PLATFORM FOR
MULTICULTURALISM

Public Policy Document

MULTICULTURALISM
AND UNEMPLOYMENT

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FOREWORD

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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MULTICULTURALISM AND UNEMPLOYMENT

LDYM

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1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

nterethnic relations are an essential element for the development of a state. Young generations must clearly articulate the stand that the development of interethnic relations is crucial for the future. However, nowadays, instead of embracing ethnicity within contemporary democratic trends and the concept of individual rights, it is increasingly becoming a cornerstone of division in society and all segments of public life. Segregation on the ground of ethnic belonging, as well as absence of communication and social cohesion lead to visible deformations in the structure of the legal state, in the democratic institutions and the performance of the system's institutions.

Equality is the pillar of the human rights concept. People make arrangements, coexist and enjoy their rights and freedom, provided they are equal. Equality does not presume being identical. On the contrary, diversity on many grounds should provide people with the opportunity to equally enjoy the fundamental rights and freedom, be equal before the law and have equal chances. LDYM (Liberal Democratic Youth of Macedonia) believes that diversity is a source of strength. Society advances if each person is free to live their life the way they choose to, without discrimination and an equal opportunity to achieve the most of their potentials.

On the other hand, youth unemployment is an essential question, one of primary interest for the Government, as well as society. As socially conscious young people and citizens, we have to dedicate ourselves to active and constant contribution towards solving this problem in the hope for a contended and more perspective society for us and the future generations involved in social processes. Our goal is to clearly mark the priority in this field and contribute for its central position in Macedonian politics. Broader actualization of the problem is of essential importance. In our opinion, it is indispensable.

2. MULTICULTURALISM

2.1. Introduction

In its essence, multiculturalism consists of ideals for agreeable and functional coexistence among different cultures and ethnic groups in a pluralistic society. The multiculturalism concept has the task to create a practice in a society where various groups of citizens and consequently, individuals understand each other, constitute the social environment and organize their individual and collective life. Proper development of multiculturalism will strengthen the bonds and communication within civil society. The multicultural concept must be supported and nurtured above all by us, the young people. We must think rationally and develop this concept because what is at stake here is our future, the world we would like to live in. Do we prefer a world of prejudice and divisions, a stereotypical and unproductive world or a common world of mutual respect, collaboration and joint vision? A world that will reform the Republic of Macedonia into a contemporary, modern, civil state without ethnic divisions, focused towards new progressive trends as established by globalization and European values.

Globalization implies multiculturalism. It imposes a new life style, a different rhythm, new challenges, as a result of which old divisions appear as pointless and superfluous. Do young people have the willingness and energy to envision the future ahead, and rationally make the decision of how to constitute the state? This is the question entrusted to us, to our individual and collective consciousness. In order to sincerely promote multiculturalism, we must institute and respect differences, we must make them a priority over uniformity and homogenization.

2.2. Basis for Developing a Multicultural Society

Macedonia embraces multiculturalism as a systematic and comprehensive solution to cultural and ethnic diversity, with its educational, linguistic, economic and social components and specific institutional mechanisms.

In addition to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, as a democratic state Macedonia is obliged to consistently abide by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities as well. The Declaration ensures the rights of minority members and guarantees their effective and active participation in the: cultural, religious, social, economic and public life, as well as in the decision-making processes in the state they live in.

In 1991, OSCE's Conference on Security and Cooperation adopted the Declaration on the Rights of National Minorities. In addition, the Council of Europe adopted the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities. The consistent observance of these documents and international standards emphasizes the democratic and multicultural commitment of the state.

Public policies, on their part, must observe individual human rights. They must be based on developing a multicultural concept that provides the individual with all fundamental rights and creates an environment for the individual to freely function in his/her freedom. The ethnic concept, on the other hand, in its focus on collectiveness imposes barriers towards other ethnic groups. Multiculturalism in its modern context is quite different from traditional notions, i.e. concepts for coexistence in egocentric religious or ethnic communities.

In order to carefully select a concept for implementation, interethnic relations should be closely inspected as they appear in everyday life and disregard the various demagogic speeches and unrealistically created political interethnic contentedness. Do we continue with ethnic bar-

riers, with the concept envisioning division in society, indeed a physical one if necessary? Do we restrict contact whenever conflict ethnic questions arise, in order to avoid discord and create complete division? Shouldn't we rather suggest a different social image, i.e. concept, one LDYM supports with full capacity and complete dedication? We need a model which observes the potential and legitimacy of ethnic communities, their cultural and social uniqueness; a concept for modern, civil society where young people, by way of culture, social life and common needs shall unite in their needs and progressive ideas.

Creators of public policies face a large challenge in the transformation of multiethnic and demographically multicultural societies, because of the possibility for endangering the relations. The process of creating feasible politics implies replacing the abstract models of multiculturalism with the application of the decision-making process and of course its successful implementation.

2.3. The Current Situation in the Republic of Macedonia and the Level of Development of Interethnic Relations

A closer look at the actual situation nowadays and a retrospective of the events following the Framework Agreement illustrate the barriers, stereotypes and prejudices still present and difficult to surpass. Civil society is still facing challenges that should have been surpassed long ago. This prevents young people from developing into individuals without ethnic prejudices and stereotypes. On the other hand, from an institutional aspect, the multiethnic concept is integrated. However, in reality institutions do not seem to function according to the model of effective and efficient administration (a functional citizens' service) without ethnic classifications. Instead, staff in the administration comprises of citizens employed solely according to political affiliation or ethnic basis. This further reduces the chances of young professionals who are not party members and who dislike being ranged

solely on the basis of their ethnicity. These negative processes have negative influence on the proper development of society and must be diminished. In times of prosperity in Europe, ethnic differences and divisions in our society prevent a number of essential processes in which ethnicity is irrelevant. Evidently, the high level of conflict, at times veiled, at others publicly explicit, in the past years has contributed to various negative aspects in the state. Violence among young people, distrust in institutions, implication of ethnic prejudices in many incidents, insufficient communication and division in almost all spheres are simply a result of bad politics. This can be prevented by raising the awareness, particularly among young people and with the creation of *new liberal politics* aimed towards a modern, civil society, a society that respects differences, society based on the premises that we have more in common, than the things that divide us.

2.4. Policy – Alternatives and Recommendations: Proposal - Measures and Developing a Real and Feasible Politics for Improving the Multiethnic Coexistence

LDYM stands for:

- A national youth multicultural network (an informal subject) consisting of civil organizations, as well as individuals. The participation in an informal network of such kind would positively influence the development and implementation of multiethnic projects;

- Multicultural informal education encouraged by the organs of the local-self government units, as a means for the civil sector, i.e. the civil organizations to actively participate in this sphere. Partnership between these organizations and the competent authorities on a local level would make a significant contribution;

- Legislative regulations prohibiting manifestation of prejudices;

- Systematic introduction with the culture of the "others", mostly through education;

- Application of international standards for the protection of national minorities;

- Ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages;

- Legislative measures preventing segregation on ethnic basis;

- Positive action in order to decrease the negative consequences of prior discrimination. (Campaigns for decreasing discrimination of any type, encouraging social reaction and institutional protection).

3. UNEMPLOYMENT

3.1. Introduction

Unemployment among young people is one of the crucial problems in Macedonia as well as Europe. Nowadays particularly, the world economic crisis has caused an escalation of this problem. This resulted in reduced employment opportunities and unstable budgets, the budget for employees' salaries included, all of which led to an increase in the unemployment rate among young people. The difficulties faced by young people on the labour market can be located in the limited possibilities, evident in: insufficient information for certain vacancies; inadequate assessment of the employees' real potential; unequal opportunities for all to acquire working experience, i.e. no opportunities for volunteering; engaging inadequate staff for higher positions, giving priorities to political and family relations, instead of the employee's capacities etc.

In order to surpass this problem and bridge over the gap between the factual state of the labour market and the critical situation in the field of youth unemployment, the focus has to be placed towards creating a framework with sustainable solutions in the long term.

Such theoretical framework implies precisely determined series of specific actions, actions involving both concerned parties, those actively looking for a job and the ones offering employment. In other words: enhancing employment opportunities for job seekers; improving the employers' approach in the context of correct management of human resources, which implies allocating duties and responsibilities according to competences. This will enable employees to make their contribution to the progress of the employer, therefore a contribution to the progress of society itself.

3.2. The Impact on Society

Bearing in mind that the target group concerned with unemployment are mostly young people, the analysis places a particular emphasis on the following occurrences:

- **The consequences of "the Lost Generation"**

The most significant consequences of youth unemployment have spread outside the temporary fluctuations on the labour market. The problem with the so-called "lost generation" is postponement of employment on the part of young generations. This on the other hand involves a series of other social consequences: increases poverty in families consisting of young unemployed people; raises the marriage age, postpones the age when individuals establish families; increases deviant behaviour in society etc.

- **Engaging young people as resources**

On account of inadequate recruitment of staff, young talented employees are often insufficiently engaged. This creates excess labour force, which on the other hand leads to segmentation of specific skills on the labour market, which further makes employment of young talented people with higher education difficult to realize.

- **Creating a strategy in order to increase the opportunities for volunteering and acquiring working experience**

Providing the essential skills required for establishing a professional profile is the responsibility of educational institutions. However, the current situation in Macedonia is quite different. The higher education institutions, crucial in the training of quality professionals for the labour market, display lack in practical work. In other words, the faculties where young people acquire their future professions offer no practical experience or training, essential for future employment. Therefore, the competent institutions must establish other mechanisms to provide greater opportunities for volunteering and acquiring working experience during studies and after graduation. This will ensure better skills and guidance for young people when dealing with the allocated duties and responsibilities.

- **Finding mechanisms for investing in adequate staff**

This is one of the key problems. The practice of hiring young people solely according to party affiliation and nepotism must be surpassed and instead place a priority on hiring adequate staff for specific vacancies. Of course we mustn't forget the Macedonian syndrome "take whatever job you find", i.e. accept any job you find. The economic development of the state depends on the engagement of adequate staff. This will lead to an increase in the working process productivity and the efficiency of institutions, which will extend to greater progress in the entire society.

- **Surpassing this problem in the long term and normalizing the level of youth unemployment**

- **Creating strategies and possibilities for youth employment for a longer period or a permanent employment**

3.3. The Current State and Inefficiency of the Existing Measures

The large number of unemployed young people is a direct consequence of the enormous number of higher-education graduates. This is a result of the Government's politics aiming to increase the number of high school graduates enrolled at university, particularly after the introduction of mandatory high school education. However, this campaign resulted in a drop in the rate of labour force with secondary education. Several other problems ensued: hyper production of higher education staff at any cost, despite the consequences (even at the price of acquiring insufficient skills and knowledge), fictive competition among the higher educated staff etc.

Lately, the Government's measures for decreasing youth unemployment, mostly implemented via the project "Self-employment" have been particularly notable. This absurd measure for employment of young people since creates conditions for youth employment difficult to achieve. Young people become indebted to the state by taking loans in order to apply their "right

to employment", but the only beneficiary in this case is the state, because apart from the large loans, it also gains the opportunity to charge larger taxes.

Let us not forget the Government's practice of erasing the records of young unemployed people from the Employment Agency if they refuse "any type of job" offered by the Agency. In most cases, such proposals consist of a position requiring much lower qualifications than the person's real qualifications. The final goal is to delete the person from the records and thus fictively decrease the number of unemployed young people defined as active job seekers.

The abovementioned problems and unrealistic solutions force a large number of young people to move abroad, which leaves serious consequences for the development of the state. This occurrence only shows to prove the state's concern for the young and emphasizes the need of serious analysis, strategy, work and engagement in order to decrease this negative trend.

3.4. Policies - Alternatives and Recommendations: LDYM's Proposal – Solutions for Decreasing Unemployment among Young People

From the abovementioned reasons, LDYM proposes the following measures for decreasing unemployment:

- Establishing a Youth Trade Forum and providing finances to encourage young people to initiate their own projects in partnership with prestigious companies;

- Organizing campaigns in cooperation with NGO's to raise the authorities' awareness that youth unemployment is an issue endangering the future of the state;

- Establishing a network of the youth organizations of the political parties throughout the country, their main task being youth activism for greater inclusion of young people in the public space;

- Organizing trainings for easier access to the labour market;

- Organizing courses/lectures/trainings to help candidates applying for vacancies in the state sector develop into quality staff;

- Privileging socially vulnerable categories in the employment process;

- Promoting employment with shorter hours and the possibility for working from home;

- Enhancing the labour market and modernizing the systems for social protection. Therefore, a large part of the programmes for support of the labour market, financed from the budget and various donors, must be directed towards programmes for re-qualification and additional qualifications.

- Simplifying and reducing the administrative burden for employment of new employees;

- Implementation of specific programmes for professional additional qualification and re-qualification of the unemployed.

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