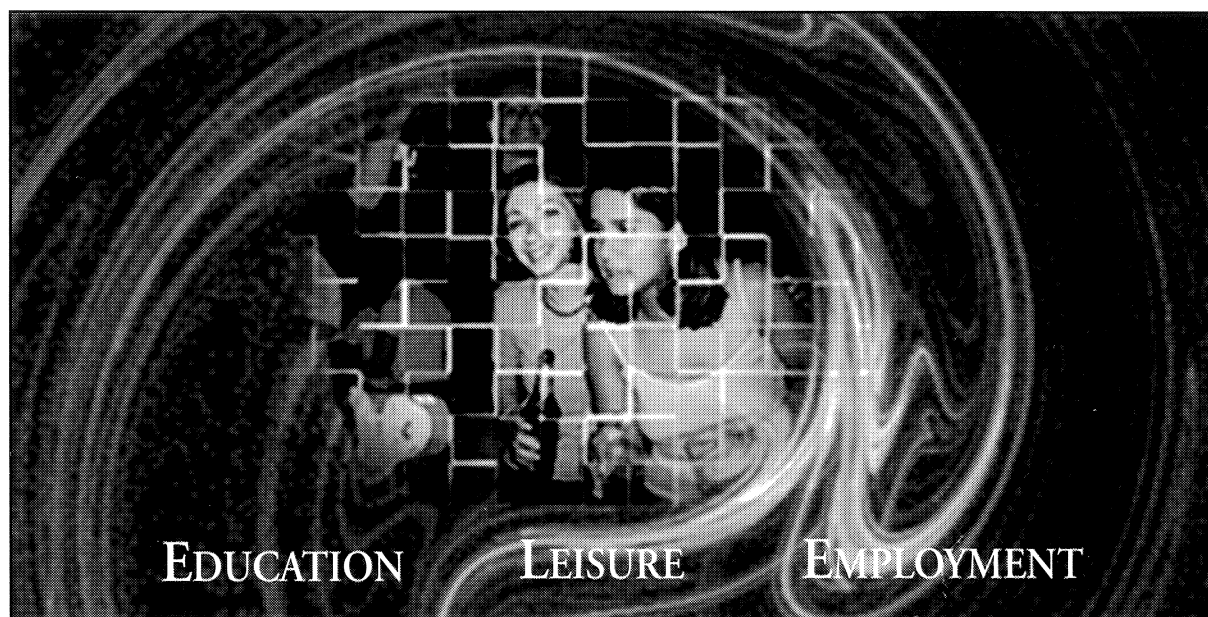


ANDY FURLONG BARBARA STALDER ANTHONY AZZOPARDI

VULNERABLE YOUTH



EUROPEAN YOUTH TRENDS 2000

2000



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

European Youth Trends 2000

**Vulnerable youth:
perspectives on vulnerability in education,
employment and leisure in Europe**

International expert report

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Council of Europe Publishing

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Executive summary

This report focuses on patterns of vulnerability among young people in the spheres of education, the labour market and leisure. It is argued that vulnerability is increasing and that while there are examples of good practices which help to reduce the vulnerability of specific groups, there is a lack of macro level policies aimed at reducing extreme vulnerability.

EDUCATION

Key trends in education include:

1. A continued expansion of participation in upper secondary education which has now become part of the educational experiences of a strong majority of young people in Europe.
2. A growth in participation in higher education with demand for places tending to exceed supply.
3. The growth in educational participation tends not to have been matched with an increase in expenditure on education: in many cases the proportion of GDP spent on education has declined.
4. Higher levels of educational participation have led to some qualification inflation and even well qualified young people are experiencing difficulties in the labour market.
5. A weakening of divisions between academic and vocational education and the development of greater opportunities to move between tracks. However, vocational education still tends to have a lower status.
6. In many countries, educational drop-out and non-completion of courses has become problematic and those who have had difficulties in the lower secondary school can find their routes to upper secondary education blocked.
7. Despite an overall increase in educational attainment, there are wide gaps between young people in different countries in terms of the development of key skills in literacy, mathematics and science.
8. Young people who leave school without basic skills, especially in literacy and numeracy, are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market.
9. While a variety of policies exist with regard to young people with special needs, systems based on integrated, rather than separate, learning seem to be most successful.
10. Educational expansion has not been associated with a marked reduction in the association between family background and educational attainments.
11. Gender differences in educational attainment have become weaker, although the relationship between gender and types of subject studies remains strong.

Young people who are particularly vulnerable within education systems include:

1. Those who come from economically disadvantaged families.
2. Those whose parents have limited educational experience.
3. Ethnic minorities, immigrants and travellers.

EMPLOYMENT

Key trends in the youth labour market include:

1. Greater competition for quality jobs among graduates and qualified school-leavers and increased difficulties for those with few skills or credentials.
2. Growing insecurity and casualisation of employment and increased participation in part-time work.
3. In post-communist societies, school-to-work transitions have become chaotic and youth wages have declined.
4. In many countries, unemployment has become a normal part of the transition from school to work, even among those with strong educational credentials.
5. Benefit restrictions have increased the danger of extreme poverty among young people who have to rely on family support.
6. With long qualifying periods for unemployment benefit and with many young people finding themselves ineligible for support, a growing proportion of young people without jobs, education or training places fail to register as unemployed.
7. Even in countries with low rates of unemployment, underemployment is frequently seen as a problem.
8. Self-employment is becoming increasingly important (especially in the post-communist countries), yet rates of business failure are high and economic rewards tend to be poor. Self-employment is frequently regarded as a survival strategy rather than representing a positive choice.
9. Vocational training schemes have tended not to enjoy high levels of credibility and links between training and employment have tended to be weak. However, the new generation of training schemes developed after the Luxembourg Summit may prove more successful.

Young people who are particularly vulnerable in the labour market include:

1. Those who have not been educated beyond lower secondary level.
2. Young people lacking in basic literacy and numeracy skills.
3. Trainees on remedial training programmes who often fail to gain an effective foothold in the labour market.
4. In post-communist countries, those who lack the skills sought by Western employers, such as languages and information technology.
5. In the face of a reduction in state support for post-compulsory education and of a tightening of the benefit systems, young people whose parents are unable or unwilling to provide financial assistance.
6. Young offenders, the homeless, the disabled and single mothers as well as those brought up in the care of the state.

Proposals to reduce labour market vulnerability include:

1. Breaking the cycle of deprivation which is manifest in continual movement between unemployment, insecure jobs and remedial training schemes through the development of high quality training provided through the co-operation of employers and educationalists. Introducing a greater range of choices in training and promoting voluntary recruitment.
2. With worker flexibility being central to modern economies, a strong regulation of the links between education, training and employment can no longer be beneficial either to workers or employers.
3. New methods of delivering educational and training opportunities to part-time workers need to be developed.
4. Effective ways of combating long-term youth unemployment need to be developed and adequate support needs to be provided for those without jobs, whatever their age.

LEISURE

The importance of leisure.

1. While the importance of education and labour market transitions tend to be taken for granted, leisure is often treated as peripheral. However, in their leisure time, young people often develop skills which are central to success in other contexts of their lives. These include social and leadership skills, socialisation into group norms, cognitive development and identity development as well as a range of skills which arise from informal education in groups.
2. Young people are frequently seen as having a plentiful supply of leisure time, yet there is some evidence that free time is actually decreasing as young people combine periods of study with part-time employment. Evidence is emerging of a detrimental effect of long work hours on academic performance, but little attention has been paid to the impact of work and study on leisure.
3. Commercial leisure has increased in importance, yet new vulnerabilities arise as some young people find themselves excluded due to a lack of financial resources.
4. Leisure provision by the youth services has frequently been affected by financial cutbacks leaving few opportunities for constructive leisure among those with limited opportunities to engage in commercial pursuits.
5. With youth transitions having become more protracted and with formal youth provision being appreciated most by young adolescents, youth workers need to develop new ways of working with young adults.
6. Learning how to make use of leisure time can be regarded as central to personal fulfilment. Young people who are denied rich and varied leisure lifestyles are unlikely to develop fulfilling leisure as adults and may face difficulties in coping with periods of economic inactivity.

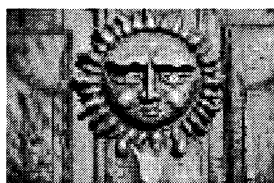
INTRODUCTION

In this second Youth Trends Report of the Council of Europe, the focus is on vulnerable youth. Youth in general can be regarded as a period of vulnerability: young people attempt to enhance their educational and vocational credentials and gain a foothold in the labour market, develop adult identities and create new life styles, form new friendships and sexual and collegial relationships, establish a degree of financial independence and perhaps move away from the family home. However, in each of these spheres some young people are far more vulnerable than others. In the following report we concentrate on identifying groups who can be regarded as particularly vulnerable. Resource limitations mean that we were unable to cover the experiences of young people in their entirety and had to prioritise.

Given that across Europe young people are spending increasing periods of time in education and training and because educational inequalities are strongly associated with vulnerability in other life contexts, educational experiences were given priority. With successful transitions to working life one of our priorities was to highlight sources of vulnerability in the youth labour market. Lastly, in recognition of the importance of fulfilment in non-formal settings, patterns of vulnerability in leisure contexts are discussed. Given that the range of experiences in each of these spheres can differ greatly across countries, our aim here is not to provide a comprehensive discussion of the impact of various institutional structures, but to draw attention to major sources of vulnerability which affect young people within significant clusters of countries.

What is vulnerability?

Although all young people in the process of transition can experience some vulnerability, here we are concerned with *extreme* vulnerability. Essentially, we regard vulnerability as being associated with the capacity of persons and social groups to confront structural and social changes.



For the purposes of this report, vulnerability is defined as severely restricted opportunities for secure employment, social and economic advancement and personal fulfilment.

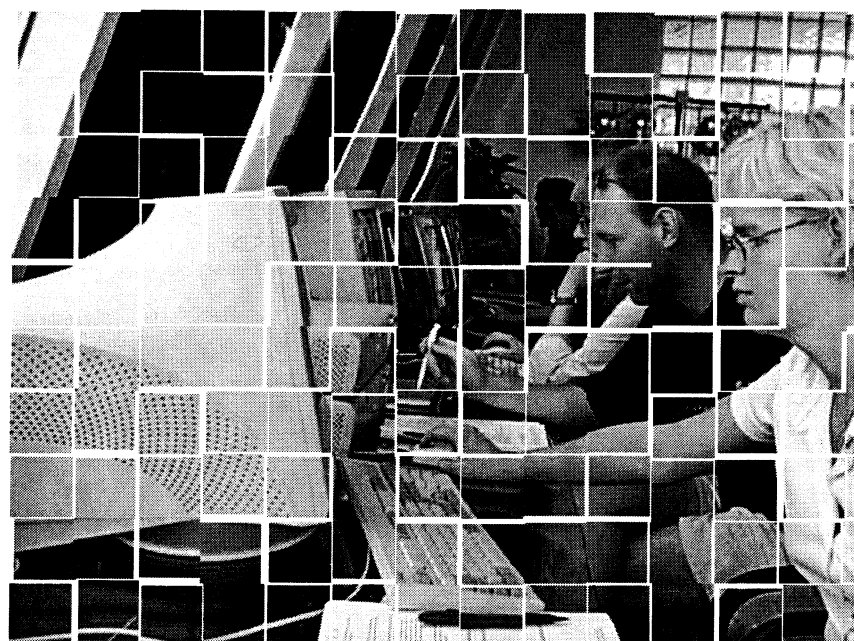
This concise definition is intended to cover a number of dimensions.¹ First, vulnerability can be viewed as the susceptibility of persons and social groups to be hurt, damaged, or affected in different ways as result of a combination of both subjective and objective factors. Subjective factors can include various weaknesses and fragility's, insecurities and incapacity to defend oneself from risk. Objective factors relate to external influences, especially those stemming from economic and social conditions. More sociologically, we can define vulnerability as the scarce response capacity of certain persons and groups inside society to confront, adapt or cope with specific economic, social, cultural and political challenges to which they are permanently exposed. This 'response-capacity' is partly influenced by the intrinsic strength of individuals, but is also affected by external impulses or inputs which improve the conditions under which they cope with the challenges that such stimuli represent.

¹ The extended definition of vulnerability provided here is drawn from the German correspondent's report.

A second element in this conceptualisation refers to the fact that ‘vulnerability’ is frequently linked to conditions of poverty and associated cultural responses which may reinforce inferior living conditions. This kind of vulnerability can be defined as ‘structural’. Lack of resources, especially poverty, is one of the most important factors influencing the quality of life and the possibilities individuals and groups have to develop adequate competencies, skills and instruments necessary to confront change. In this context, it is important to underline those possibilities, competencies and skills which are related to general and superior education, from vocational training, health and housing. In general terms, those groups experiencing a poor quality of life-quality tend to experience higher levels of vulnerability.

Another aspect of vulnerability stems from gender, cultural, ethnic and political discrimination. Those most affected are girls and young women of low social origin, members of ethnic minorities, migrants and, in certain cases, young people in general. Some of these discriminating factors are linked and therefore it is possible to classify degrees of vulnerability: gender discrimination, for example, can be seen as crossing age, cultural and ethnic discrimination and being intensified by social disadvantage.

This report is a joint endeavour, it draws on contributions by a number of National Youth Research Correspondents and benefits from the input of Irena Guidikova (Youth research co-ordinator at the Council of Europe) at all stages. Individual chapters were written respectively by, Andy Furlong (UK), Barbara Stalder (Switzerland) and Anthony Azzopardi (Malta).



Chapter 1

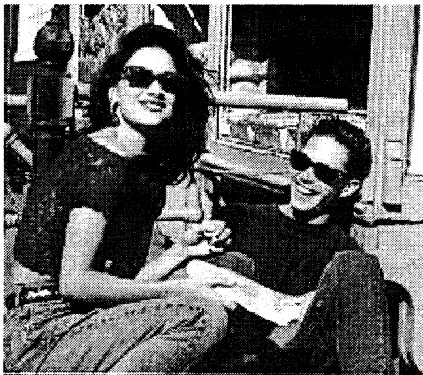
VULNERABILITY AND EDUCATION

I Trends in secondary and higher education

Introduction

In modern societies, education has become a decisive factor influencing the life course of individuals. More and more young people stay longer in education. In many countries, a variety of new academic and vocational programmes have been introduced, which are linked with different qualifications and educational careers. The labour market demands more highly qualified people. Competencies like the application of knowledge, problem-solving, learning to learn, the competence to act in teams and to deal with many situations or the capability to engage in life-long learning have become important. In this framework, educational trajectories have a crucial impact on young people's personal development as well as on their participation in economic, democratic and civil processes of society.

While educational attendance and achievement have become a significant issue, concern grows for those young people who leave the educational system without the basic qualifications needed in modern life. Young people who do not reach a certain level of education and training risk being excluded from important areas of life. They have limited access to the labour market and to leisure time activities. Moreover, educational failure is often linked with poverty, illness, drug-abuse and delinquency.



Educational failure is seen as harmful in terms of reduced economic competitiveness and social cohesion.

Considering the importance of education both for individual and societal development, educational policy is challenged to reduce vulnerability for educational failure and to enable all young people equal opportunities for a successful educational trajectory.

Education and training does not only restrict individual life-chances, but generally affects the social, cultural and economic development of society. It plays a fundamental role in contributing to economic growth, promoting welfare and equality.

This chapter focuses on vulnerability with respect to education and on policy measures aiming at coping with vulnerability and its negative effects. "Vulnerability" is defined as restricted opportunities to create one's own educational trajectory and a susceptibility to educational failure. First, major trends in secondary and higher education in Europe are described. Then, specific risk points and key factors of vulnerability are shown. Special thought is given to

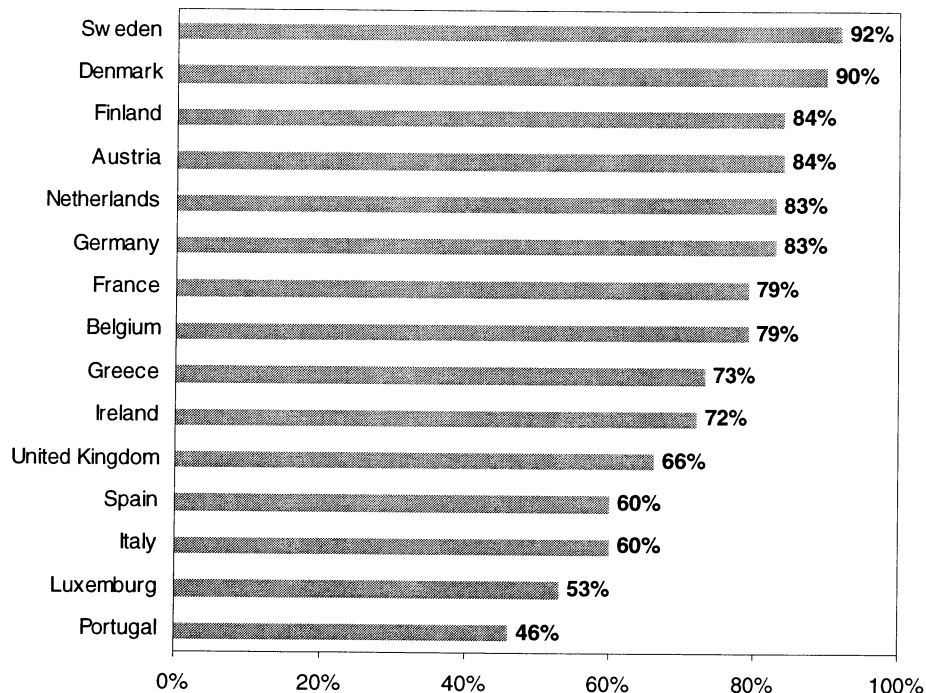
those groups of young people, which are most likely to suffer from vulnerability. Finally, possible strategies to address vulnerability and to reduce educational failure are described. It is evident that education does not only happen within the structured situations of schools, universities or companies, but also includes learning in out-of-school activities with peers, in the family and in leisure time. However, given the limited space in this report the following reflections will focus on the field of institutionalised education and training.

In Europe, participation in education has witnessed great expansion during the last decades. Educational expansion has been driven by economy as well as by young people and their parents. In order to maintain economic growth and technological development, more and more highly qualified people are needed. In view of the increasing demands of a uncertain labour market, young people ask for more education (in terms of quality and quantity) to improve their employment prospects. Social and educational policies have supported expansion, partly as a means to increase opportunities for disadvantaged youth.

1. Participation in upper secondary and higher education

Today, most young people enrol in upper secondary education. In European OECD-countries enrolment rates for 17 year-olds, the age when upper secondary education is normally underway, were frequently above 80% in 1995². In the European Union, 71% of young people aged 22 completed upper secondary education in general or vocational branches. Completion rate was especially high in Scandinavian countries (highest in Sweden with 92%), but below average in most of the Southern European countries (lowest in Portugal with 46%)³.

Figure 1: Percentage of those aged 22 having completed at least upper secondary education, 1995



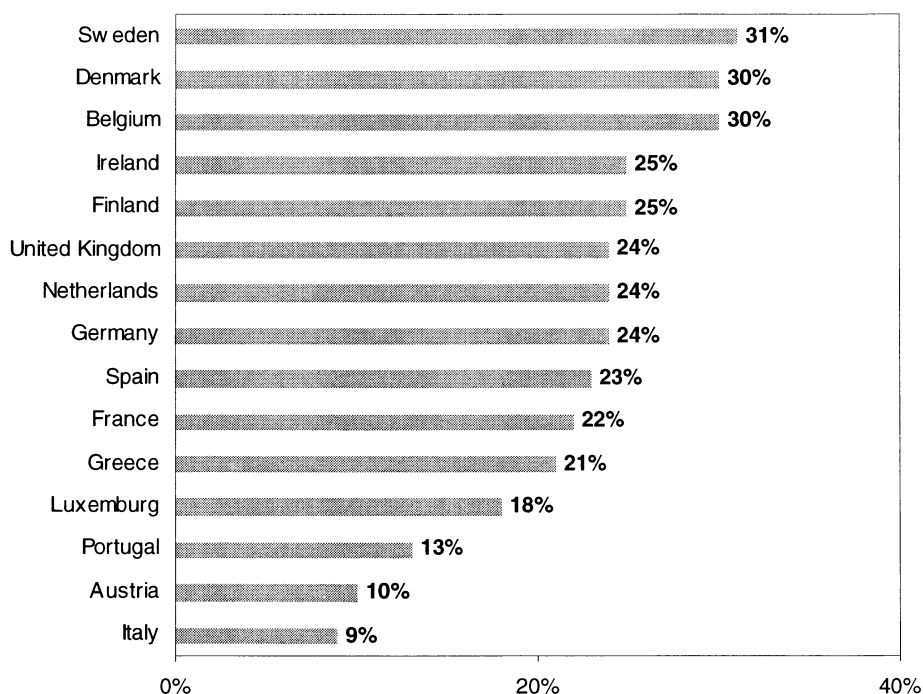
² OECD (1997). Education policy analyses. Paris: OECD.

³ European commission (1997): Key data on education in the European Union. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p. 166.

Most central and eastern European countries are also showing a significant acceleration in the development of upper secondary education, even though in many of them the number of young people in the relevant age group has decreased⁴. In Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, 85-88% of the 15-18 year-olds participated in education in 1994⁵.

The increase in post-secondary education and the changing patterns of employment prospects have also lead to higher participation in higher education. In western Europe (19 countries) participation in higher education as a percentage of all 20-24 year-olds increased from around 14% in 1970 to around 33% 1990⁶. In 1995 in the European Union, more than one fifth of young adults between 30 and 34 years old held a higher education qualification (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Proportion of people with higher education qualifications, age group 30-34, 1995



In central and eastern Europe (12 countries) participation increased from an average of 16% of all 20- to 24-year olds in 1970 to 23% in the early 90s⁷. In Russia however, a different development took place. Despite an expansion in primary and secondary education as well as in the number of universities, the number of students inscribed fell by 20% between 1980/81 and 1994/95⁸.

⁴ Kotásek, J. (1996). Structure and Organisation of Secondary Education in Central and Eastern Europe. *European Journal of education*, 31, 25-42, p.36.

⁵ Koucký, J. (1996). Educational reforms in changing Societies: Central Europe in the period of transition. *European Journal of education*, 31, 7-24, p.16.

⁶ Kallen, D. (1997). Secondary education in Europe. Problems and prospects. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 210ff.

⁷ Kallen, D. (1997). Secondary education in Europe. Problems and prospects. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 210ff.

⁸ Chuprov, V. , Zubok, J. (1996). An education system in crisis: meeting the demands of the market. IN: Ch. Williams, V. Chuprov & V. Staroverov. *Russian Society in Transition*. Aldershot: Dartmouth, p. 205.

2. Educational reforms

Alongside educational expansion in secondary and higher education there have been major educational reforms. In Central and Eastern Europe, the changes of the late 80s have been dramatic. The main changes in these countries have been: the de-politisation of education, namely, the end of rigid ideological control and orientation of the system; the breaking down of the state monopoly in education by allowing private and denominational schools to be established; the recognition of the right of pupils and their parents to choose their education path according to their abilities and interests; the decentralisation in the management and administration of the education system and the emergence of school autonomy⁹. Changes include new educational laws, structural reforms as well as curricular, organisational and pedagogical innovations. In Western Europe as well, there has been a trend towards diversification, decentralisation and school autonomy. In most countries with comprehensive structures at the lower secondary level, some formal or informal streaming has taken place in pupils' allocation to the various upper secondary programmes. The rigidity of selective systems has been softened as they offer possibilities to transfer between the different tracks of secondary education.

At the upper secondary level, the gap between academic-general education and vocational education and training (VET) is closing in terms of timetable, curriculum content, attainment targets and entitlement to access to higher education. Attempts have been made to raise the status of VET-programmes and to guarantee access to higher education.

In higher education a wider range of institutions and new courses have been created in response to increased participation and the different needs, aspirations and levels of ability of the students.

3. Critical aspects of expansion and reforms

Educational expansion and reforms have enabled an increasing number of young people to acquire better qualifications. However, several critical aspects have to be considered:



This devaluation of certificates, together with the demand for well-qualified labour creates a spiral of more and more education: young people have to remain in education as long as possible and collect a growing number of credentials. As a consequence, schools, universities and training schemes risk becoming "waiting-rooms" for young people, who have not been successful in entering the labour market.

⁹ Cerych, L. (1997). Educational Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe: processes and outcomes (1). European Journal of education, 32, 75-97, p.97.

- **Especially in Western European countries, educational expansion has led to educational inflation and the devaluation of credentials.** A certain level of a certificate or qualification no longer guarantees the same occupational and income rewards as in the past. At the same time, higher-level certificates gain importance as “entry conditions” to occupational careers have become more demanding. Thus, a certain certificate is an indispensable prerequisite for access to specific rewards without guaranteeing these rewards.
- **The more education expands the more limited are the chances for the least qualified young people.** The smaller the residual group of early-school leavers and drop-outs becomes, the more its members risk being excluded from the labour market. In Sweden, for example, young people trained on ISCED-level 0-2 (compulsory school) have a greater risk of being unemployed or having insecure jobs than the average Swedish young person. In Portugal, though, this risk is the same as that for the average Portuguese young person. Young people with little training are considered likely to gain qualifications in the future¹⁰.
- **Educational systems seem to open up more fully at the bottom than at higher educational levels.** Higher levels of education do not expand fast enough to absorb the growing number of graduates from lower levels. Especially in higher education the demand for study places in certain institutions far exceeds those actually offered. In most Central and Eastern European countries more candidates are refused than admitted. Limited access and selective entry conditions furthermore prolong the time spent in education and the period of social and economic dependence. In Finland, it is estimated that it takes 2 to 3 years on average for a matriculated student to gain entry into his or her chosen field. Therefore, a lot of the increased intake into higher education is wasted in multiple and overlapping education and training¹¹. Again, the function of educational programmes as “waiting-room” is reinforced.
- **Inequalities between academic-general education and VET-programmes at upper secondary level and between the programmes in higher education are still strong.** In spite of the attempt to close the gap between academic-general education and VET-programmes and to raise the status of VET-programmes, inequalities still exist in terms of the category of programmes accessible, of the chances of success in admission tests or examinations and in terms of academic achievement. As regards higher education, it has been argued that the diversification of programmes is not only a response to the needs of students and the labour market, but also “results from the efforts of higher education to create internal hierarchies that safeguard the interests of the established programmes by creating new, less prestigious ones”¹².

¹⁰ Kirsch, J.-L. (1998). Low training levels on European labour markets: convergence and contrast. Céreq Training and Employment no. 34 (Winter).

¹¹ Council of Europe (1997). Review of National Youth Policy: Finland. National Report. Helsinki: Ministry of Education.

¹² Kallen, D. (1995). Thirty Years of Secondary Education. European Journal of Education, 30, 457-466, p. 465.

- **Although the share of national resources devoted to education has increased almost everywhere, it has been argued, that transformations have mainly been quantitative, while quality has decreased.**

In western European countries the expenditure on students per capita as a percentage of the GDP per capita has been decreasing, which indicates lower qualitative efforts¹³. These have been especially pronounced in the United Kingdom, in Belgium and in the Netherlands. Only in countries, where expenditure efforts were weakest, as in Spain, Finland, Italy and Sweden, have they tended to increase.

In many central and eastern European countries the potential to finance the educational systems is limited. This is mainly due to an overall unfavourable development in the economy.

The number of primary and secondary schools has not grown enough to meet the increased demand, classes are overcrowded and teachers overworked. Teacher salaries have been cut, and many talented staff has left the education field and gone into the private sector.



This “brain drain” leads to declining quality of teaching and a general crisis in education¹⁴.

In the Visegrad countries the share of public expenditure on education has gone up since 1989, while at the same time and especially in the beginning of the 1990s, the GDP experienced a substantial reduction. Accordingly, even if education is one of the priorities, financial resources are still far from satisfactory. In Romania, the lack of resources and bad management has blocked many of the ongoing educational reforms. In rural areas, school buildings are in a bad condition, teachers’ salaries are very low, resources allocated to education are not used efficiently and corruption still exists¹⁵. In Russia, the science and education budget has been reduced dramatically over the last twenty years.

The educational policy underlying the reforms of the last decade has been questioned. The shift in educational goals, the increased market-orientation and the focus on diversity, which often leads to greater competition between schools and individual, has been criticised. Educational policy-making turns more and more towards attainable, “realistic” and short-term aims which can be translated into measurable attainment targets. The role of education in society has changed and the individual has become “the new credo of policy-makers and the public opinion: that of the primacy of the individual and of free choice, of the right to diversity corresponding to individual needs and wishes, of competitiveness and of performance, whereas goals that were highly valued up until the 1970s, such as equality,

¹³ Eicher, J.-C. (1998). The Costs and Financing of Higher Education in Europe. *European Journal of Education*, 33, 31-39.

¹⁴ Chuprov, V. , Zubok, J. (1996). An education system in crisis: meeting the demands of the market. In: Ch. Williams, V. Chuprov & V. Staroverov. *Russian Society in Transition*. Aldershot: Dartmouth, p. 204 ff.

¹⁵ Paper written by correspondent of Romania

solidarity and co-operation, have lost esteem”¹⁶. As the market values of individualism, competitiveness and efficiency are incompatible with long-standing educational goals and aims, the goal of equality of educational opportunity is replaced by the more modest target of fighting against educational exclusion.

II Risk points and key factors in educational trajectories

Although educational failure is a problem which affects all European countries in various degrees and forms, it is difficult to give a general definition of “educational failure”. Frequently, failure is described as not being able to reach the educational standards set in institutional norms. Other definitions stress the role of the labour market, which determines, what has to be regarded as “non-qualification” or “failure”. Finally, focusing on the aspect of personal development “failure” is also described as “under-achievement”, i.e. the inability to exhaust ones talents and to reach ones own potential.

As indicators for educational failure, statistics about early leaving, non-entry into upper secondary education, drop-out, low-achievement or grade repeating are used. Additional manifestations of educational failure could be found in school refusal, truancy or low satisfaction and self-esteem concerning school matters.

1. Early leaving

Although in most countries the number of pupils leaving compulsory education at primary or lower secondary levels has decreased, drop-out in this early stage of education still exists. In Turkey, only 57% of primary school graduates enrol in junior secondary education, the rest are early leavers. In Greece, around 9% of children drop out from gymnasium (grades 7-9), most of them from the first grade. In Portugal in 1991/992, 3% of children dropped out of primary school after grade 5 and another 2.2% after grade 6¹⁷.

Early leaving has a severe impact on the further educational career of young people. In many countries, pupils that have not successfully completed lower secondary education, can not proceed to upper secondary education.



2. Non entry into upper secondary education

At the age of 17 one to two out of ten young people are not enrolled in education. Some of them have dropped-out early from upper secondary education, others have never started a

¹⁶ Kallen, D. (1995). Thirty Years of Secondary Education. European Journal of Education, 30, 457-466, p. 458.

¹⁷ Kallen, D. (1997). Secondary education in Europe. Problems and prospects. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 148.

programme. Admission to upper secondary education mostly depends on established criteria and procedures, such as achievement levels, the passing of a final examination in lower secondary level or admission examinations to upper secondary level. In those countries where the lower secondary curriculum is diversified, allowing a choice between subjects or giving the possibility of studying subjects at different performance levels, admission to upper secondary programmes depending on these choices and levels. The recommendation of the headmaster or teacher is also often taken into account¹⁸.

For young people, who had to repeat a class and those with poor achievements, the choice to continue education at the upper secondary level is very limited. They often end up in vocational tracks and short programmes with lower opportunities for stable, rewarding or well-paid jobs.

Given this context, it is no surprise that for many young people, the incentive to pursue an upper secondary education is low. German research has shown that more than one third of young people without vocational education and training have never looked for an apprenticeship place¹⁹. Some of them thought they did not have the needed qualifications to continue their education, while others indicated they were more interested in directly entering the labour market.

3. Dropout

Dropouts from upper secondary education, especially from VET-programmes, are regarded as a constant problem in many countries. In Denmark, 28% of young people in general gymnasium, 26% in vocational gymnasium, and 46% in vocational education interrupt their education. While the majority of youths in general and vocational gymnasium enters another educational programme, 26% of those in vocational education drop out altogether²⁰. In Slovenia, 16% of young people, who had started a VET- programme in 1992, dropped out. In general secondary programmes, the rate was 7%. Programmes with the highest drop-out rates had the highest percentage of pupils who had already transferred from (unfinished) other programmes. Dropout rate was partly explained by the gap between the aspirations and the motivation of the young people and the real possibilities of enrolling into different programmes²¹. In Switzerland, one out of six young people in apprenticeship training terminates the apprenticeship contract because of problems with the apprenticeship-master and colleagues in the company, job dissatisfaction and insufficient achievements at vocational college²².

Dropping out from higher education is also frequent. Estimated rates of non-completion vary wildly: 6-13% in the UK, 30% in Germany, 64% in Italy. Failing and dropping-out happens often during the first year of studies. In Italy, it is estimated that more than a third of the dropouts leave early in the course and many of them haven't even attended a lecture²³. In Slovenia, in 1993 only 26% of the students, who had been registered as first-year students in

¹⁸ Kallen, D. (1997). Secondary education in Europe. Problems and prospects. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p.152ff

¹⁹ Troltsch, K. (1999). Jugendliche ohne abgeschlossenen Berufsausbildung. Struktur- und Biographiemerkmale. BWP 5, p. 9-14.

²⁰ Paper written by correspondent in Denmark

²¹ Geržina, S., Polak, M. (1998). Report on developments in vocational education and training in Slovenia. Ljubljana, National VET Observatory Slovenia, Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, p. 61ff.

²² Paper written by correspondent in Switzerland

²³ OECD (1997). Education policy analysis. Paris: OECD, p. 93.

1992, were registered as second-year-students²⁴. Often the first year of study serves for selecting instead of integrating the students. In Russia, an increasing number of young people are reluctant to enter and to finish higher education. Inflation has eroded the value of students grants and the quality of education has declined. The need of many students to have a paid occupation affects their performance and motivation to learn. Many young people feel that there is no need for a degree or post-compulsory education qualifications to get a job.²⁵



In some cases dropping out doesn't have to be seen as a purely negative phenomenon. Many young people that dropout change to another programme, and others might just want to take some courses without taking a degree. In some cases, dropping out which is initially meant as an interruption of education, can eventually become a break off altogether.

4. Low achievement

The proportion of “unqualified” school leavers is used as another indicator for educational failure. The IEA reading literacy, mathematics and science studies tested the skills in reading, mathematics and science of 13 to 14 year olds²⁶ in several OECD-countries. The results showed that there is a wide gap between the scores attained by the lowest and highest scoring pupils within each country. Estimating the achievement differences by looking at the progress made on average by a student in one year (translating the scores into years worth of schooling) it was shown that the best scoring pupils of the bottom quarter of population are 2-4 years behind the worst scoring pupils in the top quarter.

Poor literacy skills have a severe effect on employment and income perspectives of young people. Young people with low skills are more affected by unemployment than their peers with high achievements. Also, even if they are able to find work it is evident that they are less likely to get well-paid and secure jobs.

5. Grade repeating

In order to give low-achieving pupils more time to learn and to raise their performance, some countries let the respective pupils repeat a grade. In Portugal, over 60% of young people have been obliged to repeat a year, some of them even more than one year²⁷. In Austria in 1991 14.7% of the pupils in the “short” (grades 9 to 12) grammar schools dropped out or had to

²⁴ Trbanc, M. (1995). Employment Opportunities for University Graduates in Slovenia. European journal of education, 30, 49-63, 60.

²⁵ Chuprov, V., Zubok, J. (1997). Social Conflict in the Sphere of the Education of Youth. Education in Russia, the Independent States and Eastern Europe, 15, p.53.

²⁶ OECD (1997). Education policy analysis. Paris: OECD, p. 64ff.

²⁷ Paper written by correspondent in Portugal

repeat. In Romania, repeater rates in gymnasium rose from 5.4% in 1989/90 to 6.7% in 1991/1992²⁸.

However, investigations have proved that grade-repeating not only does not reduce but actually increases the problem of low- or under-achievement²⁹.

In the IEA reading literacy, maths and science-studies, it has been shown that students older than the average of the class have more trouble in reading, mathematics and science than their classmates³⁰. Furthermore, repetition often leads to a lack of motivation and interest in school, a lack of self-confidence, the creation of a feel of guilt, higher drop-out rates and increased conflicts between the pupil and the school.

Given this negative effects, some countries, like Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Ireland and the UK have abolished grade repeating in primary education. In many of the countries, where grade-repeating still exists (including most of the central and eastern European countries), attempts have been made to reduce the frequency of grade repetition³¹.

6. Young people most affected by educational failure

Youth regarded as vulnerable to educational failure come from a variety of disadvantaged backgrounds. These affected by vulnerability are most often young people whose parents have a low educational level and work in jobs with low employment status, young people from poor families, ethnic minorities and immigrants as well as young women.

a. Educational level and employment status of family

In the Netherlands, only 12% of the pupils from the lower social strata enter junior/senior secondary general education or pre-university education, as against 51% of the pupils from a better economic status³². In the European Union, more than 30% of the 19-24 year-olds, whose parents belong to the professional or managerial categories, are in higher education, compared with only 11% of those whose parents are unskilled workers³³. Similarly, a higher proportion of young people participate in higher education who are from families, where the father or mother have a higher education level, and fewer from families in which the head of the household has only completed a primary or lower secondary education³⁴.

Even in countries, where participation in secondary and higher education has increased significantly, young people from lower social backgrounds have not profited in the same way from these new possibilities as young people from middle and upper class backgrounds. This

²⁸ Kallen, D. (1997). Secondary education in Europe. Problems and prospects. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p.147ff.

²⁹ OECD (1997). Education policy analysis. Paris: OECD, p.68

³⁰ OECD (1997). Education policy analysis. Paris: OECD.

³¹ European Commission (1997). Key data on education in the European Union. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p. 56.

³² Veenman, J. (1995). Best practices: transition from school to work for youth at risk in the Netherlands. Rotterdam: Institute for sociological and Economic Research

³³ European Commission (1997). Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life. Luxembourg: Office for Official publications of the European Community, p.36.

³⁴ European commission (1997). Key data on education in the European Union. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p. 174.

was underlined by comparing studies on educational attainment in 13 countries including England and Wales, the former Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland³⁵. Using data for cohorts born between 1910 and 1970, these studies focused on changes in educational attainment (number of school years) due to the extent of educational expansion and on the association between educational transitions and social origin. In all countries a marked educational expansion was found. However, there was only little change as regards the effect of social origin on educational attainment and on transitions to successive levels of education. The effect of social origin on grade progression was especially strong at the beginning of the educational career.

Thus, selection on the basis of socio-economic background occurs at early stages of education. The radical social policies of the socialist states and the educational reforms undertaken in many countries didn't succeed in reducing inequalities of educational opportunity.

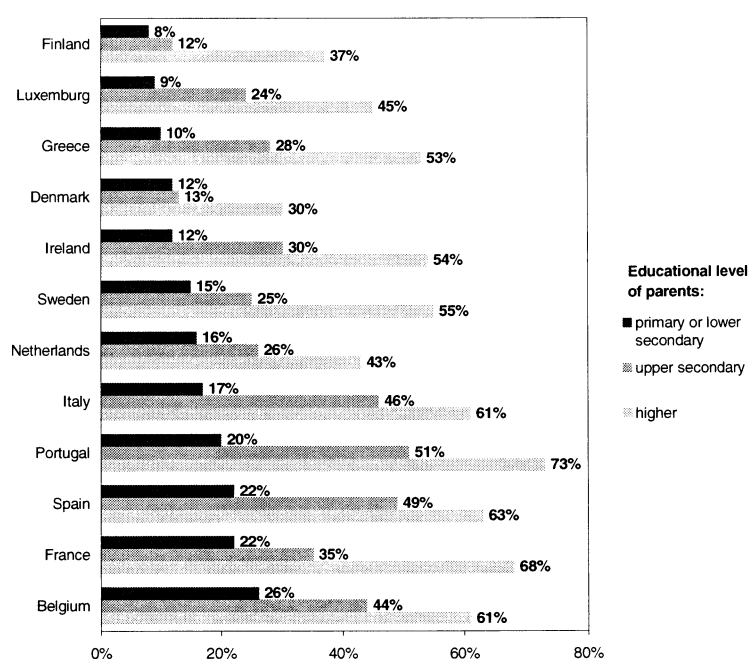


Figure 3: Participation rate of 19- to 24-year-olds in higher education by educational level of parents, 1995

b. Low income and poverty

Low income, often linked with socio-economic status, is another determinant that increases the vulnerability to educational failure. Students from low income families and students from families that are poor for a long time show lower performance in standardised achievement tests than students from high income families³⁶. Also, lower family income is associated with shorter degree programmes, while higher family income is associated with longer programmes and higher degrees. In Spain, young people coming from a family with more than one person

³⁵ Blossfeld, H.-P., Shavit, Y. (1993). Persisting Barriers: Changes in Educational Opportunities in Thirteen Countries. In: Y. Shavit & H.-P. Blossfeld. Persistent Inequality : Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries. San Francisco : Westview Press, p.1-23.

³⁶ OECD (1995). Our Children at risk. Paris: OECD.

earning money are less likely to study at university³⁷. In poor families, young people can't prolong their education because they have to contribute to family income. The high dropout rates in Portugal, Turkey or Greece have to be seen in this context, even when the young people themselves give other reasons for dropping out.

c. Ethnic minority and immigrant background

Minorities and young immigrants, and among those particularly first generation youths and young people with inadequate knowledge of the language used in school, are particularly vulnerable to educational failure. In the Netherlands, young Turks and Moroccans participate to a lesser extent in education than their Dutch peers. Non-indigenous pupils are older than Dutch pupils in the same school year. Their attainment-level is lower, they tend to higher absenteeism and are often early school-leavers. In many cases these Turkish and Moroccan pupils are newly arrived immigrant school entrants, who have come to the Netherlands at an older age³⁸. In Switzerland far more foreign young people (23%) do not enter education and training at the upper secondary level than Swiss young people (8%). In vocational training it is evident that apprenticeship places are often given first to the Swiss and only at a later stage to foreign young people³⁹. In Germany, 17.4% of all school leavers of migrant origin leave school without any formal qualification (Germans: 7.5%)⁴⁰. In the UK in 1993, a quarter of males and less than a third of females of working age had no educational qualification, while over half of the men and three fifths of the women among the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community were without qualifications⁴¹. In Ireland, only a minority of traveller children transfer from primary to second level schooling and the majority of those who attend second level education leave school within the first two years⁴².

Although there is great evidence that many minority young people are disadvantaged, there are nevertheless differences between the different ethnic minority groups. Some of them are better integrated than others and their educational achievement level is not lower than that of indigenous people. In the inner city areas of the United Kingdom for instance, children and young people from some Asian countries show higher school attainments than the "native" population⁴³.

d. Young women

Gender differences have become less marked during the past decades. In most European countries there are more girls than boys graduating from general upper secondary school. In Poland and Romania, more than two thirds of young people that obtained an upper secondary education qualification were female. Concerning the programmes chosen, gender differences are still strong. In the majority of the EU-member-states there are more girls in general education than boys, while boys outnumber girls in vocational education. In the central and eastern European countries this gender difference is particularly distinct.

³⁷ González López-Valcárcel, B., Dávila Quintana D. (1998). Economic and cultural Impediments to University Education in Spain. *Economics of Education Review*, 17, 93-103.

³⁸ Veenman, J. (1995). Best practices: transition from school to work for youth at risk in the Netherlands. Rotterdam: Institute for sociological and Economic Research

³⁹ Report from correspondent in Switzerland

⁴⁰ Report from correspondent in Germany

⁴¹ Report from correspondent in the UK

⁴² Department of Education and Science, Ireland (1998). National anti-poverty strategy, annual report 1998

⁴³ OECD (1995). *Our Children at risk*. Paris: OECD.



This trend continues also in higher education, where more women than men chose social sciences, humanities, medical sciences and theology, while men dominate the technical fields. The overall educational situation of girls and women has improved, although young women of lower social class or ethnic-minority origin still tend to have very low qualifications.

7. Educational failure and unequal opportunities

Research demonstrates that the persisting social differences in access to education and achievement level have to be seen in the context of educational policy and labour market developments.

- **“Educational failure” is to a great extent defined by the structure and the curricular approach of the educational system.**

To a greater or lesser degree, educational systems always act as a grouping and selection mechanism. The moment of grouping and selection as well as the measures and criteria used define, when and in what way pupils “fail”. The consequences linked to selection and the diversity of subsequent programmes determines how this “failure” further affects the educational career. Also, learning and teaching conditions influence the achievement level and the learning motivation of young people and determine whether low-achieving pupils are enabled to catch up. Thus, highly selective educational systems with an early moment of selection and limited possibilities to move between programmes categorise young people at an early stage into those who succeed and others that fail. In assessment systems that focus on the comparison of students the performance of the lowest achieving pupils are always marked as “insufficient”.

Regardless of their individual learning progress the least successful pupils are labelled as having failed. Their chance to actively create their own educational career is limited, they end up in “second-rate” programmes or leave the education system early.

- **The present education systems filter, segregate and reproduce social inequality.** The policy of expansion aiming to draw in an increasing number of young people and to eventually include also dropouts and early school leavers into successful pathways has failed. Socialisation and educational aspirations in the family and selection mechanisms of educational institutions together create a situation, which persistently favours children of privileged social origins. Young people from the upper social classes not only perform better at school, but also tend to study to a higher level.

Although schools may try to guarantee that every child receives equal input, too often they are dragged down into subtle mechanisms of discrimination and social exclusion. Research has shown that teachers expectations as regards pupils achievements and the recommendations for further education strongly depend on the social background of young people. Teachers, often coming from upper middle class backgrounds, tend not to judge the actual attainment of pupils and students, but - on the basis of their own socialisation - their correspondence to middle class criteria of performance and

behaviour⁴⁴. Thus, educational failure results from the “lack of an appropriate diversity in options, pathways or range of forms of teaching responsive to the varied backgrounds and interests of learners”⁴⁵.

- **Educational failure is strongly linked to labour market developments and employer demands, which restrict the opportunities for low-qualified young people.** The high number of credentials available within the labour market and the increasing demands of employers severely limit the chances of those young people who have left the educational system without basic qualifications. Educational failure has a more and more stigmatising effect. As certificates are no longer sufficient to get a job, other personal and social characteristics become decisive (i.e. speech and dress, information, contacts, ambition) – precisely those characteristics where less privileged young people find themselves yet again at a disadvantage.

Vulnerability seems to be especially high when factors cumulate. Poor housing situations, the non-availability of leisure facilities or a lack of community support and political resources lead to increased vulnerability.

Thus, educational failure tends to become a symptom which conveys and justifies social failure⁴⁶.

In countries, where the apprenticeship-system is common, changes in employers’ training policy have increased the risk of young people to be socio-professionally excluded even before they fully enter the labour market. In Germany for instance, while the demand for apprenticeship places has increased, companies have replaced apprenticeships by short trainee programmes for university or polytechnic graduates and reduced the training offered to apprentices⁴⁷.

To successfully address the problem of educational failure, changes in the attitudes and the social behaviour of employers are needed. Until this is recognised in public policy, “the educational systems are likely to be faced with insatiable demands to eliminate an ‘early leaving’ problem which, of its nature, is ever being created anew in the labour market”⁴⁸.

III Measures to reduce vulnerability to educational failure

Many countries have developed policies to deal with educational failure, starting in early childhood, continuing through adolescence until adulthood. Much emphasis is given to prevention. Other programmes seek to bring young people who have left the educational system without basic qualifications back into the educational system or to integrate them into

⁴⁴ Geissler, R. (1994). Soziale Schichtung und Lebenschancen in Deutschland. 2., völlig neu bearbeitete und aktualisierte Auflage. Stuttgart: Enke, p. 144 ff.

⁴⁵ OECD (1997). Education policy analysis. Paris: OECD, p. 94.

⁴⁶ Casal, J., Garcia, M. Planas, J. (1998). Les réformes dans les dispositifs de formation pour combattre l’échec scolaire et social en europe. Paradoxes d’un succès. Formation Emploi, 62, p. 73-85.

⁴⁷ Report from correspondent of Germany

⁴⁸ Hannah, D., Hövels, B., Van den Berg, S., White, M. (1995). ‘Early leavers’ from Education and Training in Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. European Journal of Education, 30, 325-346.

employment. Finally, compensatory training programmes are developed for adult workers, who suffer from unemployment or precarious employment after early leaving or dropout⁴⁹.

While some of the policies aim at generally improving the quality of education for all young people, others specifically focus on young people who are vulnerable to educational failure. In general, strategies can be divided into three categories: **equal opportunity, equal treatment and equal out-come**. The first approach tries to improve the preconditions of children and young people from less privileged backgrounds. The second is geared towards eliminating negative discrimination within education, and the third approach aims at promoting positive discrimination⁵⁰.

1. Equal opportunity strategies

Equal opportunity strategies operate “upstream” against inequalities in society within which education is rooted: inequalities in terms of income, family background, health, access to culture etc. It is evident that educational measures cannot eliminate these inequalities on their own. However, education has to contribute in any possible way to increase equal opportunities.

- **Integrated services for disadvantaged youth**

In programmes of integrated services, like the Dutch “Extended School-Day”, schools offer a variety of extra-curricular activities like sports, cultural activities, nature exploration etc. At the same time young peoples interest in school matters is stimulated and basic personal and social competencies are developed. Further improvement of integrated services is necessary. The specific needs of underprivileged groups of young people have to be identified systematically and followed up. Services should be provided more effectively (education for parents, language development, homework supervision, health care etc.).

What is needed, is an integration of activities throughout the educational career, the establishment of a network of all relevant partners and local bodies responsible for the development and co-ordination of the whole service⁵¹.

- **Financial and material support**

In order to increase equal opportunities the financial and material support for young people from low-income families has to be improved and better targeted. Grants and loans are necessary to finance the direct expenses and to compensate the indirect costs of education (the income foregone by young people in education).

To facilitate access to and participation in higher education, many countries have reformed their grant/loan-schemes. In Spain a combination of assistance, scholarships and income-

⁴⁹ Hannah, D., Hövels, B., Van den Berg, S., White, M. (1995). ‘Early leavers’ from Education and Training in Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Education*, 30, 325-346.

⁵⁰ Nicaise, I. et al. (1999),. Success for all? Educational strategies fro disadvantaged youth in six European countries. Synthesis report. Paper presented at the European Conference of Educational Research, Lahti, September 1999.

⁵¹ Nicaise, I. et al. (1999),. Success for all? Educational strategies fro disadvantaged youth in six European countries. Synthesis report. Paper presented at the European Conference of Educational Research, Lahti, September 1999

contingent loans is considered as the most appropriate solution and an increase of the total amount of money distributed in scholarships is discussed.⁵² In the UK there are plans to introduce study fees covering approximately one-fifth of the costs of studies and to reform the student aid system. The fee would be proportionate to parental income, the poorest being exempt and the richest paying £1000. The level of the repayment of loans that serve to cover living costs would still be linked to income, but the level of exemption would be higher and the length of repayments longer⁵³.

- **Early intervention**

Programmes reducing school failure are more effective the earlier they are implemented. Early intervention programmes like the Irish “Rutland Street Project” and the subsequent “Early Start” programme aim at preventing social exclusion before children enter primary school. They focus on the development of pre-school readiness and on skills that facilitate the transfer to primary school (extension of the child’s knowledge of the world, development of skills in the organisation of knowledge, language skills etc.). In addition to the emphasis on child development, a more frequent contact between parents and school is promoted (i.e. through mother’s clubs, advice centres, parent-teacher meetings).

American research indicates that early intervention programmes are a very effective and financially profitable investment, not only because of their learning effects, but also as a result of the reduced number of failures and transfers to special education, the increased number of successful educational careers and the decline in socially maladjusted behaviour⁵⁴.

- **Prolonging compulsory education**

To ensure everybody a minimum qualification the legal school-leaving age has been systematically raised in most of the countries. In some of them education is now compulsory until the age of 18. However, scientific evaluations of extending compulsory schooling indicate mixed results. Young people from the most vulnerable backgrounds often do not want to prolong schooling. They benefit less from their qualifications and fail more often. Moreover, other groups of young people maintain their advantage by prolonging their education even more. Thus, it is indispensable to link the strategy of extended compulsory schooling with other educational reforms. In addition, learning rights have to be stressed: the right to be admitted to a programme of one’s choice, the right to learning assistance, the protection against arbitrary expulsion or exclusion from school and the expansion of second chance schools.

While the prolongation of compulsory schooling is judged critically, the cut down of the duration of compulsory education without appropriate reforms of post-compulsory education has proved to be clearly negative. In Russia, the compulsory period of education was reduced to 9 years in 1993, limiting opportunity for access to education for many groups of young

⁵² González López-Valcárcel, B., Dávila Quintana D. (1998). Economic and cultural Impediments to University Education in Spain. *Economics of Education Review*, 17, 93-103.

⁵³ Eicher, J.-C. (1998). The Costs and Financing of Higher Education in Europe. *European Journal of Education*, 33, 31-39.

⁵⁴ Nicaise, I. et al. (1999). Success for all? Educational strategies for disadvantaged youth in six European countries. Synthesis report. Paper presented at the European Conference of Educational Research, Lahti, September 1999.

people. Since then, thousands of young people have left school without being able to continue education or to find a job⁵⁵.

2. Equal treatment strategies

Education consciously or sub-consciously still contributes to social exclusion, for instance by culturally biased curricula, low teacher expectations or the unjustified separation of young people into special education and dead-end programmes. Thus, equal treatment strategies focus on a more “fair” treatment within education, i.e. on the removal of discrimination against socially excluded groups.

• Curricular reforms and pedagogical innovations

Curriculum reforms and pedagogical innovations are preventive measures that directly focus on changes within the educational system. Reforms include:

- the development of a broad, experience-oriented approach;
- the extension of educational/vocational guidance;
- an increased flexibility especially in upper secondary education offering a range of choices according to the interests and abilities of young people;
- the enhancement of the relevance of the curriculum to emerging economic and social needs;
- the extension of support teaching.

As regards compulsory education, consensus is growing that social inequality in education can be reduced by offering a comprehensive curriculum, possibly including a limited number of optional subjects which are not binding in terms of subsequent course choices. In upper secondary education many countries focus on flexible and broad approaches. The Flemish part of Belgium tries to enhance vocational education by organising workshop classes, modular courses, project work and varying teaching approaches as well as by establishing links between school and the socio-economic sector. In Ireland, pupils are divided into streams for certain subjects and they have the option of completing upper secondary education in three years rather than in two. Luxembourg offers a two-stage apprenticeship in the vocational branch of the technical lycée, which enables pupils who are more capable of learning the practical side of a trade to follow theoretical training at their own pace⁵⁶.

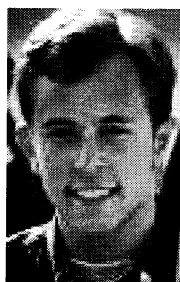
Many countries make room in the timetable for support teaching. Scotland provides pupils assistance from special learning support teachers in the classroom itself. Italy focuses on extra coaching to pupils in vocational education in order to help them make up for lost time or to meet specific local demands. In Iceland several measures including guidance, extra-schooling and support-teaching are offered to pupils experiencing difficulties in the main subjects at the end of lower secondary.

⁵⁵ Chuprov, V., Zubok, J. (1997). Social conflict in the sphere of the education of youth. *Education in Russia, the independent states and eastern Europe*, 15, p.49.

⁵⁶ Europäische Gemeinschaften – Kommission (1994). *Die Bekämpfung des Schulversagens: eine Herausforderung an ein vereintes Europa*. Luxembourg: Amt für amtliche Veröffentlichungen der europäischen Gemeinschaften.

- **Inclusive education**

In order to support children and youths with special educational needs, most countries provide means for special schooling. Special education is organised in separate schools independent from regular schools, in separate special classes within regular schools or fully integrated in mainstream education. In most of the EU-countries as well as in the Visegrad countries integrated and separate schooling exists side by side. In Belgium (French Community), Germany, Bulgaria and Romania education is mainly separate. In Italy, integration is general⁵⁷.



It has been shown that special education is more effective in integrated forms. Separate schooling has a stigmatising effect on the pupils concerned, which reduces rather than improves their chance for social integration. In general, there's a trend in most of the countries from segregation to integration. However, successful integration depends strongly on the ability of schools to care for the needs of these pupils.

Inclusive education involves additional investments in the training of “mainstream”-teachers, the support of additional staff (psychologists, remedial pedagogues, social workers), the sensitisation of all parents, special facilities in ordinary schools, differentiated teaching and alternative funding mechanisms.

- **Teacher training**

Enlarged initial and further training as well as in-career development of staff is an important means to improve the quality of education and the successful support of children with special educational needs. Teacher training is still targeted too one-sidedly at subject knowledge. It deals only fleetingly with the sociological and socio-educational analyses of deprivation, learning difficulties, social inequality or cultural differences. Teacher training has to focus more on strategies to cope with learning difficulties and disadvantage, on counselling and on school management. Examples for improvements in teacher training are found in Portugal and Ireland. In Portugal, in the context of the programme PEPT “education for everyone” a centre was established to provide further training for teachers. The aim of this training is to prevent early dropout and to develop a tradition of longer school attendance. In the Irish “Teacher counselling scheme” teacher-counsellors co-ordinate a whole-school approach to developing and implementing good practice and strategies, which should help to prevent the occurrence of disruptive behaviour.

- **Parent-school-community relationships**

In order to encourage stronger links with the home, with local authorities, social workers and enterprises some countries have developed special policies. Again, research shows different results. Policies attempting to increase educational quality by organising a competition between schools to win the favour of the parents/consumers have proved to do more harm

⁵⁷ European commission (1997). Key data on education in the European Union. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, p. 123.

than good⁵⁸. This strategy leads to more social discrimination, as middle class families withdraw from schools with a deprived public. More successful are policies that regard parents as partners, who are involved in educational activities and supported in their educational role at home.

Ireland has launched a variety of programmes which focus on “community based” responses to disadvantage⁵⁹. School and community are mutually supportive and the work of all relevant agencies (education, training, guidance, health, welfare etc.) is integrated into a coherent range of strategies. Parental participation is considered as an important contribution to the educational process of young people. The “home school community liaison scheme” aims at establishing partnerships between parents and teachers. Parental alienation from school is reduced, parents are involved in their children’s learning and parental ‘second chance’ education itself is facilitated. A co-ordinator is assigned to a school in a disadvantaged area to work with school staff, parents and community agencies. Home visits and actions with parents are organised, which focus on the general areas of personal development, parenting, curriculum development (understanding the objectives of the school and their children’s learning process) as well as on leisure. In addition, co-operation of parents is also secured in the classroom and in school meetings, in paired reading schemes or through supervision of homework.

In the United Kingdom, the scheme ‘Compact’ tries to establish links between schools and local employers in inner-city areas where early school leaving is endemic⁶⁰. Young people who achieve specific targets (for example regarding attendance or attainment) are guaranteed a job and work-related training after leaving school. Also, the scheme is used to strengthen the motivation of the pupils and to develop their understanding of employment opportunities.

In many other western European countries the links between school, home and communities have been strengthened. Most of the central and eastern European countries present a different picture. The relations between school and community had been greatly impoverished during the communist regimes. Although officially speaking there was a perfect harmony between schools and their environment, the imposed and politicised nature of this relationship resulted in alienating schools from communities, rather than in bringing them together. The present situation is influenced by the past. Schools and teachers enjoy their newly gained ideological and pedagogical freedom and are often suspicious at attempts of mobilisation for school-community programmes⁶¹.

3. Equal outcome strategies

Based on the understanding that equal treatment of less privileged pupils is not enough to overcome social exclusion, equal outcome strategies focus on “positive discrimination”.

⁵⁸ Nicaise, I. et al. (1999),. Success for all? Educational strategies for disadvantaged youth in six European countries. Synthesis report. Paper presented at the European Conference of Educational Research, Lahti, September 1999.

⁵⁹ Department of Education and Science (1998). National Anti-Poverty Strategy, Annual Report 1998.

⁶⁰ Hannah, D., Hövels, B., Van den Berg, S., White, M. (1995). ‘Early leavers’ from Education and Training in Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Education*, 30, 325-346.

⁶¹ Kallen, D. (1997). Secondary education in Europe. Problems and prospects. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p.113.

- **Educational priority policies**

Educational priority policies are additional financing mechanisms for schools with a high concentration of socially disadvantaged children and youths. Resources can be used for additional staff training, innovative projects, differentiation, assistance etc.

In the Netherlands, the objective of Education priority policy (OVB) is to equip schools to accommodate and bring up to standard children who start education with disadvantage⁶². Key OVB target-groups are immigrant pupils and pupils with poorly educated parents. OVB is conducted along a school-based and an area based line. Each pupil gets a certain "weight" based on a number of social background features. The sum of pupils' weight determines the extra facilities made available for the school. In 44 areas (with concentrated deprivation problems) co-operating schools and welfare agencies are allocated extra funds for supplementary activities. In addition, the 26 municipalities with the highest numbers of ethnic minorities and new arrivals receive extra resources for the initial reception of the new arrivals and follow up activities.

Evaluation studies have shown that OVB policy had only been partly successful, and the programme has been replaced by the Educational Disadvantage Policy Act (GOA). The resources for OVB are now allocated to local authorities. The GOA National Policy Framework makes local governments responsible for improving the starting conditions of pupils entering primary school: governments have to draw up an educational disadvantage plan in co-operation with the local education staff.

In Ireland, the "disadvantaged areas scheme" and the programme "breaking the cycle" provide special teaching assistance and extra funding to schools (for extra staff, equipment and material) in designated areas of disadvantage. Support from a specially appointed co-ordinator and in-career development for school staff is offered.

- **Alternative curricula, educational and occupational (re)integration schemes and second chance schools**

If all of the above mentioned strategies have failed additional initiatives are taken to allow young people without basic qualifications at the end of their school career to continue to learn. Among these measures are alternative curricula, educational and occupational (re)integration schemes or second chance schools. Different intentions are linked to these initiatives: rebuilding the motivation to learn, raising the general level of knowledge, enabling youths to obtain a degree, providing them with vocational training and/or a smooth integration into the labour market. These initiatives aim less at equal outcomes but represent a further attempt to reduce inequality.

The Irish Youthreach programme, introduced in 1989, is open to young people who have left school without formal qualifications or training and have been unemployed for six or more months after entering the labour market⁶³. This group of young people, which overlaps to a great extent with the early-leavers, are offered a combined basic education, training, work experience and temporary employment for up to two years. The first year is used to (re)build educational foundations, the second year to complete a qualification or to become established in employment. The programme includes a psycho-social intervention and involves new

⁶² Council of Europe (1998). Review of National Youth Policy: The Netherlands. Amsterdam: The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, p.131.

⁶³ Hannah, D., Hövels, B., Van den Berg, S., White, M. (1995). 'Early leavers' from Education and Training in Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Education*, 30, 325-346.

curriculum, teaching and counselling methods, and is delivered by specially trained staff. Since the introduction of Youthreach, the programme has expanded progressively and is now offered in over 130 centres. A 1997 survey by trainees who left Youthreach indicates that the programme has been successful: 42% of the trainees were in employment, and 30% were in further training, had returned to education or were in a linked work experience.

In Denmark, the Free Youth Education (FYE) programme was launched to offer education to young people who have dropped out of the educational system⁶⁴. The programme is based on a contract lasting two to three years. A certain amount of ordinary classes have to be attended. For the rest of the time the individual can put together an education according his/her interests choosing classes from the ordinary education system or from alternative programmes. Evaluation indicates that the FYE has been successful in motivating young people and in strengthening their formal and personal competencies. 90% of those who had completed the programme continued afterwards in education or had a job. However, evaluation reports show that the programme did not reach its target group (dropouts). The target group were not well enough informed about the programme, and the basic ideas of FYE (independence and responsibility) seemed not to correspond sufficiently to their needs.

IV Final remarks

Evaluation literature about educational policies addressing social exclusion is far from well developed. Although many initiatives and experiments are taken, only few evaluation studies exist. Existing research is often limited in its intention and methodologically debatable because of limited financing. More far-reaching and longitudinal research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of educational reforms and initiatives against educational failure.

However, considering the factors associated with educational failure it seems evident that national policies need to be wide in scope if they wanted to successfully reduce vulnerability. It is widely recognised that the natural expansion of the existing educational systems is not enough. To increase equal access, participation and out-come special initiatives are needed, which respond to the different needs of all young people. Clearly, the strategies of equal opportunity, equal treatment and equal out-come do not compete but complement each other. Also, it is important to recognise that purely educational measures are unlikely to offer a lasting solution. Educational failure has to be seen in the context of inequalities in society, the selective operation of the labour market and the unequal distribution of employment.



Thus, educational failure can not be addressed through educational programmes alone, but needs an integrated approach of educational, labour market, social and youth policy.

⁶⁴ Mathilde Mørch: the Danish system of Free Youth Education. The free education paper is on the "net edition" of "Nyri Newsletter No 1/2000 (<http://www.sub.su.se/sam/nyri/nyri.htm>)

Such an approach is suggested in Germany, where experts have formulated 20 recommendations to reform vocational education and training⁶⁵. The recommendations cover four areas:

1. **What has to change?** The structure and quality of vocational training and education: flexibilisation, modularisation and modernisation, acknowledgement of qualification gained in community work.
2. **What creates jobs?** Training over and above current requirements, training provided by more companies, expansion of school training courses, training synergies (co-operation of companies), collectively bargained wage agreements, training as part of corporate culture, subsidies for vocational education.
3. **What will help young people?** Socio-political aspects: equal opportunities, preparation for and support during training, a 'second chance' for vocational diplomas, youth training promotion schemes, vocational training for young migrants.
4. **Who does what?** Training on the spot: transition into training as socio-pedagogic task, intensification and networking of counselling options, local training policies.

⁶⁵ Flitner, A., Petry, Ch., Richter, I. (Hrsg.) (1999). Wege aus der Ausbildungskrise. Memorandum des Forums „Jugend-Bildung-Arbeit“ mit Untersuchungsergebnissen des Instituts für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Chapter 2

VULNERABILITY AND THE YOUTH LABOUR MARKET

Introduction

In the 1998 Trends Report, it was argued that young people in Europe can be regarded as an especially vulnerable group and evidence was presented to demonstrate that the risks faced by young people had increased over the last decade. In this context, the labour market was identified as an important source of vulnerability with high levels of unemployment in some countries, together with increased protraction and complexity of school to work transitions, leading to the risk of social exclusion for some young people. In this report, the focus is on young people who are most vulnerable and on the structures and policies which serve to reinforce or minimise vulnerability. We begin by describing the range of labour market situations encountered by young people in Europe and the welfare regimes which underpin labour market transitions. In the second section we identify those groups of young people who are most vulnerable within different countries and highlight specific risk points and sources of vulnerability. Finally, we discuss ways in which vulnerability can be reduced by highlighting successful initiatives and policies.

Across Europe, young people face a wide range of conditions which have an impact on patterns of vulnerability. In some countries, high rates of unemployment overshadow young people's labour market experiences. In other countries jobs are plentiful, but underemployment and poor quality jobs are perceived as problematic. Other factors which have an impact on young people's position in the labour market include linkages between education and work, vocational training and welfare and family support systems.

However, in all European countries, with young people spending longer periods of time in full-time education, routes into the labour market have become increasingly protracted and complex. In particular, young workers frequently combine work and study and are frequently engaged in low skill occupations for a period of time. Systems of support for young people have also changed and there has been a general lengthening of period in which they rely on the financial support of their families, alongside a decline in the adequacy of state support.

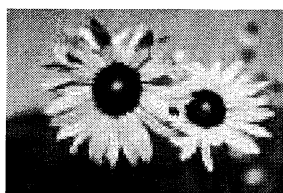
Concentrating on labour market experiences, in this section we describe some of the ways in which young people are denied opportunities for secure employment, social and economic achievement and personal fulfilment. With the range of opportunities varying strongly between countries, we concentrate on three significant lines of differentiation which affect patterns of vulnerability in the labour market: developed and transitional economies, rigid and flexible labour markets and strong and weak welfare systems.

I Labour market trends

In Western Europe, trends in the youth labour market tend to reflect changes in the adult labour market, although these trends are often exaggerated in the employment situation of the

young. In common with the adult labour market, the shift from manufacturing towards service employment is continuing and, as a result of higher levels of educational participation, the qualification profile of young workers is increasing. While the development of a high skill economy has created new opportunities for some, qualification inflation has created difficulties for those who leave education with poor credentials. Moreover, an increased supply of educated workers has intensified competition for high quality jobs among graduates and well qualified school leavers.

While the average age of entry into the labour market has risen, there are significant differences between countries. In the European Union, between 1987 and 1995 the median age of labour market entry rose from 18 to 20, although there are strong differences between countries.⁶⁶ The length of transitions are affected by a number of factors including prevalence of unemployment, the structure of education and training and the willingness of families to support young people while they pursue aspirations. Rapid labour market transitions are characteristic of the UK, Ireland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Greece, while transitions in Italy, Germany, Spain and Finland transitions are much more protracted.



In Western European countries another significant trend in the youth labour market has been the growing insecurity and casualisation of employment. Part-time employment among young people, for example, has continued to grow.

In France, for example, one in four young workers hold part-time jobs.⁶⁷ However, in EU countries a third of 15-29 year-olds said that their part-time status was seen a means of gaining additional qualifications.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, among this age group almost one in three worked part-time due to a lack of opportunities for full-time employment with the proportions of reluctant part-time workers being highest in Greece (64%), France (60%) and Italy (59%) and lowest in the Netherlands (12%), Austria and Germany (both 13%).

The insecurity of young people's labour market positions is also reflected in the growth of fixed term contracts. Fixed term contracts are more likely to be issued to young people rather than to older workers, although the use of fixed contracts can be linked to training and probationary status. In the EU in 1995, 35% of employees under the age of 25 had fixed term contracts, as compared to 14% of all employees. The use of fixed term contracts was particularly high in Spain (77% of under 25s), but relatively low in the UK (13%).⁶⁹

The protraction of transitions and growing insecurity in the youth labour market can also be observed on post-communist societies of Eastern and Central Europe. Compared to the West, in these countries there tends to be a greater differentiation between the occupational positions of younger and older workers with the former being more likely to be self employed or working in Western owned enterprises. Whereas under communism young people had

⁶⁶ European Commission (1997) Youth in the European Union: from Education to Working Life, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁶⁷ B.Bier, Correspondent's paper (1999) Disadvantage Among the Young: A review of the Pattern in France.

⁶⁸ European Commission (1997) Youth in the European Union: from Education to Working Life, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁶⁹ European Commission (1997) Youth in the European Union: from Education to Working Life, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

followed highly structured and predictable routes into the labour market, Roberts argues that for many environments have become 'chaotic'.⁷⁰ In the post-communist countries, the experiences of young people have undergone a rapid transformation and are now quantitatively different from those of the previous generation.

Young people have felt the full force of the collapse of the state sector economies. The routes into the labour market that most young people would have followed have simply vanished. In most regions of the former Soviet Union new opportunities have been, at best, emergent.

The condition of post-communist youth in the labour market has been characterised by risk and uncertainty created by regression to economic pre-modernity rather than progression to a post-modern condition.⁷¹

Roberts suggests that five emergent occupational strata can be identified within post-communist societies.⁷²

- Those who find employment in Westernised businesses with relatively high rates of pay and good job security;
- Those who enter the public sector, despite its contraction and reduced pay and job security;
- Those who succeed in establishing private businesses;
- Those who are employed or moving between jobs in the private sector, often with low levels of pay and poor job security;
- Those without jobs who have failed to find any form of employment.

Given shorter length of service and a relative lack of experience, young people in both developed and post-communist countries tend to earn less than older workers even though they tend to be better qualified. Differences between youth and adult wages tend to be lower in manual than in non-manual employment. In the West, the largest overall differentials between the wages of young people and adults tend to be found in Ireland, Spain and Portugal and the smallest in Denmark and the UK. In the EU, young males tend to get paid more than young females (by an average of 10%), although gender related pay differentials tend to be highest among older groups of workers. In post-communist countries, youth wages have declined in relative terms as wage rises have failed to keep up with inflation. In Russia, for example, in 1994 82% of young people received wages which were either just equivalent to the minimum wage or below the poverty line.⁷³

⁷⁰ K.Roberts (1997) *New Routes into the Labour Market*, in L.Machacek and K.Roberts, *Youth Unemployment and self employment in East-Central Europe*, Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava.

⁷¹ K.Roberts, A.Abibekian, G. Nemiria, L. Tarkhishvili and J. Tholen (1998) *Traders and Mafiosi*, *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol.1 (3) p.261.

⁷² K. Roberts (1997) *Understanding school-to-work transitions in former Communist countries*, paper presented to International labour markets conference on Understanding school to work transitions, Aberdeen.

⁷³ V.Chuprov and J.Zubok (1995) *Youth and Social Change*, in C.Williams, V.Chuprov and V. Staroverov (eds) *Russian Society in Transition*, Dartmouth, Aldershot.

1. Unemployment

In many parts of Europe, unemployment and the risk of unemployment is central to an understanding of labour market experiences. Although levels of unemployment vary considerably, in all countries levels of unemployment among young people are higher than among adults (usually double the all-age rate) and in many countries most young people have to cope with at least one period of unemployment. The ratio of male to female unemployment also varies, female unemployment tends to be higher in the Mediterranean countries, while male unemployment is higher in Finland, Sweden and the UK.⁷⁴

“Young people are a particularly vulnerable group that now suffer disproportionately from poverty. One of the main reasons for this is the exceptionally high rates of youth unemployment currently prevailing in the EU”.⁷⁵

Across Europe, unemployment rates also tend to be high among ethnic minority and migrant communities.⁷⁶ In Hungary, for example, Gypsies are severely disadvantaged with an unemployment rate of between 60% and 70%.⁷⁷ War in the Balkans mean that many young people have become refugees who will experience severe problems in the job market for many years to come.

In the Netherlands, “an equitable division of employment opportunities ... would require about 30,000 more jobs for young people originating from the four major minorities than are now available”⁷⁸.

Within the EU, out of nearly 18 million unemployed people, almost 5 million are under the age of 25. The 1990s witnessed a rise in the average unemployment rate among under 25 year-olds: from 16.3% in 1991 to 21.5% in 1995.⁷⁹ Indeed, in the EU almost half of those under the age of 25 find their first job after a period of unemployment. However, the average rate masks a wide variation: in 1995 around four in ten under 25 year-olds were unemployed in Spain and Finland, whereas Austria, Luxembourg and Germany had youth unemployment rates of less than 10%.⁸⁰

Although there are some exceptions (such as Greece, Italy and Sweden), long-term unemployment tends to be more of a problem for older people. Nevertheless, of those who are unemployed, nearly one in four under-25 year-olds in the EU have been out of work for more than a year. Again there are wide variations: in Italy just over 63% of unemployed young people have been out of work for more than a year, compared to just over 9% in Denmark (Figure 1).

⁷⁴ D.R.Green (1988) *Taking Steps: Young people and social protection in the European Union*, Brussels, Youth Forum.

⁷⁵ D.R.Green (1988) *Taking Steps: Young people and social protection in the European Union*, Brussels, Youth Forum, pp.11.

⁷⁶ D.R.Green (1988) *Taking Steps: Young people and social protection in the European Union*, Brussels, Youth Forum.

⁷⁷ Z.Csalog (no date) *Gypsies in the Hungarian Labour market*, publisher unknown.

⁷⁸ Council of Europe (1988) *Review of National Youth Policy: the Netherlands*, Den Haag, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport.

⁷⁹ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁸⁰ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

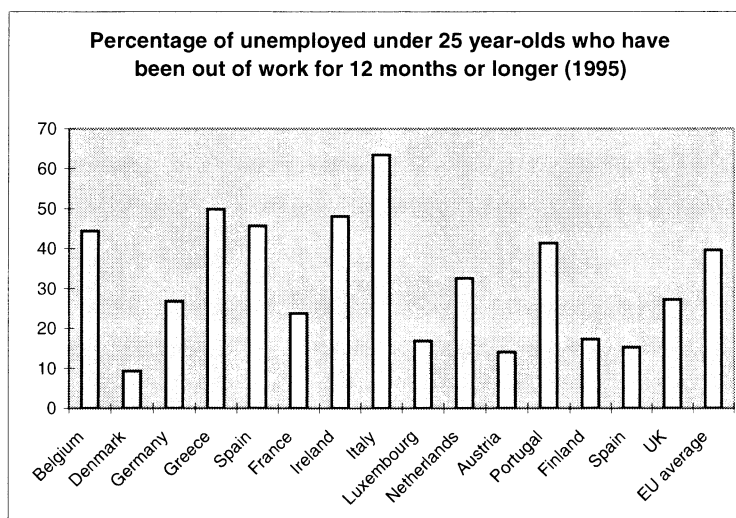


Figure 1

Source: European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

In transitional economies, levels of youth unemployment also vary significantly: in Bulgaria in 1995, male unemployment stood at 43% and female unemployment at 42% while in the Czech Republic male and female unemployment rates were just over 8%. Highlighting a concern at levels of youth unemployment in transitional economies, the International Labour Office describe youth unemployment rates as ‘alarming’. ‘While on average, young people make up less than 15% of the labour force, more than 30% of the unemployed are below that age of 25’.⁸¹ Long-term youth unemployment also appears to be more widespread than in the West.⁸² In Slovenia and Bulgaria more than half of the young unemployed had been out of work for over a year, compared to less than one in three in Poland and less than one in five in the Czech Republic.⁸³

For most young people, unemployment is traumatic and linked to reductions in self esteem and psychological well-being, although these changes tend to be reversed once they gain stable employment. There is, however, evidence that some young people find short periods of unemployment compatible with lifestyle choices: this is sometimes the case among those seeking careers in music and the arts. Others may ‘opt’ for unemployment rather than lowering long-held occupational aspirations.

However, in most countries, low (and declining) benefit levels have made ‘lifestyle’ unemployment unattractive. In most countries, those under the age of about 25 receive reduced benefit rates, sometimes because of specific political decisions (which often emerge from a perception of ‘workshy’ youth) but also linked to the need for qualifying insurance contributions.

⁸¹ International Labour Office (1996) *World Employment 1996/97*, Geneva, International Labour Organisation, p115.

⁸² K.Roberts and L.Machacek (1997) Introduction, in L.Machacek and K.Roberts, *Youth Unemployment and self employment in East-Central Europe*, Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava.

⁸³ International Labour Office (1996) *World Employment 1996/97*, Geneva, International Labour Organisation.

Whereas most countries operate benefit systems based on a combination of contributory unemployment insurance schemes and non-contributory social assistance schemes, young people tend to rely on the less generous social assistance payments.⁸⁴ Benefit rates for young people rarely provide a realistic economic safety net and young people are increasingly reliant on family support. In the EU, maximum social assistance rates for young people range from 878 ECU per month in Denmark to 178 ECU in Spain. The age at which young people qualify for social assistance varies from 16 in Denmark, Sweden and Germany to 30 in Luxembourg.⁸⁵ In general, the Mediterranean countries tend to impose strict conditions on young people's eligibility for assistance and the family is a major source of financial support⁸⁶, although in the UK most 16 and 17 year-olds do not qualify for benefits while in Belgium school-leavers are ineligible.

“Welfare provision is under increasing pressure and social protection for youth, in particular, is in danger of being crowded out by other programmes”⁸⁷.

Given a situation of full employment under Communist regimes, benefit systems in a number of countries did not exist prior to 1990. Contemporary benefit systems “are quite complex, with substantial variations in entitlement periods and benefits formulae”.⁸⁸ Benefits are frequently tied to previous earnings, length of continuous employment and age: all of these being factors which work to the disadvantage of young people.⁸⁹ Qualifying periods for unemployment benefits tend to be relatively long: typically one year full time employment is necessary for eligibility, although in Hungary the qualifying period is two years.⁹⁰ In a study of 400 young people in the four East-Central European countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), Kovatcheva⁹¹ found that while around half of those who were unemployed received some financial support from the state, none listed the state as their major source of income.

With inadequate job opportunities and with some young people finding themselves ineligible for benefits (especially school-leavers), we also find an increase in hidden unemployment (those who are not registered as unemployed, but who are not in jobs, education or training). In Britain, Williamson⁹² has referred to this group as ‘status zero’: reflecting the fact that changes to the benefit system mean that they are not even seen officially as unemployed. While little research has focused on this hidden youth unemployment among 15-24 year-olds in the EU about one in five Italians fall into this category, but only about 6% of young Danes

⁸⁴ D.R.Green (1988) Taking Steps: Young people and social protection in the European Union, Brussels, Youth Forum.

⁸⁵ D.R.Green (1988) Taking Steps: Young people and social protection in the European Union, Brussels, Youth Forum.

⁸⁶ D.R.Green (1988) Taking Steps: Young people and social protection in the European Union, Brussels, Youth Forum.

⁸⁷ D.R.Green (1988) Taking Steps: Young people and social protection in the European Union, Brussels, Youth Forum, pp.12.

⁸⁸ International Labour Office (1996) World Employment 1996/97, Geneva, International Labour Organisation p127.

⁸⁹ International Labour Office (1996) World Employment 1996/97, Geneva, International Labour Organisation.

⁹⁰ International Labour Office (1996) World Employment 1996/97, Geneva, International Labour Organisation p126.

⁹¹ S.Kovatcheva (1997) The young unemployed and self employed and their sources of support in east Central Europe, in L.Machacek and K.Roberts, Youth Unemployment and self employment in East-Central Europe, Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislavia.

⁹² Williamson Status zero

and Austrians. In Britain the figure is about 16% which is just above the EU average of 14%.⁹³ Although comparable figures are not available for Post-Communist countries, a growth in hidden unemployment has been acknowledged in some countries (for example, Russia).⁹⁴

2. Underemployment

With a rising qualification profile among young people and high levels of youth unemployment in a number of countries, underemployment is increasingly becoming an issue. The European Community Household Panel study, for example, shows that among 16-29 year-olds with jobs, almost six in ten regard themselves as underemployed. In Denmark seven in ten see themselves as underemployed. In the Mediterranean countries, levels of underemployment may be lower due to the willingness of families to support their offspring through a lengthy period of unemployment. While there is some national variation, the important point is that in all EU countries, more than half of those in this age group *think* they are working in lower level jobs to those which they see as appropriate to their skills.⁹⁵ Thirty percent of under 30 year-olds are looking for another job, hoping to improve their employment situation, while some are concerned about the prospect of losing their jobs, the largest group are seeking better overall conditions.⁹⁶

A similar problem has been identified in post-communist societies: in Russia, for example, 42% of those in jobs are working in occupations which do not correspond to their qualifications.⁹⁷

3. Self employment and alternative careers

Insecurity in the youth labour market, together with high levels of unemployment and underemployment in a number of countries has led to a growth in self employment as young people attempt to compensate for a lack of traditional opportunities. In the EU, around 7% of those under the age of 30 are self employed with levels of self employment among young people being highest in Southern Europe.⁹⁸ A number of writers have suggested that the increase in self employment reflects a lack of employment opportunities. Moreover, in Britain, for example, while self-employment among young people has risen, the rate of business failure is extremely high.⁹⁹

In the transitional economies of Eastern Europe, a high proportion of new enterprises have been started up by young people. As Foti argues, the incentives to become self employed are linked to a shortage of alternative ways of making a living. In particular, for those without higher education, 'setting up a private business has often seemed to be the only opportunity to

⁹³ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁹⁴ Correspondent's paper (1999) *Youth in Russia: 1996-97*.

⁹⁵ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁹⁶ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁹⁷ Correspondent's paper (1999) *Youth in Russia: 1996-97*.

⁹⁸ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁹⁹ R.MacDonald (1996) *Youth transitions at the margins*, conference paper, British Youth Research: the new agenda, Glasgow 26-28 January.

achieve a managerial position and to become well paid'.¹⁰⁰ Self employment tend to be based either on the use of a specific skill or on trade in commodities.¹⁰¹ While self-employment can often be regarded as a survival strategy, in Post-Communist countries many young people aspire to self employment. In Russia, for example, a majority of young people (55%) state a preference for self employment.¹⁰² Yet a significant proportion of self employed youth (around a third) have been described as 'forced entrepreneurs': these young people work for themselves as the only way to support themselves and their families.¹⁰³ As in the West, the route to success via self employment is a difficult one: income can be low and long hours necessary. In Bulgaria, for example, 35% of self employed young people reported working in excess of 60 hours per week.¹⁰⁴

With self-employment frequently being adopted as a survival strategy, some 'jobs' in this sector operate on the margins of legality. This may involve attempts to make a living at the same time as registering for unemployment benefit (partly made possible by management practices which rely more heavily on sub-contracted labour), but can also involve selling drugs, systematic benefit fraud and theft¹⁰⁵.

In Russia, between 1990 and 1994, a 40% increase in the proportion of young people saying that they were willing to engage in illegal activities to solve financial problems was reported.¹⁰⁶

4. Vocational training

Although there has been a strong trend towards extending educational participation, post-school vocational training remains an important route into the labour market in all European countries. While a variety of different training programmes are in use, a basic distinction can be made between apprenticeship models (which may be employer led or may involve a partnership between employers, trade unions and governments) and remedial measures which often aim to enhance the employability of disadvantaged groups (such as the unemployed or those with poor educational qualifications). Remedial schemes have become increasingly important in Europe.

Overall, in the EU around 22% of 15-19 year-olds and 6% of 20-24 year-olds participate in some kind of vocational education or training.¹⁰⁷ However, many young people are dissatisfied with their training: 46% of those under the age of 30 in the EU felt that they hadn't been

¹⁰⁰ K. Foti (1997) Setting up small businesses in Hungary through the eyes of young self employed people, in L.Machacek and K.Roberts, Youth Unemployment and self employment in East-Central Europe, Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava.

¹⁰¹ K. Foti (1997) Setting up small businesses in Hungary through the eyes of young self employed people, in L.Machacek and K.Roberts, Youth Unemployment and self employment in East-Central Europe, Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava.

¹⁰² Correspondent's paper (1999) Youth in Russia: 1996-97.

¹⁰³ K. Foti (1997) Setting up small businesses in Hungary through the eyes of young self employed people, in L.Machacek and K.Roberts, Youth Unemployment and self employment in East-Central Europe, Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava.

¹⁰⁴ B.Jung (1997) Initial analysis of the lifestyle of young unemployed and self-employed in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, in L.Machacek and K.Roberts, Youth Unemployment and self employment in East-Central Europe, Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava.

¹⁰⁵ S.Craine (1994) Beggars can't be choosers, PhD thesis, University of Salford.

¹⁰⁶ V.Chuprov and J.Zubok (1995) Youth and Social Change, in C.Williams, V.Chuprov and V. Staroverov (eds) Russian Society in Transition, Dartmouth, Aldershot.

¹⁰⁷ European Commission (1997) Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

adequately trained for their jobs, rates being highest in Portugal and lowest in the Netherlands.¹⁰⁸ There are strong differences in modes of delivery as well as in levels of participation by country. Vocational education and training includes workplace training, training within educational establishments as well as programmes which include both of these modes. Among 15 to 19 year-olds, levels of participation are highest in Austria, Belgium, Spain and Germany and lowest in the UK, Portugal and Ireland. High levels of participation among 20 to 24 year-olds are found in Germany and Belgium, while participation is low in Spain, Austria and Greece¹⁰⁹ (Figure 2).

Vocational education and training in eastern Europe can also take place in a variety of settings. However, in contrast to the EU countries, possibilities for vocational training have tended to decline during the 1990s as a result of the rise in youth unemployment and the demise of the state sector. Together with the loss of many public sector jobs, training departments and facilities were lost in many industries and for young people the new socio-economic systems represented a radical break with previous career structures, especially in the sphere of vocational training. In Romania, for example, apprenticeships and technical education declined during the 1990s: from 390,700 places in 1992/93 to 356,000 places in 1994/95.¹¹⁰ While in East Germany a version of the 'dual system' has been imported from West Germany.

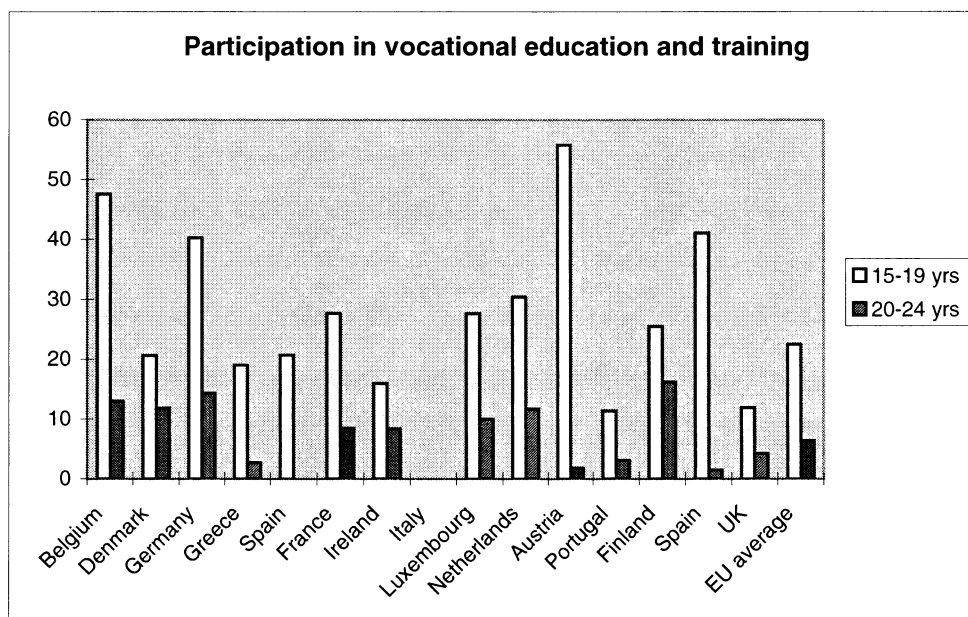


Figure 2

Source: European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Note: Data are not available for Italy or for 20-24 year-olds in Spain

¹⁰⁸ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

¹⁰⁹ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

¹¹⁰ C.Partenie and .V. Croitoru (1995) Socio-economic aspects regarding youth integration in the Romanian labour market, conference paper, Transitions in Youth, Oostvoorne, The Netherlands, 22-25 September.

Attempts to redress the reduction in training places in post-communist countries have tended to involve direct state involvement through the implementation of training schemes. However, training is often poorly financed and may be weakly articulated with opportunities in the labour market.

In East Germany, for example, many of the new training opportunities provided are in special training workshops (funded by the state or region) whereas in the West employers play a much more central role and special training workshops tend to be reserved for socially and educationally disadvantaged groups.

In the West, state funded training schemes have also grown in importance, partly as a response to levels of youth unemployment. However, while some schemes may help reduce labour market marginalisation, they are frequently regarded as a poor alternative to employer led training programmes. This response is partly a result of the relatively poor links between training and employment, but also reflects dissatisfaction with low training allowances.

‘Vocational training programmes for the young unemployed are criticised all over Europe. They are said to provide outdated professional qualifications; to benefit exclusively employers who use trainees as a labour force but do not offer them employment contracts at the end of the training periods’.¹¹¹

These criticisms led to the development of a new EU level agreement at the Luxembourg Summit. At this meeting, a set of common principles were agreed relating to the provision of measures aimed to reduce the chances of marginalisation of young people who had been unemployed for six months or more. Concern was also expressed about levels of youth unemployment and about the difficulties faced by the long-term unemployed. Although the Luxembourg agreement aimed to establish a broad set of principles for promoting labour market integration, different countries have a range of ongoing and developing initiatives to deal with these issues. In Britain, the New Deal encompasses the main Luxembourg principles which involve a guarantee that those who have been unemployed for six months (one year for those over 25) will be able to select from the following four options (not all will necessarily be available to every young person and benefit sanctions will be apply to anyone who refuses an offer):

- An employment option under which employers will receive a state subsidy in return for employing an eligible young person (£60 per week for six months). There is no obligation to continue employment after this period. Training must also be provided which will be subsidised by the state (£750);
- Voluntary sector option involving six months of work experience and training for which the provider will be paid a similar subsidy;
- An environmental option which again offers six months employment and training but which is designed to have environmental benefits;
- Full-time education and training for up to a year, primarily aimed at those with poor qualifications.

¹¹¹ Council of Europe (1998) European Youth Trends, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, pp.17

Similarly, in Germany, the new initiative, 'Employment for All', will involve a guarantee of a practical job in a company for all school leavers who fail to find a company based training place. The current system involves:

- The 'Pre-Vocational Year' (BVJ) which is a compulsory year in a professional school leading to no further qualification. Since 1993 the 'Community Initiative East' has provided more than 10,000 additional apprenticeships each year.
- Pre-vocational measures (after BVJ) normally include work experience in surrogate low qualified job sectors in an attempt to provide 'soft skills' and career counselling.
- New training programmes have been developed for media and IT professionals due to the low level of provision and a high demand for these skills. However, despite a high level of interest on the part of young people, relatively few employers offer training in these sectors.
- State funded training workshops operating within the traditional 'dual system' mode. These were introduced to compensate for a lack of training places in the 'New Länder', although the risk of post-training unemployment remains high.

Although a range of modes of delivery can be identified, the new measures can be grouped as follows:

- A broad range of initiatives based on a guarantee of jobs, education or training for unemployed youth with different conditions relating to eligibility (UK, The Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden);
- Measures which involve the extension of vocational education as well as employment initiatives based on the funding of socially useful work programmes (France, Spain, Italy);
- The extended provision of apprenticeships and pre-vocational courses (Germany, Spain);
- Placement initiatives which aim to close the gaps between educational and employment programmes (Germany, Italy).

II Patterns of vulnerability and sources of risk

Although young people can be highlighted as a particularly vulnerable group, within all European countries, groups of especially vulnerable young people can be identified. For these young people, employment opportunities tend to be severely restricted which ultimately have an adverse affect on social and economic advancement and levels of personal fulfilment. Yet whereas there are a wide range of labour market structures, common patterns of vulnerability exist and we suggest that some common solutions can be developed.

Leaving aside the post-Communist countries, the strong links between educational attainments and labour market experiences means that those who leave school with poor academic qualifications tend to be disadvantaged in the labour market. With increases in the number of qualified school-leavers, educational qualifications have become a 'declining asset' in the employment market.¹¹² As Breen and Whelan note, 'although the average level of educational attainment has increased during successive decades, there has been a simultaneous

¹¹² G.Marshall, A.Swift and S.Roberts (1997) *Against the Odds: Social class and social justice in industrial societies*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

decline in the returns to higher credentials'.¹¹³ Young people who leave school with minimal qualifications have faced increased difficulties in the labour market as the average attainments of their peers have risen and the demand for unqualified workers has declined.

The link between educational attainments and vulnerability is reflected most strongly in unemployment rates, but also manifest in marginal and insecure occupations. Poorly qualified young workers are frequently drawn into low level service jobs, often on part-time or temporary contracts.



Others enter the 'black magic roundabout' of unemployment, government training schemes, followed by further unemployment and schemes: for some, the cycle is occasionally broken by a short-term job¹¹⁴.

Education offers some protection as unemployment tends to be highest among those who have not been educated beyond lower secondary level. Figures from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey show that compared to those who leave school at the minimum age, the unemployment rate of those who have completed higher education tends to fall by about a half.¹¹⁵ Yet perhaps the most disadvantaged group are those who lack basic skills in literacy and numeracy.¹¹⁶ This group (about one in ten young people), face particular difficulties in the labour market and may not be equipped to benefit from available training programmes which assume a certain level of literacy and numeracy.

'Those with only primary education have been hardest hit by the economic transformation, while unemployment rates among those with higher education are below a third of the national average in all countries'.¹¹⁷

So, does this mean that education is the solution? Certainly for those who lack basic skills. Yet the decline in demand for the unskilled and under-educated makes it increasingly important for young people to succeed educationally, qualification inflation may reduce any gains in real terms. While graduates are advantaged in the labour market, many are underemployed. In 1995 in the European Union, almost one in five 25-29 year-olds with university degrees were working in routine office or sales jobs: in Belgium three in ten graduates are working in these sorts of jobs while at the other end of the scale, in the UK, 14% were employed at this level.¹¹⁸ Even if the age range is broadened so as to recognise the time it may take for graduates to

¹¹³ R.Breen and C.Whelan (1993) 'From ascription to achievement: Origins, education and entry to the labour force in the Republic of Ireland during the Twentieth Century', *Acta Sociologica*, 36, pp.3-17.

¹¹⁴ S.Craine (1994) *Beggars can't be choosers*, PhD thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Salford.

¹¹⁵ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

¹¹⁶ J.Bynner and J.Steedman (1995) *Difficulties with basic skills*, The Basic Skills Agency, London.

¹¹⁷ International Labour Office (1996) *World Employment 1996/97*, Geneva, International Labour Organisation p115.

¹¹⁸ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

establish their careers, we find that just 52% of university graduates between the ages of 25 and 34 are employed as managers or professionals: among 35 to 59 year-olds, the figure only increases to 65%.

Another source of vulnerability relates to variability in the quality of vocational training and to the strength of vocational routes into the labour market. Here a strong distinction can be made between apprenticeship programmes with employer involvement and a formal educational input and government run schemes which are often of a remedial nature. Employer involvement does not necessarily ensure quality training and transferable skills, but can often provide trainees with access to jobs which are not advertised on the open market. In Britain, it has been argued that the 'context' in which training is provided can be more important than the 'content' of the training programme.¹¹⁹ Similarly, in Germany it has been noted that those who fail to obtain places under the 'dual system' and enter pre-vocational training schemes face many difficulties in the labour market.



The rigidity or flexibility of the linkages between training and employment are also significant. In rigid labour markets, those without very specific formal training may be legally prevented from working in certain occupational sectors whereas in flexible labour markets, very few jobs outside of the professions are closed on the basis of qualifications.

Germany is an example of an extremely rigid labour market where entry into virtually all skilled jobs is closed to those who have not trained under the dual system. With selection for academic and vocational routes being made at age 9 (after 4 years of schooling), there are few opportunities for late developers. In this situation, failure to secure an apprenticeship will lead to permanent labour market marginalisation. Reducing vulnerability is partly dependent on flexibility and the provision of life long opportunities to develop new skills.

In post-communist countries the situation is more complex due to the chaotic state of many labour markets. Under the previous regimes, the links between educational attainments and labour market experiences bore many similarities to Western Europe. Indeed, some argue that the links were more rigid than in the West.¹²⁰ In the 1990s, many young people are now finding jobs which suit their qualifications hard to come by. Nevertheless, it can be argued that education still offers some protection against unemployment as those with the highest educational attainments are most likely to enter professional and managerial occupations.¹²¹ However, Roberts and Fagan suggest an alternative interpretation. Given the differences in employment security and financial benefits in the public and private sector, between marginal

¹¹⁹ D.Raffe (1990) The transition from school to work: Content, context and the external labour market, in C.Wallace and M.Cross (eds) Youth in Transition, London, Falmer.

¹²⁰ K.Roberts and C.Fagan (1999) Old and new routes into the labour markets in ex-Communist countries, Journal of Youth Studies, Vol.2, pp153-170.

¹²¹ K.Roberts and C.Fagan (1999) Old and new routes into the labour markets in ex-Communist countries, Journal of Youth Studies, Vol.2, pp153-170.

and regular jobs and between employees and the self employed, they argue that education has only a modest impact on success in the labour market.¹²² Given that more than half of the highest educational grouping in their sample of 20-26 year-olds in Armenia, Georgia and the Ukraine were either unemployed or in marginal employment, they argue that educational success no longer guarantees labour market success.

In Armenia, Georgia and the Ukraine, “the top educational group was slightly more likely than the bottom group to be successfully self-employed (8% versus 6%) and in regular state jobs (22% versus 20%) and regular private sector jobs (17% versus 10%). Conversely, they were less likely to be in marginal private sector jobs (21% versus 26%) or chronically unemployed (19% versus 23%)”.¹²³

Roberts and Fagan argue that in post-communist societies, new factors are emerging which provide advantages in the labour market. These factors include foreign languages (especially English) and information technology skills which are an important asset in gaining employment with Western employers. Secondly, they also suggest that connections through parents with successful privatised firms, with Western firms and with managers of state enterprises are important. Lastly, personalities and ‘luck’ (being in the right place at the right time) were seen as important.

In the West and in post-communist countries, parents have become increasingly important not just as sources of advice but, as importantly, as a means of financial support. Across Europe, there is evidence to suggest that in the face of inadequate state support, young people are increasingly relying on the support of their parents both to facilitate participation in post-compulsory education and to help maintain them through periods of unemployment and marginal employment. In these circumstances, those whose parents are unable or unwilling to provide financial support are severely disadvantaged. In Southern Europe, there has been a tradition of extended family support for young people which may result in a period of dependency which lasts until they reach their late 20s or early 30s. In Italy, for example, an overwhelming majority (87%) of young people were living in the parental home between the ages of 20-25 and a majority of 25-29 year-olds were still living at home (56%).¹²⁴ However, in the North of Europe, young people have traditionally been expected to be financially independent by their late teens or early 20s: families are now having to adjust to protracted periods of dependency. In the UK, for example, less than half (47%) of 20-24 year olds were still living in the parental home and among the 25-29 age group only 17% had remained in the parental home.¹²⁵

For many young people, vulnerability is strongly linked to the inability to make housing transitions. This is especially true for those living in remote or economically depressed regions who may have to move home to find work, but also applies to young people leaving local authority care.

¹²² K.Roberts and C.Fagan (1999) Old and new routes into the labour markets in ex-Communist countries, *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol.2, pp153-170.

¹²³ K.Roberts and C.Fagan (1999) Old and new routes into the labour markets in ex-Communist countries, *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol.2, pp164

¹²⁴ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

¹²⁵ European Commission (1997) *Youth in the European Union: From Education to Working Life*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

In Britain for example, it has been found that one in four homeless young people and 38% of the prison population had spend time in 'care'.¹²⁶ With young people in many European countries having restricted access to social assistance benefits, it has become much more difficult to live independently or become geographically mobile.

Finally, we need to recognise the vulnerability of groups of young people who have withdrawn from the labour market and have difficulty making fresh or new inroads. These include young mothers (especially single mothers) as well as the group referred to earlier as status zero, homeless youth and those who have withdrawn as a result of disabilities or dependency.

III Good practice

While there are numerous examples of government intervention to reduce vulnerability, it is not possible to highlight one single initiative which will fit easily into the range of institutional contexts which exist across Europe. Indeed, to cater for the range of needs which exist within any given country, a variety of measures are necessary. In this section we highlight a small selection of programmes which appear to be successful.

1. Meeting the needs of specific groups displaying high levels of vulnerability

Young offenders tend to face a range of barriers to labour market integration. Offenders may be discriminated against by employers on the basis of their past criminal involvement, but may also have few qualifications or vocational skills. In the Netherlands, the Inside Out programme concentrates on young offenders serving short sentences. Education and training begins within special penal institutions and involves employers from the offenders local regions. The process ends with a work placement on discharge and after-care continues until the young person has been placed in a job. Although candidates are selected for the programme on the basis of motivation, it is claimed that more than half (56%) subsequently find jobs, while 11% enter further training.¹²⁷

2. Measures aimed at the long-term unemployed

Most countries have programmes which aim to break the cycle of repeated or long-term unemployment, often through compulsory measures: few are effective. In a range of countries, new measures offering greater flexibility and choice have been introduced in the aftermath of the Luxembourg Summit (see below). While these may prove to be effective, it is too early to provide examples of good practice.

From Britain, one example of good practice is the WISE group. The WISE group is a private, highly profitable, company who provide work and training for unemployed people (of all ages) through selling services primarily to local councils. Heatwise, for example, installs housing insulation while gardenwise provides gardening and landscaping services. To become eligible for a 'job' in this intermediate labour market, people have to have been unemployed for over six months. Placements are entirely voluntary and workers are employed for a year at around the minimum wage while developing transferable skills.

¹²⁶ B.Coles (1995) Youth and Social Policy, London, UCL Press.

¹²⁷ J.Veenman, A. Dijkstra and B.Goezinne (1995) Best Practices: Transition from school to work for youth at risk in the Netherlands, Rotterdam, Institute for Sociological and Economic Research.

3. Supporting difficult transitions

Programmes offering support to groups of young people who are recognised as particularly vulnerable have been introduced in a number of countries with fairly encouraging results. Such programmes include recurrent guidance which provides personal support and advice to young people over a protracted period of time (often customised to individual needs and delivered through the ongoing support of a personal advisor). Programmes which provide additional resources to facilitate prolonged participation in education and training among young people from disadvantaged areas and providing pre-scheme preparation for those not considered to have the basic skills necessary to allow them to benefit fully from existing programmes.

4. Help for start-up businesses

In most European countries, but especially in the former communist countries, self employment has become increasingly important. However, among young people the rate of business failure is high. In this context, there are a number of programmes which have been developed to support youth business. In Britain, for example, there are a few 'incubator centres which provide flexible and low cost business premises within areas of economic and social need. Also, financial aid is provided to young entrepreneurs through the Enterprise Allowance and through the Prince's Youth Business Trust: both of these schemes provide business loans to people who would be unlikely to find commercial sources of support.

IV Reducing Vulnerability

Young people have always faced difficulties in adjusting to the demands of employment. Given their status as new or recent entrants to the labour market, youth unemployment is always likely to be higher than adult unemployment. Moreover, many of the disturbing trends highlighted in this chapter (such as casualisation and growing insecurity of employment) are likely to remain characteristics of modern labour markets. While we recognise these trends, in this section we offer some suggestions of ways to reduce the hardships faced by the most vulnerable.



High quality training must be provided, preferably with the support and co-operation of both employers and educationalists. A modern society demands a high skill, technologically competent workforce and training programmes are ineffective unless they can produce highly skilled young workers who are recognised as such by potential employers. Levels of dissatisfaction with vocational training are high across Europe, often justifiably so given that it has tended to remain the poor relation of academic higher

First, while we have moved beyond the era of ‘jobs for life’ and into an age of insecurity and casualisation, it is necessary to ensure that young people do not become trapped in a series of insecure jobs and repeated remedial training schemes. The ‘black magic roundabout’ has to be stopped in its tracks. Breaking this cycle of deprivation means recognising that the sorts of training being offered to marginalised young people are rarely appropriate.

The Luxembourg summit has led to the emergence of some interesting new programmes to help combat vulnerability and it is too early to judge the impact of many of these new schemes. The greater flexibility and range of choices is to be welcomed, but there is a sense in which new programmes are offering more of the same. In Britain and Germany, for example, fairly traditional remedial training schemes are the staple of the new menu. While there is evidence of greater employer involvement, the surrogate labour market remains entrenched within the new programmes.

Second, the links between education, training and employment in many countries is highly regulated: this is problematic in labour markets which are demanding greater flexibility from their workers. Lifelong opportunities for workers to develop new skills and enhance their educational credentials are necessary in advanced economies and can provide a safety net for those who become trapped in vulnerable positions.

Particular attention needs to be paid to those who lack the basic skills without which employment prospects decline dramatically.

Third, for many young people, part-time employment has become central to their labour market experiences. This is a mode of working which suits some young people insofar as it enables them to combine work and study. However, for others it is a poor alternative to full-time employment and support for high quality education and training must be made available to this group.

Fourth, in post-communist countries, additional measures are necessary to reduce vulnerability. Foreign languages and IT skills have been highlighted as important, but to draw in more outside investment and quality jobs, it needs to be recognised that firms can be attracted to a country on the basis of the skills of its workforce. Here, post-communist countries need to gain a competitive edge over the developed countries of the West. Among young people in post-communist countries, self-employment has become increasingly important: while it can often be regarded as a survival strategy, young people do perceive it as a desirable career route.

For some, self employment means long hours and poor rewards, for others it may be a route to a quality lifestyle, while at the margins it can represent the start of a drift into semi legal and illegal activities. In this context, skills for self-employment should be seen as a priority.

Fifth, while in most countries unemployment has become a normal part of the experiences of young people, it is important to find effective ways of combating long-term unemployment and of providing more adequate financial support to those without jobs.

It must be recognised that family support will not always be forthcoming and that for some, geographical mobility will be a precondition of security. Affordable housing for young people is particularly important.



Finally, in all countries there are groups of young people who are extraordinarily vulnerable. The groups are diverse and have different needs but they include migrants and refugees, members of ethnic minorities, the homeless, those leaving local authority care and the disabled.

Chapter 3

LEISURE: RISK POINTS AND VULNERABLE PATHS

Introduction

Defining leisure in simple terms is not an easy task. Popular perceptions of leisure range from 'availability of free time', to 'non-work time', to 'self-time' to 'fun time'. In a more mundane vein, one would also consider leisure as that space in one's daily routine when one can do with oneself what one wishes, at least for a determined period of time.

In other words, leisure is an elusive concept not easily tied to definitive bounds. The word 'leisure' is derived from the Latin *licere* which means 'to be free'. It is also related closely to the old French word *loisir* - 'to be permitted' (Jensen, 1977; Patmore, 1983). The word, itself, has been used in different contexts.

In what is known as 'the residual approach', leisure is viewed as the time remaining when the needs of work and day-to-day necessities, such as sleeping and eating, have been satisfied.

This approach was adopted by Brightbill (1963): "Leisure is time beyond that which is required for existence, the things that we must do, biologically, to stay alive... and subsistence, the things we must do to make a living".

A second approach links leisure to activity. Leisure is defined as the time when leisurely activities are undertaken.

These activities may provide relaxation and recuperation, diversion and diversity, and social and personal fulfilment. Dumazedier (1967), for example, claimed that: 'Leisure is the activity - apart from the obligations of work, family and society - to which the individual turns at will for either relaxation, diversion, or broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous social participation, the free exercise of his creative capacity'. Leisure, thus, is the use of time, not time itself. DeGrazia (1962) sees leisure as a combination of both approaches. In terms of time, leisure relates to that period spent in self-maintenance, whereas as an attitude, it relates to free will, lack of compulsion and freedom of choice.

The third approach combines elements of the first two, but adds an important subjective dimension. It relates leisure as an attitude of the mind and quality of experience.

There is a clear distinction here between free time and freedom; the fact that a person has some time free from work does not necessarily mean that s/he has complete freedom of choice in how s/he uses that time. Kelvin (1979) distinguished between 'objective' and 'subjective' free time. A person may be objectively free every Sunday, but might feel subjectively bound to do the gardening or to visit an elderly relative. For Kelvin, leisure prevails only when individuals perceive themselves to be free of external demands and in

control of their own situations. As Kelly (1982) put it: 'Leisure is not in the time, nor in the action. It is in the actor' (p. 22).

However, the anomaly that surrounds most of these perceptions is that the longed-for freedom associated with leisure time is to a large extent only imaginary. In the first place, availability of time is itself restricted by an individual's life-programme and by the fact that the self is permanently subject to the prevalent functions of social institutions (for example, family quality time, opening hours of entertainment venues and seasonal factors) and to the arena of social constructions (for example, restricted membership of clubs through status, gender or even cost) both of which are outside one's control. Secondly, the individual's aptitude, and any leisure opportunities that might arise, to make use of time emanate from a series of events in which one becomes participant only as a result of culturally determined circumstances, such as, geographic, demographic, religious and political elements, or even parental influence towards a particular hobby or sport. Thirdly, differences exist between an individual's personal project and the all-pervasive influences of social domains such as the economic system, welfare and employment policies, and value systems.



In shorthand, one can state that leisure is associated with issues of personal identity, collective meanings, social categories, and economic and cultural capital.

The set of issues mentioned above have been the subject of much research by sociologists and educationalists for a long time. Concern for youth has been dominant since Parsons (1942/1964) introduced the term 'youth culture' to mean a distinctive world of youth structured by age and sex roles conveying the message that gender divisions constitute an important sphere of concern. Since then, many studies of young people's leisure activities still highlight the maintenance of strong gender divisions (Gratton and Taylor, 1985; Roberts *et al.*, 1989; Glyptis, 1989; Furlong *et al.*, 1990)¹²⁸, an indication that leisure is still a matter which requires much more exploratory work. In 1993, Marsland wrote that, if more systematic and descriptive studies are undertaken with regard to the role of leisure in young people's psychological development, in friendship, peer group and style analysis, 'we may in ten years' time know a great deal more about the leisure life of young people than we claim to know today' (p. 131).

In the mean time, with the development of leisure provisions as a means for supporting increased demand, one encounters a variety of societal reactions to the emerging phenomenon

¹²⁸ in Correspondent's Report, UK.

of diversity of lifestyles as a result of increased educational opportunities and technological advances. Delinquency theorists of the ilk of Cohen (1972) and Young (1974) talk about 'folk devils and moral panics', Coleman (1961) directs his attention to the 'consumption of music', while the Birmingham School (1970s, 1980s) focuses on 'spectacular forms of style' as a reaction to adult domination. Such reactions are not limited to the UK. Young people in Portugal, for example, try to challenge the limits of their capacities by risk behaviours such as precocious sexual experimentation and high-speed driving (Correspondent's Report, 1999). 'Thrill-seeking' has thus entered the vocabulary of leisure.

On the other hand, other forms of 'filling one's free time' can be found across the European borders. Both Swiss and Swedish youth, for example, have been found to be very active in different organisations and associations. In this respect, among the 15 - 19 year old Swiss cohort, 53% participate actively in an organisation or a sports club (BFS, 1997c)¹²⁹, while more than 86% of all Swedish youth in the 16 -24 age range are members of some sort of organisation (Sörbom, A. 1999)¹³⁰.

However, one also finds that in a number of countries, severe economic drawbacks are surfacing.

Financial cutbacks and meagre economic support produce unexpected conflicts for Youth Services whose objective may well be to provide alternative leisure activities. This subject is increasingly coming to the fore in industrialised and developed countries where the entrepreneurship syndrome has largely overcome State and non-government (voluntary) youth work.

Huge investment by private entrepreneurs in leisure facilities seems to be reviving Veblen's (1899/1949) idea of 'conspicuous consumption'. To Veblen, consumption and, by extension, an individual's entire pattern of activities, may be an expression of social position (Reimer, B. in Fornas & Bolin, 1995). So that, what has been largely described as progress in provision with the purpose of creating a healthier and stress-free environment for recreation is unfortunately often transformed into a vulnerable site for purposeful life-trajectories. The implications in this particular sphere include short-changing through inaccessibility for the lower-income groups, the unemployed, and the alienated - a situation in which young people can be the main contenders.

With this background, overall preview of the leisure arena, a more focused understanding of leisure and its concomitant issues can now be described. Various authors hold (Schultze *et al*, 1993) that leisure time is more of an individual commitment than it is permitted by prevailing circumstances. The need to break from routine in a fast-moving schedule implies concern for both physical and mental health. Compensation for deficiencies at work also comes into the picture as a result of the need to cope with the ever-increasing demands of technological advancement in the sense that autonomy, self-direction and satisfaction are decreasing in direct proportion to the advancement made. Since economic patterns have reached a stage where comfort, diversity and media portrayals (*ibid.*, 1993) are dominating the leisure scenario, an increase in the recognition of the benefits of leisure time has been adopted by groups of all ages, across all income bands and across all social groups.

¹²⁹ in Correspondent's Report, Switzerland.

¹³⁰ in Correspondent's Report, Sweden



However, the price to be paid is that demand, utility and willingness to participate, though changing over a lifetime, dominate to the extent that lifestyles are emerging more as a result of the provisions available than as a result of the expectations of leisure seekers.

The concept of leisure is, however, closely linked to its functions and to the individual needs of social actors. With regards to young people in particular, Fisher and Holder (1981) considered leisure as an arena for privacy and territory, for group adherence and for consumerism. They consider leisure time as ‘rehearsal time for adulthood’. ‘Personal identity’ and ‘collective meanings’ are added to this list by Willis (1990), while Marsland (1993) takes a more emphatic view by describing leisure time as ‘a precious island of freedom’ and as ‘a sacred bastion of individuality’.

In view of the above, it may be stated that leisure is closely associated with a number of forces which act on a young person’s concept of personal fulfilment. Such forces may help, obstruct or even derail an individual’s train of aspirations and expectations. It is within this framework that young people’s leisure needs must be viewed so that success stories, good policy and practice, risk points and sources of vulnerability may be identified and acted upon.

I Rationale

1. What is Leisure? What should it be?

Although one of the main concerns of this report is to identify those trends in leisure activities that may lead to vulnerable situations for young people, it is essential to attempt to give as clear as possible a picture of what meanings various groups of young people give to “leisure time”. Reading through the reports submitted by a number of National Correspondents from various European countries, one finds that the range of differences in perceptions, aptitudes and expectations is decreasing. A more homogeneous and uniform pattern of trends is developing to the extent that researchers’ views and conclusions tend to converge to a common point: social and political changes are more the cause of concern to society at large than are young people’s needs and expectations. It seems, in general, that Bertrand Russell’s (in Schultze *et al*, 1993) warning needs particular attention:

‘To be able to fill leisure intelligently is the last product of Civilisation’.

As stated earlier, leisure has been assigned a variety of meanings. Yet, there is no escape, in any one of the definitions attempted, from association with time and provision. Basically, then, it may be argued that the individual's ability to recreate his/her energies through entering a new mode of thought and experience is subject to one's time management skills and the availability of accessible routes. It is within this conceptual framework that active and passive use of leisure time (e.g. sports, outdoor activities, and reading and TV watching, respectively) and dissatisfaction with 'filling spare time' (e.g. sleeping and doing nothing) need to be addressed. In so doing, one will soon realise that individual life assets - mainly, cultural and economic capital - cannot be overlooked for mere provision or authoritarian paternalism. Whether or not a young person feels the need to recreate him/herself in a particular manner cannot be determined solely through the application and implementation of general, or perhaps, adult perceptions. Concerned as the latter may be with financial considerations and/or experienced preoccupations, the resulting action may well take the form of inadequacy if not inappropriateness. For example, the rise and rise of the leisure industry in a number of industrialised countries has come about as a result of the accelerated development of technology. In terms of leisure facilities, this was translated, in many instances, into the construction of sites, such as, cinema complexes and high sound systems in discotheques. Young people, seeking new and more comfortable forms of leisure, sponsor these venues with such regularity that less expensive alternatives are ignored. Youth centres, for example, have become less attractive among the older age groups (Azzopardi & Debono, 1998; 9th Youth Report, Germany)¹³¹ although they have been found to provide space for interaction with adults and for self-directed provision (Smith, 1988; Garratt *et al*, 1997). It is useless, in the light of such statements, to bemoan current trends. On the other hand, if leisure is to be considered as an arena for social and personal education (Marsland, 1993), a balance between extremes needs to be struck.

Therefore, the message to be conveyed is that the choice between using spare time for 'sleeping', 'sports', 'commercialised entertainment' or 'club-oriented facilities' should not be of the Hobson's type. If leisure is understood to mean 'group adherence', 'public self-presentation' (style), 'privacy' or 'recreation', then any form of exclusion, be it due to structural, economic, cultural or political disadvantages, needs to be eliminated. As Eric Grill (in Willis, 1990:16) has so nicely put it:

That state is a state of Slavery in which a man does what he likes to do in his spare time and in his working time that which is required of him. That state is a state of Freedom in which a man does what he likes to do in his working time and in his spare time that which is required of him.

Contradictory as this statement may appear, it would be ideal, nay utopian, to consider leisure time as time well spent in recreating oneself without, at the same time, facing any restrictions of opportunity for personal fulfilment.

2. Education for leisure

An earlier section of this report dealt directly with the issue of education. However, since both education and leisure are politically, economically and culturally circumscribed, they are dyadically dependent. To use an almost dated pedagogical term - there are *lessons* to be learnt from either of both domains! While educational programmes are universally perceived as being intended for an individual's personal gain in terms of life-long skills-training, the

¹³¹ in Correspondent's Report, Germany

constraints associated with economic and political strategies may well render the proffered aims unattainable or even detrimental to the clients. For example, extended educational programmes, though well-meant, very often create space for young people's postponement of their entrance into the adult world through employment. Another implication could be the extended dependence of young people on their families very often resulting in hardships for parents and a diminishing sense of self-esteem for the young person (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Tschanz, 1997¹³²).

Closely related to this line of thought is the effect that an increased and improved provision of leisure facilities may bring about.

While young people may have more opportunities for choice, their role of consumers may then override their ability to organise and to invent. On the other hand, a lesson entrepreneurs give to education providers lies in the realm of risk-taking.

Entrepreneurs invest their time, energy and money in order to provide entertainment and to make profit. They create a certain number of job opportunities and they engage professional people to raise standards. They clearly know what their patrons want, and what they can exclusively provide. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about educational provision when it comes to taking risks because this type of provision has not yet donned the garb of attraction and even 'glamour' that entertainment venues so readily assume. The argument here is one that can just as easily be ignored as it can provide food for thought. Of course, the attraction and glamour that education may be seen to provide lies in its endeavour to make young people tick in the same way that parties and other popular forms of entertainment make them tick. Although educational provision in most European countries is universal, it does not lend itself to fun and pleasure because of the constant worries rigid curricula, certification and employment prospects bring with them.

In educating for leisure one needs to forge a link between the essentials of both education and leisure. Young people's desire for autonomy, their desire for a coherent world view (Button, 1977 in Marsland, D., 1993) and society's responsibility for reducing the possibility of vulnerable lifestyles can be addressed through a better mix of formal and informal education.

Perhaps, the idea of Youth Information Centres being floated across a number of European countries, on the initiative of the Council of Europe, is worth pursuing.

3. Alternative leisure

Much to the delight of social researchers, society repeatedly reacts to present-day issues in a characteristic fashion. Much is said and written about the need to have a closer look at what is going on where, and how young people congregate to recreate. The importance of law enforcement, regulation and legislation, responsible parenthood and educational campaigns has been stressed over and over again. So has the need for a specific youth policy rather than for a national social policy (Correspondent's Report, Bulgaria, 1998).

Apart from being a characteristic reaction, this type of concern is well-meant. Accountability and responsibility cannot be discarded by civilised societies. Yet, as much as the above-

¹³² in Correspondent's Report, Switzerland

mentioned strategies are purposeful in the short term, long-term proposals have, to a large extent, been ignored.



Perhaps, the time has come for adult society to declare itself committed to the concept of alternative leisure rather than to the concept of 'something needs to be done and done quickly'.

Research (Roberts, 1981; Marsland, 1993; Hendry, 1993) has shown that young people are not impressed by mere provision or paternalism. They do resist rules and restrictions. They also want to provide for themselves but they welcome advice and example. They feel abandoned by permissive neglect and authoritarian imposition (Schultze *et al*, 1993).

Have societies, particularly European ones, abandoned young people in their quest for creative leisure? A straight answer would be inappropriate in the absence of an assessment of what alternatives young people have. There are, in fact, a number of outlets available in the form of sport associations, hobbies, societies and cultural activities. Sometimes, young people do not express specific desires for having more leisure alternatives because they may not have (time, financial or spatial) possibilities even for alternatives already offered (Correspondent's Report, University of Ljubljana, 1988). The question that still needs addressing, therefore, regards the availability of enough space for expression through, for example, drama, music, art, outdoor action, sports, hobbies, discussions, philanthropy, community work and entertainment time outside the formal system of education. What is popularly termed as 'the leisure industry' should not be understood only as that industry with direct connections with commerce and trade. Is it wiser to understand 'industry' in terms of diligence and habitual employment in useful time? The point has to be made that the policy-makers' concept of leisure needs to be extended to include that which favours particular aspirations. Given the social and economic changes that all societies undergo almost regularly, one cannot but endeavour to compensate for deprivation within various groups due to disadvantages in both economical and cultural capital. There is no need to keep harping on the presence of these groups and lamenting the fact that whatever strategies one adopts, deficiencies will always appear. Responsibility for the provision of alternative forms of leisure lies with society in view of the individual needs of social actors and in view of the continuous presence of various forms of constraints that hit hardest at the "disadvantaged". Whatever meaning is attached to the latter term, one has to accept that disadvantages may be extraneous to the individual as much as they may be due to his/her intrinsic strength ("response-capacity", Correspondent's Report, Germany, 1998). While in the former case, society has to ponder on its role as a provider, in the second case it takes on the role of supporter. In both cases, the avoidance of risk points and the elimination of sources of vulnerability should be prioritised.

4. Commercialisation of leisure

As a result of a series of social changes occurring in the labour and education markets, the amount and quality of time free from work (regular employment, school, extended training programmes) is changing in form. Evenings may or may not be free, while weekends are no longer associated with rest and family time only. New employment patterns (for example, contract work, shorter working weeks, and shift work) and the production of labour-saving devices (for example, washing machines, dishwashers, and vacuum cleaners) have created space for individuals to have a variety of 'pockets of time' for the pursuit of activities other

than work. Apart from the fact that this 'extra' time is sometimes filled by other part-time work, employed young people, in particular, tend to feel lost as to what to do with themselves after work. It is not unknown either that those young people who are still pursuing a course of study have little time for entertainment. Research has shown that this particular group reserves all its energy for entertainment during the weekend. Some of them have even made 'staying out late till the early hours of the morning every Saturday and Sunday' a way of life (Correspondent's Report, Malta, 1998).

It needs hardly be added that overall, and in most European countries, a growth in real, permanent income has been registered. Consequently, and in line with tendencies in modern market economies, a general trend for increased private vehicle ownership has developed (Roberts, K. & Fagan, C.). While, on the one hand, it is no longer unthinkable for young people to have access to 'remote' places of entertainment if local provision is lacking, on the other, those living in isolated areas with poor transport facilities may constitute a cohort of disadvantaged youth. Yet, an interest in attractive provisions and an increased recognition of the benefits of leisure time, respectively, combine to create another phenomenon which needs careful consideration (Cooke, 1994).

This phenomenon has to a large extent contributed to the creation of another branch of economics, that is, the economics of leisure. Leisure has become a commercial concern because of man's ability to invest in his well-being. At one and the same time, one is caught between the grips of a more efficient labour and education market, and of a healthier lifestyle. But, economics requires the establishment of a price for the goods made available to the consumer. Consequently, 'the ability to buy' and 'the search for opportunity costs' come into the picture even in the leisure domain. While the former rests on the size of the individual's pay pack, the concomitant costs of the lifestyle chosen and the financial obligations towards dependants in the individual's private life, the latter is circumscribed by specific tastes, preferences and perceptions. So that, what one can afford to buy from the leisure industry and what one shops around for may not be consonant with the actual needs. In this respect, one also has to consider the subject of complimentary and substitute goods. If, for example, photography happens to be the means for recreating oneself during free time, the price of developing films and the cost of films and other accessories has to be taken into consideration. When, however, the total value exceeds that which one can afford, alternatives will have to be sought. One can either limit the number of pictures taken or else substitute the glut for recorded pictures by enjoying walks in the countryside or by turning one's hobby into a profitable venture, such as, taking pictures for others on special occasions like anniversary celebrations or weddings. The same applies to a number of leisure activities which are becoming increasingly popular with young people (Galea, 1998). Health clubs, fencing, ballet and archery, for example, have been identified as being beyond their financial means. Two courses of action taken by young people are that either the desired activity is given up completely or else a part-time temporary job is taken up as a means of support for the hobby. The implications here are many. A young person's aspirations are dashed, while his/her expectations have to be foregone. The consequences are also many.

Alternative leisure activities may be taken up without much enthusiasm, friends may be lost and, for the strong-willed, less time for leisure is left if financial solutions are sought in the taking up of part-time work.

The picture that emerges is, therefore, one focused on consumerism rather than on the 'intelligent' use of free time. The consumption of goods, determined by constraints created through changing patterns in the educational, social and economical spheres of life, may become another site for vulnerability and risk points.

II Risk Points and Sources of Vulnerability

There are, of course, different degrees of vulnerability and also different periods of time in which one is more, or less, vulnerable. In other words, vulnerability may be either acute or less acute, temporary or permanent (Correspondent's Report, Germany, 1998).

In order to identify these 'phases' in a young person's 'journey' (a term preferred to 'trajectory', 'path' or 'course' by French sociologists)¹³³ through adolescence, and with special reference to the leisure domain, use will be made of Coleman's focal theory, 1979, Hendry's leisure focuses, 1983 and Coffield's *et al* ecological theory, 1986 (in Hendry *et al*, 1993).

While Coleman identifies a progression in relationships from 13 to 17 and over, Hendry correlates these relationships with the different types of leisure pursuits adolescents prefer. According to these two researchers, at the early stages of adolescence, heterosexual relationships are often linked with organised activities. Later on, when acceptance by or rejection from peers becomes highly important, a link with casual activities is forged. In the third stage, when parental relationships - both positive and negative - are at their strongest, an interest in commercial activities reaches its highest point. Although these links are not bound by rules, the pattern is very obvious in most other samples (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975; Willis, 1996) besides those studied by the two authors. Coffield's theory identifies some of the elements which may contribute to variations from this pattern. He mentions, amongst others, the importance of the particular context in which young people are acting, their gender, the school, work, and friendships and lifestyle.

1. Key factors

In the foregoing paragraphs a number of key factors have been mentioned. The leisure domain is one that encompasses a plethora of issues which cannot be overlooked if both vulnerable and satisfactory 'journeys' are to be identified, remedies studied and success stories emulated and improved upon. To summarise, a categorised list of key factors is given hereunder:

For young people, in particular,

- leisure is an arena for autonomy, self-direction and fulfilment;
- leisure concerns the 'intelligent' use of time for relaxation, and the availability of and accessibility to resources; and
- the commercialisation of leisure has created as many choices and advantages as it has created inequalities and disadvantages.

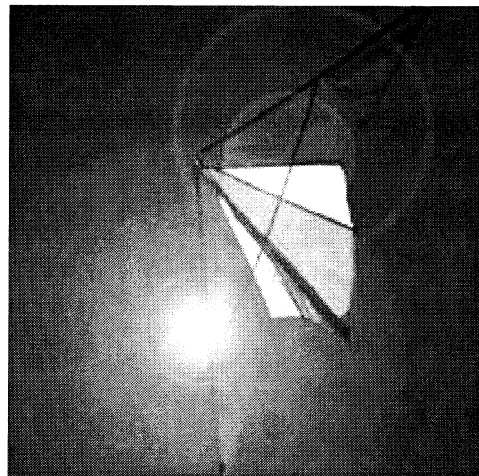
¹³³ in Correspondent's Report, France

(a) The issue of youth vulnerability must now be seen in the context of the crisis in the main vehicles for social integration, new means of socialisation and the emergence of a new form of individualism.

The traditional means of socialisation, as defined by classic sociology from Durkheim to Bourdieu, seem now to require re-assessment: according to this model, young people are socialised through the internalisation of norms and values of the system and through assimilation of social rules. Today, according to Dubet, the individual faces various possible ways forward: the integrationist course involving membership of a group; the strategic course involving competition with others and the subjectivist course, which allows self-distancing through culture. They are not adoptable simultaneously and individuals must handle them in the light of their own social experience. This undermines the whole social fabric but particularly affects young people (Correspondent's Report, France, 1999).

As a result of this fragmentation of the normative framework, the weakening or transformation of social institutions such as the family, the church, schools and trade unions and the disappearance of the collective rites which used to mark young people's entry into society, it is now every man for himself and everyone has to carve out their own niche. According to Gaulejac, the class struggle has been superseded by a struggle for position/s. Individuals are responsible for both their success and their failure. This is why the "new individualism" is now a key issue, in particular in research (by Ehrenberg, Michaud, Gaulejac, Gauchet, Castel and others), and some have even ventured to talk of anthropological change affecting all age groups. Hence, too, the increasing topicality of issues of identity. Here, in fact, we could justifiably talk of fragmentation of identity, of multi-identity, a phenomenon which is reflected in vocal demand for "recognition" (*ibid.*).

In reality, the distinctions young people make and the way they shape their own culture during the time-span between childhood and adulthood can be regarded as the main characteristic of modern adolescence. The adolescent phase of life has established itself as an autonomous time-span, and modern societies meanwhile consider it to be a relatively independent phenomenon.



In a milieu of highly individualised life struggles, young people are becoming extremely self-oriented and oriented towards their own private life world (Centre of Social Psychology/Youth Studies, Slovenia, 1997). In this regard, no distinctions can be made between the geographic or political situation of different European countries. For example, in Bulgaria, where the general rhetoric which forms the background of the social construction of youth in the late nineties is not the shift from a modern to a post-modern society as in the case of Western Europe, but from 'an imitation of reforms' to 'speeded reforms' (Kovacheva, 1998)¹³⁴, young people are not anymore receiving privileges from a patronising state (Mitev,

¹³⁴ in Correspondent's Report, Bulgaria

1996)¹³⁵. It is their unprecedented political activism after 1989 that is paving their way to participation in the process of decision-making and in becoming autonomous at home rather than by emigrating abroad.

The same applies to the Slovak Republic, which underwent similar democratic transformations of the political system. The principles of state policy in relation to young people adopted in 1992 call, among others, for the creation of conditions for leisure time, recreation and entertainment. When one recalls that the political experience of these two Eastern countries was, up to recently, an experience of lack of democracy and pluralism, one realises that the trend towards autonomy, self-direction and fulfilment - as expressed through leisure time - is more present than the term 'trend' implies.

In the light of this situation, then, it becomes even more incumbent on society to take a holistic approach towards the construction of youth as a reality. Within the parameters of this section of the Report, it is not difficult to understand that where leisure provision is lacking or where provision is beyond the reach of all social strata, there is a deficiency which contributes to the unsatisfactory social and psychological development of young people. It is in this respect that risk points and vulnerable paths become apparent. Deprivation from one source of energy that provides an impetus for integration with the rest of society in its process of transformation leaves the individual with some of the necessary tools missing. When Coleman (1979) focuses on relationships within the leisure domain, he is implying that young people's toolbox for constructing their personal identity and individuality, as social actors, should include significant others (peer relationships) and of adults (parental relationships). Moreover, these relationships, according to Hendry (1983) are seen to develop within different contexts (organised, casual and commercial activities) at different times.

It becomes a matter of concern to note that research findings are still revealing facts which do not fit within this framework. Poor or scarce relationships with peers and adults in informal contexts lead to lack of understanding of how society works. Hence, they may be considered as risk points leading to vulnerable paths.

(b) There is considerable agreement among young people in European countries as far as preference for leisure time activities is concerned. In Germany, France, Malta, Slovenia and Bulgaria being with friends, listening to music, watching television, working with computers and reading are the most frequent forms of relaxation. Sports is also given much importance by young people (e.g. 86% of boys and 80% of girls in France, and 53% of the 15 - 19 Swiss year olds are members of sports associations)¹³⁶. Throughout adolescence, however, young people's involvement in sporting activities declines and girls tend to turn their backs on sports at an earlier stage than males (Hendry *et al.*, 1993)¹³⁷. Consequently, many sporting activities tend to be male-oriented.

There is also general agreement that participation in voluntary organisations has not yet been established as a major form of activity in which young people find satisfaction. Contrasting views about this sector can be found in reports submitted by National Correspondents. For example, while in France only 'few young people are active in the voluntary sector'¹³⁸ and in Germany 'very few adolescents take on duties in clubs and organisations' (Correspondent

¹³⁵ in Correspondent's Report, Bulgaria

¹³⁶ in Correspondents' Report, France and Switzerland.

¹³⁷ in Correspondent's Report, UK.

¹³⁸ Correspondent's Report, France, 1998

Report, Germany, 1998), the Slovenian Correspondent reports that ‘it is important to notice a high level of readiness [for young people] to be involved in voluntary activities’.

Another point of convergence relating to leisure time trends among young people is the increased participation in culture and arts in the form of entertainment and consumerism (Mitev, 1996)¹³⁹. The most expanded forms of leisure are becoming subject to the passive use of electronic media, to spending money and to owning ‘monetarist totems’, like cars, clothes, etc. (Wydler, 1996)¹⁴⁰. It is relevant to point out at this stage that, for example, a common and frequent pastime among female adolescents in Germany and Malta is ‘going on a shopping spree’.

The three items mentioned above have only touched the surface of the complexity of trends in the use of time and resources as far as leisure is concerned. There are obviously other factors which need careful consideration, such as: climatic conditions which influence young people’s choice between outdoor and indoor activities, the tourist industry which strongly determines state policy with regard to the provision of facilities, the influence of voluntary organisations (lay/religious youth and sports associations, and uniformed organisations) which contribute to the availability of alternatives, and state support for youth organisations. However, for the purpose of this discussion, the possible, if not probable, ‘reproduction of socio-cultural inequalities in terms of practice and consumption’¹⁴¹, is the main concern. This point needs to be stressed in view of the associations that exist among ‘trends’, ‘cultural, educational and economic capital’, and ‘personal and social needs’.



It is common knowledge that young people’s need for socialisation and for social integration is imperative for their personal fulfilment and for their eventual entrance into the adult world. In the process of growing up, young people identify with peers, with music and dress styles, and with other forms of sub-cultures. However, the modern means of socialisation and the emergence of new forms of individualism very often clash with the socialising process advocated by various forms of educational institutions run by adults.

Modern forms of anomie among young people, such as lack of commitment and lack of respect for authority, find their genesis in the resulting ‘incoherent world view’ emanating from conflicts visible in the perceptions of young people and adults with regard to their respective aspirations and expectations (Button, 1977 in Marsland, 1993; Azzopardi, 1998). Consequently, trends and educational input may not be compatible. The same train of thought

¹³⁹ in Correspondent’s Report, Bulgaria.

¹⁴⁰ in Correspondent’s Report, Switzerland.

¹⁴¹ Correspondent’s Report, France 1998

will highlight the importance that lies in the accumulation of cultural and economic capital. Young people's interest in classic forms of culture and their interest in new technologies are not of the same dimension.

Correspondents from Bulgaria, France, Germany and Switzerland, for example, indicate that classical cultural events are seldom mentioned in young people's repertoire of leisure time. But the use of computers, video games, and the Internet are high on their agenda. The obvious association that emerges here is that perceptions about 'cultural activities' and 'technological wonders' are subject to the 'trends' syndrome. The economic aspect enters into the picture when one reflects on the impact such a situation may have on those who lack the financial means or on those who spend in excess of what they can afford. A snowball effect in spending on hobbies and favourite pastimes has also been identified as a possible consequence.

What is obviously lacking in all this is a structured view of how time could be used (intelligently?) and which resources adequately fit a young person's perception of leisure needs. Coffield's contributory elements for variations in patterns can help the reader to understand the possible emergence of risk points and vulnerable in-roads into the leisure patterns of young people. The context in which a young person is acting includes, among others, the educational background acquired. If, for example, the situation prevails whereby schooling projects, sports, and extra-curricular activities are supplementary to the formal curriculum of subjects rather than as an integral part, it should not come as a surprise to find that young people are being socialised into considering the use of leisure time only as supplementary to 'school time', and later to 'work time'. The same applies in the realm of informal education where the curriculum of activities is either concentrated on sports activities (or a particular game such as football, basketball or hockey, for example) or where hobbies, outdoor activities or community work are conspicuous by their absence. In either of the two cases mentioned, free-time, or fun-time is equated with a very narrow view of what leisure implies. Considering the importance of leisure as described earlier, the 'vulnerable' aspect of this state of affairs is fundamentally relevant.

With regard to the availability of resources, other social domains, besides formal and informal education, come into the picture. If the view is taken that increasing provision will broaden the choice or the range of users, then the element of cost will certainly act as a discriminator against the less well-off.

Excessive provision may also introduce the element of competition which goes a long way to enforce what Dubet¹⁴² termed as "the strategic course". Here one can recognise another risk point in which young people may be entrapped. Competition, in its wider meaning, includes, for example, that element of conspicuous consumption mentioned earlier. It is a vulnerable course because it encourages the young person to have his own bit of action whether or not s/he is equipped with the necessary capital to cope with his/her limitations (cultural capital) or to 'buy' the provision (economical capital).

(c) The commercialisation of leisure is synonymous with the market-oriented development of modern, industrialised societies. One immediate realisation within such a context is that the growth of a leisure industry helps in the creation of job opportunities. In certain instances,

¹⁴² in Correspondent's Report, France

where the tourist industry is a major economic factor (for example, Mediterranean countries), the availability of part-time, seasonal jobs, for young people in particular, is considered as a bonus for the labour market. Consequently, the financial returns for a country derived from the increased provision of facilities of all kind has a significant effect on the market value of leisure pursuits. It is within the concept of economics that a strong infrastructure is a prerequisite for a strong, sustainable economy.

The implication here is that the heavier the investment (entrepreneurship), the brighter will the returns be. However, this is, in practice, more of an adult perception than a young person's understanding of leisure supply. It seems that leisure opportunities are becoming available under terms set by entrepreneurs and adult policy makers where a crude form of paternalism operates. Young people's 'rehearsal for adulthood' is being directed towards the economic cost of leisure and to an accepted perception that young people are unable to provide for themselves. Young people's autonomy, self-direction and initiative are covertly being choked. Such a situation confounds the issue for young people because leisure becomes located in activities rather than in expectations¹⁴³. This view is supported by the manner in which public policy for leisure in France is being re-visited. One approach that is being contemplated is the stepping up of the provision of facilities and activities with the intention of creating a wider and more democratic choice. However, such a move does not necessarily translate itself into a broadening of the range of users (Correspondent Report, France, 1998).

In fact, the mass congregation of young people at strategic points outside entertainment venues (hanging around!) is not an uncommon sight in many countries. Their main concern seems to be that of 'being with other young people' without necessarily consuming that which is provided. The prices charged are exorbitant and the special offers/concessions' advertised may even be damaging. For example, the price of a bottle of water at rave parties (where dehydration from excessive exertion is a common cause for concern) is often put at a level three times higher than the normal (Collin and Godfrey, 1997). Special offers also take the form of a high entrance fee to a place of entertainment with the proviso that all drinks consumed on the premises will be free of charge. Excessive drinking, and its consequences, is not unknown to occur in such circumstances. Whether or not young people hang around or actively sponsor particular venues, an exclusionary effect of leisure provision can be detected.

In order to substantiate this argument further, reference may also be made to the evaluation report, by an expert group appointed by the Council of Europe, of the Netherlands Youth Policy. The following statement is found in Section 5.3:

It is probably so that no youth policy initiative can do away with or substitute the expanding private commercialisation of leisure-time and related activities. This is a general trend in all developed societies. Young people tend to register as potential customers much more easily, influenced uncritically by media advertising - and having difficulties in escaping the commercialisation process of every aspect of social life. Today the trend is to persuade everybody to adopt a new life-style, so that the rest of the process will be automatic. Since young people are more keen to experiment with new social fashions and life-styles they are also more easily manipulated: "A good customer is an un-critical, passive and automatic customer".

¹⁴³ Correspondent's Report, Malta, 1998

Also here - within the area of leisure-time activities - there is a challenge for non-formal educational initiatives: to counteract this development towards passive consumerism, which could also be a danger for civil society.

Which brings us to the issue of risk points and vulnerability. Coleman's (1979) focal theory is a reminder of young people's need to relate with peers and adults so that both 'hanging around' and participating in an adult world can be considered as 'legitimate' expectations. What may then be termed as representative of paths to risk and vulnerability is the environment (Coffield's ecological theory) by which young people are surrounded. Perhaps, Coffield's use of the term 'ecology' is now better understood since, as has been pointed out, the elements of exclusion through commercialisation, through inaccessibility via high cost, and through lack of opportunity to create self-styled niches, form part of the leisure domain.

Conclusion

When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have him around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years (Mark Twain).

Mark Twain's sense of humour and insight are evident in this innuendo. The exclusive suggestion portrayed in the remark about his father's learning ability should prompt adult society to reflect on its perception of good practice while encouraging young people to be more accepting of social realities and to be aware of intentions. It took Mark seven years to realise that his father's advice and foresight were after all well placed. Seven years was also the period of time in which responsibility, for paving the way to Mark's successful journey, lay with his father. Perhaps, it would not be out of place to apply Twain's observation to the arena of risky and vulnerable ways of the leisure domain, and to end this discussion on a positive note.

One fundamental principle that emerges from the foregoing exposition of leisure trends in European countries concerns the wisdom required in laying the foundations for a society jealous of its principles of equality and equity in leisure education and provision.

Good practice, based squarely and primarily on young people's needs, and success stories built around the current and pervasive concerns of social structures, should be placed on the agenda of researchers and given publicity much more than is presently being done. It is rather unfortunate to note that there were only a few such instances reported by National Correspondents. Much more was made out of research regarding the identification of trends leading to possible vulnerable situations. Is the overall situation so bleak as to require constant reminding of what should be done rather than of what is being done? For fairness' sake, the following extracts from Correspondents' reports deserve mention:

- The idea of provision that is more tailored to the individual now seems to be gaining ground with the introduction of sports tickets and leisure tickets that give young people *à la carte* access to leisure activities (France, 1998).
- The 'Scoops' (secondary-school based) and 'Young Enterprise' (post-secondary school based), business-oriented projects, aimed at encouraging young people to

produce rather than to consume; and the '*Skolasport*' scheme - a free, week-end school of sport run by the Department of Youth and Sport (Malta, 1998).

- Issues such as human rights, poverty, the third world, peace, discrimination, and environment are of great interest to young people and they are ready and willing to comment upon them (Netherlands Youth Policy evaluation).
- Endorsement and application of the European Charter on the participation of young people in Municipal and Regional Life' (Slovak Republic).
- It is important to notice a high level of readiness [among young people] to be involved in voluntary activities (Slovenia).
- That is, leisure time policy has not primarily been directed toward vulnerable youth. The intentions had instead been to guarantee a high standard for all and thereby counteracting vulnerability in high-risk groups (Sweden).

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This report focuses on patterns of vulnerability among young people in Europe in the spheres of education, the labour market and leisure. It argues that while there are examples of good practices which help to reduce the vulnerability of specific groups, there is a lack of macro-level policies aimed at reducing extreme vulnerability. The report identifies major risk factors and obstacles to young people's passage into autonomous adulthood and provides insights into successful initiatives to reduce their structural disadvantage. This report will be of interest to policy-makers, researchers and practitioners in the youth field.

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