

THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
The State Institute for the Protection of
Family, Maternity and Youth

THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF
ACTION FOR YOUTH

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through the *National Programme of Action for Youth* (henceforth: National Programme) the Republic of Croatia, pursuant to Article 62 of the *Constitution of the Republic of Croatia*, expresses a clear and long-term commitment to the creation of the social, educational, cultural, material, political and other prerequisites for the permanent benefit of youth and their active, complete and responsible participation in the society.

The National Programme establishes the fundamental principles of the government policy toward youth and the working plan by which the Republic of Croatia assigns basic tasks to the bodies in the system of the government administration for the implementation of this National Programme. All the units of local and regional self-management, all the associations of citizens and other active members of the society, such as religious communities, political parties, universities, scientific institutions, are also invited to contribute to achieving the common goals for the benefit of youth through mutual impetus and work.

Youth is a particular period of life during which, besides physical and spiritual maturation, there is also the process of the integration of the individual into the society. During this period, young people are expected to develop social skills and abilities in order to assume their permanent social roles in all the areas of human activity. This process generally lasts until a young person has achieved a suitable degree of social autonomy, responsibility and independence. It is difficult to determine and define the age limits of youth in an unambiguous way and the formal definition of this period of life differs among various institutions of the United Nations, European Union and national institutions. When speaking about young people, one generally thinks of the age group between 15 and 24 years of age, but the period of youth in many cases is prolonged until the age of thirty, primarily because of the longer duration of education and the difficulties in finding employment, which prevents earlier achievement of social independence. Therefore, this National Programme refers primarily to activities for the benefit of young persons between *15 and 29 years of age*.

The National Programme emphasizes the particular importance of social welfare and general social activities in the following areas:

- ❑ *education and informatization*
- ❑ *employment and entrepreneurship*
- ❑ *social policies*
- ❑ *health care and reproductive health*
- ❑ *active participation by youth in the society*
- ❑ *building civil society and volunteer work*
- ❑ *youth culture and free time, and*
- ❑ *mobility, dissemination of information and counseling.*

In addition to providing objective insight into the conditions under which young persons are living today in Croatia, the National Programme of the Republic of Croatia establishes priority strategic goals for the activities of all the policymakers toward youth during the period until the year 2008. **The strategic goals of the National Programme** are as follows:

- ❑ promotion of legislation addressing the needs and problems of youth;

- ❑ defining the tasks of individual spheres of competence, the authorized bodies of the government administration and the public institutions in fulfilling the international, constitutional and legal obligations of the Republic of Croatia in connection with youth;
- ❑ improvement of the quality of life of all the citizens, especially youth, taking their interests into consideration and pursuant to the European standards and models of good practice;
- ❑ inclusion of the greatest possible number of young persons in decision-making processes, especially regarding the needs and problems of youth;
- ❑ to reduce the average age of the members of the administrative structure of the society;
- ❑ mobilization of all the potentials in the society, especially youth and the most creative members of the community, for creating new material and spiritual values, for open and self-sustaining development, an active role in the process of European integration and the development of a democratic society and a country governed by the rule of law;
- ❑ by creating the prerequisites for the affirmation of youth in Croatia, achieve the reduction of their emigration rate and promote the return and integration of emigrants back into the Croatian society;
- ❑ to build a constructive relationship and partnership with the nongovernmental organizations of and for youth and the units of local and regional self-management in achieving the goals for the benefit of youth.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

2.1. Basic Statistical Indicators

According to the data provided by the State Institute for Statistics, based upon the 2001 population census, 898.734 people between 15 and 29 years of age live in the Republic of Croatia, who comprise 20,25% of the total population. From 1953. up to now, the percentage of young persons in the total population has declined constantly, which means that the Croatian population on the average is becoming increasingly older. In 1953. young persons between 15 and 29 years of age comprised 27,73% of the population, in 1961. this age group comprised 23,75%, in 1971. the percentage of young persons continued to fall to 23,40%, in 1981. young persons comprised 23,34% and in 1991. they comprised 20,67% of the total population.

The most significant consequences of these negative demographic trends are the reductions of the ratio of the fertile population and actively employed population, who must care for and support an increasingly large older age population.

Despite the decline in the percentage of young persons in the total population, we are confronted with a growth in the number of unemployed citizens in the Republic of Croatia up to 29 years of age. According to the data of the State Institute for Statistics, a total of 96.757 persons had been registered as unemployed at Croatian Institute for Employment in 1984., while in 1991. this number rose to 160.397 persons. In 1999. the unemployment rate of young persons between 15 and 24 years of age was 33,8% during the first six months and 39,2% during the second six months. In the first six months of 2001., this figure was 41,2%.

Young persons enter marriage at increasingly later age, therefore the percentage of the young who enter marriage prior to 29 years of age is declining (in 1981. it was 38,44% and in 1991. it was 31,93%). At the same time, the percentage of divorces of persons younger than 29 years of age is increasing (from 2,5% to 2,87%). The increase in the percentage of unmarried persons in the age group from 25 to 29 years of age in recent years has been 34,7%.

Existing data on young persons indicate a trend toward prolonging youth and the socioeconomic lack of independence. The causes lie, among other factors, in the prolongation of the educational process, more difficulties in finding the first and permanent employment, more complex conditions for access to material goods (regular incomes, credit, ownership of real estate property etc.) and the marginalization of youth in the decision-making processes.

In the continuation of this survey, indicators and evaluation of conditions have been cited according to specific areas, indicating at the same time the increasingly diminishing opportunities of youth to meet their own needs, interests and goals under the existing social conditions and circumstances.

2.2. Education and Informatization

2.2.1. Formal Education System

Formal education system is chronologically and hierarchically structured starting from kindergarten, elementary school and secondary school, to the institutions of higher education. The goals of education are clearly defined, as are the social functions of the educational institutions. The educational processes in institutions of formal education are prepared, organized, implemented, methodologically conceived and evaluated. Schools are the basic source of knowledge and skills for young persons, and due to the inclusion of a large number of young persons they represent one of the most significant factors in their socialization.

Formal education in the system of secondary education is carried out by the secondary schools, private schools with accreditation, university extensions and other institutions.

According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Sports, approximately 95–97% of the elementary school graduates enroll in secondary school, which is not compulsory in Croatia, and approximately 85–90% of the secondary school students graduate within the regularly allotted time period.

The plan and programme for secondary schools are established by the Ministry of Education and Sports. The programmes for secondary schools are classified as follows:

- (1) gymnasium (general education, without acquiring professional qualifications but instead assuming that education will continue)
- (2) secondary schools providing professional training that are divided into four-year programmes (for acquiring professional qualifications that permit enrollment at the university level), three-year and two-year programmes (for acquiring qualifications in industry, business and crafts);
- (3) artistic education (musical arts, visual arts and design, the art of dance).

The criteria and instruments for the evaluation of the educational system are poorly developed. The present system of secondary schooling is burdened by numerous problems. Significant problems include many formal shortcomings: the rigidity of the programmes that are difficult to adapt to the interests of the beneficiaries (students, parents, local communities etc.), inadequate and obsolete school premises and equipment, as well as obvious material poverty. There are problems in grading students (overemphasis on the knowledge of facts and very poor evaluation of the level of skills, the negative psychological consequences of nonobjective grading etc.) and the non-standardized evaluation of knowledge at the transition from secondary school to institutions of higher education (secondary school graduation examinations, college entrance examinations). It is particularly important to emphasize the problem of horizontal and vertical movement within the educational system, especially considering the students who continue their education after completing three-year professional training programmes in secondary school and who lose the status of secondary school students and all the rights that regular students would be entitled to when they enroll in a four-year programme (the fourth year of secondary school).

The introduction of new technologies is inadequate and slow, primarily due to material poverty. This represents a genuine threat to the future of education in the Republic of Croatia. This problem will not be resolved merely by establishing and equipping informatics classrooms. It is necessary to use the new media and apply new educational strategies (interactive programmes, multimedia etc.) in every area of education as a daily practice.

The problems of content are even more significant. The orientation toward learning facts still prevails, which is one of the causes of the overburdening of students (the amount and crudeness of the scientific material in the school curricula are subjects of concern). It is often forgotten that the kind of knowledge, acquired through our secondary school education process, becomes rapidly obsolete and useless. Therefore, it would be necessary for secondary school education to establish a network of knowledge and skills that would serve as the foundation for future knowledge and lifelong learning. Small number of elective subjects, optional programmes and extracurricular activities do not permit students to develop their potentials and express their creativity. Entire pedagogical area should be redefined in the sense of values and the preparation of young persons for life in the community (social responsibility and solidarity, human rights, conflict solving, environmental protection, teamwork, communication skills etc.).

Formal school system assigns tasks to students and directs expectations accordingly; however, pursuant to facts mentioned above, a type of paradox occurs: the expectations and obligations are in conflict with the students' personality, needs, desires and abilities. School system should provide students with support during their maturation, i.e. recognize their autonomous human values and make it possible for them to develop their full potentials and overcome their difficulties by themselves.

Changes have appeared recently in the context of the decentralization of education, which has opened opportunities for greater influence from the beneficiaries (parents, local communities etc.). Through the introduction of student councils in secondary schools, formal prerequisites for young persons to become directly involved in the planning of school operations, participating in decision making, solving problems and introducing innovations, have been created.

The Institutions of Higher Education Act stipulates the organization of higher education institutions (universities, polytechnic schools, colleges, arts academies and advanced schools), the structure of studies and the position of students and teachers. Approximately 120,000 students were enrolled in institutions of higher education in Croatia during 2000/2001 academic year. The number of graduating college students in the year 2000 was 13,507. According to available information, 33% of enrolled students complete university study (8% of whom finish within the allotted time period).

Poor horizontal flow represents a particular problem in higher education system, thereby producing a related problem which is the choice of programmes and courses. Higher education institutions are autonomous in creating their programmes; however, questions regarding the level and adequacy of the programmes have been frequently raised, accompanied by the demands for changes having the goal of meeting technological and civilizational achievements in modern society. Undergraduate university study is overburdened and insufficiently interdisciplinary, with just a few optional programmes. In connection with this, it is necessary to establish a new role for students in order to enable them to influence the creation of programmes, choice of contents and work (study) methodology.

Higher education institutions are facing serious problems regarding the shortage of expert scientific and teaching personnel and the advanced average age of university teachers. Since 2000, the Ministry of Science and Technology has committed additional efforts and funds in reaching increased number of scientific recruits at universities. For this purpose, the municipal authorities in several cities have awarded the use of a certain number of apartments to young scientists and university teachers, in order to ease their financial situation and stimulate them to pursue further study at the university level. Although well conceived, the educational system and the system of hiring scientific recruits have been inadequate in aggravated conditions of their employment (due to public services employment prohibition), after scientific recruits had reached their Ph. D. status and experience in scientific & research work at the government budget expense.

The problems mentioned regarding undergraduate studies are also present in postgraduate studies, which fail to meet contemporary tendencies in academic education. These studies are mostly performed without sufficient specialization of contents, without continuous work with constant mentor support and without independent research work impetus.

In Croatia, there is insufficient appreciation of the importance and role of expert studies, preparing students for particular professions which are more in demand on the labour market than scientific research. As a rule, expert studies are more flexible because they can, due to shorter programmes, react more rapidly to changing demands of the labour market, facilitate employment and satisfy personnel requirements in all fields.

Despite the dispersion of higher education institutions, a large number of young persons, due to aggravation of social conditions, fail to enroll in the field of study that corresponds to their abilities. This leads to a reduction in the equality of educational opportunities and to negative selection during enrollment at university study. Restricting influence of the unfavorable socioeconomic standard is being partially compensated for by the scholarship system and by providing support for the room and board costs of regular students.

2.2.2. Education Accessibility and Participation of Youth

Due to the immeasurable significance of education regarding employment opportunities, fundamental life decisions and a productive, independent and quality life, the society bears particular responsibility of providing prerequisites for equal accessibility of education to all young persons. It is particularly important to develop a system that will provide a chance to young persons of lower socioeconomic status, to those who have special educational needs and to those who are in unfavorable situation in other ways. The accessibility of education to everyone represents the most powerful factor in equalization of the opportunities in life.

In Croatia, the number of young men and women who complete education is equal at all levels, and there is no significant difference in the accessibility to education according to sex. The traditional distribution of roles according to sex is still evident in the choice of schools and professions.

Students with developmental difficulties are being increasingly included into educational programmes at regular schools, which contributes greatly to their integration into the community. Nonetheless, a significant number of secondary school students still complete their education in specialized institutions. Too large number of secondary school students in classes and the lack of sufficient training of teachers for various needs of children, have an unfavorable impact on the quality and outcome, as well as the acceptance of the integration process. Opposite to elementary schools, secondary schools, advanced schools and institutions of higher education make fewer efforts to provide for greater accessibility of young persons with disabilities. Physical barriers are present in the majority of schools. Progress in the accessibility of university studies to young persons with disabilities has been achieved by the introduction of accessible lodging facilities for persons with disabilities in the Student Dormitory in Zagreb. Unfortunately, such lodging opportunities are not available in other university centers.

Basic education in ethnic minorities languages is organized, to various degrees, for Italian, Czech, Hungarian, Serbian, Austrian and German national communities or minority groups, as well as for the Ruthenian, Ukrainian and Slovakian communities. Secondary school education is being performed for a small number of national communities or minorities.

In Croatia, there are no tuition fees for secondary school students and regularly enrolled students at institutions of higher education, which is a great contribution to the equalization of the opportunities for secondary school and university students from impoverished families. The cost of textbooks and school supplies, however, often represents a limiting factor. Access to education is also limited for secondary school and university students who do not have suitable secondary or advanced schools in their place of residence. Therefore, investments into lodging facilities for secondary school and university dormitories, and programmes promoting their openness and accessibility, represent a necessary step in facilitating secondary school and university education outside the place of residence. In addition to issues of students' standard of living, lodging capacities of secondary school & university student dormitories and food, it is necessary to emphasize here the problem of students-commuters. In some regions outside large centers, bus lines enabling secondary school students to attend school have been cancelled. The inaccessibility of transportation represents a limiting factor regarding student participation in informal education, sports, cultural and other activities, too.

Within the funds for the operation of the public institutions of higher education in Croatia, funds are being provided in the state budget for covering part of the costs of food (70.3% of the determined price of a meal), of the costs of the lodging of regular students (50% of the determined price of lodging in a student dormitory) and subsidies for subtenant lodging (210.00 kunas monthly).

Since the 1996/1997 academic year, scholarships have been awarded (lodging, food and cash allowance) to students-veterans of the Croatian War of Independence, to successful students, to students engaged in studies for jobs in short supply, and to those who will work in regions of particular government concern and on the islands, after the completion of their studies. In order to compensate for the termination of children's allowances for students, as of 2002 scholarships are being awarded to other regular undergraduate students. Moreover, since the 1996/1997 academic year the Ministry of Science and Technology has awarded annual government scholarships to particularly successful undergraduate and graduate students, as well as to postdoctoral students. It should be mentioned that the scholarships are also provided from the budgets of the local self-government units (cities and counties), of individual universities and of individual companies.

However, relatively large number of scholarships and various forms of support, due to their relatively low amounts, still do not cover the expenses of students from low-income families who study outside their place of permanent residence. Lodging capacities in student dormitories are insufficient in all the university centers and therefore significant funds are set aside for subsidizing subtenant lodgings (the average number of beds used in the student dormitories by regular students is 8,854, and an average of 12,896 students use subsidies for subtenant lodgings). This problem is particularly critical in places where new studies are being opened, but no corresponding infrastructure is being provided.

Student centers are not organized appropriately and they fail to meet all the needs of students (besides food and lodging, various cultural, sports and similar contents). Rare student associations are burdened by numerous problems — a lack of suitable premises for work, and the financing of student NGOs has not been adequately resolved either. The Croatian Student Association, legally established as the umbrella student association, represents actually just a small number of students and therefore fails to meet its purpose. Via their representatives, students are included in the work of the higher education institutions' bodies, but their number and influence are almost insignificant. Generally, students are poorly organized, both in the work of the professional associations and in the promotion of their own interests.

In 2001, Croatia joined the *Bologna Declaration* (of 1999), thereby joining mutual declaration of the European Ministers of Higher Education, and made a commitment to the goals expressed within this area. The main goals of the *Declaration* are the coordination of the higher education systems, the international competitiveness of the educational programmes, facilitating employment on the European labour market, and mobility. By accepting the *Declaration*, new perspectives appear, and the entire academic community is facing the situation of adjustment to new standards. The drafts of changes in the Institutions of Higher Education Act are also following this direction, focusing on the universities and not on the colleges. At the same time there have also been demands for the assessment and evaluation of the higher education contribution to overall social development (economic growth and other dimensions of national development).

2.2.3. Education of Adults

Young persons who have dropped out of the regular educational system can enroll in some of the organized educational programmes within the education system of adults. The goals of this system are development of abilities, expansion and acquiring of new knowledge and improving professional qualifications. Education system of adults has two functions: compensation (basic training) and the function of continued further education and training (and is therefore an important segment in the concept of lifelong learning).

The most important tasks within the education system of adults' programme are functional literacy, completion of elementary education, professional education of unqualified persons, and retraining of unemployed persons. Education of adults is performed by secondary schools (public), schools with public certificates, university extensions and other institutions, according to special curricula and programmes adapted to adult persons, which are based on the curricula and programmes of regular secondary schools. Recently, educational centers have been introduced within large enterprises because the need for such training has been increasingly recognized.

According to the statistical data of the Ministry of Education and Sports, during the 2000/2001 academic year, 370 institutions (secondary schools, open universities and other institutions) in Croatia were engaged in accredited adult education programmes. During the same period, approximately 25,000 persons were educated within these institutions, approximately 11,000 of whom acquired new professions (through the programmes of retraining and additional training). In Croatia, however, there are no systematic data on the number of young persons who left regular education and on those who continued education in adult education programmes, which ought to be monitored statistically in the future.

Current adult education system does not exist as a separate system; it is legally regulated as a subsystem within the system of regular education. The perspectives of adult education (as well as other education) are comprehended in the concept of lifelong learning, and the problem of adult education should be regulated by separate legislation (Adult Education Act), which would uniform all the educational levels of adult education (from elementary school to higher education). Furthermore, it is necessary to provide financing and necessary support from the society as a whole.

2.2.4. Informal Education

Informal education comprises not only organized but also spontaneous educational activities, established outside the formal educational system. It is adapted to the needs and interests of the beneficiaries with the purpose of acquiring a series of life skills, specific knowledge, and learning about the values and goals of democratic and civil societies. The level of development and variety of the programmes of informal education represent a reflection of the level of the society development as a whole. Informal education is exceptionally important for the contemporary concept of lifelong learning, i.e. within the concept of the orientation towards "learning society". It occurs as a response to the new demands that are not merely the acquiring of knowledge, but also the achievement and development of skills under the changing circumstances of contemporary society and labour market. Despite this, there seems to be an inadequately developed awareness of the need for ongoing education and training within young people.

In our country, many institutionalized programmes are being performed as informal education and they are structured according to the interests of the users (open universities, university extensions, cultural centers, centers for learning foreign languages, driving schools, professional associations and companies, religious centers, programmes of artistic education, mountain climbing and sports associations, other nongovernmental institutions etc.). The number of young persons who participate in such programmes is neither known nor monitored. The basic problem is that these educational programmes are relatively poorly accessible, i.e. in general they are available to young persons in large centers and, more often, to those with higher financial means (generally, programmes are charged), and a system of their presentation has not been developed either.

A separate section of the informal education system are educational programmes organized and conducted by associations of citizens. These programmes are a large and exceptionally poorly used resource in education, particularly in the context of work with young persons, formation of groups based upon common interests and organized use of free time. The programmes of informal education are generally insufficiently appreciated, and they are also a poorly recognized domain of education by educational authorities and public, despite trends in the contemporary world toward their recognition and appreciation.

In recent years, an increasingly large number of citizens' associations with educational programmes has appeared, but they are not provided with significant support. However, such programmes are particularly acceptable to youth because they do not experience them as imposed or compulsory. They are a response to the quest of an individual who has a natural and inborn desire to learn. Young people choose the areas and topics, and they experience a sense of recognition and success because their interests and abilities are given priority, while the things which they do not know are usually recognized in schools. Young persons are usually poorly or not at all informed about the opportunities for informal education because there are no information on available resources and programmes.

A characteristic of developed democratic societies is the appreciation of the criteria of competitiveness in the assessment of skills and knowledge acquired through informal education. Therefore, informal education will expand when the society becomes more open, innovative and less dependent on the government, and employers will increasingly accept it then.

Besides formal and informal education, in the concept of lifelong learning, **self-education** is of exceptional importance, i.e. the process by which an individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge through daily experience (in the framework of the family, friends, peer groups, media and other factors in the personal and social environment).

Each of three mentioned types of education (formal education, informal education and self-education) has a specific role and is necessary for lifelong learning. Therefore, the changes in educational policy should be more flexible and open to appreciation and emphasis of their roles.

2.2.5. Informatization

All secondary schools in Croatia are equipped with computer hardware and appropriate software support. They are currently being equipped with projectors and portable computers,

which will make it possible to use informatics potentials even outside computer classrooms. Based upon a contract between the Ministry of Education and Sports and Croatian Telekom, all the schools have received an ISDN connection to the Internet and a determined number of free hours of Internet use. All schools have e-mail addresses and the majority of them have web-sites.

However, the quantity or type of technological equipment is not the most important indicator of the degree of informatics development. Teachers in the schools have not been systematically trained to work on computers so far, and the possibilities provided by modern technology are not generally utilized in the preparation and performance of lectures. Informatization of education, besides mass training of teachers in shortest possible period of time, must represent strategic orientation toward modernization and development. The Council for the Informatization of Education has devoted particular attention to programmes for training of teachers enabling them for the use of informatics-communications technology, as well as to changes in the plans and programmes of teaching informatics and to the digitalization of the educational contents. The question of informatization cannot be reduced to the introduction of informatics as a compulsory subject, but it should rather be integrated within the overall process of the systematic overcoming of resistance to the adoption of new knowledge and technologies and creating conditions for it.

Although the number of personal computers sold on Croatian market has grown considerably, there is still a general problem that Internet is used by just a small part of the population in Croatia, mostly by youth. So-called Internet cafés, where one can use Internet for a fee, represent a privilege available in several larger cities only. This is certainly influenced by the fact that Internet services in Croatia are still very expensive. The rectors of all the Croatian universities have recognized this problem and they have, in a separate statement, called attention to the problem of slow informatization of higher education due to delays in the construction of the Croatian Academic and Research Network, CARNet. At this moment, there are approximately 60 locations of academic and research institutions waiting to be connected to CARNet. This backlog has occurred due to the policy of Croatian Telekom, which does not perceive the academic research community as its strategic partner in the promotion of new technologies, but instead attempts to squeeze it into its modest range of standard services, for which it charges commercial (generally high) fees.

2.3. Employment and Entrepreneurship

2.3.1. Unemployment and Employment of Youth

Existing problems in our society, generated by the structural economy crisis, intensified by unsuccessful policies for its solution, affect the lives of youth and prolong their social and economic dependence and social marginalization. In this respect, actual employment problems which are not specific only for youth, but apply to all unemployed persons regardless of age, have particular significance. Nevertheless, unemployment is always significantly more evident among youth, and if it lasts for a longer period of time, it slows down their achievement of socioeconomic independence seriously. However, since unemployment is a structural problem, it can not be resolved by partial programmes. They can only make the problem less acute. In this sense, a comprehensive governmental policy for solution of the economy crisis represents the only effective approach in the long run.

In the context of youth employment, problems specific for youth are nonetheless recognized. These are, for example, the lack of a mechanism that would provide gradual transition of youth from passive to active part of the population, the lack of processes through which they could acquire necessary experience for their first job, and the inaccessibility of financial support for their entrepreneurial initiatives. A particular problem is the fact that young persons feel almost entirely dependent upon the assistance of public institutions, and that their expectations on the government and its institutions are unrealistically high.

At the end of December 2001, according to evidence compiled by the Croatian Office for Employment (henceforth: Office), 395,141 unemployed persons were registered. 164,365 of these were between 15 and 29 years of age, i.e. 41.6%. In this age group, 78.5% of the young persons had secondary, high school or bachelor's degrees, 7.1% had completed elementary school or were semiskilled, and 14.4% were unskilled.

For a large number of jobs, suitable work experience is required for employment, which represents a particular difficulty in youth employment. At the end of October 2001, in the age group from 15 to 29 years of age, there were 82,472 persons or 50.7% without suitable work experience. Short-term unemployment prevails among youth at present: 83,477 persons or 56.9% wait up to one year for employment, 45,082 (30.7%) from one to three years, and 18,197 persons (12.4%) wait longer than three years for a job.

In the period from January to October 2001, there were 72,470 persons (from the records of the Office) in the age group of between 15 to 29 years of age who found jobs, more precisely 18,685 or 35% more than during the same period of the previous year. The majority of employed young persons were skilled or highly skilled workers (45.7%), and secondary school graduates (28%). According to the educational level, skilled and highly skilled workers had the highest rate of finding jobs (33,152 or 45.7%), whereas those with college degrees had the lowest rate (3,462 or 4.8%).

Employment, particularly hiring of young persons, represents the priority of the social and economic policy in Croatia. Thus, at the beginning of 2002, the Government introduced *the Programme of Giving Impetus to Employment*, based upon an unemployment analysis accompanied by a separate analysis of the unemployment of young persons from 15 to 29 years of age.

In the package of six measures intended for giving impetus to employment, two of the programmes are directly focused on the assistance in hiring of young persons. Five measures of the programme entitled *From College to Work*, anticipate the co-financing of highly educated young persons employment, and the programme *From Classroom to Workroom* co-finances employment of skilled young persons in trades.

The Programme of Giving Impetus to Employment has been guided by the principle of a complex and complete approach, and contains measures for the co-financing of employment, self-employment and education, with the goal of raising employment abilities. Therefore, in addition to the basic activities of the Office for Employment, coordinated activities of the public sector structures, in the area of employment promotion, must be considered within the framework of the Programme, too.

In addition to this Programme, through its constant regular activities the Office provides professional assistance to the unemployed and assists them in choosing and seeking for professions and employment (information dissemination and counseling).

In 1998, the Office developed five new programmes with the goal of influencing labour market motion and promoting new employment (employment measures, self-employment measures, loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, public major construction projects, and taking care of redundant employees).

Within the framework of the measures intended for giving impetus to employment programme, the Office co-financed employment of 7,540 young persons of up to 30 years of age who had no prior working experience. With the measure of employment with additional training co-financing (loss of knowledge and skills as a consequence of long-term unemployment), 7,431 persons were employed, 4,459 or 60% of whom were young persons of up to 30 years of age. The co-financing of professional training, retraining or additional training, included 3,119 persons, 2,027 or 65% of whom were younger than 30 years of age.

The Office also implements a separate project financed by the European Training Foundation, with the goal of reducing unemployment of youth in two counties (Bjelovar - Bilogora County and Požega - Slavonia County) using the experience of other European countries on the field of local partnerships. Through the cooperation of social partners at local levels (the Ministry of Education and Sports, local self-government, schools, Croatian Office for Employment, local entrepreneurs, enterprises and unions), a programme for training and employment of young persons, who are qualified for professions that are not in demand on the labour market in these two counties, is being prepared. It is anticipated that positive experiences, concerning the creation of local partnerships, will be expanded to other counties in Croatia, too.

Besides measures mentioned above, many other attempts are being made in Croatia to create a favorable climate for the Labour market development. The programmes intended for crediting entrepreneurial projects under conditions which are more favorable than market conditions, performed by the Ministry of Trades, Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship, and the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, also promote new employment. Development agencies and entrepreneurial centers, which promote innovations and entrepreneurship in their work, are operating in various cities.

Only strong economic growth during several next years can raise employment rate and reduce unemployment significantly. Croatia is committed to market economy and entrepreneurship as fundamental determinants of its development, and therefore it is necessary to create wider stimulating conditions for entrepreneurship as soon as possible, eliminating simultaneously all the obstacles which restrain its growth. The reforms, arising from the process by which Croatia approaches membership in the European Union, could in this sense accelerate significantly the development of market economy, entrepreneurship and structural adjustments, which will influence, among other things, youth unemployment reduction, too.

2.3.2. Entrepreneurship as a Resource

Strategic orientation of Croatia, expressed in the programme entitled "Croatia for the Twenty First Century", is oriented toward development of small and medium-sized enterprises as an

impetus for overall economic development. Development of that part of the economy is stimulated by recently adopted *Impetus for Development of Small Business Act* and *Programme for Development of Small Businesses*. This Programme has included, as one of the strategic determinants and goals of development, the education for entrepreneurship and training of youth for entrepreneurs through regular and supplemental education, which is one of the basic prerequisites for achieving development, too.

Through education for entrepreneurship and within entrepreneurship, the possibility to acquire necessary professional knowledge and skills needed for successful operations, are being provided. Development of such skills increases overall employment opportunities of youth and contributes to development as well. Young people, as the bearers of new knowledge and skills of adaptation to new technologies, are a social group which guarantees a multiple refund of investment. Therefore, only their quality training and education can guarantee the efficiency of planned measures for the development of the economy.

Besides the problem of the lack of entrepreneurial spirit among young persons, and the need for a more active approach to development of entrepreneurial skills, it is necessary to develop a system of mutual connection among those performing incentive measures and young people themselves. A large number of potential young users do not have information on the existing incentive measures and opportunities, or they fail to obtain appropriate counseling support during their first encounter with some types of incentives. Furthermore, the performers of incentive measures are not informed sufficiently about the needs of young persons as potential beneficiaries.

2.4. Social Policy Toward Youth

Social policy toward youth is used here with the meaning of the system of guided social intervention (support and services) in the function of social risks overcoming, social inequalities compensation, equalization of the opportunities in life, and social solidarity and integration stimulation. This is necessary for better social integration of all youth and particularly of the groups needing additional attention and support.

Young people as a whole are in an unfavorable socioeconomic position in comparison to other age groups. This means that young persons do not own property (real estate, savings and stocks), they have difficulties in finding employment and obtaining housing, and are dependent on their parents' support. Transitional processes increase the degree of uncertainty for the young persons who, having completed their education, have no clear perspectives on the opportunities for employment, professional development and leading independent and productive lives.

Croatia shares some of the European trends: during the 1990s youth became the poorest population group in the countries of Central and Northern Europe. Countries in transition are exposed to additional risks of social differentiation, of social welfare level reductions, and to the appearance of new risks (organized crime, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, human beings' trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation).

Basic determinants of the social position of the majority of youth and their integration degree are as follows: inclusion into educational or working process, family support, local community and peer groups. Young persons who drop out of school prior to acquiring qualifications, those

who wait a long time for jobs after they graduate, and those who are employed in insecure, poorly paid and risky jobs, are all in difficult situations. Besides that, subtenants and parents of small children have significantly higher living expenses. Owing to the high degree of family solidarity and long-term support from parents, the majority of young persons are not left on their own, which reduces social risks to a great extent. However, not all families are in a position to support their young members. It is estimated that approximately 10% of persons within Croatian population live below national poverty threshold. Socioeconomic situation is particularly complex in regions which were affected by war. Young persons from impoverished and dysfunctional families require greater social assistance in order to equalize their chances in education and employment.

Reaching quality life and social mainstream inclusion are additionally aggravated for young people who live in regions distant from major centers (islands, villages and small towns), where there are very few possible choices for education and employment, and reduced accessibility of information or organized services adapted to the needs of youth.

A disintegration of the community has occurred in the regions directly affected by war, so young people live surrounded by divisiveness and tensions. The issues of the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes, the reconstruction and return of property, finding employment, reintegration into society and recovery of co-existence are daily challenges for youth in these regions, where economic activity is still of low intensity. Programmes implemented by foreign and domestic nongovernmental organizations, focused on economic revitalization and social integration, compensate for the consequences of the war in just a limited manner.

Socially undesirable position of youth is also connected with the problem concerning difficulties they face in finding apartments of their own. This is due to expensive rents of apartments leased by private landlords, to the problem of unregistered leasing contracts, to the inaccessibility of available subsidies for living expenses, to modest range of social apartment construction, to the inaccessibility of incentives for apartment building due to the inability of young persons to obtain loans, and to the total costs of apartment construction.

These factors increase social vulnerability of youth, and probably influence to a certain extent increasingly delayed establishing of families and parenthood. Social standard and the process of modernization require employment of both parents, and there are no satisfactory supporting social services to facilitate this.

Besides all mentioned above, some groups of youth are socially isolated to a greater extent due to prejudices or a breakdown of relations with their families and the community. In certain socially isolated groups, there is the problem of their recognition. Just a few groups are broadly accepted and recognized as characterized by greater vulnerability and by social risks to which they are exposed, while just a limited percentage of the public is aware of the marginalization of others. Research on the attitudes of younger adolescents shows that over 50% of them believe that persons with disabilities and poor people are treated unjustly in Croatia, while somewhat less than half of them believe that members of other ethnic and religious communities are unjustly treated, too. Research studies have also shown that there is a social distance toward certain national minorities, the greatest of which is toward Romanies. Particularly negative stereotypes, avoidance and/or fear exist among the public toward some specific groups, which additionally intensifies their social isolation (for example, persons of

minority sexual orientations, victims of commercial sexual exploitation, persons suffering from AIDS or mental illness, etc.).

2.4.1. Young Persons Who Fail to Graduate from Secondary School

Among youth, particularly adolescents, there is a group causing a great concern and it is composed of those who do not attend or have failed to graduate from secondary school. This group is especially socially vulnerable because it is exposed to the risks of poverty (limited employment opportunities) and the development of socially unacceptable behaviour.

There are very few data on the reasons why young persons fail to enroll or to graduate from secondary school, inappropriate attention being devoted to them, too. In villages far away from major cities, there is a frequent argument that transportation needed to attend school is expensive and that transportation connections are poor. A certain part of youth, who experience developmental disorders, do not receive sufficient support from school, family or local community in a manner acceptable to them, so they give up their education.

A particular problem is inappropriate inclusion of social services and local communities in creation of the mechanisms for social support and integration.

2.4.2. Young Persons with Disabilities

All social interventions involving persons with disabilities must have the goal of achieving the greatest possible personal independence, economic independence and full integration into society. This requires approval and coordination of all the sectors on various political levels, but genuine integration must and can only occur at the local community level.

Young persons with disabilities form a heterogeneous group, with various types and degrees of abilities' limitations. Heterogeneous nature of this group of young persons is increased by the fact that some of them, due to their basic disabilities, require both medical and educational assistance, and often social, i.e. material assistance as well. Education represents both Constitutional and legal obligation, and should be monitored as such by other systems (healthcare and social welfare) as well. Although approximately 15,000 young persons exercise various rights to support (including cash allowances, institutional and adoptive care), there is surely a certain number of students with developmental disorders who are, because special education programmes are not available at all schools, deprived of certain rights from the social welfare system, generally due to the lack of the system cohesion, but also due to the fact that parents are not sufficiently acquainted with their rights.

In the processes of growing up, becoming independent and active inclusion into society, young persons with disabilities encounter multiple limitations and barriers. Besides those imposed by their illness or disability, there are even greater barriers deriving from the prejudices and ignorance of the community, from outdated models of care for them, and their overprotective or rejective families. There are also numerous physical barriers that prevent their access and participation.

During the period of youth, exceptionally important decisions determining the future of a person with a disability take place. Parents and professionals make decisions which determine considerably the quality of life, future level of education and training, and type of support for

an independent life and decision making process. Such decisions can be contrary to the desires of the young person and to the principle of the greatest possible independence. Therefore, it is extremely important to emphasize the necessity for coordinated activities of three basic systems - educational, social welfare and healthcare systems.

Within various organizations of persons with disabilities, young people have a marginal position, they find it difficult to articulate their requirements and they fail to participate sufficiently in decision making. Therefore, these organizations are not always the best advocates of the specific needs and interests of youth.

Integration into peer groups and organized cultural, recreational and sports activities, excursions and trips, are to a great extent impossible for persons with disabilities due to physical barriers and the lack of sufficient education of youth for acceptance and assistance to their peers with developmental difficulties.

The opportunities for independent living for young persons with disabilities are generally limited to a choice between living with parents or living in an institution, which is not acceptable from the standpoint of the maximal possible independence. Small residential communities, as a form of sheltered accommodation within the framework of the local community, are still very rare and are used by a very small number of persons. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has recently proclaimed a new, more modern concept that includes, among other features, decentralization, deinstitutionalization and inclusion.

2.4.3. Young Persons with Behavioural Disorders

The period of youth is the time of potentially more frequent appearance of risk behaviour and a large number of young persons violate social norms, without any permanent impact on their development. Although only a small percentage of young persons violate the law and repeat criminal offences, their share in total criminality rate is significant. Violations of social norms and laws are not harmful only to the victims and the perpetrators, but they harm overall social recognition of youth, because they contribute to labeling of young persons as more problematic than other age groups.

Data on behavioural disorders and criminality among young persons are greatly determined by the definition, manner of registration and efficiency of various services (police, judiciary and social welfare services). Thus, with a change in the law and the criminalization of the possession of small quantities of narcotics, there was an apparent increase in the number of criminal offences committed, although this was only a case of their being defined differently. At the same time, the Juvenile Courts Act was adopted and it emphasized the need for out-of-court proceedings involving minors and young persons who are of full age. Thus, the number of young persons in conflict with the law, who found themselves in some form of center for social welfare treatment, increased significantly.

It should be emphasized that Croatia, like all other former socialist countries, had a low rate of juvenile delinquency in comparison to the West. While there was a great growth in criminality in other transitional countries, according to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, we can at the moment note a large increase only in relation to the possession of narcotics in Croatia (which is greatly the consequence of stricter legal regulations), and it has also been recorded that there was a certain quantity growth of criminal offences against property. However, a

decline in the number of young perpetrators of serious criminal offences against life and body has been recorded.

The abuse and resale of psychoactive drugs have been recognized as significant social problems. Social interventions are not being exhausted through stricter reporting and punishment measures, but a highly diversified system of interventions, intended to provide support to addicts in treatment and reintegration into society, is being developed.

Behavioural disorders which are still not serious enough to be considered criminal offences, can have equally destructive consequences. Violent behaviour in schools has been recognized as a serious social problem which requires a separate programme of measures, issued by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in 2001. It is necessary to continue development of a system for preventing behavioural disorders as one of the basic prerequisites for criminality reduction. Monitoring of risk factors in the behavioural disorders' development has also been noted as lacking sufficient cohesion among various systems in charge of care for children and youth. Schools, for example, being institutions through which the majority of youth passes, are most often not acquainted with the activities of centers for the social welfare focused on families and children, and cannot offer appropriate treatment to a schoolchild who requires it, and, of course, vice versa, inappropriate informing of the centers for social welfare prevents timely treatment of the family as well.

In several recent years a few incidences of hooliganism, involving a large number of injured persons and great damage to property, have been recorded at sports events in major cities, especially in Zagreb and Split. The extent of violence and conflicts exceed acceptable or anticipated forms of regional rivalries' or political orientations' manifestations by the individual groups of fans.

Several instances of racist hooliganism have been recorded in Zagreb. Some groups represent openly racist and post-Nazi ideas, and violence toward members of national minorities, homosexuals and persons with different political views. Family background and parents' lack of concern regarding their children's companions and manner of spending their free time, neglect of the educational function of school, as well as insufficient interest of other factors in the local community, regarding the needs and problems of youth, have contributed to leaving some young persons on their own and to the influence of the street; they have also contributed to the establishment and manipulation with informal groups of youth, with the creation of a situation in which the reactions of the police and the administration of justice, through the application of the existing legal means and measures, sometimes do not achieve effective prevention of radicalized behaviour. The occurrences of racism and xenophobia in Croatia are marginal, which does not mean that they cannot get reinforced, as it has been happening in other countries. In this context, it is very important to empower social mechanisms of prevention and timely sanctioning of such occurrences.

We may say that in our society one may notice inappropriate reliance upon measures of penal punishment reaction, in the area of the prevention of behavioural disorders among youth, with unacceptable lack of work on timely identification and performance of healthcare, educational and family-legal measures, social protection and emergency measures insuring education and appropriate development of youth.

The response of the society toward violators of the law younger than 18 years of age (in exceptional cases, young persons of full age below 21), differs significantly in comparison to

the attitude toward young persons who are considered to be adults. The most modern approaches have been built into *Juvenile Courts Act*, with emphasis on avoiding deprivation of freedom and on positive measures of restitution, on special responsibilities, out-of-court settlements and work for the benefit of the community. Despite some progress, the majority of the measures have still not been exercised in practice because of the fact that their implementation requires provision of numerous prerequisites, such as suitable places and programmes for performance of socially useful work, youth counseling centers intended for fulfilment of a special obligation of inclusion into the work of counseling centers, and trained mediators for implementation of out-of-court settlements.

Centers for social welfare implement training measures and supervision of youth with behavioural disorders, as well as the supervision of families which fail to provide their children with adequate care. Children and youth with behavioural disorders can be separated from their families and placed in institutions for social welfare or included into their daily treatment. In addition to centers for social welfare, youth with behavioural disorders can be sent to an educational institution, reform school or juvenile prison.

The effectiveness of institutional treatment of youth with behavioural disorders is questionable. Out-of-date methods, low living standards and inadequate numbers of professionals do not assure the type of surroundings necessary for positive changes in behaviour. There is a lack of small, flexible programmes, adjusted to the individual (residential-therapeutic communities, specialized adoption and similar).

Many centers for social welfare include outside associates into the implementation of increased care and supervision measures, and good results have been achieved recently through inclusion of youth as assistants and counselors (peer helpers, "Big Brother - Big Sister" programmes, and similar). Trained and motivated young assistants represent a valuable and insufficiently utilized resource in the prevention and treatment of youth with behavioural disorders.

The family, school, local community, sports clubs, religious and nongovernmental organizations, etc. participate in a system of interventions included into primary prevention of behavioural disorders. However, the system is not complete, fully conceived or coordinated. Secondary (selective and induced) prevention often occurs under supervision or through direct intervention by social services. In recent years, nongovernmental organizations have made a significant contribution to secondary prevention.

Young persons who were forwarded with the goal of the re-socialization to institutions or prisons, as well as youth treated because of addictions, in general lack support for their reintegration into their local community and families. The lack of such a support regularly leads to a repetition of criminal offences.

Young people are not just the perpetrators of criminal offences, but also their victims. Data from the Ministry of Interior Affairs indicate that in the past five years, the quantity of criminal offences against property, in which young persons were injured, has been doubled, and a rise has also been recorded in criminal offences concerning sexual abuse of youth. Recorded rise in criminal offences involving neglect and abuse of children and minors is of particular concern, as well as the exposure of the youth to violent behaviour in the family, which undoubtedly indicates that young persons are often deprived of basic prerequisites for suitable development and protection from their parents, who are by nature highly expected to

provide for them. This indicates the need for development of a programme for more effective self-defense and the prevention of criminal offences where young people are victims.

2.4.4. The Position of Young Romanies

The Romanies are undoubtedly in the most difficult social position of all the national minorities and ethnic groups in Croatia, as a result of the high degree of their social exclusion. The Romanies are well integrated in very few environments, and assimilated in others.

Stereotypes and social marginalization have led to social mimicry (the tendency of not declaring their national identity and inclination toward the majority), due to which it is not possible to state with certainty how many Romanies live in Croatia today, and the estimates vary widely. In recent times, the assessment by the UNICEF Office in Croatia that there are approximately 40,000 Romanies living in Croatia has been widely accepted. One part of the Romanian population does not have Croatian citizenship, which prevents such individuals from exercising their fundamental civil rights and makes access to all the forms of social protection impossible. Besides this group, the Romanies, who live in ghetto settlements without any kind of infrastructure, are in the worst position.

According to the same data, it is estimated that only approximately 10% of the Romanian children complete elementary school, and the number of young Romanies who attend and graduate from secondary school is nearly insignificant. The causes for this generate from the tradition and their way of life, but also from the social lack of acceptance that Romanies experience. The children grow up in difficult socioeconomic circumstances, with inadequate healthcare, food and hygiene. Young persons without education, exposed to prejudices, find it exceptionally difficult to find jobs. Traditionally, young Romanies establish families very early in life, already in adolescence, and have no access to contemporary knowledge about family planning or childcare.

Public services frequently refuse responsibility for the position of Romanies, citing the principle of nondiscrimination and equal treatment for all, regardless of ethnic affiliation. However, it is the responsibility of the society and institutions to recognize those who are in an unequal position and to develop effective measures for reducing social exclusion and equalizing opportunities. Besides social protection, it is necessary to coordinate active policy for all sectors and provide flexible, culturally adapted programmes of education, healthcare and health education, promoting responsible parenthood, employment, accommodation etc.

2.4.5. Young Persons without Family Support

The group of young persons who have for various reasons been left without family support is numerically small, but it requires great responsibility by the society in terms of equalizing opportunities. Public services become “institutional parents” of children and youth for whom their families cannot care, and these services have the responsibility of supporting these young persons until they become independent. Currently, there are approximately 230 young persons between 15 and 21 years of age in residential centers for children without suitable parental care. In addition, a certain number of young persons live in reform institutions and specialized

institutions for children with developmental disorders who cannot expect support from their families after they leave those institutions.

Institutions do not provide youth with life skills necessary for good social integration. After completing secondary school, young persons must leave residential institutions, although they often do not have anyone or any place to go to. Despite efforts by the centers for social welfare, lodging, employment and integration are very difficult to achieve. Many years in residential institutions have an undesirable effect on the development of young persons who are placed in such institutions in order to protect them from the risks and dangers to which they had been exposed while living with their families, due to the absence of special residential institutions for children with behavioural disorders and the unbridgeable difficulties in implementation of differentiated treatment, under circumstances of living in a group.

Within the framework of the social welfare system, great advancement has been achieved through the establishment of small residential communities in which young persons are trained for independent living. Unfortunately, only several apartments are currently in use for this purpose, but the expansion of capacities for this form of care has been planned. However, this does not represent a permanent housing solution, which should be provided by the local community. The responsibility of the society for the education of youth without parental care ends with the acquiring of a profession in secondary school. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has only recently, for the first time, provided financial support to several young persons who successfully enrolled in college.

2.5. Healthcare and Reproductive Health

Social changes which significantly affected the health of the entire population, particularly the health of children and youth, began in Europe ten years ago. Three changes and/or social occurrences, which will lead or have already led to changes in the health of the young population, should be emphasized: migration of the population (east-west); changes in the healthcare systems (healthcare reforms in a large number of European countries for various reasons and with entirely opposite tendencies); powerful orientation toward healthcare privatization in transitional societies (as contrary to the process of the return to a public health orientation, government responsibility and financing of healthcare, in developed countries).

These changes have also occurred in Croatia and have affected the health of the youth, changing the "health profile" of this population. In the pathology of young persons, an increasingly significant place is being occupied by disorders and diseases connected with certain kinds of behaviour, habits and lifestyles (excessive alcohol consumption, smoking tobacco, usage of psychoactive drugs, risky sexual behaviour and sexually transmitted diseases, inadequate physical activity, malnutrition, eating disorders and the consequences of traffic accidents), as well as psychosocial problems (suicides and mental disorders), while in contrast to many European countries, the problem of contagious diseases is significantly less expressed (owing to many years of persistent immunizations). However, in our country there is a significant problem of injuries and deaths caused by easily accessible firearms, as well as landmines and explosives left after the war.

From the viewpoint of the healthcare services, young persons from 15 to 19 and from 20 to 29 years of age, differ significantly in terms of their biological and sociological characteristics.

Young persons from 15 to 19 years of age are still in the period of both physical and psychological growth and development. Most of them are still involved in the organized systems of training and education, and are connected with their families. The group of young persons from 20 to 29 years of age is in the process of further education, work or looking for work, achieving economic independence and/or establishing their own families. The differences between these groups are also evident from data representing a part of the health indicators on the state of health of the population in Croatia.

According to the data of the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the leading causes of deaths of children and young persons from 15 to 19 years of age, in the year 2000, were as follows: injuries (including traffic accidents and suicides), tumors, diseases of the circulatory system, diseases of the nervous system and congenital malformations. Traffic accidents, which are among the leading causes of death, are considered to be preventable deaths today. It is possible to influence them through suitable health-educational measures (education and inclusion of the entire community in programmes for the prevention of injuries and accidents), and repressive measures (for example, the control of mandatory usage of helmets when riding a motorcycle, exclusion of drivers under the influence of alcohol from traffic). In 1995, out of the total number of persons killed in traffic accidents, 31.3% (approximately 1,200) were young persons from 18 to 29 years of age. According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 655 persons died in traffic accidents in the year 2000; 236 or 36% died in accidents participated by young drivers of up to 24 years of age.

Diseases and diagnoses confirmed during the primary healthcare of children and youth from 7 to 19 years of age in 2000, according to the Croatian Institute for of Public Health data, were as follows: in the first place, with 49.3%, were disorders of the respiratory system, contagious and parasitic disorders, followed by 7.9%, of disorders of skin and subcutaneous tissue, injuries and poisonings, disorders of the eye, and disorders of the urinary and reproductive organs. In recent years, an increase in allergic disorders, which occur as dermatological allergic disorders (rashes, dermatitis and eczemas) or disorders of the respiratory system (asthma), has been noticed.

For the group from 20 to 25 years of age, according to the same source, we have exact data on the reasons for hospitalization, while on the morbidity and mortality of this population, we only have reports on the age group from 20 to 64 years of age. The reasons for hospitalization, according to the groups of diseases, are different for women and for men. For women, pregnancy and delivery are in the first place, while injuries are in the first place for men. Furthermore, as far as women are concerned, there are frequent disorders deriving from the group of other factors that affect health, disorders of the urinary tract and reproductive organs, endocrine disorders and mental disorders. As far as men are concerned, injuries are followed by mental disorders, disorders of the respiratory system, disorders of the digestive system and contagious diseases. It should be emphasized that the leading diagnosis, being the reason for hospitalization among men, is the group of mental disorders (schizophrenia), followed by internal injuries of the head. Among women, the leading diagnoses for hospitalization concern reproductive health, pregnancy and post-delivery status, and depression in the low tenth place.

Many years of continuous monitoring show that the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and other psychoactive substances is increasing. The results of investigations conducted in 1995 and 1999 (ESPA95 and ESPA99) among first-year secondary school students in Croatia indicate that the number of young persons who consume psychoactive drugs is rising and that

their number is not insignificant. Thus, in 1999 among fifteen-year-olds, 30% of the boys and 25% of the girls smoked more than one cigarette daily; 37% of the boys and 19% of the girls had become drunk three or more times in their lives; 18% of the boys and 13% of the girls had used marijuana at least once in their lives, and 4% of the boys and 5% of the girls had used heroin.

There is also a growing incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, primarily infections caused by chlamydia and HPV. According to data from the "Andrija Štampar" School of Public Health, among female student population at the University of Zagreb, the prevalence of chlamydia infections is 15–18%. The last investigation among the college and secondary school students showed that young persons have inadequate knowledge concerning sexuality and reproduction. Only 34–44% of the respondents regularly used a condom, and approximately 90% of the students had a sexual experience that was connected with some risky sexual activity such as sexual intercourse without protection, "one-night sex", sexual contact under the influence of some psychoactive substance, including alcohol and drugs.

Work with young persons with developmental disorders requires a multidisciplinary approach and intersectoral cooperation. In this group there are young persons with problems in learning and the formal acquiring of knowledge, with psychological, emotional and mental disorders, behavioural disturbances, disabled or handicapped persons etc. Research in other countries and in Croatia confirms that 10–20% of people of all ages have specific difficulties in learning. Youth with chronic diseases, due to illness or consumed medications, fail to achieve appropriate success in school corresponding to their abilities. Prejudices regarding the abilities of persons with developmental disorders and negative attitudes toward them significantly influence their success in school and their advancement at work. Various forms of the abuse and neglect of youth are a serious public health problem. Results of investigations in Croatia (a representative sampling of secondary school students in one county) have shown that 29.7% of the secondary school students were emotionally abused, 16.0% physically, 8.2% sexually, 13.0% were neglected and 33.8% had witnessed violence.

As far as the state of the mental health of the young in Croatia is concerned, we do not have an overall picture due to the lack of research and the nonsystematic monitoring of this area. This problem is particularly important in our country due to the consequences of the war and post-war period. The results of most recent studies in our country show that 18% of the children from the group of returnees have noticeable depressive reactions. Researches in other countries show that a significant percentage of young persons (30%) have been involved in multiple high risk kinds of behaviour that could have exceptionally negative consequences.

From this brief presentation, it is entirely clear that as far as the expectations, demands and needs of the various age groups of young persons are concerned, there should be a specific approach to health and healthcare for this population. Systematic healthcare education has therefore been organized in some countries, both separately and in coordination with schools and in connection with education, such as school medical services with teams in charge of secondary schools or colleges.

The planning of healthcare for youth should be directed toward the following:

- ❑ preventive and health education programmes;
- ❑ development of intersectoral cooperation;
- ❑ organization of healthcare near the places where young people live, go to school and work in order to make services accessible, at the same time enabling the utilization of

all the advantages and opportunities for working with and for young persons who are connected with the relevant environment;

- ❑ inclusion of young persons in the implementation of healthcare programmes;
- ❑ promotion of the development of specific healthcare measures and specific training of physicians;
- ❑ promotion of the establishment and work of multipurpose healthcare centers with multidisciplinary teams;
- ❑ timely diagnosis of prevailing and recognizable disorders, diseases and problems of youth;
- ❑ monitoring of health indicators and evaluation of performed activities.

In Croatia, there is a long and successful tradition of organized healthcare for schoolchildren, college students and youth. Fundamental changes for offering better quality healthcare for youth should be based upon the suitable norms and standards, development of multidisciplinary teams, development of referral centers, and coordination of the programmes of measures with the needs of schoolchildren, college students and youth, with continuous professional activity, education of professionals and other associates.

2.6. Active Participation of Youth in Society

The question of the active participation of youth can be divided into three main problems:

1. the lack of confidence toward youth, prevailing in the social and political system;
2. the lack of confidence that young persons feel toward social and political institutions and
3. mutual lack of confidence and insufficient cooperation between youth NGOs and political institutions.

Young people are characterized by minimal social and political influence, even regarding problems that primarily concern their generation. Although young persons between 18 and 29 years of age represent 22% of the Croatian electoral body, and although they constitute 15% to 30% of the membership of political parties (most often in the form of party youth), in the bodies of the authorities, from the Parliament to the local levels, they are extremely poorly represented. For example, from 1990 until today, the percentage of young representatives in the Parliament ranged from 0 to 2%. For the local authorities, there are no systematic data but it is realistic to assume that the percentage of young persons is unsatisfactory. The participation of youth, from the formal level point of view, in a multi-party Croatia worsened in comparison to the socialist period when, for example, the percentage of youth in the Parliament was between 5% and 9%.

In public executive bodies, established after 3 January 2000, there has been unsatisfactory progress in this sense, too. There are only 10 young persons among approximately 130 of the most significant appointed officials. The situation has not improved significantly after local self-management elections in 2001. Since the personnel base for the appointment of executive authorities had been prepared by the political parties, it was obvious that the majority of the parties were still not inclined toward the promotion and affirmation of their young activists.

There is no suitably developed governmental institution in charge of youth in present organization of the public administration, as is the case in the majority of European countries.

This concerns public administration body with suitable level of authorization and appropriate financial, organizational and personnel support for more active participation of youth in social and political life. There are many examples indicating that political structures (on the party and government levels) attempted to prevent, weaken or minimize initiatives appearing on the youth and student scene during the nineties.

Researches have shown that the majority of young persons are aware of their own political marginalization, and that the reason for this is to be found in the lack of readiness among older persons to relinquish a share of the political arena to them, but also in the incompetence of their own generation. They are provided with insufficient information about civil society, democracy, the process of political decision making and the manner of political activity. Although the majority of young persons consider that their political involvement has a purpose through various forms of organization, a very small number of them decide to participate actively. The interest in politics and political events has dropped significantly, so that at the end of the nineties, half of the young persons were completely uninterested in politics, and only one tenth of them declared themselves as having a particularly great interest. The majority of young persons are dissatisfied with the level of the representation of their generation in public bodies, and therefore think that, in order to improve their participation in the decision-making processes, it would be necessary to apply so called quotas for youth in the party election lists.

Simultaneously with poor participation in political institutions, there is somewhat greater participation of youth in various NGOs and associations of citizens. However, it often happens that young persons active in this sector avoid cooperation with political institutions. Since both sectors have the same field of activity, being the improvement of the quality of life and the social status of youth, such cooperation, exchanges of information, ideas and experiences, as well as financial support would lead to better results.

Negative demographic trends in Croatia and the departure of qualified young persons from the country are a warning that it is necessary to improve the overall social status of youth and initiate actions that would have the goal of increasing their participation in the social processes and institutions. This is particularly important for Croatia as a transition country, confronted with serious democratic deficits and economic problems.

Satisfactory democratic transformation and stimulation of economic development depends to a great extent on the degree of youth inclusion in the actual processes in the Croatian society. There are two reasons for this: young people are the least burdened by experiences from the past which slow down the achievement of desired changes, and as the most vital and most flexible segment of the population, they are potentially the most creative social force. In order to express their presumed creativity, it is necessary for them to have a suitable social arena in which they can actively participate, encouragement and education on the manners of entering this arena.

It is therefore important to persist in changing public awareness about the importance of the active participation of youth, opening of social and political space for youth activity, informing and educating youth to participate in a democratic society, and improving cooperation between the governmental and nongovernmental sectors active in this area.

Finally, in the procedure of the inclusion of Croatia in the European Union, one of the important conditions will be the adequate inclusion of youth in the life of the society.

2.7. Youth and Civil Society

The development of a just civil society, in the global context, characterizes the process of social development accompanying construction of the political community on the principles of democracy, tolerance and global solidarity. *Civil society* or *society of citizens* implicits the trends to evaluation standpoints of individuals and social groups participate in the forming of the activities of the community. The inclusion of youth, as the objective bearers of development, in the process of the civil society construction is of particular significance for the democratic development of Croatia.

Since in Croatia there are no satisfactory institutional mechanisms in charge of youth, the inclusion of youth into the development of the society and the participation of youth in decision making, is based on self-initiative and independent organizational forms (nongovernmental organizations, cultural initiatives, informal groups ...). Basic manners of active participation of youth in construction of the society and the development of the community are as follows:

- ❑ the work of interested nongovernmental organizations, and organizations and groups of young persons active in the development of the local community;
- ❑ youth volunteer work in social institutions, humanitarian and nongovernmental organizations;
- ❑ youth media activity through press, radio stations, publishing houses and the Internet.

In Croatia, the *Programme of Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Nongovernmental and Nonprofit Sector* was defined in 2000, in which all the types of associations as active bearers of the development of the civil society were included — social initiatives, religious organizations, unions, local communities, institutions, foundations, funds, interest groups and male and female citizens' initiatives. This programme is based on the list of values that the members of the civil initiatives and active citizens articulated as the basic guidelines for the development of just social order: *social change, cooperation, solidarity, social justice, transparency, personal power and responsibility, participation in decision making, appreciation of differences, self-organization, appreciation of organizational differences and constant education.*

Youth nongovernmental organizations receive financial support from the state budget, through competitions held by the NGOs Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, and through the executive bodies of the local and regional self-management units. There are neither developmental guidelines nor systematic support on the national level for the area of individual volunteer work or media activities, and there are not enough studies or research on the frequency or opportunities for this type of activities.

2.7.1. Youth Organizations

Independently organized groups and associations of and for youth, as well as the third sector as a whole, are relatively new phenomenon in Croatia. Among approximately 360 associations in Croatia dealing with children and youth, there are approximately 130 associations of young

persons, and besides them there are some 30 active informal groups of youth. They represent the only form of independent youth activity for improvement of the conditions in the society, which is particularly important in transitional societies characterized by social apathy, increased emigration and turbulent transformation of institutions and social processes. Civil (the third) sector of youth is in the early developmental phase: there is neither representation nor coordination at the national level, nor are there institutional conditions for sustainable activities and expanding activities; a small number of nongovernmental organizations are engaged in youth issues and they lack constant contents which would represent youth groups to other youth groups.

A particular problem is the lack of a national umbrella association (of the type that operate in the majority of other countries) that would include the majority of the most important national youth NGOs. Up to now, several attempts have been recorded regarding the establishment and activities of such an umbrella association, but none of these initiatives (mainly due to political manipulation) was accepted and legitimized by the majority of the relevant national associations. The absence of such a coordination, established on the principles of free associating, autonomous operating and democratic decision making, hinders and slows the communication between youth NGOs sector and the state and local self-management, keeping Croatia outside the framework of the most important European youth organization (the European Youth Forum), and many opportunities which are offered through this organization in the areas of cooperation, exchange and the youth education.

The most frequent activities of organized youth are as follows:

- ❑ cultural and media programmes: issuing publications, theater, music, fine arts, Internet;
- ❑ organization of youth free time;
- ❑ facilitating communication between young persons and various social subjects in the local community;
- ❑ environmental protection and sustainable development promotion;
- ❑ human rights protection and promotion;
- ❑ sports and recreational activities;
- ❑ participation in the campaigns and programmes of nongovernmental organizations;
- ❑ organization of "street" manifestations and performances.

The greatest problem regarding the activities of youth associations is the availability of adequate premises. Only a small number of environments have premises planned for youth activities, and when they exist, they are generally inadequate and often offered under unacceptable conditions. This situation aggravates the possibilities of new members joining, continuous activities and systematic providing of youth services.

Besides premises, operational problems are caused by the following:

- ❑ a lack of continuous financial support, which leads to inadequate public presence and activity;
- ❑ non-regulated relations with the authorized bodies: lack of recognition of volunteer and good will engagement, lack of communication channels, unfamiliarity with formal procedures, lack of criteria for achieving support, or desire for cooperation;
- ❑ lack of personal engagement tradition, so that young people are subject to apathy and fail to recognize the opportunities of their situations' changing;
- ❑ inaccessible educational institutions;

- the dominance of the passive and consumer culture in the media, public and advertising places, and in places of cultural and artistic activity.

2.7.2. Youth Volunteer Work

Youth volunteer work is a particularly important area for acquiring work experience and skills, and for active youth participation in social development and social solidarity affirmation. Through volunteering, young persons are provided the opportunity to direct their professional interests, help others and advance certain activities in their communities.

The system of volunteer work in Croatia is not developed and volunteer opportunities are possible almost exclusively through nongovernmental organizations or a small number of humanitarian institutions. Information on the places for volunteering are not accessible to the general public, and a formal mechanism for evaluating volunteer work has not been established. All of this influences the lack of interest of youth in volunteer work, with additional impetus of negative experiences by those who have decided to volunteer.

Croatian legislation does not recognize the concept of volunteer work (the volunteer work from Article 29 of the *Labour Act*, which refers to internship, is not volunteer work in this sense). Croatia has not ratified the Convention on the Promotion of International Long-Term Youth Volunteer Work, of the Council of Europe, empowering volunteer services and permitting free international mobility of young volunteers. The status of foreign volunteers in Croatia has not been resolved because their work is considered to be another form of work according to the *Employment of Foreigners Act*.

A network of youth work camps, which would directly support and promote youth volunteer work on programmes of common interest to the members of the local or general community, has not been developed in Croatia. Modest attempts to revive the idea of youth work camps (the Task Force of the Croatian Youth International Association and of the Croatian Emigration Association from the early and mid nineties) did not gain followers for their new initiatives. The potential which lies in youth volunteer work is exceptionally great and usable in the most varied areas: from the renewal of the infrastructure in regions affected by the war, providing of assistance to geographically and socially isolated communities, planting forests and environmental protection, to the socialization of cured addicts, archeological research etc.

2.7.3. Youth Media Activities

Youth presence in the public area, as well as enabling youth to use the media and informatics technology, represent important prerequisites for youth participation in social and economic development. Providing youth with the opportunity to create actively their own public space, means enabling them to promote, through the exchange of ideas and opinions, their own values, to examine critically the trends in the society and to become conscious of their own role in their country development.

A complete youth informing system does not exist. Former weekly and monthly publications for students and youth, which played an important role in the affirmation of democracy in the socialist political system, and particularly human rights and political freedoms, lost their social role with the establishment of a democratic system and therefore vanished soon. However, due to the existing youth social position marginalization and the impossibility of public expression of their problems and ideas, there is an evident need for serious and influential media for students and youth. Media “from youth to youth” in Croatia exist in the form of school and student magazines, informal periodicals that are generally connected with the music and cultural scene (fans), or are presented by the contents developed on Internet. Due to the lack of a system to support such media or their developmental strategy, the intensity and number of young persons included in such activities is very small.

2.7. Youth Culture and Free Time

Youth culture is one of the fundamental elements of the identity of young persons and an exceptionally important area of their affirmation, communication and lifestyle. This is actually an area through which young people critically re-examine traditional cultural forms and their heritage, as a part of their identity, and create new forms and esthetics, creating room for their self-affirmation and activity.

The concept of youth culture is frequently understood as the alternative and non-institutional cultural creativity of youth, but these segments are merely a part of the youth culture because it includes many forms of institutional cultural and artistic creativity through which a much larger number of young people attempt to reach recognition.

The Ministry of Culture promotes cultural creativity of youth in various ways, especially through its Administration for Cultural Development, which followed alternative culture and youth culture, multimedia culture and development programmes as a separate programme segment in the year 2001.

In the area of musical activity, there were numerous manifestations which assemble creative young people, as well as numerous projects of dance ensembles and modern dance expression. Theatre festivals also have their relevancy, as well as the programmes from the area of cultural-artistic amateurism, films and video creativity by children and youth. There are numerous multimedia activities which popularize youth culture through electronic media.

Youth free time is a fairly disorganized area upon which the state has irrelevant influence. Organized care for youth free time remains at the level of the nongovernmental organizations, religious communities and still infrequent activities by the bodies of local and regional self-management.

Participation of youth in the decision making system and creation of free activities are inadequate and irrelevant. When young persons themselves initiate, form and begin to implement programmes giving a concept to their free time, the local self-management often fails to find a way to support them in doing so, and does not provide the space they need for work. Therefore, many initiatives and undertakings, confronted with high operational costs, rental costs, etc., gradually become commercialized and thereby, contrary to the basic idea, reduce their accessibility to a wider area of users. Many attempts of youth to organize

themselves and to contribute with their ideas to the local community fail after the initial period of enthusiasm, or are suppressed due to the lack of funds and premises for gathering, but also due to the lack of confidence by the community.

As far as the area of the free time is concerned, young persons also feel the problem of professional sports' privileged status, representing an disadvantage to the recreational and amateur sports which have the function of life quality and health improvement.

Extracurricular sports activities of students and sports activities during free time at school, are most often performed in sports clubs which are generally treated as the foundation of amateur and professional sports. Although basic intention of school sports clubs organizing was to include the largest possible number of students, an exceptionally small (one might even say irrelevant) number of secondary school students participate in sports activities within the school today, which has significant consequences on the youth health condition. Many schools (even when they have suitable indoor and outdoor sports facilities) do not meet necessary standard of maintenance and particularly the standards of equipping. A separate problem is a certain lack of openness by the schools toward sports programmes of clubs and associations.

Disregarding poorly organized sports for secondary school students, they nevertheless still exist as a basic layout, in contrast to university sports which are nearly entirely unrecognizable (both among the public and among the student population). College sports have a certain legal basis in the *Sports Act* and *Student Association Act* but in practice there are no precisely determined financial obligations of the Ministry of Science and Technology. Croatia regularly participates in international student sports competitions (World University Games), although the status of student sports associations has not been resolved and there are no university sports leagues. Therefore students are generally not included in sports activities at their colleges, which has negative consequences upon their health. The use of available space and organizational college capacities would therefore be necessary for more widespread and more active inclusion of students into various kinds of physical exercise and sports activities, in which Croatia has a long tradition, too.

In the current situation, the problems are reflected through:

- ❑ inadequate communication of the governmental and local structures with young persons who create, plan and realize cultural and sports programmes and activities;
- ❑ insufficient quality education in the area of management and production in culture;
- ❑ insufficient inclusion of youth in the processes of decision making regarding the needs, strategies and financing of youth culture and free time programmes;
- ❑ insufficiently developed mechanisms of social recognition and promotion of young talented artists upon completion of arts school and academies;
- ❑ insufficient readiness by local and regional self-management for creating of basic conditions for performance of the activities of youth NGOs (space, equipment etc.)
- ❑ inappropriate conditions for the affirmation of new programmes in the youth culture;
- ❑ the lack of multifunctional centers for youth at the local level;
- ❑ the lack of cultural contents in rural environments and smaller cities;
- ❑ inaccessibility of large sports objects to non-professional youth sports.

2.9. Mobility, Dissemination of Information and Counseling

2.9.1. Mobility

The area of youth mobility includes *educational, cultural and tourist mobility* as well as *international cooperation and youth exchange*. Educational mobility also includes mobility for the purpose of the advanced scientific training of youth. Educational, cultural and tourist mobility are important indicators of the social concern for improvement of general living standard of youth. High level of youth mobility is also a prerequisite for being open to communicate with other societies and thereby learning about them, tolerating and respecting their varieties, as well as for intercultural learning. Mobility, in addition to social education, promotes faster flow of ideas and enrichment of experiences which influence the creation and development of comparative standards.

Educational mobility of youth in Croatia is below desired intensity level and is limited by many factors: social living conditions and economic standards of the parents, the capacities of dormitories for secondary school students and college students, enrollment policy of the colleges and universities, study curricula, employment perspectives etc.

Youth cultural mobility has been seriously reduced, the number of young persons from small places, who attend and subscribe to cultural events and programmes, is decreasing, so that institutional culture has become to a certain degree the privilege of urban youth.

Youth tourist mobility is stagnant; Croatia has got 9 youth hotels, resorts and hostels, with somewhat more than a thousand beds, with only 3 hostels, which have approximately 490 beds, which meet the criteria of the international system *Hostelling International* standards, and which operate throughout the whole year. The organization of scouts has 5 international centers in Croatia, with a total capacity of 600 accommodation places in buildings and camps, of which just 2 centers with only 77 accommodation places operate throughout the year. The universities do not possess any facilities for university students' vacations and recreation. Three most important associations engaged in youth mobility (the Croatian Ferial and Hostel Association, the Scouts Association of Croatia and the Croatian Musical Youth Organization) have less than 15,000 members; less than 5,000 young persons have EURO<26 card, the most important international card promoting youth mobility (the Republic of Croatia has signed so-called Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, by which it accepted the obligation to support the development of this system), whereas somewhat less than 3,000 young persons have ISIC student identity card. In comparison to other European countries, this is roughly half of the rate of entire youth population. The student IKS card has practically no value outside of university institutions and student centers, and also lacks international verification.

In secondary schools, recreational excursions, graduation trips and other travels are noncompulsory extracurricular activities. Such travels are generally not defined by the educational plan and programme, but rather by the annual plan and programme of the school, and are performed according to trends and commercial criteria, without necessary level of educational elements. The consequence of such an attitude toward the role of organized travel is an unsatisfactory level of tourist culture among youth and an exceptionally low rate of their mobility in comparison to other European countries. Moreover, the existing privileges stipulated for the travel of youth are treated as a social category, and not as an instrument for

youth mobility increase. Therefore, the existing system of benefits is fragmented, weak and insufficiently utilized.

International cooperation among youth is seriously lagging behind the needs and possibilities. Only several large youth associations have the status of full membership in central international organizations and permanent forms of international cooperation and exchanges. There is also no agency which would represent Croatia in the *Youth* programme (formerly known as *Youth for Europe*, nowadays being included into it) of the European Union. Consequently, Croatia does not participate in a series of international projects monitored and co-financed by European institutions and organizations.

The international youth exchange (including exchanges in programmes of volunteer youth labour) has been unsatisfactorily developed, and the programme of the *European Voluntary Service*, sponsored by the Council of Europe, is merely in the initial phase. Only several large associations, which have access to European volunteer programmes through European umbrella organizations (for example, the *European Scout Voluntary Programme*), appoint members within exchange programmes. The situation is somewhat better regarding the international exchange of students, and this is due to the activities of specialized, i.e. branch student associations (AEGEE, AIESEC, ELSA, etc.) which send and receive students within exchange programmes and professional internships every year. This mainly involves university students, while students at two-year colleges and private institutions of higher education are generally not offered such opportunities.

Croatian higher education has been increasingly involved into international cooperation through the Council of Europe, UNESCO and rectors' conferences. By signing the *Lisbon Convention* of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, and by participation in the preparation on the *Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century* of UNESCO, Croatia is gradually becoming included in the international currents and legislation from this important area. Youth mobility (one of the main goals of the *Bologna Declaration*), as a part of the processes of integration into the programmes of the European Union, should make study in foreign countries more common and it should promote wider exchange of students. The mobility of students is particularly important for small countries which have the need for foreign students, particularly for young researchers who would provide high level of the research programmes and centers. A prerequisite for greater mobility is effective recognition of professional and scientific qualifications, and it depends primarily on the inclusion of Croatia into European Union programmes. In the area of bilateral scientific and technological cooperation, many contracts, protocols and programmes have been signed, on the basis of which undergraduate and graduate students have the opportunity of completing their studies in foreign countries. There is also the exchange of students and teachers through CEEPUS programme, in which 9 countries are involved (the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Rumania, the Republic of Slovakia and the Republic of Slovenia). This exchange takes place within a network to which certain universities belong. From the spring of 2002 till the spring of 2003, Croatia will have chaired the Joint Council of Ministers. Within the framework of CEEPUS, the universities are represented in 26 networks, and as appointed coordinator they chair three networks. After the Republic of Croatia obtains the status of a candidate for membership in the European Union, Croatia will become eligible to participate in the SOCRATES programme, which, among other things, makes it possible for students to pursue part of their studies at foreign universities within the framework of the common higher education policy of the European Union.

In the area of cultural cooperation, Croatia has already signed many bilateral agreements. However, young persons participate in such programmes sporadically: there are only exchanges involving young musicians, and these are only from Slovenia, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, Russia and France, and with some countries, such as Italy, with which international agreements have not been signed yet.

2.9.2. Dissemination of Information and Counseling

Youth must have a suitable level of available information about their rights and opportunities, and about the programmes and services offered to them. This primarily refers to school and extracurricular activities, especially supplemental forms of education, informal education, engagement in individual projects, scholarships, employment and career development; social, health and supplementary insurance, legal protection, the financing of accommodation, volunteer work, sports and cultural activities, religion, aid in crises, mobility, youth tourism, etc.

In Croatia, there are no classical youth information centers, of the type that exist in other European countries, and only one of their functions is performed by larger Internet clubs and youth tourism bureaus in macro-regional centers. The lack of information centers affects significantly the level to which young persons are informed and the degree of their social activity. The existing organizations of and for youth are not part of a network and do not coordinate their activities. Therefore, their range is limited and they only succeed in engaging a small number of people.

Organizations and institutions engaged in supporting crisis situations have somewhat better developed systems of counseling centers, but they act through implementation of palliative instead of preventive measures. There is also an evident shortage of crisis interventions' teams.

The existing educational system does not have a concept of counseling services for secondary school and college students (which would recognize problems in time and provide information on possible professional assistance and problem solving) at any level. Within the school system, there is not a well-organized counseling service which could be educated for proactive and preventive activities for students. The student desks at universities do not have the function of counseling centers either. Young people are also forced to invest great effort in establishing suitable contacts and finding necessary information in order to exercise their rights and opportunities (for example, young persons who are interested in possible further or supplemental education and career planning).

3. GOALS OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME

The Republic of Croatia accepts its responsibility for creating the conditions and providing all the necessary opportunities for the harmonious development and lives of youth in a safe and desirable environment. Starting from this principle and bearing in mind the need for decentralized activities of all governmental bodies and professional institutions, as well as the possibilities and need for coordinated work with the local self-management and

nongovernmental organizations, the Republic of Croatia, through this National Programme of Action for Youth, *establishes the basic goals of its policy toward youth:*

- ❑ to provide the life with full exercise of human rights and the fundamental freedoms pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations and other international documents relating to human rights for all young persons;
- ❑ to promote mutual respect, tolerance and understanding among young persons of different sexes, races, nationalities, social origins, religious affiliations, cultural orientation, political convictions and other characteristics;
- ❑ to prevent all forms of violence, hooliganism, intolerance, racism, chauvinism and xenophobia through preventive programmes, treatment measures and the consistent implementation of the law;
- ❑ to promote social values which young people can use in their active thinking and in achieving a safe and prosperous future in a society with equal opportunities, social solidarity and socially appreciated creativity;
- ❑ to stimulate youth, using suitable instruments and measures, to participate actively in solving social, personal and generational problems, through their inclusion into the process of decision making at all levels;
- ❑ to promote education and activities building civil society, to cherish peaceful resolving of social conflicts, cooperation, mutual respect and understanding among various nations;
- ❑ to promote and appreciate volunteer work, socially useful activities, solidarity, respect for justice and recognition of differences;
- ❑ to provide an open and up-to-date system of formal and informal education and continued study for all and to promote social advancement adequate to ability and knowledge;
- ❑ to provide opportunities for youth to acquire new knowledge and skills and to widen existing knowledge through lifelong education in order to be qualified for complete and responsible participation in all the aspects of the society, and to achieve productive employment, social security, an independent and healthy life and participation in decision making;
- ❑ to provide equal opportunities in life and reduce the risk of social exclusion and inequality for young persons who live in particularly difficult conditions, youth with disabilities and those who are in other ways in an undesirable position;
- ❑ to promote all forms of the employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship of youth, giving particular attention to employment of young persons and the creation of new opportunities for development in small cities and less developed regions;

- ❑ to stimulate and appreciate the activities of young scientists, researchers, innovators and technologists with the goal of strengthening of the developmental potentials and a society of knowledge;
- ❑ to promote the solutions of the youth housing problems through active policy measures;
- ❑ to eliminate all forms of youth discrimination and marginalization in cultural activity, taking into account the pluralism of cultural patterns;
- ❑ to respect the needs of youth for autonomous cultural expression, structured use of free time, and their need for sports and recreation representing one of the quality of life aspects;
- ❑ to promote charitable donations and establishing foundations for the purpose of providing scholarships and youth education improvement, the promotion of talented young artists and their suitable participation in the cultural life of the society;
- ❑ to promote the cultural, tourist and educational youth mobility which broadens their horizons, opens communication with the world and makes it possible for them to become acquainted with new standards, patterns, methods and types of activity within society;
- ❑ to promote the construction and establishment of various objects of the youth infrastructure;
- ❑ to provide adequate healthcare services to youth, with the goal of improving the accessibility and quality of healthcare services, with the active participation of youth in healthcare programmes;
- ❑ to provide adequate support to youth in the areas of family planning, family life, sexual and reproductive health, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and risk behaviour;
- ❑ to support measures and activities directed toward acquiring of healthy habits and lifestyles, and to promote youth health, with particular emphasis on the prevention of addiction, chronic non-contagious diseases, mental illnesses and behavioural problems;
- ❑ to give impetus to youth to participate actively in programmes intended for the protection and improvement of the environment and self-sustaining development;
- ❑ to support the decentralization of programmes for youth implementation, giving impetus for improvement of youth lives in underdeveloped regions;
- ❑ to support the work of youth NGOs and NGOs for youth in programmes for their general benefit and their civil awareness empowerment, engagement and responsibility, respecting their autonomy in work and freedom of independent determination of their own priorities;

- ❑ to advance youth information dissemination system and youth counseling system at all levels;
- ❑ to perform systematic scientific research on youth issues, with the purpose of providing a professional basis for the structuring and implementation of adequate policies toward youth, as well as for their constant monitoring and evaluation.

The Republic of Croatia shall implement its policies toward youth in a coordinated and inter-sectoral manner, with the participation of all the bodies of public administration in the implementation of the National Programme, pursuant to assigned tasks in the Working Plan and subsequently developed programmes originating from this National Programme.

Wherever possible, governmental and public sectors shall leave the initiative and realization of programmes, through which these goals are achieved, to local self-management units, youth NGOs and NGOs for youth, universities and other autonomous segments of the civil society, actively providing material, financial, political and all other available support.

In cases where governmental and public sectors, primarily the implementers of the Working Plan, independently provide the initiative for the fulfillment of assigned tasks, they shall offer partnership and cooperation to the local self-management units and youth NGOs and NGOs for youth, in order to empower them for increased and coordinated activities and to enable them to accept gradually the role of the organizers and independent implementers of the programme.

4. FINANCING OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME

The Republic of Croatia shall provide the funds necessary for the implementation of this National Programme from the funds of the State budget, in such a manner that the implementers of individual measures or activities include their implementation costs into their annual budgetary position plans, pursuant to the determined operative plans for the implementation of individual measures or activities. Pursuant to this, the dynamics for providing and spending the funds intended for the implementation of the National Programme shall be determined every year during the planned five-year period within the procedure of the adoption of the State budget.

With the goal of achieving individual tasks, to be implemented in cooperation and partnership with the local and regional self-management units, their participation, according to the abilities and needs of the local unit, is expected in the financing of the programme, too.

With the goal of realization of particular measures from the National Programme, their implementers are allowed to conclude contracts, requiring approval of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, with international organizations and other interested donators.

5. WORKING PLAN OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME

In an attempt to achieve the goals of the youth policy, the Government of the Republic of Croatia obligates by this Working Plan the bodies of the public administration to implement the measures of this Working Plan within a five-year period (2003–2008).

Public administration body in charge of youth issues (at present the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth) is appointed as a body responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the National Programme.

The implementation of the National Programme shall be performed according to operative plans, which must contain specified implementation activities with deadlines, financial indicators, planned sources of funds and appointed bodies within the public administration system, and the body in charge of coordination of the implementation of the National Programme will give a proposal, containing united operative plans, to the Government of the Republic of Croatia, within a period of 6 months after the adoption of the National Programme.

Measures indicated in this Working Plan are accompanied by public administration bodies as the implementers of these measures. The body in charge of the coordination of the implementation of a particular measure and the work of all the implementers, is specified in the first place (underlined).

Public administration body in charge of the National Programme implementation coordination will submit to the Government of the Republic of Croatia once a year a comprehensive report about the implementation and the results of the National Programme evaluation, on the basis of the reports of all the bodies in charge of its implementation. The report will be submitted latest till 15 March of the current year for the previous year.

5.1. Education and Informatization

1. To promote the importance of continued (lifelong) learning as one of the fundamental strategic guidelines of the educational system. To prepare a programme and implement many activities that would indicate the ongoing need for acquiring new knowledge and development of skills, and to promote knowledge as a factor of success.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

2. To develop regular and separate programmes directed at protecting health and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health

3. To urge young persons to continue their education through the development of a system for timely information dissemination and support to persons interested in continuing their education, thereby facilitating horizontal and vertical mobility. To include local self-management, nongovernmental organizations and employers in the planning of incentive measures pursuant to the developmental needs of the community.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Croatian Institute for Employment

4. To provide material conditions and support for return of young persons, who have dropped out of school, to the system of formal education.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Education and Sports

5. To monitor systematically the number of young persons leaving regular education, and those who have entered adult education system.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Croatian Institute for Employment

6. The development and application of an interdisciplinary approach and the implementation of inter-sectoral measures in order to combat violence and in order to increase safety in educational institutions.

With the goal of increasing the safety in educational institutions, starting from the status of safety in the educational institutions, it is necessary to prepare an interdisciplinary programme of intensive education of the educational-training staff, students and parents, the programming and the protocol for the implementation of inter-sectoral measures, to provide for the necessary changes in the educational work of educational institutions and for the changes in the work and relationship of the authorized public bodies and institutions toward the school, from local level to the state community.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Interior Affairs; the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management

7. To prepare a catalogue of informal educational programmes offered by institutions, NGOa and economy subjects on the level of every county. The catalogue should be accessible to youth at information centers and places where young persons gather.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations and local self-management units

8. To stimulate NGOs to develop programmes of informal education for youth. This particularly refers to programmes for training young leaders, programmes for developing teamwork, strategic planning, empowerment for participation in the community, training for entrepreneurship and self-employment, etc. Mentioned programmes must include the development of tolerance toward persons with disabilities and involvement of youth into the humanitarian activities.

IMPLEMENTERS: The State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Education and Sports

9. To establish informal education evaluation system. To structure the possibility of recognizing and grading all levels of knowledge and skills acquired through informal education within the framework of extension schools and nongovernmental organizations, with the goal of making an entry into the Employment Record Card.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Education and Sports

10. To include youth into working groups, councils, bodies, committees, etc. which devise on structures of educational policies at all levels. The structures of educational policy (at any level whatsoever), particularly the curriculum, cannot be adopted without active participation of youth — through cooperation and adequate representation in the relevant bodies.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

11. To refine and determine clearly which decisions require the participation of youth in their adoption and which decisions require the approval of the young persons who are included in the educational process. This must be done on the basis of the legally guaranteed representation of secondary school and college students in councils or similar bodies within the educational institutions they are attending, in order to enable the councils to make legally binding decisions and to enable youth to participate in the relevant decisions' adoption.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

12. Within the scope of the new *Higher Education Act* adoption, to establish a new function for students as active implementers of programmes and important factors in the choice of contents, methodology and the evaluation of their realization.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Science and Technology

13. To develop and promote the importance of professional studies at two-year colleges and independent colleges, and postgraduate specialization as a flexible response to the requirements and interests of youth and the needs of the economy.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Science and Technology

14. To reorganize and redefine student centers in order to make them the natural places for students to satisfy the majority of their needs (food, temporary employment, culture, sports, debates, regional clubs, socializing...), and permit greater participation by student representatives in the management of these centers.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Science and Technology

15. Within the adoption of the new *Student Organization Act*, to resolve the question of the Croatian Student Association and student NGOs.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Science and Technology

16. To support the systematic implementation of programmes for monitoring gifted young persons. These programmes should stimulate the development of the creative potentials of youth in all areas, including insuring of the care of the society for suitable mechanisms of support for their employment and for the long-term optimal guidance of their potentials within the professional and technological-scientific environments.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Croatian Institute for Employment

17. To provide for the implementation of the system of equal opportunities for access to education, regardless of the place of birth and residence, material and social status, sex or state of health. This also concerns persons with difficulties in development, married young

persons, pregnant women and mothers. To provide for the support of the state to individuals who are unable to secure ongoing and quality education for themselves, according to their abilities, and the give support to the programmes of tolerance toward persons with disabilities and NGOs taking care for persons with disabilities.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Education and Sports

18. To implement and support the accessibility of secondary school and college premises to those NGOs which offer secondary school and college students nonprofit sports and cultural programmes, informatics and technical culture programmes, programmes for the development of democracy, civil society, multiculturalism and inter-culturalism, etc.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

19. Through changes in the *Sports Act*, to establish in an appropriate and realistic manner a system of secondary school and college sports clubs, so that they can achieve their function of including the largest possible number of youth in sports and recreational activities, regardless of the abilities and results.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Education and Sports

20. To promote and have media coverage of secondary school and college sports competitions with the goal of the public empowerment of positive examples and the inclusion of the largest possible number of youth in sports.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Education and Sports

21. To elaborate and implement informatization and the introduction of new technology as one of the fundamental strategic determinants of the educational system. Pursuant to this, to elaborate a programme of activities for accelerated and continuous informatics training of teachers, as well as students who are preparing for the teaching profession. Furthermore, to promote and award technological and multimedia innovations in teaching which are positively evaluated by the students.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

22. To introduce informatics and the use of the Internet as a requirement for mastering the basic use of computers and access to the Internet (and, where possible, the additional applications adapted to the type and level of education) in all educational institutions, with the goal of increasing the accessibility of information and the educational contents.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

23. To open informatics labs for the constant use by students and teachers outside of class. Wherever possible, to transform informatics labs into school Internet zones.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Education and Sports

5.2. Employment and Entrepreneurship

24. To prepare criteria for the particular support of youth NGOs' projects which prepare youth for the labour market by assuring that they have the necessary knowledge,

working skills and experience, self-confidence and adaptability necessary for the labour market.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Institute for Employment

25. To develop a programme for the self-employment of youth with a guided approach that refers to the recognition of personal potentials, orientation, mastering the methods and techniques of active search for employment, management, additional training, retraining, continuing education, etc.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Trades, and Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Croatian Institute for Employment

26. To promote the development of local partnerships through a system of tax deductions and rewards to partners among the regional and local self-management bodies, social partners and youth NGOs, for the implementation of the active Government measures for promotion of employment, including the promotion of workers' cooperative and education.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Trades, and Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship

27. To elaborate guided dissemination of information at youth information centers and in business centers, on the opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. To provide the accessibility of complete information about government and local incentive measures, the procedure necessary for founding of a company or starting a trade, available credit arrangements, services of entrepreneurial incubators and technological parks, the labour supply, interested investors and partners, etc.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Trades, and Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship, the Croatian Institute for Employment

28. To provide the support for programmes which have the goal of promoting entrepreneurial culture among youth, as well as projects by young scientists, proposed and/or supported by secondary schools, colleges and university institutions, NGOs or local self-management units. The programmes could be oriented toward the education about entrepreneurship with a stressed practical and motivational function, toward acquiring entrepreneurial skills through workshops, toward promoting the entrepreneurial spirit through competitions for business plans, and toward other ways of promoting successful young entrepreneurs, cooperation by educational and scientific institutions with business, etc.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Trades, and Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Science and Technology

29. To give impetus to programmes and projects which have the goal of improving informatics channels between existing institutions, which provide support to entrepreneurship, and young users. It is necessary to develop a system of giving impetus to local self-management units which enter into partnership with youth NGOs from the local civil sector, and programmes that open new communication channels (Internet, road-show projects oriented toward educational institutions, etc.).

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Trades, and Small and Medium-Sized Entrepreneurship

30. To elaborate programmes for the social engagement of unemployed youth (volunteer work for the benefit of the community in NGOs, institutions and other public services, assistance on the principle of "youth for youth" etc.) and their supplementary education for

the purpose of compensating for the negative socio-psychological consequences of long-term unemployment.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Croatian Institute for Employment

5.3. Social Policy Toward Youth

31. To promote actively the initiatives of youth oriented toward improvement of the social integration of the youth in regions affected by war, and in the rural regions, islands and small places, through joint activities and education directed toward the appreciation of differences, multiculturalism, tolerance, the nonviolent resolution of conflicts, youth participation in decision making, and improvement of the quality of the lives of children and young persons with disabilities (priority in the distribution of funds to NGOs and recommendations to the local communities).

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry for European Integration, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

32. To coordinate and adapt existing apartment building programmes, and to elaborate new programmes pursuant to the abilities of youth

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Public Works, Renewal and Construction

33. By changing of the regulations, to regulate the apartment market of private landlords. To increase the legal protection of tenants and landlords, as a prerequisite for the use of housing subsidies.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management

34. To improve the position of young families with children through family policy measures (children's allowances, accessibility of childcare services, flexible employment, i.e. working hours).

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

35. To educate youth about social responsibility and solidarity in relation to the phenomena of social exclusion, discrimination and stereotypes. To promote the appreciation of differences and the principle of equalizing the opportunities in life.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for Human Rights, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Education and Sports

36. To provide suitable support to young persons who for various reasons did not enroll in secondary school or who dropped out of the secondary school, in order to facilitate their inclusion in some form of education and reduce social risks.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Office for Employment of the Republic of Croatia

37. To promote the organization and activities of independent advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities. It is necessary to provide for more active representation of the

rights of young persons with disabilities in the process of decision making regarding their independence.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for Persons with Disabilities, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

38. To promote the establishment of independent NGOs of young persons with disabilities or separate sectors for youth within the existing organizations.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

39. To educate youth about the need for the active inclusion of persons with difficulties in development into the society with an appreciation of their independence and dignity, through regular education and additional education/campaigns.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth

40. When planning activities intended for youth, to take systematic account of the possibilities for access and participation by persons with disabilities.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Sports

41. To increase systematically the quantity of residential accommodations for the independent lives of young persons with disabilities through a programme of de-institutionalization.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, in cooperation with local self-management

42. To empower social mechanisms for the prevention and timely reaction by the society to the occurrence of behavioural disorders, including young drug addicts.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Prevention of Disorders in the Behaviour of Children and Young Persons, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth; the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Prevention of Addiction

43. To develop programmes of peer assistance in local communities and include youth into the prevention and correction of socially unacceptable behaviour.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, in cooperation with the local self-management and nongovernmental sector, the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Prevention of Disorders in the Behaviour of Children and Young Persons

44. To develop capacities for implementation of alternative educational measures for juveniles and young adult persons who have committed criminal offences (education of mediators for implementation of out-of-court settlements, opening counseling centers, programmes for implementing measures of socially useful work).

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Prevention of Disorders in the Behaviour of Children and Young Persons

45. To develop small and flexible programmes for the re-socialization and integration of young persons with behavioural disorders into the community, which should includes substitutes for institutional accommodation (residential-therapeutic communities, daytime centers, specialized adoption arrangements).

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, in cooperation with the local self-management and nongovernmental sector

46. To provide for the material support to the higher education of young persons who, due to inadequate support from their families, have been placed in institutions for neglected children. Funding can be provided from the budgetary or donated funds, or through the establishment of a separate foundation.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

47. To develop a programme of residential care for young persons who leave institutions for neglected children, in cooperation with their local community.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

48. To develop a programme for teaching self-defense and defense from robberies, banditry, physical and sexual abuse.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Interior Affairs

49. To create and provide for the implementation of a programme of educational workshops for the support of young Romanies who are not included in the formal educational system. The workshops should be adapted to the culture and lifestyle of the young Romanies, with emphasis on the *life skills education*. Such an educational programme includes various areas, such as healthcare, nutrition, social and communications skills, getting familiar with the rights and civil responsibilities, relations between sexes, risk behaviour, self-defense, family relations, the skills needed to find work, self-employment and small entrepreneurship, etc.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Office for Employment of the Republic of Croatia, the Institute of Public Health of the Republic of Croatia, the Office for National Minorities, the Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for Human Rights, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia (in cooperation with local self-management and nongovernmental organizations)

50. To develop programmes for the active promotion and assistance to young Romanies in completing elementary school, and for inclusion into the secondary school and higher educational systems.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Office for National Minorities, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

51. To implement constantly the programmes of training of young Romanies for work, of additional training and retraining, in order increase their employment.

IMPLEMENTER: the Croatian Institute for Employment

52. To provide for the systematic education of mentors for work with Romanian communities and their inclusion into the work within the social welfare system, preschool and elementary educational systems. Trained mentors who are familiar with the Romanian language and customs as well as the Croatian language, are of great help in connecting public services with their beneficiaries. Therefore, it is necessary to regulate urgently their status within the educational and social welfare systems.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for National Minorities

53. To create a separate programme for the support and monitoring of young Romanian families with children. The education, support and practical assistance to young mothers and fathers in mastering the skills for adequate childcare, through home visits, mutual support groups, etc.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Office of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for National Minorities

54. To initiate a programme of compulsory fieldwork for the expert staff members of the ministries. Professional staff members of the authorized ministries need to spend more time in the local community, providing expert assistance to the employees of the local services and institutions under their authority, through education and supervision, and through connections and networks. Every expert staff member within the ranks of the advisor or senior advisor should spend a certain number of days during the year working in the local services and assisting them, according to previously determined schedule, and such experts should be additionally trained for this kind of work - for the skills of supervision, consultation and development of teamwork.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Sports; the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth

55. In educational-residential institutions and services in the healthcare system (such as school medicine, mental health services for children, young persons and others), to provide for a sufficient number of relevant experts (psychologists, special-education teachers and other rehabilitation specialists, as well as appropriately educated professors and teachers) for work with young persons with developmental difficulties. To organize Crisis Intervention Teams within the range of above mentioned experts, who could provide support and assistance after traumatic events, including accidents, murders, suicides and other kinds of suffering to which young persons have been exposed.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

5.4. Healthcare and Reproductive Health

56. Consistent implementation, monitoring and evaluation of preventive, therapeutic and other programmes.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth

57. Planning and implementation of a pilot study of the school subject *Health Education* in elementary and secondary schools, with the following compulsory modules: sexual and reproductive health, risky kinds of behaviour, harmful habits and the prevention of addiction.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Health, the Institute for the Advancement of Education, the Croatian Institute for Public Health

58. Raising awareness and providing information about risky kinds of behaviour and behavioural disorders through workshops based on personal experiences, education by peer educators and other forms of activity by teachers and other experts, parents, youth and members of nongovernmental organizations.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Health, the Institute for the Advancement of Education, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Committee of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Prevention of Disorders in the Behaviour of Children and Young Persons

59. To provide for the development of counseling within the healthcare system with the support of the educational system and nongovernmental organizations. In every county, it is necessary to designate a unit that will be the support center for providing information, implementing quality programmes in connection with venereal diseases, addiction diseases, assistance in crisis situations, risky kinds of behaviour, sex problems, sexuality and reproductive health. Within the scope of these activities, it is necessary to provide for the accessibility of contraceptive devices and professional assistance.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health, the Office for the Prevention of Addiction Abuses, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Croatian Institute for Public Health

60. To provide for the conditions for the implementation of safety measures in the psychiatric care and treatment of young persons who must be temporarily institutionalized, and for young drug addicts, based on the *Protection of Persons with Mental Disorders Act* and the *Juvenile Courts Act*.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Institute of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Prevention of Addiction; the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management

61. Adoption of coordinated professional criteria on procedures in connection with reproductive health, with particular emphasis on the early discovery and timely treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and uterine cancer.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health

62. To conduct systematic research and establish a register of children at risk or children at neurological risk, with the goal of determining the state of health of youth.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, county offices of public health, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Education and Sports

63. To initiate continuous educational programmes in the public media, for the promotion and improvement of health and healthy lifestyles of youth.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Sports

64. Through evaluation of the existing national programmes against addiction, smoking and alcoholism, to create and implement special activities (campaigns etc.) that will be directed toward youth.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health and the Institute of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for the Prevention of Addiction, the Croatian Institute for Public Health

65. To create and initiate new programmes for development of traffic culture and increasing traffic safety for youth through special school activities and campaigns with the goal of reducing the quantities of injuries and mortality in traffic.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Communications, and the Croatian Council for Traffic Safety on the Roads

66. To tighten the regulations on the right to carry and possess firearms with the goal of protecting the health and lives of the youth and to develop youth awareness raising programmes about the dangers of handling firearms, and mines & explosive devices remaining from the war.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the Croatian Red Cross

67. To develop a programme for the systematic monitoring of suicides and attempted suicides by young persons, with the development of a prevention programme.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the Committee for the Prevention of Behavioural Disorders in Children and Young Persons, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Croatian Institute for Statistics, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, and the Institutes for Public Health.

68. The establishment or revitalization of units for the mental health of children and young persons at the level of the local communities.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health and the Croatian Institute for Public Health, with the cooperation of the health institutions at the county and local levels.

69. To create a programme for the education of experts in healthcare, education and social welfare who work with youth, with the goal of the early detection, monitoring and intervention in cases of mental disorders of youth, with particular emphasis on the recognition of personal and environmental risk factors for the development of mental health disorders. Experts should be trained to use interactive methods of teaching in order to help young persons to develop self-respect, creativity and life skills, through the suitable programmes of working with them.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

70. Improving school medicine activities, through supporting preventive measures, facilitating intervention programmes oriented toward physical and mental healthcare and adoption of a healthier lifestyle, with inclusion of youth in their implementation.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health

71. To develop ecological products and/or more valuable nutritional products' food programme in public institutions. It is necessary to start the planning of the programme for the gradual but comprehensive introduction of healthy nutrition (which also includes the possibility of meatless nutrition) in all training, educational, military and health institutions for children and youth in the Republic of Croatia, and to use to the maximal possible extent nutrition products from domestic producers for this purpose.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

5.5. Active Participation of Youth in Society

72. To initiate Constitutional and legislative changes which would, in accordance with the solutions in some European countries, provide for the youth of 16 years of age and over the active right to vote in elections for local administrative bodies. Since young persons in Croatia are entitled to the right of full-time employment, this fact indirectly qualifies them to decide about life in their local community. In this manner, the early and responsible inclusion of youth in the decision making process would be stimulated, and the local authorities would be given an impetus to devote greater attention to youth problems in their environments.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management

73. To make innovations in the curricula and programmes applied in secondary schools, in order to implement education for democracy and a civil society, in order to raise the level of responsibility, knowledge and competence of citizens, so that that they can become respectable political decision makers.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Education and Sports

74. To prepare a project enabling youth for systematic monitoring of the work of the Croatian Parliament in accordance of the model of the European Parliament. Representatives of youth NGOs will thereby be enabled to monitor the work of the Croatian Parliament and its committees, in the capacity of guest observers, according to the topics the Croatian Parliament discusses and decides upon. The representatives of youth NGOs would also be available to parliamentary representatives for consultation.

IMPLEMENTER: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth

75. To adopt the *Youth Councils Act*, which would regulate the establishment, status and organization of youth councils. Youth councils would be established at the local level (municipalities and cities) and would consist of the representatives of the local youth NGOs and NGOs for youth, and they would be in charge of representing the interests and needs of all the youth groups at the level of the particular community, of coordination of the activities for youth, and they would elect representatives who would participate in the work of the

municipal and city councils, as well as the county councils (without the right of formal decision making). The youth councils of municipalities and cities would be mutually linked and would form, through their representative, county (regional) youth councils.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management

5.6. Building Civil Society and Volunteer Work

76. To establish a separate and independent body responsible to the Government, in charge of the implementation and coordination of Government policy toward the youth. This body would be in charge of cooperation with youth councils and youth NGOs and NGOs for youth, of the coordination of the implementation of the *Youth* programme of the European Union in Croatia, of the representation of the Republic of Croatia in international institutions and representative bodies responsible for the policy toward youth, of the monitoring of the financing of projects and programmes by and for the youth funded from the Government budget, of the coordination of the implementation of the *National Programme of Action for Youth* and other youth policy issues.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management, the Ministry for European Integrations

77. To establish a Council for Youth, as a professional and advisory body of the Government, consisting of representatives from various governmental sectors, youth NGOs and NGOs for youth, and relevant experts, with the goal of the implementation and evaluation coordination of the National Programme. The Council would, among other things, propose criteria for the financing of youth NGOs and it would participate in the creation of the governmental institutions' programmes intended for youth..

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

78. To appoint a responsible person in each ministry, who would, among other duties, also have the duty of a commissioner for work with youth and cooperation with youth NGOs and NGOs for youth. Besides this, the task of the commissioner is also constant communication with the bodies authorized for the implementation and coordination of state policy toward youth.

IMPLEMENTERS: The State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, and all the ministries

79. To support the establishment of an independent and nonpolitical umbrella youth organization in Croatia, which will be established on the principles of a voluntary association of interests, democratic constitution and administration, as well as programme openness, and which will include the majority of the youth NGOs and NGOs for youth active on the national level, and which will represent Croatia in international umbrella organizations. Such an organization would be, besides the youth councils, the basis for the democratic representation of youth and it would facilitate faster and simpler communication of the youth NGOs and NGOs for youth with public administration, international institutions and youth networks. The support will be performed through providing for the basic material and financial conditions for the work of the umbrella youth organization.

IMPLEMENTERS: The State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

80. To establish a system for the evaluation of the youth volunteer work. It is necessary to establish a system for the evaluation of the volunteer work for the benefit of the community and of the skills acquired through volunteer work, in order to facilitate youth employment. This system includes the development of criteria and educational programmes for institutions and other legal persons who can engage volunteers, legal regulation of volunteer work as a separate category, promotion of the social recognition of responsible volunteers and the development of a mechanism for documenting volunteer work experience as a recommendation to employers. In this sense, it is necessary to prepare an amendment to the *Labour Act* and support the work of volunteer centers in collecting data on the need for volunteers.

IMPLEMENTERS: The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

81. To disseminate (make accessible) the documents and reports on human rights conditions in the Republic of Croatia through the system of the public administration, educational institutions and youth organizations. To organize systematic translation and dissemination of international documents, as well as public administration bodies' and NGOs' reports concerning human rights conditions in the Republic of Croatia.

IMPLEMENTERS: The Office for Human Rights of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry for European Integrations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

82. To disseminate documents and reports on the conditions of the environment and sustainable development in the Republic of Croatia. To organize the systematic translation and dissemination of documents and reports concerning environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development, as well as of programme and strategic documents of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in connection with key economic and infrastructure investments which affect the environment, with the goal of ecological awareness raising of youth and their active inclusion into environment preservation.

IMPLEMENTER: The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning

83. To introduce solutions which will improve the existing practice within the process of the adoption of the act **regulating civil performance of the military service.** To take particular care in order to establish counseling centers about the civil service at the regional defense offices and to provide for the monetary support for work clothing and food for persons subject to civil performance of military service.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management, the Ministry of Defense

84. To work out a programme promoting the civilian performance of military service. To develop the programme through the regional defense offices, educational institutions, nongovernmental organizations and public media, with the purpose of raising awareness and promoting activity for the benefit of the community and useful service for the purpose of helping its members with special needs.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Local Self-Management, the Ministry of Defense

85. To prepare criteria for the definition of the concepts and status of the “youth NGOs and NGOs for youth” and a “national organization of and for youth” (according to the number and age of the members and leaders, the number and distribution of branches, programmes directed toward youth, the number and types of programmes implemented on the national level, etc.). To prepare a proposal for the creation of an annual lump sum of financial grant to support the work of the national youth organizations which meet stipulated criteria.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Council for the Development of a Civil Society

86. To create a competition for the youth projects and programmes in order to co-finance informal education, international cooperation, active participation, culture, mobility and programme networking, within annual competition for the NGOs support from the state budget.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the Council for the Development of a Civil Society

5.7. Youth Culture and Free Time

87. To open educational institutions to the nonprofit organizers of youth free time. Schools should be given an impetus for the efficient cooperation with nonprofit youth NGOs and NGOs for youth engaged in the organized use of free time, especially culture, entertainment, promoting healthy lifestyle, creative and volunteer work of youth, education for civil society, informal forms of education, youth tourism, sports, recreation etc. Nonprofit organizers, particularly NGOs and qualified individuals, creating programmes appropriate to the needs of youth, should be given priority in relation to for-profit organizers.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Education and Sports

88. To promote the creation of programmes for monitoring and stimulating talented young artists in cooperation with youth NGOs, through the construction of regional and sector information networks (for example, the *Network of Young Musicians* by Croatian Musical Youth) and a database, through scholarships, inclusion into public manifestations, special public programmes and programmes of international cooperative exchange.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

89. To promote the establishment of multifunctional youth centers in all the macro-regional centers. To create a model in order to establish macro-regional multifunctional youth centers (in Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek and Split) which would have the function of information centers, Internet clubs, providing technical services for youth NGOs and youth initiatives, club and entertainment contents, and to network them. To provide for the access of persons with disabilities to all the centers. To offer such a model to other regional centers.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth (in cooperation with the municipal authorities of the cited cities)

90. To promote the establishment and work of youth clubs, which work on a nonprofit basis, in all local environments, through recommendations to local self-management units, co-financing of the projects for training of young leaders of programme activities,

technological support, networking, programmes and information dissemination, connections with partner organizations from other places and countries, etc.

IMPLEMENTER: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth

91. To continue supporting youth culture projects on the national level, particularly those which can represent Croatia on the international cultural scene, reducing the disproportion in financing between the programmes of youth culture and the programmes of the established cultural institutions traditionally monitored by the Ministry of Culture. To encourage sponsor, with promotional methods, to monitor established cultural projects, which would free significant monetary funds for new programmes.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry of Culture

92. To continue supporting further development of the existing cultural institutions of and for youth which have been recognized through internationally relevant projects. Such projects, such as some international theatre and film festivals, the Imaginary Academy or the International Cultural Center of Croatian Musical Youth in Grožnjan, should be supported through providing for permanent stable conditions for their functioning.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with local self-management units

93. The elaboration of mechanisms for providing for greater funding for international cultural collaboration and youth exchange, and to make programmes of collaboration and exchange accessible to all the organizations engaged in youth culture or assembling young artists.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Culture, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth

94. To go on giving impetus to the development of culture and new media and technologies' art through incentives and subsidizing of productions, education and reception of the contents in this area through the establishment of the infrastructure required for operations.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Science and Technology, CARNet, the Ministry of Culture

95. To promote the construction and providing equipment for recreational youth centers, especially in regions destroyed during the war. Local self-management units which administer these centers through public enterprises or institutions should include into management and programme leadership as many young people as possible from the local community since the centers are supposed to serve to the local community itself.

IMPLEMENTER: the Ministry for Public Works, Construction and Renewal, the Ministry of Education and Sports

96. Priority should be given to amateur sports, recreational sports and school sports clubs' activities, within the financial support from the state and local budgets, as well as from the fortune games' revenue.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Finance

97. To finance the needs of secondary school and college students for cultural activities and other forms of the organized use of free time, partially from the student services' revenues, which should set aside a fixed percentage of their revenues for this purpose.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with universities and the Croatian Student Organization.

5.8. Mobility, Dissemination of Information and Counseling

98. To support with incentive measures the establishment of networks of high standard and multifunctional youth hostels, through incentives to entrepreneurs for the development of this aspect of tourist and hotel opportunities, with a reduced residential fee for users of youth hostels, with the goal of constructing new youth hostels and renovating existing ones (also accessible to persons with disabilities), with which the total hostel capacities in Croatia would stabilize at current optimum of 2,000 beds, at least one half of which should be opened throughout the entire year.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Public Works, Renewal and Construction

99. To support directly the empowerment of the international scouts' centers network through renovation of existing centers and opening new ones, which would make it possible for a minimum of 200 beds to be used throughout the entire year. This also includes making Otok mladosti /*Youth Island*/ (Obunjan) serve again to the function of the scouts' activities and the recreation of youth.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth and the Ministry of Education and Sports

100. To make it possible to use part of the capacities of the secondary school and college students' dormitories and objects owned by individual colleges, for student and youth tourism and international exchanges.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology

101. To revitalize old school buildings for the needs of youth. To investigate the possibility that some of the old schools buildings, which are no longer used as schools, could be renovated and function on behalf of youth tourism, scouts', recreational, cultural, sports, ecological and other youth centers.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry for Public Works, Renewal and Construction

102. To establish youth information centers in four macro-regional centers as a pilot project, according to which a model, which can be adapted to the needs and possibilities of youth in other major cities, will be developed. Info-centers, according to previously established functions and contents, would be established within existing youth NGOs or youth institutions, and would mediate and create information available to everyone, with an initial state subsidy and the constant financial support of the local self-management. Info-centers should be networked on the national level.

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, in cooperation with the county and municipal authorities and nongovernmental organizations

103. To develop a system of secondary school counseling centers for students and initiate a pilot project in two counties. Such counseling centers would provide professional assistance to secondary school students in their professional orientation, difficulties in social integration and learning, crisis situations, etc.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, in cooperation with county educational authorities

104. To establish university counseling centers for college students which would operate within the framework of student centers and would provide all the relevant information, services and professional assistance in various areas of student life.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Science and Technology, in cooperation with universities

105. To initiate the production of an informative manual which would, in the initial phase, be distributed free of charge in all the secondary schools. The manual would include all the relevant information on the rights and duties ensuing from the legal regulations, and on the opportunities for special and supplementary forms of education, informal education, engagement in nongovernmental organizations and initiatives and on their projects, on scholarships, employment and career development, on social, health and supplementary insurance, on legal protection, financing, housing, volunteer work, sports and cultural activities, religion, the prevention of addiction and risky behaviour, assistance in crisis situations, mobility, youth tourism, European integration and similar. The manual would have a general section and a section referring to the local county conditions.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health and the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth in cooperation with universities and local self-management bodies

106. To regulate the organization of trips, professional and graduation excursions within the framework of the curriculum and educational programme. For this purpose, to prepare programmes and standards for excursions for each grade of secondary school.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Tourism

107. To revise the *Privileged Fees in Interior Passenger Travel Act* so that privileged fees are standardized for organized groups of young persons from 14 to 26 years of age in passenger transport on land, sea and air, as an incentive to greater of youth.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Finance, the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth

108. To provide material support to youth and student informative and educational mass media on the national level (except for those founded or owned by political parties).

IMPLEMENTERS: the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Maternity and Youth, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Education and Sports

109. The programme of support to youth publishing projects within activities of educational institutions in the Republic of Croatia. To record the number of existing secondary school and college magazines in the Republic of Croatia, and to develop a programme for the support of these activities, as well as a system for exchange of publications among institutions.

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Education and Sports and county offices of education and sports

110. To create the prerequisites for the development of nonprofit projects based on the Internet and computer media. To promote the use of informatics technology among civil youth initiatives, through development of a programme for providing free Internet services for youth organizations and youth cultural centers, within the existing nonprofit provider of Internet services (CARNet).

IMPLEMENTERS: the Ministry of Science and Technology, CARNet (Croatian Academic and Research Network).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL SELF-MANAGEMENT UNITS

Counties, cities and municipalities are invited to participate in the partnership with the state and nongovernmental sector in the achievement of the common goals for the benefit of youth as stated in the National Programme. They are also invited to prepare, in cooperation with youth NGOs and NGOs for youth, their own programmes of action for youth, and particularly to initiate, support and, in accordance with their abilities, to co-finance:

- ❑ the establishment and work of the youth councils at their level;
- ❑ the programmes which promote lifelong learning and education for the building of a civil society, and particularly informal forms of education;
- ❑ the programmes and initiatives which make employment, self-employment and development of youth entrepreneurship possible;
- ❑ the programmes establishing cooperation with youth NGOs from other municipalities and cities in Croatia and from abroad;
- ❑ the programmes which have the goal of social solidarity, the inclusion and re-socialization of youth, and the decentralization and de-institutionalization of the social welfare system;

- ❑ the programmes for environment protection and promotion of healthy lifestyle;
- ❑ the programmes which promote inter-ethnic cooperation and understanding by youth, and tolerance of all differences;
- ❑ the programmes which promote and improve reproductive health, prevent risky kinds of behaviour and combat addiction;
- ❑ youth NGOs and youth initiatives which promote the participation of youth in social decision making and provide information and training in this area;
- ❑ the inclusion of youth and their NGOs into the activities of the local and regional self-management units, particularly into the decision making on the issues which affect them directly;
- ❑ the programmes from the area of youth culture and the free time;
- ❑ the programmes through which young talents are recognized;
- ❑ the establishment of youth hostels, scouts' centers, recreational, ecological, cultural and similar youth centers, through change of the function of existing objects or the construction of new ones;
- ❑ the establishment and opening of youth information centers, youth counseling centers and multifunctional youth clubs;
- ❑ youth/student NGOs and youth/student initiatives which promote youth mobility, international cooperation and exchange;
- ❑ youth and student informative and educational publications at the local level (except those founded or owned by political parties).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Youth NGOs, youth sections within the framework of larger NGOs, student NGOs — all youth NGOs and NGOs for youth — are invited to cooperate with the authorized public administration bodies and with the local self-management units, in the implementation of the National Programme with the goal of achieving its fullest possible realization.

In this context, all youth NGOs and NGOs for youth are invited to do the following:

- ❑ to join at the local level and help establish youth councils, and to participate actively in their work through their representatives;
- ❑ to apply regularly and publicly with their programmes for the competitions for all the budgetary funds sources;
- ❑ to direct public activity to the building of partnerships with the public administration bodies and the local and regional self-management bodies;
- ❑ to demand to participate in the work of the bodies which decide about them at all levels;
- ❑ to get included into the process of decision making in local and regional self-management units;
- ❑ to implement programmes for youth training intended for the development of their local communities, and in other regions where the local NGOs have still not been sufficiently developed;
- ❑ to create and implement informal forms of education intended for the building of a civil society, in which young persons, who have not been included into the educational process, would actively participate;
- ❑ to become actively engaged in the campaigns with the goal of preventing and combating addiction and all forms of risky youth behaviour;
- ❑ to cooperate and provide mutual support on the principle of generation solidarity and to exchange information, coordinate activities and promote joint activities for youth;
- ❑ to join into an umbrella organization, founded on the principles of voluntary mutual interest association, of democratic constitution and administration, and programme openness, which will include the majority of relevant Youth NGOs and NGOs for youth on the national level and represent Croatia in international umbrella organizations;
- ❑ to initiate the establishment, renewal and construction of youth hostels, scouts, recreational, ecological, cultural, information and similar youth centers, multifunctional clubs and similar gathering places for youth;
- ❑ to strengthen the existing and initiate the establishment of new youth and student informative and educational publications;
- ❑ to empower the national system of privileged fees for youth in passenger traffic, accommodation, education, culture, commerce, services, entertainment and other segments which are of interest to youth.