

## **Concept of work development with youth for the years 2016-2020**

The concept of work development with youth for the years 2016-2020 (hereinafter referred to as “the concept”) is a strategic document of state policy that specifies state priorities for work with youth by 2020. It follows the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014-2020 by contributing to the fulfillment of the strategic objectives in the field of work with youth as one of the basic thematic priorities of the document, mainly the thematic area No. 9: “Work with Youth”. The Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014-2020 was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 23 April 2014 by Resolution No. 192.

The creation of an analysis of work with youth and the definition of the basic objectives and priorities through regional and national consultations preceded the creation of the concept. Representatives of various institutions working in the field of work with youth and youth policy from all regions of Slovakia were involved in the consultations.

The concept is divided into five thematic areas in which a simplified description of the baseline situation, the vision approaching work with youth work by 2020, and the concrete objectives to be achieved in 2020 are always briefly presented. Several possible measures are outlined thereof. This list is not final and other effective measures may also be presented in the course of the concept’s validity to fulfill the stated goals. The measures that are to be implemented, the timing and the institutions responsible for their implementation will be determined through action plans after the Government of the Slovak Republic approves the concept.

Under work with youth<sup>1</sup> we understand a deliberate activity that responds to the needs of young people and leads to the positive development of their personality in order to be able to fully apply it in life. It is based on the principle of voluntary youth participation, partnership and mutual respect. Its role is to contribute to maturity, finding a direction in life and the self-identification of both individuals and groups. It should create space for the co-decision of young people about the issues concerning them, motivate them to engage, and thus contribute to the building of civil society. It is implemented by people specifically prepared for this activity, actively working in this field as well as volunteers who are irreplaceable for the concept’s

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<sup>1</sup> *Basic information on the status of work with youth - see Appendix 1*

fulfillment<sup>2</sup>.

The concept is founded on the following principles: work with youth builds on the current situation of a young person and seeks to meet his/her needs; it assists with the real application of the rights of young people; is directed at ensuring the overall quality of young people's life; works for the common good of individuals, communities and societies; recognizes the important role of the non-governmental sector in achieving results in work with youth; applies a systematic and comprehensive approach to work with youth based on partnership, cooperation and an integrated approach for all actors (young people, local and regional authorities, state and public administration, non-governmental organizations, other organizations, institutions, individuals, the business sector, the media and the whole society); quality work with youth cannot be implemented without adequate financial support.

### **The needs of young people as a starting point for work with youth**

Starting point situation:

The current requirement within European Youth Policy<sup>3</sup> is to work with youth based on the evidence of the actual needs of young people. In Slovakia, data on youth is gained mainly through research and surveys, which form the basis of "reports on youth". They are issued in a period of 3 to 4 years (2010, 2014 and planned 2017) and are the basis for the creation of national strategy documents. More specific data collection and identification of the needs of young people at the regional or local level is minimal, there is a lack of independent interpretation of such findings and their subsequent use in concrete measures or granted challenges in work with youth.

Vision: Working with youth based on the knowledge of the current needs of young people.

Objective: Systematically identify and analyze the needs of young people at all levels, national, regional and local, to make public disclosures and to publish the findings and take corresponding action on their basis.

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<sup>2</sup> *The expanded original definition set out in the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014-2020*

<sup>3</sup> *Resolution of the Council and the representatives of governments and the Member States meeting at the Council on working with youth, 2010*

Possible measures:

- Continue to gather evidence and publish reports on youth at the national level.
- Support the practice of identifying and analyzing youth needs at the regional and local level (to support the development of the methodology for identifying and analyzing needs, working with and disseminating the methodology).
- Support (e.g. through education) implementers of work with youth in using an analysis of the needs of young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of youth activities and programs.
- When looking for and analyzing needs, to ensure the view of experts/professionals from relevant fields, including young people.
- Visualize the needs of young people and strengthen their advocacy toward the public as well as the representatives of relevant institutions touching the topic of youth (i.e. “important adults”) at all levels (national, regional and local).
- Financially support of research and surveys focused on identifying the needs of young people within the “Evidence on Youth” program<sup>4</sup>.

### Quality work with youth

Starting point situation:

Emphasizing the increase in quality in youth work is another pan-European trend. In 2015, the EU Expert Group defined the basic principles of quality work with youth, regardless of the context in which it is performed<sup>5</sup>. One of the forms of quality validation in Slovakia is the accreditation of non-formal education programs in work with youth under Act No. 282/2008 Coll. on Support of Work with Youth and amending Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments to Certain Laws as amended (hereinafter referred to as “Act No. 282/2008 Coll.”). At the same time, within configuring the criteria for the “Support Youth Organizations” program, the quality criteria were given much weight than in previous programs.<sup>6</sup> In Slovakia, the creation of innovative systems for increasing quality was supported in the first calls of the “Priority Youth Policy” (Programs for Youth 2014-2020) program of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as “MESRS SR”). But in other types of organizations (non-children and youth supra-regional organizations) at the level of regions, towns and municipalities, there is still no consensus on

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<sup>4</sup> As part of the Youth Programs for 2014-2020, the subsidy-provision system by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic for the field of youth work on the basis of Order of Minister No. 54/2013

<sup>5</sup> Quality youth work, A common framework for the further development of youth work, European Commission, 2015

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.iuventa.sk/sk/Granty/Nova-generacia-Programov-PRE-MLADEZ-na-roky-2014-2020.alej>

what constitutes quality in work with youth. At the same time, greater support for the deployment of quality is needed through the use of various tools in practice and the creation of a motivating environment where organizations can inspire and learn from one another.

Vision: Promoting and improving the quality of work with youth

Objective 1: Putting into practice the tools to measure and promote the development of quality in work with youth

Possible measures

- Create a consensus on quality criteria and indicators in work with youth, with a view of the different forms, areas, target groups and actors in work with youth, taking into account European trends.
- Creating and supporting various tools for quality support (peer review, external feedback...).
- Education and system support for work with youth implementers to perform high-quality work with youth and use various tools for quality support.
- Supporting management and methodical staff in organizations and institutions working with youth in quality development.
- System support for introducing quality and standards for work with youth.
- Make the good examples of quality work with youth more visible.
- Extend the accreditation of non-formal education programs for work with youth under Act No. 282/2008 Coll. also on the accreditation of institutions.

## **Actors working with youth**

Starting point situation:

There are many diverse organizations and entities in the field of work with youth. The activities of national organizations operating on a membership principle on a regular basis and regional organizations are partly mapped out because they are candidates for the resources of the MESRS SR through the “Youth Programs for 2014-2020”. These organizations have a large number of quality people, mostly volunteers. Although these organizations are very important in terms of work with youth, they capture a relatively small percentage of the young people in Slovakia<sup>7</sup>. This is why it is important to promote the growth as well as the fulfillment of these organizations

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<sup>7</sup> Organizations supported by the SUPPROT MO program registered 72,252 members in 2014

for young people as well as young volunteers. In addition to non-governmental organizations and other organizations working with children and youth, all educational and training facilities fall within the scope of valid legislation<sup>8</sup>.

The situation with regard to leisure centers that work in the field of local work with youth is difficult<sup>9</sup>. Legislatively, they belong to school facilities and are regulated by relevant legislation within regional education, but, at the same time, on the basis of a decree<sup>10</sup> they are supposed to carry out activities related to work with youth, which leads to a number of complications in practice. In supporting youth activities, also due to recent changes in funding, they are supposed to play an important role by systematically supporting local and regional authorities. Despite some positive examples, however, such support is not sufficient and a systematic conceptual grasp is lacking. Non-formal youth groups also play a significant role in work with youth. There is still unresolved question of what other institutions, which provide activities for youth but their activities fall into other areas (e.g. community centers from the social field libraries from the cultural field and so on), do in work with youth.

Vision: A comprehensive, functional and flexible system for work with youth (at the national, regional and local level)

Objective: Define the roles and tasks of the various actors active in the work with youth system at all three levels in order to complement each other's activities and together fulfill the mission of work with youth.

Possible measures:

- Definition of work with youth (activities and services) within child and youth care outside education (e.g. in relation to school facilities, cultural and sport organizations...).
- To analyze the current state of work with youth in Slovakia and local specifics (who is involved, who we care about sufficiently and in what forms, and what is missing), including the naming of target groups that we do not address in adequate or appropriate forms.

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<sup>10</sup> Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (the Education Act) and the amendment and supplementation of some laws.

- Support greater involvement of local authorities in supporting work with youth at the regional and local level.
- Evaluate and create a new system for child and youth care outside education with a clear understanding of the position and roles of individual actors (e.g. leisure centers, school children's clubs, elementary art schools, schools with the use of educational vouchers, child and youth organizations and other organizations supported through towns and municipalities) to fulfill the role of the state in this field better.
- Comprehensively reforming the activities and focus of leisure centers and defining their position in work with youth in line with the proposed new child and youth care outside education system (including possible transformation to something other than school facilities and the adaptation of relevant legislation).
- Adaptation of legislation on the basis of the created model (amendment to Act No. 282/2008 Coll., or Act No. 245/2008 Coll., and other relevant legislation).

### **Financing the work with youth**

Starting point situation:

Public resources are an important source of funding for youth organizations because they allow the funding of coordination and support activities of headquarters for their regional branches. However, these resources are often tied to a relevant calendar year (not taking into account the needs of the sector for long-term funding) and are available too late in the year (May/June), making it more difficult to use them efficiently. In terms of accessibility, there are also large geographical differences, since some municipalities have earmarked financial resources to support work with youth and others have not. Even in cases where funding for youth activities exists, it is often unsystematic. There are no defined goals and priorities based on relevant analysis and identified needs. At the same time, there is a great disproportion in terms of funding earmarked for support of work with youth<sup>11</sup> in comparison with the funds earmarked for other activities within child and youth care outside education, e.g. through educational vouchers.<sup>12</sup> The change in the financing of the leisure centers, valid from 1.1.2013, has redistributed resources originally intended only for local governments, where leisure time centers operate on a flat basis for all municipalities, regardless of their use for youth. While this change gives local governments more flexibility in youth care, it has been done without the systematic support of

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<sup>11</sup> For youth programs was allocated in 2014 the amount €2,329,565

<sup>12</sup> For education vouchers, €17,117,790 was earmarked for 2015

local governments, with how to effectively use these means to support youth. Currently there is no information on what activities, on what basis and at what quality local governments are funded from these sources. Between 2011 and 2015, two national projects in the field of work with youth were implemented: KomPrax - Competence for Practice and Praktik - Practical Skills through Informal Education in Work with Youth from the European Social Fund (hereinafter referred to as the “ESF”), which brought about important innovations and examples of good practice.

Vision: Sufficient, targeted, transparent and sustainable work with youth.

Objective: Create a work with youth funding system and provide adequate resources at all levels (national, regional and local).

Possible measures:

- Analyze systems for financing child and youth care activities outside education and their effectiveness in meeting strategic goals in the areas concerned and define areas that are not covered.
- On the basis of the analysis, quantify and allocate adequate resources to meet strategic objectives in the field of work with youth (e.g. redistributing existing resources in the sector, acquiring additional resources, etc.).
- Link existing financial resources of all relevant departments, relevant ministries or foundations to provide inter-ministerial cooperation in work with youth at the national, regional and local level (and to create a space to learn from each other).
- Allocate funds to the “Youth Community”<sup>13</sup> program and to cumulate state and local, or regional work with youth resources through it.
- Create a grant system for work with youth at the regional level from share taxes and link them to needs analysis and set strategic goals.
- Create tools for checking and monitoring the use of work with youth resources at all levels, linking to needs analysis and quality criteria.

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<sup>13</sup> Within Youth Programs for 2014-2020, the subsidy-provision system by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic for the field of youth work on the basis of Order of Minister No. 54/2013.

- Find resources to develop infrastructure and investment activities in work with youth (e.g. via Structural Funds resources).
- Create tools to support non-formal groups.
- Ensure suitable conditions for organizations working with youth (long-term funding, institutional support, flexible funding that responds to changing needs or other support, e.g. education that is mandatory...).

### **Visibility and recognition of work with youth**

Starting point situation:

Activities at the European level focused at increasing the recognition of work with youth and its results have been in place for over a decade. A specialized center for the preparation of strategic actions related to the recognition of work with youth (SALTO Recognition) has been established within the framework of European Union programs. Since 2012, IUVENTA - The Slovak Institute of Youth, has prepared various measures to promote the recognition and visibility of work with youth (Conference Prúty a architekti, Non-formal education - fáma alebo bežná prax, Forum named Fórum inovatívneho učenia). The activities of the Komprax national project - competences for practice in this area culminated in 2013 with the signing of the Declaration on the Recognition of the Contribution of Non-Formal Education to Work with Youth. Work with youth was also included as a separate topic in the Youth Strategy of the Slovak Republic for the years 2014-2020 as a separate topic, and work on an amendment to Act No. 282/2008 Coll. has begun. There are many other initiatives in the youth sector, such as the “Bridge” award of the Youth Council of Slovakia. But the awareness of our society about the benefits of working with youth and why it is important is far from the level of some other European countries, such as Denmark and Belgium.

Vision: A society that understands the benefits and impact of working with youth.

Objective: Develop tools to promote the recognition of work with youth at all four levels of recognition (formal, social, self-esteem, political) and to use them

Possible measures:

- Financially support research and surveys to identify the impact of work with youth under the “Evidence of Youth”<sup>14</sup> program and to publish identified information (self-esteem).
- Make the examples of quality long-term partnerships, e.g. campaigns, programs, projects (social recognition) more visible.
- To include a youth worker in the National Occupation and the National Qualifications System (formal recognition).
- Expand education of work with youth in universities (formal recognition).
- To develop the competences of local government staff responsible for youth (political recognition).
- Implement information and promotional activities on the benefits of work with youth mainly outside the sector (social recognition) at all levels.
- Create a space for linking work with youth and formal education (formal recognition).

### **Implement, monitor, and track the fulfillment of the Concept**

The implementation of the Concept of Work Development with Youth for 2016 - 2020 is the responsibility of the MESRS SR and will be executed in cooperation with IUVENTA - the Slovak Youth Institute and the relevant ministries. The fulfillment of the concept’s objectives through the different sectors will be performed within their capacities and competencies. Monitoring and tracking the fulfillment of the concept will be performed by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for State Policy in the field of youth. The development of the concept presupposes a two-year action plan with an annual evaluation at the level of the Ministry of Education and publicizing the fulfillment of the concept for the public in a comprehensible form.

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<sup>14</sup> Within Youth Programs for 2014-2020, the subsidy-provision system by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic for the field of youth work on the basis of Order of Minister No. 54/2013.