



PLATFORM FOR
MULTICULTURALISM

Public Policy Document

FROM THE YOUTH
TO THE YOUTH
- MEASURES FOR
DEALING WITH
YOUTH 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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NSDY

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment along with high inflation is among the gravest social, economic and political problems threatening the creators of macroeconomic politics of any country. Tackling the principal problem of unemployment demands: quick changes in the Macedonian economy, dynamic economic growth, proper social policies, more adequate distribution of the profit and the resources and reforms in the education. Despite significant attempts for reforms, the macroeconomic indicators of the Macedonian economy are unfavourable. Macedonia is among the countries with the highest unemployment rate in Europe. Rather than low income, high unemployment is the key factor for poverty. Unemployment can simply be defined as the number of people without a job. This definition includes young people at a pre-working age, the retired, the ill, individuals not fit to work, as well as people who simply choose not to work, therefore do not look for employment. Consequently, it would be simpler to state that unemployed are: people able and willing to work, actively looking for employment, but cannot find one.

A consequence of unemployment is the occurrence of socio-pathologic problems, such as: thefts, youth delinquency, prostitution, murders with financial motives. These occurrences are a large burden for the state.

Young people looking for a job after graduation develop a negative attitude and lose motivation to further look for employment after endless applications and numerous encountered obstacles and false promises from employers.

Certain questions arise at this point: How easy is it, in our country, to find a job despite higher education qualifications? Are the criteria demanded by the employees decisive for a certain vacancy or are candidates employed in spite of them? Of course, this depends on the level of professionalism and the ethic principles of the decision-makers in the company.

Numerous research proves that unemployment is accompanied by mental and health changes. A frequent occurrence of mental disorders and illnesses is noticeable, particularly: depression, anxiety, low level of self-confidence and stress.

These symptoms are an additional burden and may result in apathy and indifference towards life in cases when no specific measures are undertaken. One might become depressed and lacks motivation to do anything. Or one might become cynical and lose interest, might withdraw from friends and family. Therefore, it is very important to know that each of us can and should make a step towards improving the quality of life, our own, as well as that of the people in our surrounding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a common topic of interest for everyone: teenage magazines write articles about it, it inspires books and films, and of course, almost daily we hear information about it on the radio and TV. It has been the problem of the past few generations. What is the real reason behind it, though? Is it the teenagers' fault or maybe their parents'? Teenagers tend to enjoy their youth, live their life to the fullest, travel, go out every evening, hang out with their friends, and have fun. They are young and their problems still seem insignificant. However, one day their carefree enjoyment has to come to an end. Maybe, in moments of fun education seems unimportant, however parents should direct their children towards the real values in life.

What seems like wasting time for a teenager might play an important role for their life in the future. Education, formal as well as informal, leads towards better future and knowledge and might provide a more fulfilling job position. The reasons for youth unemployment might be located among parents as well. Due to an overwhelming desire to please their children, to provide as carefree life as possible, parents make mistakes: instead of bringing up a mature and responsible person, they bring up a parasite used to acquiring everything from his/her parents, without having to leave the comfort of the home and go to school or work. The unemployment phenomenon is spreading, and parents need to ask themselves how they can help their children become responsible citizens. Young people on the other hand need to realize how they can help themselves and stop complaining of the lack of employment.¹

2. THE PROBLEM CALLED 99.8% HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES ENROLLED AT FACULTY

A closer consideration of this statistics might make a person think that the entire population is comprised of directors, managers, bosses and no labourers. This statistics might serve as a basis for boasting, yet does a statistic of only 14% high school graduates enrolled at faculty surprise you? Before you believe this statistic to be a quotation from an undeveloped African country, let us point that this is the official statistics in Germany, the model of pillar economy in Europe. Not everyone is a student there. There are auto mechanics with high salaries, shop assistants, repair men who do not continue their education not because they don't want to, rather because they don't need to. Perhaps this is the problem in Macedonia – the phenomenal 99.8%. Will there be factories without workers and only directors tomorrow? Without workers there is no need of directors. Is this phenomenon positive or rather very negative for Macedonia? What do foreigners think about this statistic, how can somebody invest in a factory if there is a lack of workers? These are the questions in need of answers. While the young are studying in the effort to gain all possible titles before the age of 30, the labour market will not require their profiles any longer.

We all want a better future, however not everyone was made to be a doctor of philosophy. Someone has to work, so instead of wasting 5 to 8 years in an attempt to graduate from university, this person could have 5 to 8 years of working experience at a job position they appreciate.

¹ www.multikultura.org.mk

3. STUDENTS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Students have an important role in our society. Times have changed for the better in terms of higher education, however in terms of unemployment the situation is becoming graver by the minute. How can students without working experience (a precondition requested from all employers) find the appropriate job? First of all, every student needs to consider volunteering for a company or other type of organization, doing courses to improve his/her skills and expand the knowledge gained at school. Finally, young people need to learn to take advantage of the Internet where vacancies grouped according to regions, cities and positions are published daily.

The first step towards finding a job is of course volunteering, a means for students to acquire experience and motivation for the desired position. Volunteering leads to finding a job and has a significant place in the curriculum vitae of a young person, as well as in their further development.

Nowadays there are numerous organizations offering free courses. Participating in such courses is of importance for a person's self-confidence, a crucial segment of the character in the process of finding a job. It creates opportunities for students, such as making contacts, or applying in employment agencies. Establishing contacts in Macedonia is important in the process of finding a job, so make new acquaintances, because you never know who might help you.

The use of internet can prove helpful while looking for a job. In order to find a job you have to search for information, but also share the one you have. It might reach an employer and you might be lucky enough to get a job interview. First of all determine your goal: what type of a job you are looking for. Then use the internet opportunities and finally check if you are eligible for a certain vacancy in a company.

4. YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is of particular importance in the process of finding a job. It has been said many times, but its importance to future employment must be repeated again. The subject matter taught at school and faculty is of course irreplaceable. However, professors cannot teach about one thing - practical knowledge, improving one's skills and dealing with responsibilities at the working place. Job advertisements found in newspapers, web-portals or TV contain one crucial sentence used by young people as an excuse not to apply for a certain position: 2, 3, 4, or 5 years working experience necessary. Why object? The employer needs experienced staff. They have no use of employees reciting text book definitions, they need practice instead. This experience does not necessarily have to be gained in a similar company or at a higher position. Employers simply need a proof that the person in question is aware of their job responsibilities. Volunteering is not a free working force. Volunteering is a possibility to acquire competence, improve one's knowledge and of course enhance the curriculum vitae in the experience section. Volunteers are not paid because they acquire services from the company or organization: by learning they gain experience. Volunteering is similar to schools or faculties, and students receive no salary for their efforts.

Upon inspecting the short biographies of many successful people it becomes apparent that none of them began their careers as directors, but as volunteers. By making contacts and developing competences they reached a higher level. It is the circle of life that offers quality and desirable positions. A fact every young person needs to be aware of is this: when you climb the ladder step by step, you will be successful in the chosen field; however, if you take the director's position immediately after graduation, you will be one of the many incompetent directors whose companies are slowly, but surely sinking.²

² www.multikultura.org.mk

5. HOW TO FIND A JOB POSITION WITHOUT NEPOTISM

With every passing day, unemployment in our country becomes a more salient phenomenon. People talk about undertaking measures, however lack the courage to do something about it, to face the problem directly and solve it once and for all.

The number of university graduates without a job in Macedonia is high. Immediately after graduation these young people make an effort to find the suitable job for their qualifications, but after a while they stop. The competition consisting of their wealthy colleagues whose parents have sufficient influence to exert a better job position is demoralizing. Quality students most often accept a manual job with a minimal income, instead of offering their quality at a higher ranking position with higher salaries.

Desperation destroys these young people's desire to choose higher education, forcing them to continue their education abroad in some cases. It is the reason why many of the best students who have the potential to contribute to the state's development go abroad, where their effort and education is appreciated, where they can find the position suitable to their competence and education.

This is precisely why the question of unemployment among young people must be solved. We must find a way to reward the students with the highest achieved success in education, not the most successful parents in the business.

By debating or mentioning the problem we are one step closer to its solution. There are numerous foreign organizations ready to help bridge the gap between young people and employers and thus help young people find employment.

According to the latest numbers of the State Statistics Office, unemployment in Macedonia reached a record of 35%. Young people looking for a job in Macedonia are constantly fighting to

find a full time job, and lose hope of finding it in the process. This is all due to the unavailability of the system and the business community. On the other hand it is ironic that employers complain of insufficient qualified young labour force. This contributes to the creation of an endless cycle: the young cannot find a job, while employers cannot find a labour force to achieve their goals and create new positions.

The key question is how to find a solution. A possible answer is the development of a programme for bridging the gap between the supply and demand on the labour market. For instance, organizing public debates to openly discuss the problem or forming groups of experts experienced in solving such matters which are of great importance to managing the entire society.³

³ www.multikultura.org.mk

6. MEASURES FOR DEALING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

The measures for dealing with unemployment consist of certain proposals which aim to decrease the unemployment rate, particularly unemployment among young people. The social democratic youth as a youth organization within the New Social Democratic Party actively participates in the solution of youth problems with proposals and suggestions. In the context of the above said, NSDP suggests the following:

- Decreasing the retirement age from 64 to 60 for men, and from 62 to 58 for women;
- Exemption from social and health insurance for companies that employ individuals younger than 30;
- Loans for youth self-employment by the state, for the purpose of starting a private business in the trade and service field;
- Exemption from taxes in the first two years of initiating a private business for people not older than 30 years.

First measure: decreasing retirement age from 64 to 60 for men, and from 62 to 58 for women will create a larger circulation of vacancies in the state. The explanation is that if the working age decreases, there is a possibility for increasing job productivity, as well as the opportunity for development of new ideas, new working methods, changes in the organization etc.

Second measure: exemption from social and health insurance for companies that will employ persons younger than 30 will contribute in prioritizing youth employment, mostly because companies would be tempted to save on expenses regarding salaries and insurance. The state, on the other hand, will have the opportunity to employ a larger number of young people.

Third measure: State loans for youth self-employment to provide an opportunity for private businesses in the trade and service field. This measure is mostly intended for young people who decide not to enrol at university. Such loans will help develop new businesses in the so-called small economy and solve the unemployment problem for young people who want to set up their own private business.

Fourth measure: Exemption from taxes in the first two years of initiating a private business for people not older than 30 years. This will not only ensure the establishment of private business, but also the exemption from state taxes for young people in the most critical period for a business.

7. THE MULTICULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE PROBLEM WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

The above mentioned problems and the proposed measures are common for all young people in our country. It is a known fact that various ethnic communities live in the Republic of Macedonia, and the young people, members of these communities, feel the consequences of unemployment on their own skin.

Macedonia is a multicultural state factually and by declaration, hence the elements of multiculturalism are already established in the public policy. This implies an additional mechanism for the protection of members of all ethnic communities that minimizes the danger from being excluded from the system. However, regardless of an individual's ethnicity, every young person, if excluded from the education process or if unemployed, feels excluded from society.

Multicultural politics is adopted in all spheres of life. However, what is important in the context of the unemployment problem is the introduction of employment quotas in the administration, i.e. guaranteed employments for members of ethnic communities in accordance with their percentage presence in the Republic of Macedonia. On the one hand, the goal is to avoid exclusion, and on the other to prevent domination of the largest ethnic community. However, these quotas can be problematic from several aspects: first, this quota might be manipulated in cases when in reality there is no need for certain vacancies; the number of people on salary, while staying at home and not working increases; the candidate's qualifications are overseen on account of his/her ethnicity; the political parties gather votes and issue membership cards on account of these ethnic employments etc. Furthermore, the private sector is facing high level of discrimination on ethnic ground in the employment process. The most obvious example of discrimination is the Roma community, a community faced with exclusion as well.

Therefore, employment programmes need to be inclusive and encompass young people from all ethnic communities and replace the quota method, which is exploited too often. The labour market requires regular detailed analysis pursuant to which the appropriate employment programmes can be created in a specific period. The sectors that appear to benefit from employment of members of ethnic communities should be the target for this method.

The differences present in Macedonia (ethnic, language, religious) should by no means be an obstacle for the employment of a young person. Regardless where (state institutions or the private sector), proper qualifications should be the only factor crucial for his/her employment.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, unemployment of young people is a social problem with negative effects on the entire economic and social development of the state. Lack of suitable employment conditions leads to lack of conditions for a better future. In times when the young have no jobs, their attention is increasingly focussed on deviant occurrences, such as: prostitution, thefts, drug abuse etc.

Unemployment directly influences a young person's private life. This factor influences the decision to postpone establishing a family, which is the basic principle for the development of a nation.

Quotes

„Work like you don't need money. Love like you've never been hurt, dance like nobody's watching.“ – Mark Twain

„All things are difficult before they are easy.“ - Thomas Fuller

“Don't hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for the love of it.” – Henry David Thoreau

“Every noble work is at first impossible.” – Thomas Carlyle

“I cannot imagine anything more worthwhile than doing what I most love. And they pay me for it.” – Edgar Winter

“If you put all your strength and faith and vigor into a job and try to do the best you can, the money will come.”- Lawrence Welk

“Laziness may appear attractive, but work gives satisfaction.” – Anne Frank

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