the people they live and work with.

The Roma are the most endangered ethnic group in Macedonia. On account of their culture and tradition, members of the Roma community from a very early age cease the educational process, making a high school or university degree among this ethnicity very rare. Consequently, they have no predispositions to apply for any position and raise the unemployment rate. In addition, women from Roma families are not usually allowed to work, their only task being to care for the children and the home. Lack of education and knowledge of society, as well as the opportunities offered by it, force them to accept this life style.

Apart from Roma, a large number of Macedonian citizens have not finished or even started primary education. This of course obstructs their search for job, i.e. renders it impossible. Therefore we suggest schools where older persons would be able to acquire primary education by way of intensive programmes. In order to indulge the requirements of certain religions, the teaching in the school should be divided into male and female classes.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Macedonia and the young people living here are in need of serious long-term economic policy for managing the unemployment and raising the economic standards. The problem is not in the youth idleness or lack of motivation, rather the problem lies in the lack of institutions that would address the young people's problems and help realize its youthful ideas.

Renewable funds are required in order to provide convenient loans for supporting new businesses, which will lead to new ideas and conceptual solutions for the problems.

Older generations believe that they have gained experience in their lifetime and they possess the knowledge of what needs be done. However, they do not seem to realize that times and generations have changed. New times require new ideas, new people who know what they want and need, the most crucial being moral and financial support from older generations.

Young people always follow the example of their elders. It is time to swallow the pride and change certain behaviour for the future generations to be able to enjoy stable and pleasant co-existence in the Republic of Macedonia.

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