

# PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING



SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES INTERNATIONAL

BRIEFING PAPER 5  
EMPLOYMENT



I MATTER



OCTOBER 2012

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## IMPRINT

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Date of publication: October 2012

**Publisher:**  
SOS Children's Villages International  
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## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: Understand and address the crisis

As a result of the global financial crisis that shook the world, unemployment and more particularly youth unemployment have been rising sharply in almost every branch of activity and in all countries. The issue is global and concerns both developed and developing countries.

“Of the world's total number of unemployed in 2010, nearly 40 per cent – or about 75 million – were between 15 and 24 years of age.” (*ILO, 2011*)

“In 2011, the unemployment rate for people in the age group 15–24 was 17.4 per cent in the OECD area, compared with 7 per cent for adults aged 25 and over.” (*OECD, 2011*)  
“Young people in all regions are more likely than adults to be unemployed or to work in vulnerable employment. They are at greater risk of earning lower wages in a low-productivity job, working in unsafe or risky conditions, working below their skill or educational level, working long hours or fewer hours than needed, holding a temporary job, having few or no prospects for advancement and/or lacking job stability.” (*UN, 2011*)

This problematic situation has given rise to significant uncertainty, doubts and questions; it creates a great deal of concern among the public and particularly among young people who, as recent events have shown, take action, express their views on issues they face and present their concerns about their future.



“The recent social and political movements across the world illustrate the hopelessness of youth regarding what they perceive as their countries' lack of prioritization of their concerns as well as institutional capacity to address them.” (*UN, 2011*)

International organisations have been working together to tackle the problem of youth unemployment. Immediate focus has been put on addressing the problem and providing for a reflection on the challenges, the perspectives and opportunities available. The UN Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN) in partnership with the World Bank, the UN and the ILO have produced comprehensive documents such as the ILO Programme on Youth Employment (YEP), the ILO Programme on Employment for Social Justice and a Fair Globalization, the ILO Global Employment Trends for Youth 2011 Update and the United Nations World Youth Report 2011. To reflect continuity with the social youth movements worldwide, young people have been invited to participate in an e-discussion, a space of dialogue and interaction organised to include young people and representatives of youth-led organisations around the world.

## 1. CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

### → “Last in” and “first out”

During economic downturns, young people are often the “last in” and the “first out.” They suffer a precarious situation where it takes a very long time before getting a job and where the probability of losing it is greater than for anyone else. In addition to the difficulties in accessing work, young people face low-quality jobs and unstable work situations.

### → Vicious circles

In a vicious circle, unemployment creates obstacles to personal development because it constitutes a source of delay before the independence and emancipation from parents. Unemployment also implies social risks because there is a clear link with economic growth, political stability and national security.

More generally, unemployment can have implications on mental health such as depression, pressures, strained personal relations, and to a certain extent it can contribute to anti-social behaviours such as drug abuse. Poor working conditions can also be a source of physical problem.

### → Quantity and quality

The main objectives highlighted in the UN World Youth Report are the requirement of quantity and quality jobs. That means that there should be enough jobs to ensure that each young person has access to the labour market. In addition, quality jobs should be promoted. Working poverty should be ended and decent work should be available for all. The report also includes the requirement of relevance: a job should be in accordance with one’s capacities, skills and abilities.

## 2. SOLUTIONS

To find solutions to the current challenges, different areas of intervention are suggested.

### → “High-quality multi-faceted education”

The first key answer lies in education. Learning must be accessible for all, but also educational attainments should be relevant to the demands and needs of the labour market. Efforts must be made to facilitate the critical transition from school to work with, for example, the development and implementation of a “high-quality multi-faceted education.”

“Therefore, it is recommended to expand the scope of education by including entrepreneurial skills and training opportunities, and intergenerational partnerships for youth aligned to rapidly changing labour market needs.” (UNESCO, 2011)

Young people should be provided with opportunities for internships, volunteering and vocational trainings. However, this should be seen as preparatory steps for gaining practical work experience and eventually finding a decent job.

### → Entrepreneurship and broad-based partnerships

Entrepreneurship and broad-based partnerships are key elements for solutions. The idea of “Job creators not job seekers” illustrates this new focus on enterprise innovation and creation. Young people need motivation, ideas, and visionary plans for their professional accomplishment.

The private sector is a particularly valuable source for developing training policies and providing work experiences and mentorships in partnership.

This may be a very effective tool for developing mutually beneficial cooperative ties and allowing concrete and coordinated actions in different areas.

Providing practical opportunities and encouraging entrepreneurship and alternative careers would therefore be the first recommendation to policymakers towards ensuring young people adequate and appropriate preparation for the job market.

### → Job search and networking

In addition, attention should be given to the mechanisms for direct job searching and networking. Business and social networks, whether formal or informal, are key success factors for youth employment. Youth-focused organisations create networks that share experiences, advices and peer-to-peer support. Moreover, career fairs and annual graduate recruitment programmes are also positive job guidance initiatives.

### → New perspectives

Finally, young people should look ahead to the future constructively meaning they should plan for tomorrow’s jobs. Green jobs as well as ICT are developing sectors which should open up interesting new prospects for the years to come.

We should not forget that states do have a responsibility to support those in need and to find alternatives. This includes the coordination of activities and investments at national level between government, private sector groups, youth organisations and schools; but it also means that states should reinforce assistance to the most vulnerable through targeted income support and effective reemployment programmes.

Governments should be actively engaged in finding tailored solutions to respond to the specificities of each country. Not forgetting, above all, young people are the first to be concerned and should therefore always be consulted, included and informed at each stage of the process.

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## ARMENIA: Nelli's story



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“Here in my country finding a job is very difficult, especially for students or newly graduated young people. One of the biggest problems is that there is no guarantee that you will find a job even if you have the right professional background or skills.”

When starting the job search, very often you have to ask people you know to make informal recommendations. Of course, there are also employment agencies that help people find jobs according to their knowledge and skills, but in reality it doesn't work well and it takes quite a long time. That's why not only people who are looking for a job but even employers often prefer to spread the information in their social environment by asking colleagues and friends. Also, employers feel more secure about hiring a person that someone they know has recommended. So finding the right company or person is a problem not only for employees but also for employers.

After leaving care I had to find work since the financial support I received was not enough anymore. I started looking for a job that would have a good salary, which is a very big problem too. In the beginning I tried to apply for various jobs through career announcements but the results weren't good. So I told everyone who could help me that I was looking for a job, and one of my acquaintances knew a person who was recruiting. Now I work for a company that imports sweets from Italy. I am a merchandiser. It is a very easy job for me, and the salary here is high, but the only problem is that it's not my profession. I studied tourism and I tried to find a job in that sphere after finishing university. Although I managed to find several tour agencies, the salary they offered was very low. Almost everyone looks for a job this way, and some have to agree to work for a low salary. But this problem is much bigger for those who have left care, especially those from state children's homes, because they do not have any additional financial support and they have to earn enough to live on their own.

**NELLI KARAPETYAN**

## ARMENIA: Ando's story

My summer holidays were just starting and I had decided to start working that year. I had a few reasons for that. The first was that I wanted a bicycle that I could buy with my own money, and I thought that besides resting, it would be good to work during the holidays and save some money. I was also wondering what it would be like to work in a team and to have colleagues. I was eager to get to know new people, who wouldn't form an opinion of me from knowing that I grew up in care and who wouldn't communicate with me out of pity. Instead, I wanted them to treat me like a normal person and to get to know me as an individual. I think it is offensive when people pity you. Also, they often try to help you because they feel sorry for you and so you don't strive to reach what you want.

“It took me quite a long time to find a job. At that time I was 18, and wherever I applied they wouldn't hire me because I was too young and I had no work experience.”

Employers are only interested in hiring experienced people. So it turned out that I couldn't find a job, because I had no experience and I had no idea where to get that experience from.

Finally I managed to find a job with the help of my friends. In the beginning they weren't so willing to hire me but somehow they appreciated the fact that I wanted to work at a young age. So I started a trial period in a café which went well, and I quickly learned the job of a waiter. I was earning so well that I was even able to put some away for savings. After a while, I was told that I had to pay daily into a pension fund. Since I was earning enough, I didn't get into the details of what it was for. Later I found out that when you are a registered worker you must pay

from your salary into this fund which is used for your pension afterwards. But I was not a registered worker and I realize afterwards I should not have paid it. And so I worked the whole summer and bought myself a bike, which I rode to work and back home. This also saved me money as I didn't use public transportation. I finally felt that I had found my place in society, where people accepted me as an equal and treated me like anybody else. I was very happy that my colleagues liked me a lot as their colleague and as a person. They said my parents must be really proud to have a son like me.

When I went looking for another job, I tried to find one where I could be officially registered, but I learned it wasn't so easy. It is a common problem in our country. Many businesses have a number of unregistered employees who are overloaded with work and not paid fairly. The reason is the disproportion in the labour market: there is a high demand for jobs but there are not enough job positions. That is the reason why employers take advantage of this situation and disobey the Labour Code. They are confident that they will be able to find people willing to work under their conditions.



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Maybe because of all these obstacles, young people want to leave the country after they finish their education in order to find a better job abroad. I hope that one day equal employment opportunities will be available for everyone and that professional skills and knowledge will be appreciated.

**ANDRANIK MARGARYAN**

## AGEING OUT OF CARE: What about employment?



Of all age groups, young people generally experience the greatest hurdles in accessing employment. For care leavers, these challenges are especially destabilizing.

Young people ageing out of care are individuals who leave care upon coming of age and who are no longer entitled to care and protection under the child welfare systems.

Care leavers face discrimination in all spheres of life, including employment where they have particularly limited job opportunities and are more likely to be engaged in illegal work, meaning minimal and often irregular pay, non-access to health and social benefits.

They are more vulnerable because they accumulate interrelated risk factors – at the social, family and personal levels. Young people leaving care have generally lower levels of education than their peers and they lack skills necessary for securing employment.

In terms of structure, experience teaches us that young people in residential care facilities are the

most disadvantaged. Residential care facilities do not sufficiently ensure that young people will be included in the job market, whereas young people from small group homes do better. Young people leaving foster care have the same educational and employment opportunities as their peers who live with their families of origin. In addition, research shows that young people under the care of SOS Children's Villages are 'better prepared in terms of communication skills, educational achievement, attitudes towards work and study, and employability'. Importance of the deinstitutionalisation efforts must be underlined.

A study done by SOS Children's Villages regarding the situation of young people leaving care in 13 countries showed a range of obstacles that young people face in their efforts to get employed.

### 1. THE LACK OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION

In practice, the law is often subject to unclarity and the problem of interpretation and application. The existence of legislation does not imply its implementation. It should be noted that the lack of reliable data and the absence of standardized terminology is

a source of considerable uncertainty and therefore is an issue that must be overcome in order to adapt legislation to the reality.

In addition, the child protection system is too often fragmented and involves different ministries and state agencies. This is a source of confusion and complexity which leads to inefficiency.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

With a view to improve support to young people ageing out of care, national standards should be established to harmonize policy and programmes. There should be first general services available for all young people. In addition, specialized services should be provided to young people in care in particular. A State Labour Office should be set up to support care leavers in search for employment. Employment offices, at local level, must necessarily be equipped to provide support to care leavers. Governments should support them with national legislation providing special protection measures for young people in care, preparation services for leaving care as well as after-care services, such as social and life-skills training workshops, flexible drop-in services for guidance and social counselling, pre-employment accompaniment, legal counselling, and problem-solving support.

Additional services include protection in labour relations and information on rights as well as support in finding employment, internships, apprenticeships or accessing unemployment benefits; support for entrepreneurship and the development of institutional relations between employers and youths leaving care (through skills training, mentorship, access to funds and premises); and promotion of employment measures. An efficient aftercare service system should be developed in the areas of rehabilitation, legal advice, employment services, labour protection, as well as psychological counselling, individual career counselling, financial support and assistance, provision of accommodation and vocational training which has proved its worth.

In practice, however, only a small number of facilities provide this support; the services are not efficient and do not reflect the children's needs or the realities of the market economy. Vocational training should be

adapted to the young people's needs. Children in care often receive courses without any job orientation, which responds neither to their interests nor to the labour market demand.

### 3. IDENTIFICATION OF SOME GOOD PRACTICES

In spite of these challenges, good practices are acknowledged by the study. Special focus should be placed on the existing innovative initiatives to promote employment for young people leaving care.

- Centres for social work offering extended guardianship to young people over 18 (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Employment legislations introducing financial benefits for employers who hire young people with care experience (Bulgaria)
- Subsidies and job quotas to facilitate and encourage youth employment (Bulgaria, Russia)
- Group homes, focusing on inclusive employment and facilitating job placement (Croatia)
- Community-based centres for employment, education and development giving access to professional development services and employment assistance (Georgia)
- 'Centre for Support of Development' offering professional support, counselling, training, employment-seeking assistance, and 'peer mentor' programme (Poland)

Special mention should be made of the role of NGOs which contribute largely in the management of services. It must be emphasized that NGOs and businesses have introduced several initiatives and projects to support the professional training and employment of care leavers. Even if their sustainability is not secured, these are initiatives to be encouraged.

The lack of concrete assistance related to employment can lead to violations of the rights of young people ageing out of care. Capacities and capabilities must be developed to ensure better employment opportunities for young people ageing out of care.

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## BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Vermina



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Vermina, a student at the Sarajevo Music Academy, has been living semi-independently for one and half years now. About half a year ago, more precisely, in September 2011, she began working as a member of the Sarajevo National Theatre Choir.

### 1. How do you feel being a young person and being employed?

I enjoy my work and, first and foremost, I feel entirely satisfied. I have the opportunity to do the job I like and for which I have been educated. I am a very happy person and I do not experience my job as a kind of burden, but as a way in which I can express myself, make progress and acquire experiences that could help me with my future life and profession.

### 2. You are a student, but you have a job. How do you organise your commitments? Is it difficult to manage sometimes?

It is not unusual these days to be a student and to work at the same time, so I do not experience it differently than other young people who both study and work. Naturally, there are some difficult times when I think that I need one more hour to be able to accomplish everything I planned, but I have managed to harmonise all of my commitments and establish dynamics so that things function smoothly. I have found both the Academy and the Theatre to be understanding of my schedule, and I do not face any problems if I fail to attend a lecture due to my rehearsal in the theatre or vice versa. That is very important to me.

### 3. How did you find this job? Who or what helped you with that?

When I was about to finish Secondary Music School and had decided to enrol in the Academy, it crossed my mind that it would be very nice if I could find a job which was not too time-consuming and which would be related to my profession and help me earn some money. I had a teacher at the time who accompanied my solo singing on the piano and who also worked as a director in the National Theatre Choir. She said to me that an audition was to be held soon. She took me to the head of the choir so he could hear me sing. He was pleased, but he said that the audition was postponed and that he did not know when the next one would be organised.

Just before the classes at the Academy began, I happened to meet him in the street and he told me that the audition would be held in a few days. I auditioned and was accepted! What definitely helped me was the fact that I had finished Secondary Music School in the Solo Singing Department, because solo singers were given preference. The talent and musicality I showed at the audition certainly helped me too.

### 4. What does your daily routine look like?

When we prepare an opera, we have rehearsals in the morning in the theatre. They last for about two hours. Then I go to the Academy and it depends on the number of classes I have as to how much time I will spend there. Since I also sing in two other choirs, one within the Academy and the other established by my colleague in the Theatre, my evening hours are reserved for these rehearsals.

Of course I always find some time to have a cup of coffee with my friends, but basically, my whole days are full. Before the first performance of an opera, rehearsals in the theatre may last for six hours. During these times, it is more difficult to organise everything, but I manage.

Weekends are for rest, studying for exams and going to lunch with my SOS mother who, as always, does her best because she knows that I do not have time to eat quality food during the work week. In short, every day of my life is full and interesting!

### 5. What is nice and what is difficult in your job?

I can say that I have been doing one of the most beautiful jobs in the world. I can truly say that! First of all, I deal with music, which is what I have always wanted to do. My working hours are relatively short, and the people I work with are excellent. My job allows me to be creative, to turn into another personality, to walk into another century, travel to the end of the world. I utterly enjoy it and I have not yet seen any negative aspect of my job.

### 6. How do you see yourself in the future, in terms of your professional development?

I see myself as a happy, fulfilled and satisfied person. I do not know what life will bring me, but I would like to finish my studies, to do the job I like and be surrounded with people whom I love and who love me back. This is not too much, is it?

**JASNA SOFOVIC**

## ALBANIA: Youth initiative on self-employment opportunity



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*"I am a young person who has been raised in alternative care. My experience has shown me that if there is support, you can change your life; you can achieve your expectations and be an active member of society."*

*(From Shahin's project application)*

The World of Difference (WOD) programme was designed to create opportunities for individuals to work for a partner organisation for a maximum of one year, with salary and related operative expenses provided by Vodafone Albania Foundation (VAF). The programme is based on the concept that individuals and community organisations should identify what they feel passionate about and then be provided with the resources to make changes happen. A

public competition is launched every year by VAF, and the winners are chosen on the merit of the application's impact and on the individual's capacities.

#### FIRST STEP

To take advantage of this opportunity, a roundtable was organised with youth volunteers from the *I Matter* project in January 2012. SOS Children's Villages National Advocacy Advisors presented the initiative announced by the Vodafone Foundation and invited young people to think about possible ideas for an individual application. For the realization of this initiative young people would be supported by SOS Children's Villages Albania. The young persons liked the idea of the application and saw it as a good opportunity for self-employment. Since the rules of VAF stipulate that an organisation can support only one person or one application, the young people decided to work individually first. Each of them would write down some ideas or develop a mini-project. They would then present them to each other to select the best initiative for the application.

#### SECOND STEP

Five young people worked for a week, and in a second joint meeting they presented their ideas and initiatives which were very bold in terms of innovation, ambition, spirit, and strong desire for change. Their mini-projects ranged from grandiose ideas – for reducing poverty in the poorest areas of Tirana, for educational support for children in need, for economic empowerment of struggling families in marginalized areas – to concrete practical ideas on how to support specific groups. By consensus, they decided to apply to the VAF programme with an idea from Shahin, which was concrete, achievable and practical enough. Shahin is one of the young people in the semi-independent living programme provided by SOS Children's Villages Albania and has had long-term involvement in the *I Matter* campaign. His idea consisted of organising and implementing English courses, computer courses, and sports activities for children and young people in the SOS Children's Village in Tirana, including children from the family strengthening programme in the nearby area of Sauk.

The WOD programme has the strict rule that only individuals may apply, and therefore the budget proposal should include salary payment for one person only – in this case, only for Shahin. But, two other young people liked Shahin's ideas very much and wanted to engage in the project activities corresponding to their skills, experience and their desire to bring a significant contribution. Angelo and Arlinda have been very active in the *I Matter* project since the beginning. Shahin agreed that their contribution to implementing the project idea would be helpful, especially since, for different reasons (time, skills, knowledge), it is impossible for only one person to fulfil all the activities foreseen. In consensus they decided that Shahin should apply individually, but that if the project were to be approved, while Shahin would be the team leader, Angelo and Arlinda would also be included in implementing the project, sharing in both the responsibilities and the financial benefits.

#### THIRD STEP

The next challenge was putting down ideas in a structured way according to the VAF templates. This included writing the full project, which needed to be submitted in English within 10 days. Shahin and the others had no previous experience in writing for this type of project, but they were very enthusiastic and determined. They decided to work 4-5 hours per day in writing the proposal and to divide tasks according to responsibility; they were led and supported in their efforts by a national advocacy advisor and a public funding advisor. Thanks to their persistent work, the application was completed and submitted on time.

#### FOURTH STEP

The project successfully passed the first stage, and Shahin had a short interview on the phone some time later. The young people are waiting for the final phase of the application process, when Shahin goes in for an individual interview with a panel.

## GEORGIA: Employment Support Service of the SOS Children's Villages Family Strengthening Programme in Tbilisi



The Employment Support Service was established in the Tbilisi Family Strengthening Programme in August 2009. The main objective of the employment support service is to assist socially and economically vulnerable parents and children (above 16) in developing their professional skills and obtaining a source of income through employment. The employment support service provides parents and children with:

- Professional education courses/vocational trainings
- Training on developing interview presentation, CV writing and job hunting skills
- Individual and group consultation on various employment issues
- Inventory/employment tools to set up in business
- Internships in various organisations

- Job advertisements in newspapers
- Networking with different potential employers

Through the employment support service, family strengthening beneficiaries can increase their motivation to realize their potential, acquire new professional knowledge or gain qualification in their profession. They learn how to understand and respond to job market requirements and to master skills in job hunting and start employment. In addition, the service enables family strengthening beneficiaries to participate in various events and exhibition-sales organised by the family strengthening programme. In 2011, 42 caregivers and 4 young people gained employment through the support of the employment service of the SOS Family Strengthening Programme Tbilisi.

**EVENTS**

In April 2011, employment support service organised the event, Partnership for Social Responsibility. Among the invited guests were representatives from the private sector, as well as governmental and non-governmental organisations (existing and potential partners).

*The objectives of the activity were as follows:*

- ➔ For the invited organisations – introduction of the programme activities in order to raise their awareness and increase their motivation for future cooperation;
- ➔ For the programme – widen scope of partnership with stakeholders in order to increase opportunities for employment of more family strengthening beneficiaries;
- ➔ The activity also envisaged supporting private and governmental organisations in better understanding corporate social responsibility. At the end of the meeting, there was an exhibition-sale of artwork from beneficiaries, who had been provided vocational training in enamelling and felt work.

**JOINT EVENT (EMPLOYMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE)**

On 21 December 2011, a New Year’s exhibition-sale of artwork from family strengthening beneficiaries took place at the Centre for Cultural Relations – Caucasian House. The exhibition-sale was arranged as a joint event by employment support services and psychological services. The art pieces were created by family strengthening parents and young people, who, through the support of the project, had undergone vocational trainings in enamelling, modelling, felt work, computer graphics and design. The exhibition included artworks (drawings, wax, clay and plaster figurines) of children created during play and art therapy sessions, as well as handicrafts by parents and young people (clay and enamel articles, other jewellery).

The family strengthening programme supported beneficiaries in purchasing necessary equipment for their work. The exhibition-sale aroused great interest among the invited guests and as a result, many



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art pieces were sold. The exhibition-sale was also broadcasted on various TV stations.

**SUCCESSFUL CASE**

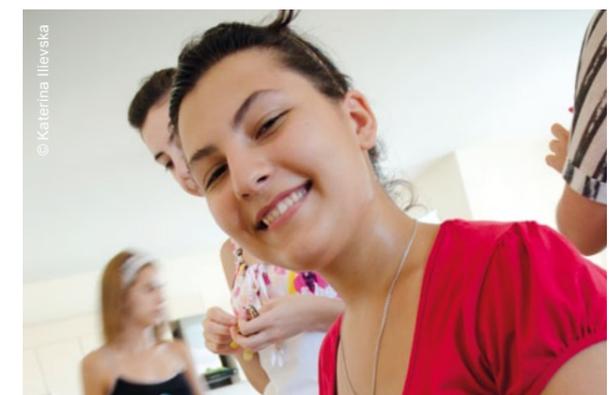
Kati, a single mother who was internally displaced from Abkhazia, attended sewing and tailoring training courses as part of the family strengthening programme in Tbilisi. In January 2011, through the employment support service, she applied to a non-governmental partner organisation, IOM, for a small grant within the scope of the Small and Medium Business Support Programme. After receiving support on how to draft a business plan, she sent in her proposal. Her application was one of the top 15.

As a result, in this preliminary round of the contest, she was given free training courses on owning a small business and on tax accounting. She distinguished herself by her high motivation and the level of knowledge she gained through the courses. In the second round of the contest, she was among the top 10 and was therefore eligible for a grant. With the financing she and her business received (in the amount of 1000 USD equivalent in GEL), she purchased necessary sewing materials and equipment. Now she has been able to widen the scope of her activities. Whereas earlier she had to depend on individual orders, now she herself can decide on what to produce and sell. Accordingly, she has been able to increase her income and her family budget.

# EUROPEAN UNION: Tackling youth unemployment – A growing priority

Over the past 15 years the European Union (EU) has made significant progress in the field of youth policy. Since 2001, the European Commission (hereunder referred to as “the Commission”) has been setting out priorities advancing youth policy beyond mere exchanges, and placing emphasis on participation. It has also proposed to take the youth dimension more into account in the development of other relevant policies, including employment. This approach has been supported by the European Parliament and by the Council (the EU institution representing Member States), which adopted a framework for cooperation in the field of youth.

The table below highlights the issue of unemployment facing young people in Europe in accessing the labour market, quality traineeships and skills training. However, these figures are just a general overview of unemployed young people and do not illustrate figures for young people in or leaving care. It is important to advocate for the mainstreaming of care leavers and those still in care, in order to ensure that they are specifically recognised as an individual group at greater risk of unemployment. The EU has devised a number of approaches to address youth unemployment which can prove beneficial to NGOs working in the field of youth.



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	Unemployment in % (total population)	Number of persons unemployed (rounded)	Youth unemployment rates in %	Number of young people unemployed (rounded)
European Union	10.2	24,772,000	22.6	5,516,000
Belgium	7.3	353,000	7.1	78,000
Bulgaria	12.6	423,000	32.8	84,000
Czech Republic	6.7	352,000	9.0	68,000
Denmark	8.1	237,000	5.1	71,000
Germany	5.6	2,382,000	7.9	368,000
Estonia	11.7	81,000	24.9	17,000
Ireland	14.5	307,000	30.3	61,000
Greece	21.7	1,079,000	51.2	164,000
Spain	24.1	5,540,000	51.1	918,000
France	10.0	2,940,000	21.8	608,000
Italy	9.8	2,506,000	35.9	534,000
Cyprus	10.0	40,000	28.8	10,000
Latvia	14.6	168,000	27.3	34,000
Lithuania	14.3	229,000	34.3	45,000
Luxembourg	5.2	12,000	17.4	3,000
Hungary	11.2	485,000	28.4	84,000
Malta	6.8	12,000	13.6	4,000
The Netherlands	5.0	441,000	9.3	131,000
Austria	4.0	176,000	8.6	50,000
Poland	10.1	1,821,000	26.7	425,000
Portugal	15.3	829,000	36.1	158,000
Romania	7.5	735,000	24.8	225,000
Slovenia	8.5	85,000	16.5	14,000
Slovakia	13.9	382,000	33.9	76,000
Finland	7.5	203,000	19.4	63,000
Sweden	7.3	371,000	22.8	149,000
United Kingdom	8.2	2,588,000	21.9	994,000

Table 1: Unemployment rates in the EU (March 2012)  
Source: European Commission

### EU ACTION IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Better skills and educational opportunities are essential to finding a job. Under the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, EU heads of state or government agreed to reduce the early school leaving rate. In order to help them achieve this, the Commission approved an action plan in January 2011, “Tackling early school leaving: a key contribution to the Europe 2020 Agenda”. The solutions identified are a mix of measures such as prevention, intervention and compensation.

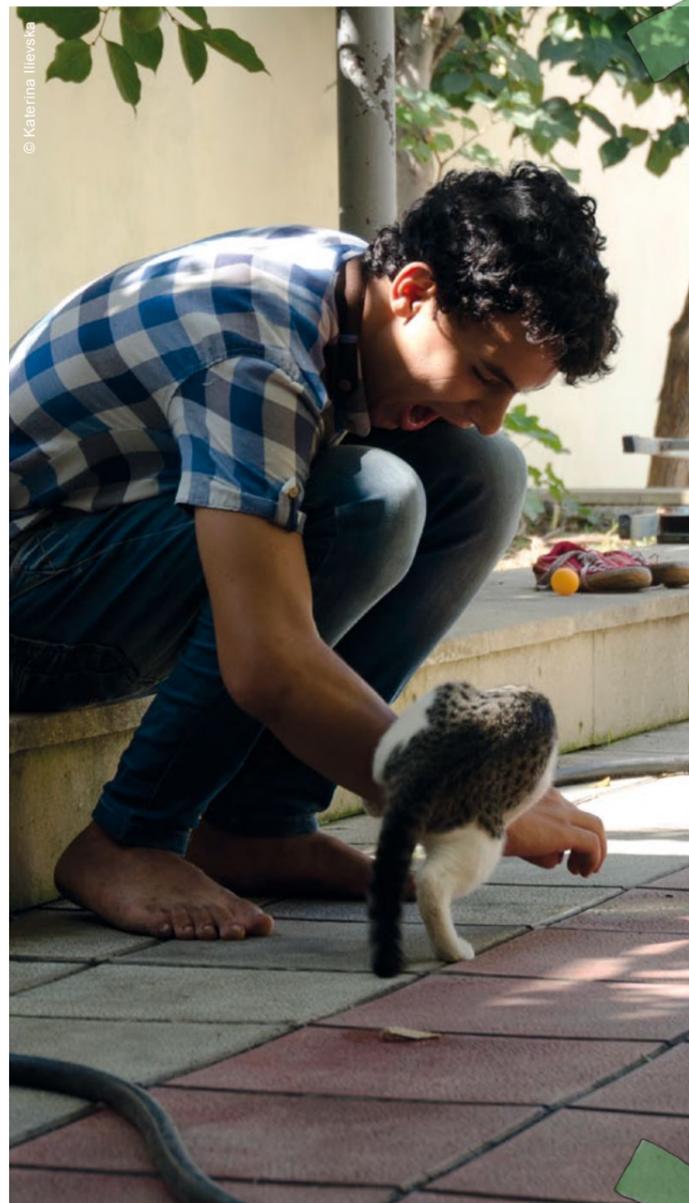
Among the EU measures complementing national policies to tackle youth unemployment, the Commission has launched the “*Youth on the Move*” initiative in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, followed by the “*Youth Opportunities Initiative*” in December 2011, with its employment package adopted in April 2012. Priorities on the EU agenda are reducing early school leaving, modernising education, developing skills relevant to the labour market, facilitating the transition from school to work, improving access to the labour market for getting the first work experience and on-the-job training, and better use of European funds for specific activities tackling youth unemployment.

The Europe 2020 Strategy is the EU’s growth strategy for the coming decade. The Strategy has set five objectives – on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy – to be reached by 2020.

For the period 2014–2020, the Commission has proposed minimum *European Social Fund (ESF)* shares representing a volume of at least € 84 billion, addressing investment priorities such as access to employment for jobseekers and people without work; sustainable integration of young ‘NEETs’ (people *Not in Education, Employment or Training*) into the labour market through ‘*youth guarantees*’; self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation; as well as education and social inclusion investments and capacity-building in public administration.

**Youth on the Move** is a comprehensive package of policy initiatives on **education** and **employment** for young people in Europe. Launched in 2010, it is part of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

**Youth Opportunities Initiative** is a set of measures, planned for 2012 and 2013, to drive down youth unemployment. It is part of the EU’s Youth on the Move education and employment initiative.



### LINKING EDUCATION, TRAINING AND WORK

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) forecasts greater demand for high-level qualifications. The EU Skills Panorama to be launched by the end of 2012 is the first step towards the converging of all existing forecasting tools. It will provide a single overview of the European national and sectorial finding on the short to medium-term prospects for jobs and skills needs up to 2020.

In the “Youth Opportunities Initiative”, the Commission published the working document *Implementing the Youth Opportunity Initiative: First Steps Taken*. The new working document focuses on school drop-outs, access to first employment and making better use of available funding to support the Member States’ youth employment strategies.

- ➔ Vocational training education and training streams at upper secondary level often have high drop-out rates, especially among students of vulnerable groups. Immediate and effective action is needed to reintegrate these young people into education or training measures that fit their needs.
- ➔ Certain Member States should put schemes in place for providing a workplace experience to disadvantaged young people as part of active market policies.

The **European Social Fund (ESF)** is one of the EU’s Structural Funds, set up to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across EU Member States and regions, and promote economic and social cohesion. The ESF is mainly devoted to promoting employment in the EU.

The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions. In short, the ERDF finances, among other things, the creation of sustainable jobs.

### FUNDING ON THE EU LEVEL FOR YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The Commission allocates funding through a variety of different funding programmes to States of the European Union. *Table 2* identifies the funding allocation from two specific funds, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

	ESF unallocated (EUR M)	ERDF unallocated (EUR M)	Total unallocated (EUR M)	Unallocated funds as % of total EU funds
European Union	22,271	60,043	82,314	24
Belgium	45	85	130	6
Bulgaria	422	1,578	2,000	30
Czech Republic	1,070	5,600	7,000	26
Denmark	91	14	105	21
Germany	2,112	3,688	5,800	23
Estonia	33	340	374	11
Ireland	2	0	2	0
Greece	1,495	2,805	1,300	21
Spain	2,712	8,000	10,712	31
France	747	3,500	4,247	32
Italy	3,674	4,326	8,000	29
Cyprus	0	0	0	0
Latvia	0	150	150	10
Lithuania	289	761	1,050	15
Luxembourg	0	5	5	10
Hungary	2,190	4,010	6,200	25
Malta	20	55	75	9
The Netherlands	0	240	240	14
Austria	78	322	400	33
Poland	3,775	13,725	17,500	26
Portugal	1,760	1,240	3,000	14
Romania	698	5,102	5,800	30
Slovenia	204	371	575	14
Slovakia	39	2,261	2,300	20
Finland	89	261	350	22
Sweden	195	105	300	18
United Kingdom	230	1,170	1,400	11

Table 2: EU funds still to be allocated for the period 2007–2013 (estimate by end 2011) Source: European Commission

The **PROGRESS PROGRAMME** is a financial instrument supporting the development and coordination of EU policy in the following five areas:

- Employment
- Social inclusion and social protection
- Working conditions
- Anti-discrimination
- Gender equality

### THE EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

Under the Progress Programme and in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Employment Strategy (EES) seeks to create more and better jobs throughout the EU. To reach these objectives, the EES encourages measures to meet three headline targets by 2020:

- 75% of people aged 20–64 in work
- school drop-out rates below 10%, and at least 40% of people aged 30–34 completing third-level education
- at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

### CONCLUDING NOTE

There are structures and funding mechanisms within the European Union that are directed at young people who are unemployed or facing unemployment. These structures offer new opportunities for NGOs working in the field of youth to develop actions and projects on the national, regional or local level through the use of European funding streams. However, even though it shows promise that young people and the challenges they face in finding employment are given specific mention, what is not explicitly shown is the higher risk of unemployment for young people in, or leaving care. It is important to advocate for the mainstreaming of young people in or leaving care as a specific group who are disproportionately affected by employment and the hardships that unemployment conveys in comparison with their wider peer group. Advocacy and project development through EU funding offers an important tool in the mainstreaming of children and young people living in alternative care and in creating activities specifically for them.



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## PROMOTING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT (PYE) GOOD PRACTICE FROM THE ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS (AER)

### → Transforming an economic downturn into an opportunity

If Europe is to achieve its headline targets of 75% of people aged 20–64 in employment by 2020, specific action is needed to help tackle rising levels of youth unemployment. The prospects of young workers have only been made worse by the economic recession. That is why AER came together with four of its member regions to develop innovative tools and policies at the regional level and effectively address the challenge of youth unemployment by undertaking an intensive programme of peer reviews and exchange.

### → What is the AER Peer Review?

AER developed a peer review methodology in order to allow regional authorities to assess and improve their performance in key areas of regional responsibility. Until now it has been implemented in such fields as alcohol policies, tourism, economy and renewable energies. It will now also prove useful in the area of youth policies in the AER member regions.

### → PYE methodology

The AER Peer Review methodology is based on a multi-level bottom-up approach, which means that PYE will involve regional authorities, national and regional stakeholders playing a central role in youth employment, as well as young people themselves. Four five-day peer review visits in each partner region will enable an in-depth sharing and transfer of good practice between European regions, focusing on three structural challenges in the field of youth employment: young people's preparation for, transition to and stabilisation in the labour market.

### → Outputs

Each peer review visit resulted in a tailor-made list of recommendations drafted by international experts. These reports will lead to four Regional Action Plans setting out specific policy recommendations to improve young people's access to jobs in the region. The outcomes of the PYE were presented to the wider public during its final conference on 26 June 2012 in Brussels.



## CROATIA: Supporting employment through sound preparation and good decisions for life

Finding a job is a key element in the life of a young person. This is particularly true in the case of young people leaving care, who might not be able to rely on the support of their families. In Croatia, the unemployment rate of young people up to the age of 30 is particularly high. They make up to 32.3% of all unemployed people in Croatia, one of the highest figures in Europe.

SOS Children's Villages Croatia together with partners supports children and young people on their way to independence, advocating for their rights. Below are some steps we take in preparing them for employment:

### 1. THE "LITTLE SCHOOL OF LIFE"

The "Little School of Life" is a time to prepare children in care (in SOS Children's Villages in our case) for living more independently in youth houses and for making good decisions about their education. Tailored to the children, the programme is age-appropriate and covers the following topics: awareness of self, hygienic habits, sexuality, understanding and ex-

pressing emotions, confidence, safety and traffic movement skills, children's rights, cooking, strengthening work habits (learning and home duties), helping the family community, study techniques, speed reading techniques, communication skills, nonviolent conflict resolution, acceptance of diversity, and finally, access to counselling on financial issues and prevention of addiction. In addition, children visit youth houses so they can become familiar with the concept of living in a youth house, with decision making, mediation and buying clothes independently. For children needing vocational guidance, this programme also assists them in choosing a secondary school according to their needs and capacities, and also regarding the situation on the labour market.

The Little School of Life has shown good results in preparing children to take on more responsibilities and decision making concerning their lives. Giving children concrete practical knowledge, particularly in preparation for the labour market, is a key facet in the curricula of the school.

Although it seems a bit premature to start preparing children for the challenges of independent life, our experience and research tells us that starting early is the right thing so that children can be fully involved in the process.

### 2. PREPARATION FOR INDEPENDENT LIFE AND THE LABOUR MARKET IN THE YOUTH COMMUNITIES

This preparation is done according to an individual development plan, in which young people participate and make plans together with their youth leaders. At this stage of preparation, we include external partners from government and from the non-governmental sector, who perform additional workshops with young people.

### 3. SUPPORT DURING THE SEMI-INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMME

The very first steps toward independent life are supported by our semi-independent living programme,

which includes counselling, guidance and financial assistance.

Our experience has shown that young people who have participated in a semi-assisted living programme are successful in finding jobs after they leave the care of SOS Children's Villages.

### 4. OUR ADVOCACY WORK

First, youth unemployment is very rarely mentioned as a major social problem, thus indicating a rather indifferent attitude towards the youth population in Croatia. Secondly, it is often forgotten that only young people know how it is to be young at this point in time and that only young unemployed people can fully understand how this phenomenon affects their lives.

#### a) To advocate and provide young people with opportunities to be involved in decisions regarding their employment

SOS Children's Villages joined the Croatian Youth Network in implementing their project "Who is scared of a big bad crisis".

Young people from SOS Children's Villages communities participated in the meetings hosted by the project. The project is expected to raise awareness on the challenges faced by young people in their employment and to provide solutions to improve the situation.

#### b) The "Pragma Association"

Together with the "Pragma Association" SOS Children's Villages advocates for social mentoring for young people. Through mentoring, young people are provided with individual tailored support for a better integration and to improve their education, skills and chances for employment. In 2010, the project included 80 mentees and 20 trained mentors.

In our future programme and advocacy plans, we will include these examples of good practice in preparing young people leaving care, so that all young people who leave care in Croatia can get the necessary set of competences, assistance and support they deserve.



## UNITED KINGDOM: Providing opportunities for young people from care

The E18HTEEN project uses sport and physical activity as a vehicle to engage young people in care as well as care leavers aged 16-19 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or are at risk of becoming NEET. The aim is to improve the quality of life and outcomes for each of these young people. In partnership with the Greater London Authority, Haringey Council, Barnet Council, Enfield Council and Waltham Forest Council, E18HTEEN offers an individually tailored learning and development programme with free access to 18 separate training and life-skills workshops and 18 different sports.

The young people are referred to the project by the Virtual Schools of Children in Care. Dedicated qualified youth mentors have the role of discovering each participant's ideas, goals and aspirations and instilling an impetus for action. Each young person is presented with opportunities to participate and volunteer in the sport or physical activity of their choice, which then becomes part of an individualised learning and personal development plan that promotes independence and gives support in the transition to adulthood.

As E18HTEEN is based on individual need, each participant has a different experience. We do not believe in a 'one size fits all approach', and we ensure that each participant is supported in achieving their individual goals. In addition to participation, the young people are encouraged to engage in 18 hours of volunteering through our community-based projects such as Kickz. E18HTEEN provides a variety of life-skills workshops, events and activities to promote independence and personal development, such as money management and conflict resolution. E18HTEEN also offers exceptional experiences to encourage self-discovery and self-empowerment for example white water rafting, and participant-led projects in sport, music and performing arts.

The Tottenham Hotspurs Foundation delivers a variety of programmes that are intrinsically linked to E18HTEEN. If an opportunity does not exist internally, a mentor from the virtual school will provide support to identify and introduce the participant to an external opportunity. The rationale behind this is that young people who have been in the care system rarely engage in the kind of mainstream opportunities that can increase social interaction skills and



bring young people out of isolation. E18HTEEN provides the support needed to build self-esteem and social skills.

E18HTEEN has almost completed its first year of operation, and the impact to date is as follows:

- 532 hours 1-2-1 mentoring (13.2 hours average per participant)
- 65% of participants now engaged in education, employment or training
- 45% gained accredited qualification
- 52.5% completed 18+ hours volunteering
- 365 community volunteering hours delivered in total

### **The ultimate goals of E18HTEEN:**

- A minimum of 80% of participants will achieve at least one formal qualification
- 75% of participants will have completed a minimum of 18 hours voluntary work within the local community
- 75% of participants will either be in education, training or employment
- 75% of participants will have engaged in sport and physical activity
- Through the measurement of 'softer outcomes' E18HTEEN has been instrumental in improving aspects such as punctuality, personal hygiene, travel, self-confidence, attitude and social skills.

E18HTEEN involves Spurs and England striker Jermain Defoe as an active ambassador and positive role model. As ambassador to the project, Jermain regularly meets the young people to provide inspiration, motivation and encouragement to pursue their life goals. He says the programme changes young people's lives and provides them with key opportunities:

*"E18HTEEN is all about giving young people opportunities to take courses and gain qualifications that can open doors for them to do something positive with their lives, focusing on 16–19 year olds who are or have been in care. (...) There are many challenges facing this group of young people and some have had hard upbringings, but E18HTEEN can change their lives. For me personally, it's important for young people to see what I have achieved in my life and the hard work it has taken to get me to where I am today having come from the streets of East London. E18HTEEN has given me the chance to do just that, and it is a great feeling."*

## DHL: Living responsibility – How Deutsche Post DHL delivers self-esteem

### INTERVIEW WITH RALF DUERRWANG



Ralf Duerrwang is Vice President of Corporate Responsibility – GoTeach and is responsible for the management of the Global Partnerships on Education under the DHL strategy of Living Responsibility. The GoTeach Programme is supported by the international partnerships with Teach For All and SOS Children's Villages.

We spoke with him about his thoughts and views on the issues of education and employment of young care leavers, the partnership between Deutsche Post DHL and SOS Children's Villages, and his passion for empowering young people.

#### 1. Mr. Duerrwang, as a worldwide employer, why are you committed to supporting the employment of young people from a care background?

At Deutsche Post DHL we see education as a prerequisite to a successful life as well as for economic growth and development. As a logistics company and as one of the largest employers worldwide, we benefit both directly and indirectly from better educated and empowered young people, including young people with a care background. We need capable and competent employees to rely on in order to provide world-class logistics services.

Furthermore, we want to be an employer of choice and our activities help us to showcase the attractiveness of the logistics industry and of Deutsche Post DHL as an employer.

In addition, I believe this is a great opportunity for our employees to help and contribute towards unlocking the potential of young people. I truly hope this can be achieved through our partnership.

#### 2. Where do you see the added value for your business in engaging with young people?

First of all, it is about developing young future talents, motivation for our employees through their contribution and thus retention of our employees. This is what I believe in as the future of employee relations, since everyone needs the motivation to work and one of the greatest moti-

vators is volunteering towards something meaningful, and where the individual knowledge of each employee is passed on to others in the world. All this is also aligned to our organisational goals in becoming employer of choice.

It is a truly touching experience for me when I see employees involved in activities on the grass-root level and to see how proud and happy they are with their participation. Through this experience they also learn and broaden their horizon and get greater job satisfaction. This in turns helps them to perform better at their work and to be proud of the company.

#### 3. Generally speaking, what do you think young people need at this age?

For young people, they need challenges to grow further; they need role models for their future orientation and a sense of belonging to a community or group which they feel proud to be part of.

For me personally, I think they should get to know their needs and desires, and then pursue them in an ethical way. This has a lot to do with gaining self-respect, personal freedom and social security.

#### 4. Now coming to the young people involved in the programme, what do you expect from them?

I hope they are open minded about this opportunity and have the willingness to grab their chances as they come their way and grow with them. Overall I hope they take care of their learning and the learning of their peers and ask questions when needed, ask for support and go through a challenging self-discovery process.

#### 5. Can you tell us a little bit about the nature of your existing partnership with SOS Children's Villages?

We think this is a unique type of a partnership and it is more like an integrated corporate citizenship. Within our partnership we work collaboratively with the win-win aspect in mind

### DEUTSCHE POST DHL PARTNERSHIP WITH SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES

Deutsche Post DHL started its partnership with the international social development organisation SOS Children's Villages in December 2010. The partners aim to give youth a better future by offering access to vocational training, work experience and other skills necessary for entering the work force.

The partnership helps young adults 15 to 25 years of age to better prepare for an independent and self-determined life. A range of educational opportunities involving both partners provides need-based assistance that helps individuals to lay the foundation for a career.

The partnership is remarkable because Deutsche Post DHL and SOS Children's Villages develop activities together and tailor them to local needs. Such customized individual support has the greatest impact on a young person's employability.

#### The partnership's focus:

- Career guidance and internship placement for young adults
- Mentoring under Deutsche Post DHL volunteers with professional experience
- Financial support of educational programme of SOS Children's Villages in partner countries

An exceptional example from this compelling partnership is a local initiative by DHL employees and SOS Children's Villages in Madagascar. With DHL's help, nearly a dozen teenagers have found excellent employment opportunities since the programme began.

The partnership has already been launched in Brazil, Madagascar, South Africa and Vietnam, and will include additional countries in 2012.

thus catering to the overall mission of both our organisations. For us the main focus is not on the monetary support we provide, but on the time contribution, the know-how, the common ideas and most importantly the involvement of our employees.

I believe this is the reason why we have been able to grow from a small pilot initiative to a large and expanding partnership. I think we reached this stage because of the authenticity in the partnership where both the parties have respect and understanding about each other's values and visions.

#### 6. Could you give us an example of a success story within your partnership with SOS Children's Villages?

I am happy when I receive calls and questions about the partnership from countries that ask to take part in it. This acts as an indicator for me that we are on the right track.

In terms of success, I was happy to receive a letter



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#### THE SKILLS REQUIRED TO RETAIN GOOD BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

As a result of the encouragement she received from her mentor – Mbolatiana at DHL Ivandry – Stephanie (19) is now taking informed choices as she feels *“more responsible, sociable and confident”* to pursue her dream of becoming one of Madagascar's few telecommunications engineers in the next two years. *“I am proud of me thanks to them.”*

Meanwhile, in Sao Paulo, Miguel (16) gained exposure to a real working environment; he is not giving up on his dreams thanks to the advice of his mentor, Bruna Goncalves, at DHL Express Brazil. She taught him the importance of teamwork and the skills required to retain good business relationships.

*“Before, I was shy. DHL gave me more confidence to speak in public, to express opinions and not to be afraid to ask,”* said the invigorated teenager.

Stephanie and Miguel may live worlds apart, but they have much in common. A challenging family and social environment led each of them to seek the support of SOS Children's Villages. They come from communities where a good education is an unaffordable luxury, where the cycle of intergenerational poverty can only be broken by quality employment. By partnering with SOS Children's Villages for another three years, DHL will continue to stimulate much needed confidence and will significantly increase the employability of hundreds of young people such as Miguel, who speaks from experience when he says *“everyone has his fate, but it does not decide his future.”*

from one of the young people who participated in our programme last year. He thanked us for the programme and said how useful it has been for him. I believe it is a success when DHL can offer jobs to the young people from the programmes and they are happy to accept them. Ultimately, it is overwhelming to see the commitment of our employees to be part of this programme.

#### 7. Why do you personally believe in this cause?

I believe in our joint programme due to my own experience. Some might say I grew up on the wrong side of town: I was the first young person in my family and in my neighbourhood to go to college and university. I feel that in the right moment I met the right people, who helped me to unlock the potential in me which they saw. Those were my rowing coach, teachers, and some leaders I have since met and had the pleasure to interact with at Deutsche Post DHL.

I have faced challenges, but I was able to manage them, and now I know that challenges are just a part of our life – as is success. Life is an ongoing learning process.



© BAZ Berlin

## GERMANY: BAZ Berlin – The SOS Vocational Training Centre in Berlin

*“Excuse me, can you tell me the way to the ‘ROSSI’?”*

You hear something along these lines every other lunchtime in the corridors of the SOS Vocational Training Centre in Berlin. ROSSI, a training restaurant that is part of the centre, has now become a really hot tip with the lunchtime crowd. With its high standards, excellent quality and great prices, ROSSI attracts plenty of workers from surrounding businesses and offices, senior citizens, and people interested in the former OSRAM factory, now home to over 60 shops, galleries and offices, including the local Vocational Training Centre of SOS Children's Villages Germany.

#### FOCUS ON TRAINING

The training restaurant is just one part of BAZ (Berufsausbildungszentrum) Berlin, as the SOS Vocational Training Centre is known as for short. In addition to apprenticeships in the restaurant and hospitality sector, there are seven other training apprenticeships in skilled trades and administration on offer. BAZ Berlin also consists of a hairdresser, paint shop, gardening and landscaping business, and media unit; the centre has been actively involved in helping socially disadvantaged adolescents and young adults to gain qualifications and training for 15 years now. Young people are offered a modern apprenticeship in a proper workplace, which gives them prospects for the future beyond unemployment and long-term state benefits. They are supervised by a professional team of trainers, social educators and support teachers.

### CAREER GUIDANCE AND PLANNING

Not all young people know right from the start which occupation they would like to pursue and where their strengths lie. BAZ Berlin has developed a three-stage concept of vocational preparation. Using three modules tailored to the needs of each individual, undecided young people can work their way towards their ultimate career goal. Once their social and organisational skills and theoretical knowledge have been established, they enter the career guidance phase. They get the chance to find out about different occupations through work placements lasting several weeks. The third stage then involves targeted preparation for the chosen occupation, and obtaining the qualification modules required.

BAZ Berlin offers a range of support options, from filling gaps in school qualifications to the European Computer Driving Licence and job application training. In this context the BAZ Berlin has proven invaluable as a contact point for young people in supporting the transition from school to training and then to work.

BAZ Berlin also reaches out to young people while they are still in a school environment. In selected schools BAZ Berlin provides, for example, intensive social work on site, in-depth career guidance (with practical placements for trying things out), and the SOS “Learning Oasis” project, which helps teenagers who do not attend school regularly to complete their secondary school qualification.

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### MOTHERS AND FATHERS LEARNING

“Young mothers and fathers want to learn!” is a project devoted to the particular needs of single parents and young parents. BAZ Berlin gives them the chance to complete a training course on a part-time basis. This allows them to combine childcare and a vocational qualification. In addition, their children can receive care from two carers in a specially designed “BAZini” nursery.

Much has been achieved in the last 15 years: 250 young people from 21 countries now attend the SOS Vocational Training Centre. Over 80 co-workers see to the smooth running of the many tasks associated with the centre. And every day confirms that their mantra is right: training is the first step towards the future. The popular ROSSI restaurant with its highly motivated young chefs and waiters is the prime example.



## ROMANIA: Don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today – the story of Ionela



Ionela Floristeanu is one of the first success stories from the youth programme in Bacau. It was not an easy and smooth road for Ionela. It was a difficult path, filled with obstacles seemingly impossible to overcome – childhood abuse, miscarriage, health problems. But Ionela managed to overcome all of them and follow her dream of starting a family and building a happy home, ideally with three children.

Ionela was taken by child protection authorities at the age of eight. She went through several housing centres, and at age 16 she was transferred to an SOS Children's Village in Hemeius, Bacau. She completed 10 classes at the local vocational centre and received certification as a qualified worker in commerce. Ionela has been working since the age of 14 – as a chef, an ice cream seller, and as an employee at the plastic factory. Ionela lived for 10 months in an SOS youth house, during which time she received life skills training – skills that would help her at school, work and in private life, such as budget management,

salary management and counselling about relationships, family life and raising a baby.

In April 2010, Ionela married Florin. They moved into the house of her husband's parents which was adapted for two families. At first, Ionela worked at the plastic factory. Soon after, she left for Italy together with Florin and her mother-in-law. There, she realized how difficult life could be, how hard it is to find a job and to pay rent. After three hard months they decided to return to Romania. In addition, Ionela had health problems which she neglected, and she also suffered a miscarriage. Through these experiences, Ionela began to grow up and to see life through different eyes.

With the support of SOS Children's Village Bacau, Ionela decided to address her personal problems. She also enrolled in a hairdressing, manicure and pedicure course. Then, a great opportunity from the Velux Company came along. After finishing the course, SOS Children's Villages and Velux provided Ionela with the necessary funding and guidance to start her own business: a “beauty salon” in her home. With the funding, she was able to purchase professional equipment and professional products needed for providing beauty services. The funding also enabled her to begin renovation work on the house. All the painting and installation work was done by her husband.



Finding clients was not easy at the beginning and Ionela had to work in the plastic factory to financially support her family and the project. The support of the organisation continued through this period. Ionela grew in maturity and responsibility, and in December 2011, she began to earn money from her home beauty business. Her services were in constant demand from relatives, friends and teenagers from SOS youth programmes.

Ionela realized she needs to learn more to become a professional and to meet different customer's needs. She was very excited to hear she could receive a second grant from Velux to learn more and to develop her business further. She gathered information, studied the market and concluded that the best thing would be to attend the best professional school in the city (Academy Edelweiss) where she could learn the latest trends in beauty business alongside the skills necessary to run a business. However, she would have to continue working at the factory to support herself and to be able to save money to invest in her business.

Ionela is self-assured and looks optimistically toward the future. She is determined that she will become a professional and will earn enough to see her biggest dream come true: becoming a mother and giving her children everything they need to grow up healthy and happy.

What makes Ionela story a success is her ability to communicate, to talk about her problems and the things that trouble or interest her, and her ability to seek the opinions, support and advice from those who are more experienced. Because of this, she has been able to develop personally, to solidify her relationship with her husband and to maintain good relations with her husbands' parents.

Ionela accepted her past and assumed responsibility for her present and future. She made the decision to reconnect with her biological mother. After years of not being in contact, they are now in touch. And when time allows, she even takes her younger sister, who lives at SOS Children's Village Hemeius, to her mother's place on the weekend so that they can all

spend time together. When she meets young people at the SOS youth house in Bacau she never misses an opportunity to remind them "don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today", prioritize school and think maturely about what is about to come. She is an example for other young people and also a valuable resource in her support to the team of advisors when she can reinforce and highlight key messages.

Acceptance, work, perseverance, vision, maturity and responsibility, that is, in short, the message Ionela transmits to the new generation.

#### VELUX FOUNDATION SUPPORTS SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES IN ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

In July 2010 a micro-grant project was launched by the SOS Children's Villages associations in Romania and Bulgaria with funding support from SOS Children's Villages Denmark. The grant was based on a donation from the Velux Foundation Denmark. Velux Foundation supports social and cultural projects in countries in Eastern and Central Europe. The primary objective of these projects is to support the development towards democracy and welfare in these countries. Special emphasis is given to projects targeting children and young people, designed to improve their living conditions and future opportunities. The micro grants available within the Velux projects are defined as smaller sums of money given to vulnerable individuals and families, following a specific application procedure and for a specific investment. Through this investment, individuals and families are expected to become self-reliant and significantly improve the quality of their lives. The funds are given with no interest and no requirement for repayment.

## USEFUL LINKS

### → Legal references

- UN World Youth Report on <http://unworldyouthreport.org/>
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, on [www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm)
- UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/index.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/index.htm)
- Youth Employment section on [www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/lang--en/index.htm)
- The International Labour Standards relevant to work and young persons on [www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS\\_115993/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_115993/lang--en/index.htm)
- Global employment trends ILO 2012 on [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_171571.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_171571.pdf)
- Benchmarks for Youth Employment, Youth Employment Network, 2010 on [www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yen/downloads/benchmark2011.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yen/downloads/benchmark2011.pdf)
- Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth, OECD, on [www.oecd.org/employment/employmentpoliciesand-data/46717876.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/employment/employmentpoliciesand-data/46717876.pdf)
- Treaty on European Union, Title XI, Social policy, education, vocational training and youth, on <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/ce321/ce32120061229en00010331.pdf>
- Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, on <http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp>
- European Employment Observatory, on [www.eu-employment-observatory.net/](http://www.eu-employment-observatory.net/)

### → Studies

- Ageing out of care, SOS Children's Villages International, on [www.sos-childrensvillages.org/About-us/Publications/Pages/Ageing-out-of-care-international-analysis.aspx](http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/About-us/Publications/Pages/Ageing-out-of-care-international-analysis.aspx)
- Allen, Maggie, Into the mainstream – care leavers entering work, education and training, Joseph Rowntree foundation, on [www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/1842630865.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/1842630865.pdf)
- Care leavers, reports and projects, on <http://childout.org/web/category/care-leavers/>
- From Care2Work Project: Phase 1 Final Report, NCAS publication, on [http://leavingcare.org/publications\\_training\\_consultancy/ncas\\_publications](http://leavingcare.org/publications_training_consultancy/ncas_publications)
- Leaving care research paper, University of East Anglia, on [www.uea.ac.uk/menu/acad\\_depts/swk/MRC\\_web/public\\_html/files/qpb7.pdf](http://www.uea.ac.uk/menu/acad_depts/swk/MRC_web/public_html/files/qpb7.pdf)
- Supporting care leavers in employment - Working in partnership to support young people leaving care, NCAS publication on <http://resources.leavingcare.org/uploads/7dddb27e61d802f24da23ff11f26e85d.pdf>
- Youth employment, Eldis, on [www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/children-and-young-people/working-young-people/youth-employment](http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/children-and-young-people/working-young-people/youth-employment)

### → Youth friendly Guides

- A guide to employment: For anyone starting out in employment, NCAS publication, on <http://resources.leavingcare.org/uploads/f9bbf71bb19396cb51dd24934749c848.pdf>
- Guide for Needs Assessment for Youth, on [www.cyc.uvic.ca/naty/home.html](http://www.cyc.uvic.ca/naty/home.html)
- It's my life: Employment, A Guide for Transition Services from Casey Family Programs, Casey, on [www.casey.org/resources/publications/pdf/ItsMyLife\\_Employment.pdf](http://www.casey.org/resources/publications/pdf/ItsMyLife_Employment.pdf)
- Le guide de l'emploi des jeunes en entreprise, Agir pour l'égalité, on [www.agirpourlegalite.fr/site/img/Final\\_Guide\\_22aout2011.pdf](http://www.agirpourlegalite.fr/site/img/Final_Guide_22aout2011.pdf)
- Your journey to work: A career planning workbook, NCAS publication, on <http://resources.leavingcare.org/uploads/4f4a8c2a3f3f533dcfc69964f8cc1f48.pdf>
- Work experience: guide for young people, NCAS publication, on <http://resources.leavingcare.org/uploads/9882279cb1f25c2f5f1d2567fe0c23a8.pdf>

### → On-line support

- Arbeit : sicher und fair! Zukunft und Perspektiven für die junge Generation (Germany), on [www.jungegeneration.de/](http://www.jungegeneration.de/)
- Bienvenue à jeunesse, Welcome to youth (Canada), on [www.jeunesse.gc.ca/fra/accueil.shtml](http://www.jeunesse.gc.ca/fra/accueil.shtml)
- El portal de los Jovenes que egresan de instituciones (Argentina), on <http://guiaegreso.com.ar/>
- Get ready for adult life, on [www.getreadyforadulthood.org/](http://www.getreadyforadulthood.org/)
- Job guide (Australia), on <http://jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au/>
- Le guide de l'emploi des jeunes en entreprise (France), on [www.pourlemploidesjeunes.fr/](http://www.pourlemploidesjeunes.fr/)
- Twitter: Youth Employment @YFJ\_Employment (by Member Organisations of YFJ to work for youth employment in Europe), on [www.youthemploymentaction.org/](http://www.youthemploymentaction.org/)
- YES: Youth Employment Support, on [www.youth-employment-support.eu/index.php?id=4&L=1](http://www.youth-employment-support.eu/index.php?id=4&L=1)
- Youth policy Watch – European Youth Forum, on <http://intranet.youthforum.org/newsletters/node/36574>
- Youth Unemployment, AEGEE Europe, on [www.projects.aegee.org/yue/](http://www.projects.aegee.org/yue/)

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[www.sos-childrensvillages.org](http://www.sos-childrensvillages.org)

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