EMPLOYMENT

“My work motivates me. It is demanding; I have an opportunity to learn new things. It offers professional growth.”

Jan, 24

Preparations for this year’s Regional Monitoring Report, *Young People in Changing Societies* included two Focus Group discussions and nine individual interviews on the subject of success at work in *the Czech Republic*. Participants included ‘high-flyers’ grasping the new opportunities offered by the market reforms in the region, those in low-paid jobs, and a number of employers. Many of these participants are featured in the “Voices of Youth” panels in the Report, particularly in *Chapter Four*, which focuses on youth employment.

The Report finds that a young people in the region are entering a labour market that bears no resemblance to the one that existed under communism. At that time, unemployment was virtually non-existent and entry into the labour market was guaranteed and even enforced. The ‘transition generation’ faces a new phenomenon: youth unemployment. In 1998 the average rate of youth unemployment stood at 30 per cent in the 18 transition countries for which data are available – twice as high as the overall unemployment rate.

The Report also finds, however, that the changing nature of employment may work in favour of young people, who are already particularly active in the new private sector. While young people earn less than adults, the income gap in the region is remarkably small and sometimes smaller than in the market economies.

It suggests that young people are particularly likely to benefit from training and self-employment programmes, as well as programmes to help those seeking their first job. Many countries now put more emphasis on active measures such as counselling, personal development and skills training. However, funding for such policies remains low and most transition countries spend only a tiny fraction of their GDP on such measures.

More effort is needed, says the Report, to create active labour policies targeted at young people and to monitor the impact of those already in existence. National employment agencies are under-used by both employers and job seekers, with only an estimated 30 per cent of vacancies reported to labour offices. Improvements in the services offered by these employment agencies would be of particular benefit to young people. The Report also calls for more analysis of the employment situation of the ‘transition generation’. Understanding how young people search for work, where they work and under what conditions, would help in the development of effective labour policies.

Click here for *discussion guidelines on employment*. 