

YOUTH TRANSITION TO WORK IN BELARUS



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PREFACE

The European Union (EU) Neighbourhood Policy aims to stabilise the region in political, economic and security-related terms. The European Training Foundation (ETF) has been providing regular input to the European Commission in implementing the Eastern Partnership¹ (EaP) work programme. In November 2017, the EaP summit agreed on 20 deliverables for 2020, including a deliverable aimed at strengthening investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability. In this context, in 2017 the ETF launched a project to create a set of comparable analyses on youth policies in six EaP countries, further promoting the exchange of experiences throughout the countries in the region and fostering evidence-based policy making. The focus of the country analysis is on policy measures that support youth transition to work.

National expert Irina Vashko and ETF specialist Daiga Ermsons drafted this report, with contributions from Anastacia Bobrova. The ETF would like to thank stakeholders in Belarus for sharing information and providing valuable inputs.

¹ Eastern Partnership is a joint policy initiative aimed at deepening and strengthening relations between the EU, its Member States and its six Eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

INTRODUCTION

Youth transition to work is a complex issue as it is linked both to external factors over which a country has little control, such as the general political and economic situation in the region or even globally, and internal factors, such as changes in the structure of the economy and the labour market, and demographic developments. Nevertheless, within these major forces that have an impact on the labour market situation, there remains scope for the government to improve the circumstances of young people who are already in the labour market, or to support their smooth transition into it. It is important that the government has policies in place that accompany young people in their transition to the world of work and that help them to realise their full potential.

Youth is a priority for the EU's social vision, and young people's human and social capital is recognised as one of Europe's greatest assets for the future. Therefore, the EU supports young people's employment, employability and social inclusion. The EU Youth Strategy (2010–2018) sets out two overall objectives: to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market, and to promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people. In December 2016 the EC, in its Investing in Europe's Youth Communication, proposed a renewed effort to support young people in the form of a package with three strands of action: better opportunities to access employment, better opportunities through education and training, and better opportunities for solidarity, learning mobility and participation.

Within the framework of the EaP, the EU provides support to its neighbouring countries through financial assistance, as well as through relevant policy dialogue at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Within this framework, in December 2017 all partner countries committed to demonstrating and delivering tangible benefits to the daily lives of citizens across the region by focusing on achieving 20 Deliverables for 2020 (European Commission, 2017) in four key priority areas: the economy, connectivity, governance and people-to-people contacts. In the area of youth, education, skills development and culture, the countries agreed on a deliverable aimed at strengthening investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability, with a particular focus on leadership, mobility and the quality of formal and non-formal education.

In Belarus, youth policy is acknowledged as an important part of state policy on social, economic and cultural development, and the country has a well-developed legal framework covering all spheres of young people's lives. However, the fact that the youth unemployment rate is higher than the unemployment rate for the adult working-age population indicates that young people are facing difficulties in the transition to work.

This report analyses the youth situation in Belarus and, in particular, youth policy measures implemented in the country. While youth policy in general addresses a range of aspects of young people's lives, such as participation in society, health and cultural development, this report will focus only on those that relate to youth education and skills development, and employment. The purpose of the analysis is to support national stakeholders in understanding the main challenges that young people face during the transition to work, and in developing innovative approaches to address these challenges effectively by implementing new policies, measures and services.

The analysis is based on the available statistical data, scientific publications and studies, as well as administrative records of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MoLSP), Ministry of Economy and other state and non-state actors. The labour market analysis is based on data from Census 2009, administrative data and data from Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) (2016, 2017) that was provided by the National Statistical Committee (Belstat). Data provided by

these sources is difficult to compare and there could be discrepancies in the approaches that will limit analysis of the labour market situation in the country.

The report is structured in four chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of the youth labour market, providing a description of the demographic and economic context and a brief analysis of the main labour market trends and challenges. The second chapter describes the youth policy framework and the main institutions involved, while the third chapter examines policy measures implemented in support of the youth transition to work. The fourth chapter analyses the main institutional and operational constraints that have a negative impact on the quality and efficiency of youth policy measures, and proposes necessary actions that could help in improving their implementation.

1. YOUTH SITUATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

1.1 Overview of the youth situation

1.1.1 Definition of youth in the country

In Belarus, 'youth' is defined by the Law on Foundations of State Youth Policy as nationals of Belarus, foreign nationals or stateless persons permanently residing in the country who are aged between 14 and 31. The law also defines 'young family' as one in which both parents (or the parent in a single-parent family) are under the age of 31.

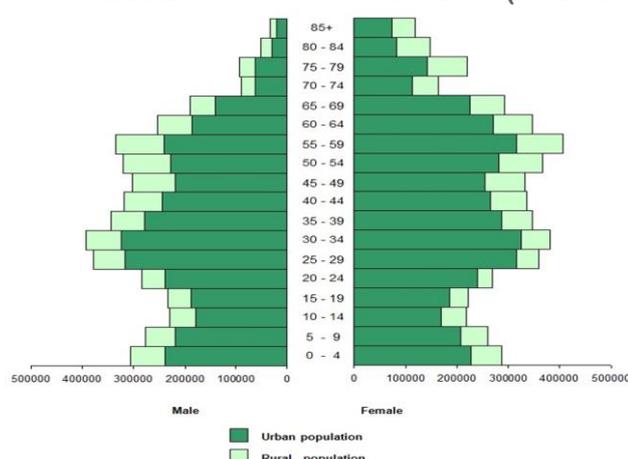
However, most studies conducted by governmental and non-governmental agencies provide data and information for the age group 15–29 years. Belstat groups statistical information into five-year age cohorts and, accordingly, disaggregates individuals aged 15–29 into sub-groups of 15–19, 20–24, 25–29 and 30–34. Thus, in Belarus the age boundaries of statistical groups do not coincide with the age boundaries of the 'youth' definition that is enshrined in the legal system. However, it is possible to obtain data in the labour and demographic statistics on an age group corresponding to the definition of 'youth'. For the purposes of this report, the analysis will focus primarily on young people aged 15–29 years. Where possible, the data will be disaggregated by sub-groups (15–19, 20–24 and 25–29).

1.1.2 Demographic profile and migration

In general, the demographic factors influencing the national economy are the total size and age structure of the population, the birth rate, the mortality rate and migration levels. The population of Belarus at the beginning of 2018 was 9 491 823 people. The urban population was 7 412 118 (78.1%) and the rural population 2 079 705 (21.9%). Since 1994 the overall population of the country has declined by 718 580 people. Furthermore, the share of youth in the general population has been declining and the transformation of the age structure of the population is moving in the direction of ageing. However, the process of decline has slowed down in recent years. In 2010 the natural population decline was 29 082 people, while in 2017 it decreased to 16 755 people (Belstat, 2018a). Low fertility rates corresponding to those in European countries are one of the main demographic challenges for Belarus.

As of 1 January 2018, the number of young people aged 14–31 was 1 921 075, or 20.2% of the total population of Belarus. The male population was 985 185 (51.3%) and the female population 935 890 (48.7%). The largest youth age group is young people aged 25–29, with a total of 713 641 people (7.5% of the total population); the age group 20–24 has 512 640 young people (5.4% of the total population), and the smallest age group, 15–19, 453 268 young people (4.8% of the total population) (Belstat, 2018a).

FIGURE 1.1 POPULATION PYRAMID AS OF 1 JANUARY 2017 (AGE IN YEARS)



Source: Belstat

To address the negative dynamics on the main demographic indicators, which were reaching a critical level of depopulation, Belarus adopted the 2007–2010 and 2011–2015 national demographic security programmes. To further stabilise the demographic situation and foster a shift towards demographic growth, the State Programme on the Health of the Nation and Demographic Security of Belarus will be implemented between 2016 and 2020.

The country is undergoing a process of urbanisation affecting all groups of the population, including young people. The flows of internal migration of young people are towards the cities, where industry and services are developing. Thus, in 2017 the population of the city of Minsk increased due to a migration inflow of 5 337 people. At the same time, in all regions of the country (with the exception of the city of Minsk and Minsk region) the migration balance was negative (Belstat, 2017c).

According to the official statistics, Belarus has positive annual international migration inflows. Net migration was 18 494 people in 2015, 7 940 people in 2016 and 3 874 people in 2017 (Belstat, 2018a). The trends in external labour migration have been changing under the influence of the economic situation in both Belarus and the destination countries. For instance, over the period 2009–12 the number of Belarusian workers abroad constantly increased. In 2013 and 2014 their number decreased. However, since 2016 it has been growing again.

Statistics on labour migration are very limited, as most labour migration flows are to Russia. Integration agreements between Belarus and Russia imply the absence of a border and minimal barriers for Belarusians to be employed in Russia, and provide additional opportunities for the entry and exit of migrants. This, together with widespread employment in the shadow economy, makes it difficult to make a precise assessment of the number of Belarusian labour migrants. According to estimates, in 2017 about 70 000 Belarusians were working in Russia. In addition, a growing number of people, in particular young people, have migrated to study abroad or used other opportunities to work abroad, such as the EU Blue Card (which entitles the holder to work in a high-qualification occupation in the EU), the Karta Polaka or the US Green Card.

In turn, Belarus is attractive for labour migrants. For example, in 2016 over 20 000 labour migrants (including about 5 000 skilled workers and specialists) and, in 2017, 15 800 labour migrants (including about 4 200 skilled workers and specialists) came to work in Belarus. They were mostly from China, Ukraine, Russia and Uzbekistan.

According to the results of a sample survey, which was carried out by the Institute of Sociology within the framework of the sociological monitoring of external and internal migration of the population of Belarus, migratory trends among the population are very sensitive to changes in the socioeconomic situation in the country (Artyuhin, 2015). The number of people who planned to leave the country for temporary work increased from 9.1% in 2011 to 16.5% in 2014. Among young people aged 15–29 years, the proportion of those intending to work abroad was even more pronounced: between 2010 and 2014 it almost doubled, from 16% to 30%.

1.1.3 Educational attainment

Expenditure on education has priority status on the government agenda. Approximately 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) is allocated annually for financing education, which is comparable with the corresponding indicator for developed countries (5.2% in 2010, 4.8% in 2014, 5.0% in 2016) (Belstat, 2017a). Over the next five years, the education sector will be developed in accordance with the State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for 2016–2020 (SPEYP 2016–2020). During this period it is anticipated that at least 5.2% of GDP per year from all funding sources will be allocated to the education system.

For more than 20 years, Belarus has demonstrated consistently high educational achievements. The country has a high average duration of education (11.5 years) and a high number of expected years of

study (15.7). Its literacy rate is one of the highest in the world: according to Census 2009, it was 99.6%. The gross enrolment rates in both primary and secondary education are close to 100%. In general, the education attainment of the population is high. In 2017, 53.7% of the active population aged 25+ had attained a high level of education (tertiary and secondary specialised), 44.8% general secondary and vocational, and only 1.5% a low level (general basic and lower).

The education system in Belarus includes formal, continuing (dopolnitelnoje) and special education. Formal education is divided into preschool, general secondary (basic and secondary), vocational, specialised secondary, higher and postgraduate education. Vocational and specialised secondary education form the basis of the formal VET system in Belarus. On successful graduation from basic schools, young people have the opportunity to continue their education at general secondary schools, technical vocational schools and secondary specialised (professional) schools, simultaneously receiving general secondary education and professional training. The certificate of general secondary or secondary special education enables young people to enrol in higher education institutions.

Over the past five years, student enrolment numbers have been decreasing in both vocational and secondary specialised education, as well as in higher education (see Table 1.1). This can be explained by the decreasing number of young people in the age groups 15–19 and 20–24 years. At the same time, enrolment numbers have been increasing in pre-primary and general secondary education.

TABLE 1.1 YOUNG PEOPLE IN EDUCATION

Enrolment (in thousands)	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Pre-primary education	407.0	410.6	409.8	418.1	426.3
General secondary education	931.3	946.1	969.1	982.3	994.5
VET	74.6	72.8	72.2	70.3	66.9
Secondary specialised education	138.4	129.0	121.3	117.8	114.1
Higher education	395.3	362.9	336.4	313.2	284.3

Source: Belstat, 2017a (authors' calculation)

Belarusian students have high rates of achievement in international competitions. Between 2010 and 2015, 199 medals (20 gold, 76 silver and 103 bronze) were won in international subject Olympiads for schoolchildren. In 2018 Belarus will participate in the next round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). This will provide new data and information on the quality of the education and training system in the coming years.

1.2 Labour market situation of youth

1.2.1 Overall macroeconomic situation (focus on labour demand)

Belarus is an upper middle-income country according to the World Bank classification. After gaining independence in 1991, the country embarked on the path of introducing gradual reforms while preserving an economic model based on the dominance of the public sector, broad-based income redistribution and a high level of socioeconomic equality. The economy generated high growth rates until 2009: the average yearly GDP growth rate in the period 2004–08 was 9.92%.

Growth slowed down substantially in the context of the global economic crisis and the economy was strongly affected by unstable external conditions, the main ones being the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine, the unfavourable situation on world commodity markets, the recession in the Russian economy (the main economic partner of Belarus), and the unresolved controversy over gas prices and volumes of oil purchased. After several years of slowing growth, increased macroeconomic volatility,

and balance-of-payments pressure, the Belarusian economy entered recession in 2015. In 2017, the economy started to recover and GDP grew by 2.4%, in contrast to the 2.5% decline in the previous year. Economic growth rates are unlikely to exceed 3 percent due to supply-side constraints, according to the forecast of the World Bank (2018), although the Belarusian government predicts 3.5% annual GDP growth in 2018.

Trade, services and the industrial sector are the main sources of the country's economic development. The priority sectors include machinery and metalworking, oil refining, the chemical and petrochemical industries, electrical power, consumer goods and food processing, and the timber and woodworking industry. In 2016 industrial production amounted to 36.1% of GDP, agriculture to 7.9% and services to 56.0%.

The existing economic model has prioritised the development of state-owned enterprises. These continue to play an important role in the economy, benefiting from a preferential regime in terms of financial and other resources and limited regulatory obligations. This leaves the private sector at a competitive disadvantage. In 2015 state-owned enterprises accounted for 46.3% of value added and were the dominant players in key industries such as machinery and chemicals. State organisations (commercial and non-commercial) and organisations with a share of state property employed 60.5% of all employees in 2015 and 61.1% in 2016. In contrast with other post-Soviet economies, Belarus has not yet implemented a large-scale privatisation programme, and structural reforms are proceeding slowly. The economic model continues to be based on full employment, primarily in the state-controlled sector (OECD, 2017).

In the past few years, the government has increasingly supported private sector participation in the economy and has taken steps to develop a comprehensive support policy for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Despite these developments, SMEs in Belarus still contribute little to employment and value added, compared with the contribution made by SMEs in the EU and other EaP countries. In 2015 SMEs in Belarus accounted for 31.9% of total employment and their contribution to value added was 27.0%. Most Belarusian SMEs operate on a very small scale in traditional industries with low productivity, which in turn explains their limited contribution to total value added. In 2015 half of SMEs operated in manufacturing and trade, repair of motor vehicles, and household and personal goods (OECD, 2017).

The economy is generally characterised by a slow pace of modernisation of production, the preservation of obsolete and inefficient production, slow absorption of technology and the rapid obsolescence of existing knowledge. Another important feature of the economy is overemployment in the public sector. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) National Human Development Report (2015) noted that in Belarus, administrative regulation and budget support have resulted in the maintenance of excess employment, irrespective of enterprise profitability, and of a rigid sectoral structuring of the economy. Movement of labour takes place mainly within existing jobs, and the creation of new and efficient forms of employment is proceeding only slowly.

Owing to the economic decline, in 2015–2016 many enterprises were forced to resort to part-time employment, unpaid leave or the dismissal of workers. Throughout 2015–2016, more jobs were reduced than were created, and some of the largest state-owned enterprises continued to downsize their labour forces. In 2016 both the absolute number and the share of the total number of those dismissed in industry, wholesale and retail trade, financial and insurance activities declined. In the second quarter of 2016, the top 20 employers in the public sector (with more than 5 000 workers each) reduced their staff by 3% on an annual basis, while in the second quarter of 2015, downsizing of 5.1% took place (World Bank, 2016). As part of initiatives to support citizens in their right to work, a number of measures were taken in 2016 to create new jobs, and in 2017 the situation had started to improve.

1.2.2 Key labour market indicators

In 2016 the labour force amounted to 5 797 600 people, or 61.0% of the country's total population (Belstat, 2017b). The level of labour resources² is affected by the decline and ageing of the population, as well as an increasing demographic burden on the working-age population. As a result of demographic processes, the share of the potential group of newcomers to the labour market, namely young people aged 15–24 years, in the total working-age population (men 16–59 years, women 16–54 years) is decreasing. It amounted to 23.2% at the beginning of 2011 and had reached only 17.8% at the beginning of 2018. The decline in labour resources is also negatively affected by labour migration, primarily to Russia. Territorial unevenness in the allocation of labour resources and a lack of mobility are the main factors in the labour surplus in some regions and the shortage in others.

The activity rate in Belarus is high. According to administrative data, it was 82.1% in 2015 and 81.4% in 2016. LFS data indicates an activity rate of 86.5% in 2016 and 86.9% in 2017 (Belstat, 2018b). Differences between the administrative and survey estimates reflect the methodological differences in collecting and processing the data.

According to the LFS, the youth activity rate is very high for the age group 25–29 in particular, amounting to 94.1% in 2017. The activity rate is higher for men than women because women are one third more likely than men to continue their studies in higher education. The youth employment rate is also high, at 88.6% for the age group 25–29 years (see Table 1.2) (Belstat, 2018b).

TABLE 1.2 YOUTH ACTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT RATES, 2017 (%)

	Age group 15–19			Age group 20–24			Age group 25–29			Age group 15–29 – Total		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Activity rate	10.5	9.9	10.2	76.4	79.1	77.8	93.1	95.1	94.1	66.8	68.4	67.6
Employment rate	8.6	8.7	8.6	71.8	70.3	71.0	88.6	88.7	88.6	62.9	62.5	62.7

Source: Belstat, 2018b

Overall, labour resources are characterised by high general educational and professional levels (data by age group is not available). In 2017 the share of employed persons with higher education was 33%, with secondary specialised education 22.3%, with vocational technical education 20.5%, with general secondary education 22.1% and with general basic education 2.0%. The education level affects activity and employment rates. According to the LFS, activity and employment rates are the highest among those with higher education (see Table 1.3).

A transformation is currently taking place in the sectoral structure of the employed population towards the service sector. Thus, employment in the service sector has increased from 56.7% of total employment in 2012 to 60.0% in 2016; the industry sector has seen a corresponding decreased from 33.5% in 2012 to 30.3% in 2016. According to the MoLSP, the sectors with the largest proportion of young people in their workforces are accommodation and food services (37.0%), finance (34.3%), retail trade and repair of cars, household products and personal items (34.0%), construction (28.3%), and operations with real estate (28.2%).

² Labour resources comprise population employed in the economy, or able to work but inactive for any reason. Labour resources cover the able-bodied population of working age (men 16–59 years old, women 16–54 years old), and working persons above and below the working age.

TABLE 1.3 ACTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT RATES BY EDUCATION LEVEL, 2017 (%)

Education level	Activity rate			Employment rate		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Low educated (Grade 9 and lower)	13.0	21.3	17.2	11.5	18.3	14.9
Medium educated: general education (Grade 11)	47.8	64.1	56.1	44.4	57.8	51.2
Medium educated: VET	73.6	84.8	80.3	70.6	77.6	74.8
Medium educated: post-secondary	71.1	83.0	75.4	68.4	77.8	71.8
High educated	82.5	85.6	83.8	80.2	82.4	81.1
Total	67.1	75.9	71.3	64.4	70.4	67.2

Source: Belstat, 2018b

For many years the official unemployment rate in Belarus has been very low, mostly around 1% of the working population. This is because it takes into account only unemployed individuals who are registered with the public employment service (PES). At the end of 2017, the official unemployment rate decreased to 0.5% (MoLSP, 2018a).

In 2017 Belstat published for the first time an unemployment rate that was calculated according to LFS data. This unemployment rate was 5.8% in 2016 and 5.6% in 2017. The youth unemployment rate was higher, at 7.8% in 2016 and 7.2% in 2017 (Belstat, 2018b). Belarus has a relatively low rate of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in 2009 the NEET rate was 12.1% (calculation based on Census 2009)³. Since 2016 Belstat has also calculated the NEET rate, which was estimated at 8.2% in 2016 and 7.3% in 2017.

According to the MoLSP, in 2017 the labour market situation started to improve as a result of increasing labour demand (see Figure 1.2). At the end of March 2018 the PES had registered 60 600 vacancies, which amounted to 136.8% of the number for the same period in 2017 (MoLSP, 2018b). Most vacancies registered in the PES database are in health and social services, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade, car and motorcycle repairs, and education. However, the demand for workers varies between different regions and in Minsk city.

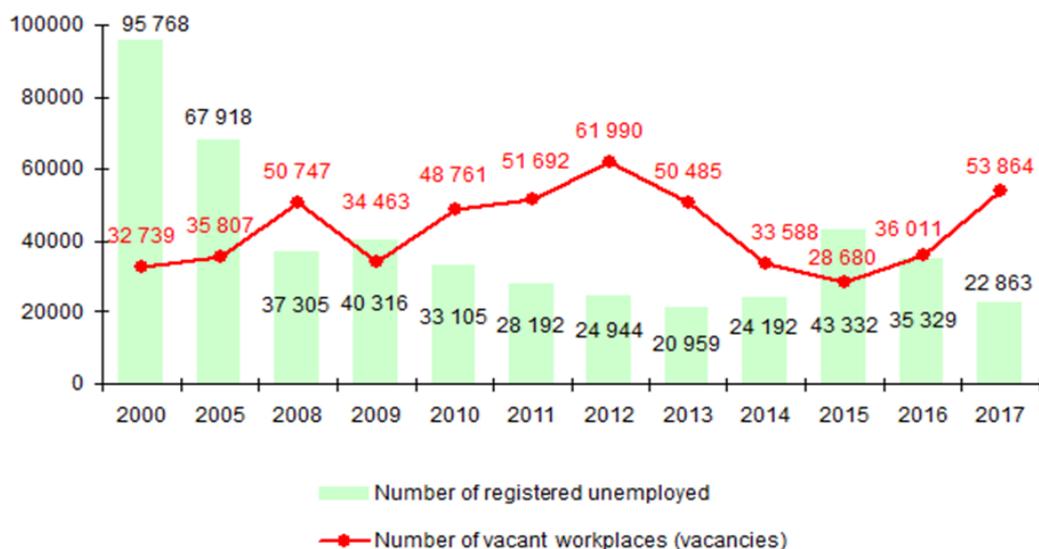
1.3 Characteristics of youth transition to work

1.3.1 Length of transition

No transition surveys have been carried out in Belarus. It is therefore difficult to assess the actual length of transitions. According to the MoLSP, at the end of March 2018 the average length of unemployment for individuals officially registered as unemployed was 3.9 months for men, 4.0 months for women and 2.9 months for young people. The average period for job searching is shorter for young people than for adults. At the end of March 2018, it was 1.3 months for young people and 1.6 for adults (MoLSP, 2018b).

³ www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/lang--en/index.htm

FIGURE 1.2 REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED AND VACANCIES



Source: Belstat

In 2017 the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (BRYU) conducted the sociological survey Youth Employment: Problems and Prospects. The study covered 1 900 respondents aged 16–30, from four sociodemographic groups: schoolchildren aged 16–17; students; graduates; and working young people aged 26–30. According to the survey, about 31% of the employed respondents had found their current job in a few days, 30% needed a month, 20% about two–three months, 11% about six months, 6% a year and 2% more than two years. For 40% of respondents, the current workplace was their first and for 29% their second; 25% of respondents had changed workplaces two or three times and 2% had changed more than six times⁴. The EU-financed VET and Employment project that is due to start in 2018 will conduct a nationally representative transition survey. The results will be available in 2019 and are expected to give a better and more comprehensive overview of youth transition to work on the Belarusian labour market.

1.3.2 Methods of searching for and finding the first job

Three main methods of job search can be identified in Belarus: institutional, non-institutional and informal. Institutional methods include participating in the ‘distribution system’ (graduate job placement), registering at the PES and using the services of employment agencies.

Belarus maintains a distribution system that provides graduate job placement in public sector or state-owned enterprises. The system provides a guaranteed first job for those graduates who have completed education at vocational, specialised secondary and higher education institutions, with the costs met from the state budget. The placement is mandatory for one year following completion of vocational education and two years following completion of specialised secondary and higher education. As a rule, it cannot be terminated. Graduates who have completed education at their own expense can also, at their own request, be given a job placement, provided there are vacancies available. In the context of a challenging economic situation in Belarus, this opportunity has become attractive for some graduates, as it provides them with a chance to obtain their first job and gain professional experience. At the same time, some graduates are dissatisfied with the proposed job placements, believing that the scheme limits their freedom of choice in the labour market. The scheme

⁴ www.belta.by/society/view/sotsopros-70-studentov-uvereny-cto-najdut-rabotu-po-spetsialnosti-v-belarusi-243435-2017

is also criticised for being used to mobilise the workforce for the purpose of economic development of certain regions by sending young specialists there.

Although educational institutions actively contact enterprises to find jobs for graduates, in many specialities there is a lack of applications from enterprises for the placement of young professionals. This forces many graduates to look for jobs themselves. Consequently, in the situation where demand from employers is decreasing, the question arises whether the distribution system can continue to be a determining factor in the coordination of the labour market and the education system. Opinions about the effectiveness of the current distribution system differ. The government considers it an effective means of social protection for young citizens because it provides them with the opportunity to gain their first job. The MoE reports that in 2017, around 24 000 graduates obtained a job (5 200 more than in 2017); this constituted 98% of the total number of graduates who were covered by the mandatory distribution system. Moreover, 1 200 graduates received a job at their own request⁵.

However, there is an opposing opinion that the current system is not able to meet the needs of the changing economic situation. According to the results of a survey (Evaluation of the Ministry's Performance and Problems Facing Higher Education in Belarus from the Standpoint of Students and Graduates), 49% of graduates in 2015 who participated in the survey felt that the government uses the distribution system to fill vacancies where no one wants to work because there are poor working conditions. Only 16% believed that the distribution system is a useful scheme that guarantees employment for young professionals.

In the 6th Monitoring Report on Implementation of Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education, the Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee (BIBC) concluded that the authorities have blocked the implementation of changes to the graduate work placement system, despite public criticism.

Since 2014 the PES has provided free access to the Nationwide Database of Job Openings (<http://gsz.gov.by/>) and is systematically working to ensure that the database is up to date. Currently the structure of vacancies in the PES is biased towards 'blue-collar occupations', as most vacancies offer poor-quality jobs with low wages. The private employment agencies, which provide fee-based services, are more focused on the recruitment of middle-level personnel and specialists for the occupations that are most in demand on the labour market. As of 1 January 2017, all agencies that provide employment services to individuals must register with the MoLSP. Once registered, they are added to the Register of Employment Agencies. By 1 January 2018, 105 employment agencies were on the register⁶.

Non-institutional methods include using internet resources, searching for job advertisements in the press, attending job fairs, and contacting employers directly. There are a number of online job platforms in Belarus, such as <https://rabota.by/>, <https://jobs.tut.by>, <https://praca.by>, <https://belmeta.com/>, <https://rdw.by/> and <https://by.jooble.org/>.

Informal methods involve finding a job through networking. A large number of job openings are never advertised and are filled through personal contacts with friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances. The purpose of networking is to gather information, advice and referrals that might lead to an interview and ultimately a job offer. In Belarus, the strength of informal contacts is an important factor in enabling graduates to find a job on the labour market.

⁵ www.belta.by/society/view/okolo-989-vypusnikov-bjudzhetnikov-vuzov-v-etom-godu-poluchili-raspredelenie-270769-2017/

⁶ http://mintrud.gov.by/ru/reestr_po_tr

According to the results of the Youth Employment: Problems and Prospects sociological survey, slightly fewer than a half of respondents (49%) found their current job on the advice of acquaintances, while 30% had contacted the employer independently or received an offer directly from the employer. About 22% found their job using internet resources. Fewer young people had used employment agencies or searched advertisements in the published press⁷. There are differences between the job search methods used by secondary school leavers and those used by students/graduates, and between those used by urban and rural residents. Most unemployed students and graduates use social networks as an important source of information and a place for sharing news about internship and/or job opportunities.

1.3.3 Working conditions

The main objective of the country's employment policy has been to provide access to jobs for all. In this context, the regulation of the labour market has some specific features. On the one hand, it is flexible in terms of the duration and conditions of employment contracts, while on the other hand, excessive regulation has generated rigidities, including widespread direct and indirect regulations in wage setting and hiring and firing procedures that aim to sustain low levels of inequality and absolute poverty. In recent years there has been a growing emphasis on fostering more flexibility in the labour market. Presidential Decree No 4 on the Development of Entrepreneurial Initiative and Stimulation of Business Activity in Belarus (2010) sets out a goal to eliminate excessive regulation of the labour market by expanding the application of flexible forms of employment.

Working conditions for young people include a number of elements, such as labour contracts, conditions in the workplace, implementation of labour legislation, wages and social guarantees. The Labour Code provides specific provisions for the employment of young people under the age of 18 and of women, such as regulation of their working time. There is no specific regulation for the employment of other groups of young people. Thus, the working conditions of young people generally correspond to those of other workers.

There are two types of employment contract in Belarus: permanent and fixed term (in general, not more than five years). Presidential Decree No 29 on Additional Measures to Improve Labour Relations and Strengthen Labour and Performance Discipline (1999) fostered the broad use of fixed-term contracts in Belarusian employment relations. Today, Belarus is the only country in Europe where fixed-term employment contracts are widely used (80–90% of all employees) (Khodosovsky, 2011).

Following the global economic crisis, which negatively affected the economic situation in the country, a common practice among Belarusian enterprises was to introduce part-time employment or a reduced working week, as well as enforced administrative leave, either without pay or with partial payment. However, the use of such practices has been diminishing in recent years.

Although the conclusion of labour contracts is provided for by the legislation, informal employment exists, and also involves young people. In accordance with the official methodology, informal employment is work in the informal sector, as well as work without an employment contract in agricultural operations or in other organisations (informal employment outside the informal sector). The persons involved in the following activities are considered to be employed informally: individual entrepreneurs; persons engaged in craft activities; persons working on an individual basis without registration as individual entrepreneurs; persons employed in agro-ecotourism; persons employed by an individual entrepreneur; persons employed in households; persons employed in 'subsistence farming' if the items produced are intended for sale. According to LFS data, the proportion of

⁷ www.belta.by/society/view/sotsopros-70-studentov-uvereny-chto-najdut-rabotu-po-spetsialnosti-v-belarusi-243435-2017

employed young people aged 16–30 years in informal employment was 7.8% in 2016 and 8.3% in 2017 (Belstat, 2018b).

The most important objective of employment policy in Belarus is to ensure stable personal income levels through wage growth, though without creating significant wage differentials. The main policy instrument for targeting the desired wage levels is the wage scale that regulates the salaries of every profession. The wages of young people who are starting their working career are, in general, lower than the wages of experienced, highly skilled workers. The low wage levels and poor working conditions are the main reasons for young people's dissatisfaction with their jobs, and this fosters high workforce turnover. At the same time, in some sectors, such as high-tech industries in which predominantly young people are employed, the wage levels are much higher than the average wage in the country.

There have been limited studies on youth working conditions in Belarus. According to the results of a sociological survey covering 1 740 young people, which was conducted in 2015 by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, 53% of young people were not satisfied with their wage level. Young people are willing to raise the level of their material well-being: 33% of respondents reported that in the previous two–three months they had regular, casual or extra earnings (Smirnova, 2016).

1.3.4 Factors impacting youth transition to work

Various factors influence youth transition to work. They include both external factors, such as the state of the country's economy, and personal factors, such as level of education, disability and health problems, alcohol and substance abuse, crime and other factors that disadvantage young people.

Overall macroeconomic factors: The global economic crisis had a negative impact on the economy of the country and created financial and economic instability that has reduced the overall well-being of the population. Alongside the worsening economic conditions, the structural reforms of the national economy have led to the reorganisation of state-owned enterprises and the dismissal of workers, and to the widespread use of part-time employment and unpaid leave. In this context, young people have faced problems in entering the labour market and an increase in poverty risk. The poverty level in 2017 was 5.9%. This indicator is higher for children and young people owing to the lack of income during the period of education.

Labour market regulation: Institutional factors that influence youth transition to work include labour market policies and institutions, labour legislation, and other legal instruments containing norms that regulate youth employment. A variety of measures supporting youth employment are implemented within the framework of government programmes developed by different ministries (see Chapter 3). Graduate work placement still plays an important role in guaranteeing a first job for a large number of young people, although its sustainability in the context of the rapidly changing economic environment is questioned.

Skills mismatch: Skills mismatch is becoming a growing concern in Belarus, with businesses reporting an inadequately educated workforce as an obstacle for their economic performance. More than half of Belarusian SMEs recognise an unskilled workforce as an impediment to their business, and a recent survey by the IPM Research Centre identified human resource factors, such as lack of motivation and skills, as the biggest barrier to business growth, after financial factors (IPM, 2015). According to the results of the survey of employers that was conducted in 2014 by the Scientific Research Institute of the MoLSP, 65% of the surveyed organisations (386 companies) had difficulty filling vacancies. They also assessed the level of training at educational institutions as low. Almost all employers underlined the need to provide additional training to young specialists and graduates of educational institutions in order for them to be able to properly perform their work functions (ETF, 2017).

According to the World Bank, skills mismatches can be partially attributed to the quality of education, but they also stem from the inefficient allocation of resources (e.g. labour), with a significant part of the labour force, including highly skilled workers, locked in state-owned enterprises (World Bank, 2013). Almost 30% of workers in agriculture have attained higher or secondary specialised education and could presumably move to better jobs in more productive sectors. The accessibility of higher education and the overall negative image of blue-collar occupations that prevails in society have led to an increase in the number of graduates from higher education institutions. As a result, the labour market has an overabundance of specialists with higher education and a lack of specialists with vocational education.

In the sociological survey Youth Employment: Problems and Prospects, half of respondents work within their specialty, 27% work outside their speciality, but in the same profession, and 23% work in a profession that is different from their education. The most frequent reasons for not working in the specialty or profession were the lack of work experience (33%), low pay (29%), lack of vacancies (19%) and unwillingness to work in their chosen specialty (15%)⁸.

Geographical location: One important factor that affects transition to work is a young person's place of residence (i.e. large cities, local frontier areas, rural areas and small settlements, the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident). The economic development of the Belarusian regions is uneven, and this affects labour market demand and introduces differences in the employment opportunities for young people. More young people are looking for jobs in large cities, primarily the capital, where labour market demand is higher. Consequently, small towns and villages are slowly becoming depopulated. The rural population in Belarus has significantly decreased as a result of urbanisation, and in 2017 it was 21.9% of the total population. The share of young people in the total rural population was 14.1%, compared with 22.0% in the total urban population (Belstat, 2018a). In local frontier areas adjacent to countries with higher average wages, labour migration and informal employment among young people is more widespread.

Gender: Gender is an important factor to consider when discussing youth transition to work. In Belarus, young women are economically active and the female employment rate for the age group 15–29 (62.9% in 2017) is slightly higher than the male rate (62.5% in 2017). In general, women have higher educational attainment levels than men, which, theoretically, gives women a competitive advantage on the labour market. However, women often fulfil their potential in less well-paid occupational categories and spheres of economic activity. One of the main reasons why men and women are not equally represented in various spheres of the economy is that many women need to balance work and family duties. The traditional image of woman and mother – implying the role of housewife and the family member who is responsible for childcare – makes it difficult for women to fulfil professional duties. In many cases women spend longer looking for work, need job retraining following maternity leave and rely more on remote and flexible forms of work.

Level of education: Educational levels affect young people's activity and employment rates, as these rates are highest among those with higher education.

Vulnerability: Four interconnected contextual influences dramatically heighten the vulnerability of young people across the world: poverty, inequality, social exclusion and hazardous environments (UNDP, 2014). In Belarus, relative poverty is concentrated in population groups that have a less favourable standing in the labour market, such as those with low levels of education, young people, individuals with a disability, those released from places of detention, and those who are dependent on

⁸ www.belta.by/society/view/sotsopros-70-studentov-uvereny-cto-naidut-rabotu-po-spetsialnosti-v-belarusi-243435-2017

social benefits, such as unemployed individuals (the level of unemployment benefits is low), women with small children, and orphans.

1.3.5 Transition to work for vulnerable youth

National legislation provides additional guarantees aimed at supporting the employment of people who are not able to compete on the labour market on an equal footing. They include:

- young people under the age of 21 who are looking for a job for the first time;
- persons with a disability;
- persons discharged from military service;
- army veterans of military operations;
- persons released from places of detention;
- orphans and children left without parental care;
- persons evacuated and resettled from evacuation zones after the Chernobyl disaster;
- parents in families with many children, incomplete families, and persons bringing up children with disabilities.

Although only young people under the age of 21 are specifically targeted, young people may fall into other above-mentioned groups that are entitled to additional support measures (see Chapter 3).

2. YOUTH POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 Legal framework

Youth policy is acknowledged as an important part of state policy in the social, economic and cultural development of Belarus, and the country has a well-developed legal framework covering all spheres of young people's lives. While youth policy addresses a range of aspects of young people's lives, this chapter will focus only on those related to youth transition to work and employment.

2.1.1 Legal acts

The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus includes several guarantees that support youth transition to work, including the right to work and the right to access to free general, secondary and vocational education. The state also recognises its responsibility for the creation of conditions for full employment of the population.

The Law on Foundations of State Youth Policy (2009) establishes a system of social, economic, political, organisational, legal and other measures aimed at supporting young citizens. Its overall goal is to promote comprehensive education for young people and provide assistance for their spiritual, moral and physical development. The law defines eight main areas of state youth policy, including assistance with the implementation of young people's right to work, government support for young people in gaining education, and government support to gifted and talented young people. According to the law, the state provides young people with their first job and implements a set of measures aimed at fostering employment, including measures providing economic, organisational and legal support to youth entrepreneurship. The law also provides that in order to engage young people in community work and foster the acquisition of work skills, temporary employment for young people studying in educational institutions should be organised in their free time.

The Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education (2011) provides for legal regulation of all levels of education and for continuing education. It not only regulates the learning process, but also determines the distribution system and provides for the social protection of students, including the protection of the rights of people with a disability. The code is currently undergoing revision. The reforms envisage establishment of an independent agency for quality control of education, which is stipulated in the framework for fulfilling obligations under the Bologna Process.

The most important legal acts in the employment field are the **Labour Code** (1999) and the **Law on Employment of the Population** (2006). The Labour Code governs employment relationships based on the employment contract, including the professional training of workers. It recognises the specificity of youth labour, sets out age restrictions and protects the rights of minors. In accordance with the law, graduates of educational establishments and some categories of young people are provided with their first job.

The Law on Employment of the Population aims to provide a legal, economic and organisational basis for the state employment policy and ensure the constitutional rights of citizens to work and their social protection from unemployment. The law does not distinguish young people as a specific target group. However, it does regulate some aspects of the employment of graduates who are subject to the distribution system, as well as the provision of support to unemployed people who are seeking their first job. In 2016 the law was amended with the aim of reducing social dependency. The most important amendments included provisions for the responsibilities of unemployed individuals, including the obligation to search for a job, an increase in the responsibility of unemployed individuals in relation to the violation of employment legislation, and a reduction in the maximum period an individual can be registered as unemployed from 36 to 18 months.

On 25 January 2018 Presidential Decree No 1 was adopted. It revised the controversial Decree on the Prevention of Social Dependence (2015), which was adopted with the aim of identifying and reducing informal employment. The 2015 decree created public anxiety and provoked protests across the country, and in 2017 it was suspended for one year. The new title of the revised law is **the Decree on Promotion of Employment of Population**. Its aim is the creation of optimum conditions for employment. It establishes measures to stimulate employment and self-employment and to support entrepreneurial initiative. Local authorities will play the most important role in implementing the decree. This law also emphasises an individual approach that means providing help to every unemployed person according to their individual needs, including through retraining, temporary work or other mechanisms. From 1 January 2019, individuals who are able to work but are not economically active will have to pay for state-subsidised services at their full cost. The government will establish a specific list of such services.

2.1.2 State programmes

Belarus continues to use the programme-target management method, according to which the main state programmes are adopted for a five-year period. The state programmes define the main objectives and activities, and indicate their estimated costs, the sources of financing, and the institutions responsible for implementation. Based on the state programmes, the relevant programmes are developed at the regional and local levels, reflecting the specificities of the regions.

Youth policy is implemented within the framework of several state programmes. The **State Programme on Social and Economic Development for 2016–2020** defines the priorities, directions and goals for the social and economic development of Belarus with the aim of increasing the country's competitiveness and improving the quality of life for Belarusian citizens. As one of these goals, it establishes an annual employment target of at least 50 000 people in newly created jobs. A long-term goal is to change the sectoral structure of the economy to reduce the proportion of high-energy and material-consuming production, to replace inefficient production with processes based on high levels of technology, innovations and new materials, and to improve the effectiveness of labour resources and workforce competitiveness in the labour market. The main priorities targeted at young people include successful transition from childhood to adulthood; acquisition of contemporary professional knowledge; entrepreneurship; support for gifted and talented young people; and youth engagement in fundamental and applied research and innovative activities. There are plans to develop a special system of grants that will allow young people to study at the world's leading educational centres, provided they return to work in Belarus. The distribution system for guaranteeing graduates their first job will be expanded by introducing measures to promote youth employment in SMEs.

Implementation of the most important areas of youth policy is carried out within the framework of the **State Programme on Education and Youth Policy for 2016–2020** (SPEYP 2016–2020), which has eight sub-programmes, including Youth Policy. The Action Plan for implementing SPEYP 2016–2020 sets out four objectives and identifies 69 measures. Objective 3, in particular, aims to increase the effectiveness of work on vocational guidance and the organisation of youth employment in free time, and to support youth entrepreneurship and the development of volunteer and student work teams. It includes such measures as vocational guidance activities (training, consultations, seminars, exhibitions, etc.); international, national and regional events and professional skills competitions among young workers, employees and students; activities for specialists working with young people and civil servants in charge of youth issues (forums, conferences, seminars, training); and activities aimed at involving young people in innovative activities and increasing entrepreneurial activities (start-up activities).

The **State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020** (SPSPEP 2016–2020) aims to develop a system of social protection of the population by enhancing the efficiency of employment policy, improving the conditions of labour protection and ensuring the

social integration of people with a disability and older citizens. The sub-programme Promoting the Employment of the Population includes activities supporting youth employment, including the provision of career guidance and the monitoring and adaptation of graduates from institutions of higher, secondary specialised and vocational education in their first jobs. Particular attention is paid to people with a disability and other groups of the population who are not able to compete on an equal basis in the labour market.

The **State Programme on Small and Medium Entrepreneurship 2016–2020** includes measures to promote the development of SMEs and to encourage entrepreneurship. It aims to increase the share of GDP generated by SMEs to 40% by 2020 and the share of people employed by SMEs and individual entrepreneurs to 41.7% of total employment in the economy. The Ministry of Economy coordinates the implementation of the programme. The Belarusian Fund for the Financial Support of Entrepreneurs provides state financial support to small-business entities; this includes providing financial loans, leasing property, and granting guarantees on preferential loans issued by banks in Belarus, with the costs met from local budgets.

The **State Programme on Innovative Development for 2016–2020** is aimed at ensuring the quality growth and competitiveness of the national economy, with a concentration of resources on building high-tech sectors. It envisages the creation of 9 000 new jobs by 2020. Currently, 21 innovation infrastructure institutions operate in Belarus, including 11 technology parks and nine technology transfer centres. The State Committee for Science and Technology (SCST) oversees the development of innovative activities and the implementation of state scientific and technical programmes aimed at creating new jobs. The Belarusian Innovation Fund (Belinfund) is a non-profit organisation under the SCST. Its main objective is to provide favourable conditions for the development of innovative entrepreneurship and the effective functioning of enterprises and organisations that develop science-intensive innovative products. It provides financial support to innovative start-up entrepreneurs.

The **State Programme Hospitable Belarus for 2016–2020**, within the framework of its sub-programme Personnel, Scientific and Educational Support in the Field of Tourism, aims to create new jobs in sports and tourism, and to foster young people's engagement in sports, tourism and recreation.

Another important element of state youth policy in Belarus is the support for young families that is being implemented under **the State Programme on the Health of the Nation and Demographic Security for 2016–2020**. The material and organisational assistance provided to families with young children and young mothers in particular is aimed at fostering better work–life balance.

2.2 Institutions and stakeholders

In general, the development and implementation of youth policy is based on a three-level system. At national level, government institutions, with participation from national youth organisations, develop the legislative base and general directions for youth policy. At the regional level, the development and implementation of youth policy measures are delegated to the regional authorities. The local level includes local authorities and other actors such as youth organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work directly with young people. The multilevel structure is aimed at ensuring cooperation among different stakeholders and promoting the mainstreaming of regional specificity.

2.2.1 State institutions

The system for developing and implementing youth policy functions under the authority of the President of Belarus. At the level of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus, youth policy issues are entrusted to the Parliamentary Commission for Health, Physical Training, Family and Youth Policy.

SPEYP 2016–2020 defines the MoE as the main coordinator for the programme and lists 15 other ministries that are taking part in the implementation of the programme within the scope of their competences. They are: Ministry of Architecture and Construction, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Communications and Informatisation, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Transport and Communications, MoLSP, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Economy. The programme also identifies state committees (National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Higher Attestation Commission, Academy of Public Administration and Management Directorate of the President of Belarus), as well as regional executive committees and the Minsk City Executive Committee as co-partners in its implementation. Interministerial cooperation is an integral part of the implementation of youth policy. The Action Plan within the framework of SPEYP 2016–2020 clarifies the responsibilities of all stakeholders and co-partners (including youth NGOs) for each individual activity.

The **MoE** is a leading institution in the field of education and youth policy. It coordinates the activities of government agencies, regional bodies and other organisations in the sphere of education and state youth policy, and implements governmental monitoring in the education system and in the field of governmental youth policies. The ministry oversees the functioning of a network of general, secondary, vocational and higher education institutions. There are currently over 8 000 educational institutions, representing all levels, at which more than 3 million children and students are educated. In the field of youth policy, the MoE carries out a comprehensive analysis of the youth situation and provides organisational support for policy implementation. In November 2017 the Coordinating Council of Education for Sustainable Development at the MoE was established to develop proposals and recommendations for improving the education system with the aim of reaching sustainable development goals.

The MoE provides organisational support, conducts fundamental and applied scientific research on youth policy, and ensures implementation of its results. It cooperates with organisations, institutions and researchers carrying out scientific research on youth-related topics. These include the National Institute for Higher Education, the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Centre for Sociological and Political Studies of the Belarusian State University and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Belarus. The research results and stakeholders' recommendations are taken into account during the elaboration of the legislative framework on youth issues. The MoE, in cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, issues an annual national report on the situation of youth in Belarus.

Under the MoE, the Republican Institute for Vocational Education (RIPO) plays an important role in developing and implementing vocational education policy. The RIPO's tasks are focused on improving the legislative framework governing VET; conducting studies on the labour market and economic issues in VET; developing VET curricula and retraining programmes for young people, adults, and those who are unemployed or have a disability; re-designing and modernising VET content according to sustainable development goals and lifelong learning priorities; introducing a competence-based approach and new didactics in VET; providing methodological support and training aids for VET specialisms; and coordinating VET initiatives and disseminating the best international experience in human resources development on a nationwide basis.

The **MoLSP** is a central governmental body implementing public policy on labour relations, labour protection, employment, social security and demographic security. It has a coordinating role on these matters in respect of the other national government bodies, local councils, executive and administrative bodies, and public and international organisations. The activities of the ministry include organising and coordinating government and regional employment promotion programme, participating in the formation of the state policy on vocational guidance and vocational education of

the population, and on continuous professional training of workers and employees. The MoLSP also coordinates implementation of SPSPEP 2016–2020. It is responsible for the development and implementation of active labour market measures, including the provision of support to unemployed graduates and social support for young workers.

The organisational structure of the MoLSP includes structural units of the seven regional and Minsk city executive committees, which exercise public authority in the fields of labour, employment and social security. The regional Departments of Labour, Employment and Social Protection currently employ approximately 800 staff, who perform the PES function in Belarus. In December 2015 Belarus launched a project to improve the work of the PES as part of international cooperation with the Swedish PES. The project has been implemented in the Minsk, Grodno and Vitebsk PESs. The project's major area of work was improving methods of cooperation with employers. In addition, new approaches were developed to forecast labour market development, taking into account regional characteristics and differences.

In 2002 the Republican Institute for In-service Training and Retraining of the MoLSP was established. The institute provides training for unemployed individuals (through a wide range of programmes) and retraining for persons with higher education. It also implements social and labour rehabilitation programmes for people with disabilities. Every year the institute provides training to over 3 000 participants.

To improve the planning of professional training for the workforce, the Ministry of Economy, the MoLSP and the MoE have established two working groups for the period 2015–20, the first for the ongoing planning of professional training and the second for medium- and long-term forecasting of labour force demand.

At the sub-national level, in the area of state youth policy and within the scope of their mandate, local executive and administration bodies develop regional programmes and present them for approval to the relevant local councils of deputies, define the procedure for setting up and maintaining local registries of public youth associations supported by the government, provide information in support of activities on state youth policy implementation, undertake government control, and organise youth work in their localities.

There are seven regional executive committees: Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Minsk, Minsk City, and Mogilev. In each region there are also committees on labour, employment and social protection. The structure of regional and city executive committees includes the Central Departments of Ideology, Culture and Youth Affairs, which regulate, manage and control the implementation of youth policy, taking into account the characteristics of social and economic development of the regions, the Departments of Labour, Employment and Social Protection and Employment Departments.

Belstat is the government authority for state statistics, and is directly subordinate to the President of the Republic of Belarus. It publishes a number of reports on youth policy, and these are available on the Belstat website:

- Labour and employment in the Republic of Belarus (every two years);
- Social conditions and standard of living in the Republic of Belarus (every two years);
- Education in the Republic of Belarus (annually);
- Demographic yearbook of the Republic of Belarus (annually);
- Women and men in the Republic of Belarus (every two years).

The structure of the reports is determined by national regulatory requirements and they are not always harmonised with international practice. Since 2012 Belstat has conducted the quarterly LFS.

2.2.2 Youth organisations

Young people's involvement in forming and implementing state youth policy is one of the policy's main principles. In this regard, two youth councils have been established under the MoE that directly participate in decision-making processes relating to youth issues. Formally, the Republican Youth Council reviews proposals to improve legislation and shape normative legal frameworks for youth policy in Belarus and develops recommendations aimed at increasing the efficiency of state youth policy decisions. The council includes representatives of state authorities, public associations and unions, young teachers and scholars, researchers, pupils and students.

The Republican Student Council includes representatives of all 51 higher education institutions of the country. Its main objective is to provide support to competent specialists seeking efficient solutions to problems in the education system by creating the necessary conditions for a broad public dialogue involving young people.

As of 1 January 2017 there were 320 youth public associations registered at the Ministry of Justice, including 26 children's public associations. There is also a register of youth and children's public associations that are entitled to state support, and this currently includes 16 such organisations.

Many youth associations are working towards the development of patriotic and moral education for young people. The Belarusian Committee of Youth Organisations is a national union that coordinates the work of all youth associations in implementing socially significant programmes and projects aimed at the ideological, patriotic, intellectual, spiritual and physical education of young people.

As well as patriotic activities, youth organisations implement various kinds of youth programmes and projects with a range of educational, social and cultural objectives. Youth organisations play an important role in providing social support to young people. The League of Youth Voluntary Service, the Belarusian Association of Parents with Many Children, and the Belarusian Association of Assistance to Children and Young People with Disabilities provide social support in various fields. For example, the Belarusian Youth Public Association 'Different-Equal' successfully provides assistance to enable young people with disabilities to obtain education and employment, and implements programmes for the social and employment rehabilitation of young people with disabilities. The project Affordable Work (2016–2018) aims to increase the employment levels of young people with intellectual disabilities, as well as to strengthen the potential of social enterprises.

Youth organisations also play an active role in providing education and training opportunities to young people. For example, the union of Belarusian youth organisations – Belarusian National Youth Council, 'RADA' – organises many activities relating to education and engagement. One of its educational programmes, Academy the First, aims to promote informal methods of education and the development of leadership skills. The project receives funds through Scandinavian youth organisations. The Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs unites 50 organisations that work in all regions of the country and implements various educational programmes.

In recent years there have been developments towards fostering youth entrepreneurship initiatives. Thus, several regional support centres for youth entrepreneurship have been established. For example, the district administration of Minsk established Youth Social Service, a municipal unitary enterprise, to support the creation of SMEs by young people and to ensure their social, economic and legal interests. In 2009 it was registered as a small-business incubator and is now an open platform for cooperation consisting of more than 200 enterprises from various fields: education, art, industry, IT, tourism, marketing, services, logistics, construction and manufacturing. Enterprises, which can stay in the incubator from three to five years, are offered various services, such as marketing, accounting, legal and secretarial services, seminars, training, brokerage events and exhibitions, as well as opportunities to participate in international projects.

Another example is the NGO Youth Entrepreneurship Support and Development Centre, which aims to promote economic education and youth entrepreneurship through practical experience that simulates real-life situations, enabling young people to develop interpersonal skills, creative thinking, and knowledge and understanding of business objectives and processes. It organises an annual economic fair for secondary students, Stairs to Success. It also runs a competition, Beginning Investor, to provide young people in Belarus with an enjoyable, low-risk experience of investing on the stock market and learning how the economic system works.

2.2.3 International donors

The EU is one of the major donors in the field of educational and youth policy. Its main contribution is a large-scale project on employment and VET that will be implemented over the period 2018–21. The main objective of the project is to enhance the employment prospects of young people and adults by ensuring greater synergy between the VET system supply and the needs of the modern labour market; by improving the quality and attractiveness of VET; and by improving the labour market information system (LMIS). The project will conduct a number of surveys under the LMIS component, such as a school-to-work transition survey, sectoral and regional skills demand surveys of employers, and VET satisfaction surveys, which will generate new evidence and information on the labour market and VET. The total value of the EU funding for the project amounts to EUR 11.5 million.

Belarus also benefits from the EU European Scholarship Scheme for Young Belarusians and the youth actions of Erasmus+. Belarus received EUR 2.4 million for student and staff exchanges under the 2015/16 selection of Erasmus+, with 114 projects involving Belarusian universities. EU4YOUTH 2017–2020, a new programme for the EaP, will provide new opportunities for young people in Belarus by developing youth leadership and entrepreneurship through a variety of actions, including education and training opportunities to improve employability, support for creative young entrepreneurs and a focus on disadvantaged youth.

In December 2017 the EU and UNDP launched an important new project that will support the development of SMEs across Belarus. The project will assist vulnerable groups in the population by providing them with business knowledge, start-up support and access to affordable finance. Grants will be provided to at least 200 SMEs, social enterprises and NGOs to launch new innovative businesses or supply socially important services to local communities.

The UNDP is currently implementing a project, Promotion of Employment and Self-Employment of the Population in Small and Medium-Sized Towns in the Republic of Belarus. This focuses on promoting employment/self-employment through the strengthening of external economic integration within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and promoting a socially responsible approach in the development of small businesses in small and medium-sized towns in Belarus. There are plans to create five pilot business incubators in small towns in the Vitebsk and Mogilev regions.

In 2015 the World Bank approved a USD 50 million loan to Belarus for the Education Modernisation Project, which aims to improve access to a quality learning environment in 120 general secondary schools through the rehabilitation of school facilities and the provision of the necessary laboratory equipment for physics, chemistry, biology and IT classes. It also aims to modernise the management of the education sector and bring it into line with international best practices. Within the framework of the project, the existing approaches to student learning assessment and data analysis will be strengthened to achieve better system performance and improve student learning outcomes. Moreover, the World Bank is preparing a new project to realise Belarus's commitments under the Bologna Process and to modernise its higher education system. The project is expected to start in 2019.

Belarus became one of the first countries to launch the Women in Business programme implemented by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in the countries of the EaP and

funded by the EBRD, the EU, Sweden and the Early Transition Countries Fund. The programme promotes women's entrepreneurship and supports SMEs led by women through access to the finance and knowledge necessary for business growth. The programme also includes advisory services projects with mentoring and longer-term coaching to provide female entrepreneurs with the knowledge and confidence to start their own businesses.

A number of German–Belarusian projects aimed at supporting employment for young people with disabilities, as well as training specialists working with young people, are currently being implemented. For example, Mobile Work with Young People – Innovation in Partnership Interaction aims to develop and test an innovative regional model for work with young people that is intended to prevent addiction and to provide social and pedagogical rehabilitation based on the German experience.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implements activities to enhance social and economic inclusion for people with disabilities. USAID currently supports the Art for Inclusion of People with Disabilities project implemented by the Belarusian Association of Assistance to Children and Young People with Disabilities. The first cycle of the project was aimed at developing a positive attitude towards people with a disability, expanding their opportunities, and promoting their inclusion in society, and was targeted primarily at young people aged 16–25. The new cycle of the project launched in 2016 will further promote inclusion of children and young people with disabilities by strengthening the capacity of disability organisations and developing community-based services. The USAID Belarus Entrepreneurs Support and Training (BEST) project aims to boost entrepreneurship and develop a start-up infrastructure in Belarus. Within the framework of the project, a former local online business content provider, BEL.BIZ, was transformed into a unique infrastructure institution that fosters SME development, entrepreneurship growth and innovation countrywide. The project also provides training opportunities such as TechMinsk, a boot camp for young entrepreneurs. In three years, over 200 participants from 90 start-ups have graduated from TechMinsk. Projects by TechMinsk alumni have already attracted over USD 7 million in investments.

3. POLICY MEASURES SUPPORTING YOUTH TRANSITION TO WORK

Transition policies are intended to promote young people's school-to-work transitions and include aspects of education, social and employment policies. This chapter examines policy measures implemented in the areas of skills development and employment. The policy measures are grouped into four sections: skills development, career guidance, first work experience and active labour market programmes (ALMPs). The annex provides a list of the main programmes and projects implemented at the national, regional and local levels over the past three years that are targeted at young people or specific youth groups, as well as general programmes that also apply to young people.

3.1 Skills development

Skills development processes in Belarus are based on a system of centralised management and state programmes. The advantage of this approach is continuity, as new state programmes take into account the implementation results of previous state programmes, social and economic developments, and progressive trends in the development of education systems in the world community. There is a belief that in the context of limited resources, a centralised approach could enhance opportunities for more effective implementation of the programmes.

At the same time, decentralised education provision promises to be more efficient, to better reflect local priorities, to encourage participation, and, eventually, to improve coverage and quality. In recent years a trend towards decentralisation can be observed in Belarus, with many functions of the MoE transferred to regional authorities and educational institutions. In particular, responsibility for VET funding has been transferred from national to regional (oblast) level.

Improving the quality of formal education

The quality of the education system is one of the key factors that determines economic efficiency and competitiveness. Therefore, special attention is being given in Belarus to the rights of children and young people to obtain high-quality education. SPEYP 2016–2020 envisages a collection of measures aimed at increasing the quality and accessibility of education according to the needs of the innovative economy, including the formation of a 'cloud' informational and educational environment containing quality resources and services that are based on modern information technologies.

The SPEYP 2016–2020 sub-programme Development of the Vocational and Secondary Special Education System sets out the tasks required to improve the quality of vocational training, to bring the scope and structure of training into line with the requirements of the national economy, and to foster the development of high-tech industries. To encourage the use of innovative approaches in the education process, the Introduction of Modular-Based Models of Technical Vocational Education, Continuing Adult Education and Vocational Training of General Secondary School Students in Technical Vocational Education and Training Institutions project is being implemented at 11 pilot sites.

Recent years have demonstrated that the new vision for the VET system requires the strengthening of cooperation and coordination between the world of work and the world of education, with social partnership considered a key success factor in these transformations. An example of an emerging partnership is the recent development of joint action plans between the MoE and sectoral ministries to improve regular labour force training, retraining and skills upgrading, with a particular focus on new institutional arrangements. Such plans have been developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Architecture and Construction, as well as BAMAP, the Association of International Road Carriers.

The SPEYP 2016–2020 sub-programme Development of the Higher Education System establishes three main objectives:

- to improve the quality of education and training;
- to increase the competitiveness of higher education in the world educational space;
- to improve planning and optimise the structure.

In 2015 Belarus started the process of integrating its higher education system into the Bologna Process and adopted the Belarus Roadmap for Higher Education Reform. However, in December 2017 the BIBC and the Ad Hoc Committee of Belarusian National Platform of the EaP Civil Society Forum carried out independent monitoring of the process and concluded that the implementation of the roadmap has recently deteriorated, as the discussion on the new Education Code in the National Assembly has been postponed indefinitely. They found that there is a lack of visible progress in developing and embedding the National Qualification Framework (NQF) in the legislation and that none of the obligations on the social dimension of higher education and academic values have been fulfilled. In view of this situation, it was proposed that the roadmap implementation timeline be extended for two–three years and that international control over its implementation be maintained (BIBC, 2017).

Bridging gaps between skills supply and demand

One of the main reasons for the imbalance on the labour market in Belarus in terms of its occupational and qualification structure is the lack of consistency between the supply of and demand for skills. Despite the employers' increasing demand for employees for blue-collar occupations, the education and training market is still oriented mainly towards producing specialists who have higher education.

In order to address this issue, Belarus has created a defined system of labour market data collection and application. There are three large databases that can be used to forecast labour market needs, produced by Belstat, the MoLSP and the MoE. In accordance with the Agreement on Information Exchange concluded between Belstat, the Ministry of Economy and the MoLSP, Belstat provides all the statistical information used for the elaboration of annual programmes of socioeconomic development, state programmes, etc.

Based on the data from the automated State Order and Admission system, the MoE produces forecast figures on educational profiles (directions) for the state programmes for five years. Estimated figures for admissions to higher and vocational education institutions are adjusted annually, taking into account the updated order for staff training, the results of graduate job placements and information obtained from the MoLSP on graduates from educational institutions who are registered as unemployed with the PES as of 1 December of the reporting year. In addition, the Nationwide Data Bank of Job Openings provides information on professions and specialisms needed to fill existing vacancies.

At the request of the Council of Ministers of Belarus, work has been carried out to establish additional reliable mechanisms for identifying skills needs in the labour market. The Work Plan for Short-Term Planning of Staff Training and Enhancing Medium- and Long-Term Forecasts of Staff Needs (2015) sets out the timeline for the introduction of the information and analytical forecasting system. It envisages the creation of a three-level information and analytical system with a coherent multifactor model that includes three modules: the economy, the labour market and vocational education.

Non-formal education for youth

The SPEYP 2016–2020 sub-programme Development of the System of Additional Education for Children and Youth is aimed at ensuring the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of additional education for children and young people that is currently provided by 318 establishments (3 republican and 315 regional). There are 133 sector-specific institutions and 185 multidisciplinary

institutions. A third of students in Belarus attend additional education for children and young people, which allows young people to gain additional skills, leadership skills and experience in teamwork.

Youth organisations and NGOs also carry out a wide range of education and training activities for young people using various organisational forms (training courses, volunteer projects, competitions, etc.). For example, the Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs, in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education, organises a training course for teenagers – Useful Skills for a Successful Future – aimed at upgrading the competences and motivation of 13–17-year-olds with a responsible attitude towards their lives, development and health. The programme includes training sessions and distance learning (more than 12 academic hours in total) on various issues, such as effective communication, self-presentation and conflict management.

Inclusive education for young people with special needs

Considerable attention is paid in Belarus to the development of skills for young people with disabilities and to fostering their integration into society. The Law on the Social Protection of Disabled People (1991) establishes the right to free preschool, general secondary, vocational and technical education, and additional education, and, on a competitive basis, to free special secondary education and higher education. The Concept of Development of the Inclusive Education of Persons with Mental and Physical Impairments (2015) sets out the principles, aims, tasks, priority directions and mechanisms of the development of inclusive education of students with special needs. The network of educational institutions not only provides educational opportunities but also offers monitoring, rehabilitation, correctional and pedagogical assistance to students with special needs at all stages of their socialisation and at all ages.

In the 2016/17 academic year, 149 919 children (8.22% of the total number of children) were registered on the Republican Data Bank of children with mental and physical impairments. Some 99.7% of these children were covered by special education and correctional-pedagogical assistance and 85.2% were educated in general schools⁹.

The inclusion of children with disabilities is one of the main priorities of the MoE. In 2017 the first National Resource Centre for Inclusive Education was opened in Minsk, the result of the joint work of the MoE, the Belarusian State Pedagogical University and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) in Belarus. The centre will promote the idea of access to education for all children and will ensure purposeful and coordinated implementation of best practices in the education process.

Support for gifted and talented youth

Gifted and talented students enjoy particular support from two special funds of the President of Belarus, namely the fund for social support of gifted students and the fund for the support of talented youth. Support measures include the payment of scholarships and prizes, provision of other material assistance, and the organisation of creative projects and events, such as competitions, festivals, concerts and exhibitions, to encourage young talent and to promote their creations. For example, the Information and Analytical Centre, under the Presidential Administration of Belarus, has implemented the Smart Networks project to search for, select and train young analysts for government bodies. Within the framework of the project, young analysts from all over the country discuss issues of social and economic development and are involved in decision-making processes.

Since 2011 the BRYU has implemented the 100 Ideas for Belarus youth project, which aims to providing young people with an opportunity to contribute to society, to demonstrate their abilities and to achieve innovations in various areas. Young people are encouraged to submit their projects and

⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16357Belarus.pdf>

ideas throughout the year. The best projects are then selected and sent to the exhibition in Minsk, where the winners are awarded prizes and certificates.

The Ministry of Culture maintains a database of talented youth. As of 1 January 2016 this contained records of 672 talented young people and 173 creative teams. Over the past 16 years, 20 000 individuals have been granted awards, scholarships and material assistance from the fund for social support of gifted students and over 2 000 young persons from the fund for the support of talented youth.

Continuing adult education

Belarus has a well-developed system of continuing adult education. The Education Code defines continuing education as the training and education of students through the implementation of educational programmes for additional education. The SPEYP 2016–2020 sub-programme Development of the Adult Education System sets out two strategic priorities: revising the standards of specialised retraining and increasing the number of institutions offering distance-learning programmes. It also establishes as an indicator that by 2020, 15% of the adult population will be taking part in continuing education (currently around 10% of the working-age population participates in advanced training and retraining every year).

The Education Code establishes five types of adult education institutions: academy of postgraduate education; institute of advanced training and retraining; institute for education development; centre of advanced training for executive staff and specialists; and centre of training, upskilling and retraining for blue-collar workers. The system of adult education institutions is structured according to sectoral affiliations, with each institution accountable to a specific ministry. In addition, higher and vocational and specialised secondary education institutions (vocational schools, colleges, etc.) offer adult education programmes.

To be able to issue official academic degree certificates, an educational institution or other organisation must obtain a licence for educational activity and the certificate of state accreditation. Formal education programmes (advanced training and retraining) conducted by public education institutions receive public funding. This may include compensation for maintenance costs of public education institutions directly from the state budget or compensation for training costs through participation fees paid by the relevant ministry. Additional education can be covered from local or regional budgets (e.g. for agricultural organisations). However, in many cases either employers or employees themselves cover the costs of employees' advanced training and retraining.

Alongside public educational institutions, other organisations, private enterprises and private entrepreneurs are entitled to provide educational services. Private educational institutions can be created as commercial or non-profit organisations and can offer formal adult education (advanced training and retraining), which requires licensing by the MoE.

A wide range of programmes for professional skills development is available. They include programmes both in fields that are not yet recognised as separate occupations (florists, fitness instructors, etc.) and in recognised occupations, for which they provide short-term courses on specific topics such as sales, personal development and management. There are also training courses in foreign languages, computer literacy skills and the development of creative abilities (e.g. music, painting, etc.).

Non-formal education can be provided without licensing. It can include:

- educational programmes providing training courses (lectures, thematic workshops, practical training sessions, military officer courses and other types of educational course);
- educational programmes for improving personal skills and abilities.

Non-formal education is provided by a wide range of actors, including public and private educational institutions, private entrepreneurs and civil society organisations. According to the data on the portal www.ngo.by, at the beginning of 2017, 435 NGOs listed 'education and training' as one of their lines of activity. These organisations pay particular attention to promoting the values of lifelong learning and non-formal and civic education. For example, since 2006 the Association of Lifelong Learning and Education (a non-commercial association of 13 educational organisations and establishments) has organised the biennial Festival of Non-formal Education, and since 2004 has published a journal on non-formal education, ADUKATAR. The European College of Liberal Arts in Belarus (ECLAB), which was founded in 2014, provides an opportunity to obtain a supplementary education within the liberal arts education system as a non-formal alternative to formal Belarusian higher education.

Some NGOs have programmes specifically targeting young people. For example, the NGO Centre for Informational Support of Public Initiatives (The Third Sector) has been operating a school for young journalists designed to train full-time and freelance correspondents for private mass media and publishing houses, as well as press secretaries for NGOs located in the Grodno region. Young people attend a course called Basics of Journalism and participate in a trainee programme led by the internet portal Your Style. As part of the programme, Your Style youth journalism festivals take place and study visits are organised to other Belarusian cities and to foreign countries.

Belarus does not have an established procedure for allocating public funds to NGOs that are providing non-formal education services. They are often financed by volunteer activities and funds from international agencies. For example, DVV International (International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association) has implemented a number of projects aimed at developing non-formal adult education, facilitating the creation of adult education centres, and professionalising adult education teaching specialists.

Vocational training for unemployed people

SPSPEP 2016–2020 aims to promote the development of continuing vocational adult education for unemployed people. The PES offers an opportunity to those who are unemployed to be referred for vocational training, retraining and advanced training in the occupations that are in demand on the labour market. Vocational training for unemployed people is carried out for more than 120 professions. The PES outsources the provision of training services, with training providers selected on a competitive basis according to state procurement rules. Unemployed persons who are referred to training courses are entitled to several social guarantees, including financial support (scholarship) during the period of training.

Special attention is paid to the provision of vocational training to young people, in particular those under the age of 18 who do not have professional education. Young people have a preferential right to be referred to vocational training courses. Of the total number of unemployed people who were referred to vocational training in 2015, those aged 16–20 years constituted 47.7%, or 4 200 people (MoE, 2015). Since October 2016, women who are on parental leave with children under three years old are entitled to be referred to vocational training or retraining courses, even if they are not registered as unemployed. This might increase their ability to return to the labour market.

3.2 Career guidance

Vocational guidance within education system

The Development of Vocational Guidance for Youth concept, adopted by the MoE in 2014, sets out the principles of and arrangements for the vocational guidance system. It is aimed at the creation of conditions for psychological and pedagogical support for young people in their professional self-determination by helping them to identify professional interests and abilities and by fostering their successful socialisation into society and their active adaptation to the labour market. The SPEYP

2016–2020 Youth Policy sub-programme underlines the necessity of increasing the quality and effectiveness of vocational guidance.

Vocational guidance is conducted at all levels of formal education. In lower and general secondary education, the following areas are distinguished: professional information, professional diagnostics, professional counselling, professional selection and professional adaptation. Vocational, specialised secondary and higher education institutions use vocational guidance methods to attract new students and to encourage forward-looking skills acquisition. They perform various activities such as attending secondary schools and disseminating information about training courses in their institution, meeting with potential students and their parents, and organising study visits to vocational educational institutions for secondary school students.

Within the framework of SPSPEP 2016–2020, the PES is also involved in providing youth vocational guidance. The activities include providing information sessions in general secondary educational institutions and organising open days, master classes and tours in enterprises. The PES regularly holds regional job fairs offering an opportunity for students, graduates and other interested individuals to meet representatives of organisations and enterprises that are seeking employees.

It is not only educational institutions and the PES that carry out work on vocational guidance, but also other organisations, NGOs and enterprises. For example, since 2014 the Association of European Businesses, in cooperation with the Brest Regional Foundation for Regional Development, has been implementing a corporate social responsibility project, Job Shadowing. Job Shadow Days are held for students in Brest and Minsk by mentors from enterprises that provide students with free access to a real working environment during the working day. Trainees have an opportunity to communicate with specialists, obtain information about the features of a particular profession, and ‘test’ their interest in the chosen profession or field of activity. In 2017, 29 students took part in the project.

Career guidance services for unemployed people

PES career guidance services for those who are unemployed are rather limited. They include assistance in choosing or changing profession, assessment of training or retraining needs, and development of individual employment plans for long-term unemployed people, as well as monitoring and assessment of the plans’ implementation. Additional support is provided to people with a disability. Vocational guidance for this group includes analysis of each individual’s medical, psychological, educational, vocational and social condition and its possible development, vocational information and consultation, and selection of an appropriate occupation. As described above, the PES is actively involved in youth vocational guidance.

3.3 First work experience

This section describes initiatives that promote workplace-learning experiences, both within and outside the education system, and that support youth entrepreneurship.

Work-based learning in vocational education

The current legislation does not provide a definition of the term ‘work-based learning’. However, the Education Code describes such concepts as qualification upgrading, retraining and training in organisations. Work-based learning is an integral part of the educational process in vocational and specialised secondary education institutions and in additional adult education. Various regulations provide a framework for the organisation of work-based learning in formal education by defining the functions of educational institutions, the types of practices, their organisation and management, and financial support. Work-based learning can consist of one or more periods, depending on the status of students. For students of vocational education institutions it is organised in three stages – initial, main and final – while for students who are upgrading their qualifications there is only one period of practice. Work-based learning can be carried out in workplaces at enterprises, job training workshops,

educational farms, resource centres, training grounds and other structural sub-divisions of educational institutions.

On-the-job training in companies

The legislation sets out the rules for the professional training, retraining and advanced training of workers in organisations and enterprises. Professional training for employees is carried out by a number of large industrial enterprises that use different forms of professional training, including internships, in the workplace. For example, the Institute of Business Technologies (IBT), the corporate training centre of Atlant-M International Automobile Holding, implements the Future Holding Elite Programme, which is geared towards fourth-year students from leading regional universities. The goal of the programme is to attract the best students as potential future employees of the Holding. The company provides participants with a number of opportunities, namely courses in management, marketing and finance, specialised automobile industry courses, a chance to complete a practice and internship at the enterprise, and a chance of being hired, with further promotion and career-building opportunities.

Temporary employment of young people studying in educational institutions in their free time

One of the tasks set out by SPSPEP 2016–2020 is to stimulate the economic activity of the population and involve economically inactive people in work. In order to encourage young people's involvement in socially useful work and to provide them with an opportunity to gain working skills, the PES organises temporary employment for young people studying in education institutions, to be carried out during their free time, including the summer vacation. This temporary employment can be offered to young people aged 14–31 and is carried out based on contracts concluded between the PES and the organisers of the work. The organisation providing the temporary employment can receive funds to cover equipment, tools, materials, labour books, and wages equivalent to the minimum salary. According to information from the MoLSP, 30 805 students were employed in 2016.

Student work teams

The concept of student work teams has been widely supported in Belarus as a way of providing temporary employment opportunities for young people in their free time. For students of vocational, specialised secondary and higher education institutions, this work can be recognised as an internship, provided it is relevant to the occupational profile of the student. In 2015, 71 900 individuals were employed in 3 767 student work teams (in 2010 there were 19 700 individuals in 769 work teams). The organisation of **student work teams** and volunteer activities is led by the BRYU.

Support for youth entrepreneurial activity

Belarus is making significant efforts to foster innovative aspects of economic development and the creation of more high-tech jobs, and to create the human resources potential required to meet the evolving needs of the national economy. The Programme of Continuous Education of Children and Young People for 2016–2020 sets out a number of measures for promoting entrepreneurship as a behavioural model and life strategy. It includes various activities, such as:

- training courses: Youth Entrepreneurship, The Search for Business Ideas, The Role of Other Professions in My Activities, Career Growth for the Technical Vocational College Graduate, Enhancing Motivation to Set Up a Business;
- innovation project: Introduction of the Performance Model of Pupils' Business Enterprises in the Networking Context;
- organisation of professional competitions, technical creativity exhibitions, youth forums on initiatives and creativity in the economic field, etc.;
- establishment and functioning of practice firms, companies, technology parks, business incubators, start-up centres, etc.

The Ministry of Economy carries out work to support the start-up movement in Belarus. This aims to involve various groups, especially young people, in entrepreneurial and innovative activity. Every year since 2012 the ministry has developed action plans for the organisation of the network of start-up schools and interactive competitions for innovative business projects that are implemented by the regional executive committees.

Since 2010 the SCST, with the participation of the Belarusian Innovation Fund, the National Academy of Sciences, the MoE and the BRYU, has organised an annual national contest of innovation projects to foster the development of innovative activities. The best projects are chosen for further commercialisation. Since 2015, with support from the Belarusian Fund for Financial Support of Entrepreneurs, a private company called Start-up Technologies has organised a national start-up forum, Youth in Entrepreneurship, through which innovation projects by young people can receive assistance for implementation.

The municipal unitary enterprise Youth Social Service, a small-business incubator, supports youth entrepreneurial initiatives at the initial phase of their development. The organisation implements a number of training projects and provides office space for young entrepreneurs. In 2017, within the framework of the Business School 'From Idea to Business' project, which was implemented with the support of Coca-Cola Beverages Belarus, 12 three-day training sessions were organised. Nine participants from the programme have already opened their businesses. Overall, 315 people participated in various training programmes in 2017, and in 2018 there are plans to provide training opportunities to 750 people.

The business incubator of Belarus High-Tech Park provides practical support to new start-up companies that are developing their own products, with the aim of contributing to the favourable and successful development of IT businesses and other export industries that are based on new and high technologies. It is actively engaged in supporting IT education and innovative entrepreneurship. Its Educational Centre provides re-education opportunities for adults who want to start a career in the IT industry and training for employees of IT companies who are willing to improve their knowledge and skills. It also organises iTeen Academy for children aged 6–15 years old. In 2016 over 1 300 school students and 700 university students visited Belarus Hi-Tech Park, where they had an opportunity to learn about the prospects and benefits of working in the IT industry.

Increased attention has also been paid to the development of entrepreneurship culture and social entrepreneurship in Belarus. Research on social entrepreneurship in Belarus carried out by ODB Brussels found that social entrepreneurs need support in entrepreneurial skills development, including writing a business plan, marketing strategy and sales. They also need opportunities to network, as interacting with other social entrepreneurs might encourage and motivate them. Initiatives include the Talaka.by platform, which fosters the development of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem by encouraging partnerships and cross-collaboration with businesses, offers media support and provides a means for social entrepreneurs to network and exchange experiences. Another example is the youth NGO's New Faces initiative, which, together with ODB Brussels and with support from the EU, organises a summer school on social entrepreneurship for teenagers, SEI Youth: My First Business. During the summer school, teenagers are introduced to the basics of social entrepreneurship and have an opportunity to learn how to use it to solve local, social, cultural and environmental problems. However, many NGOs face problems, as social entrepreneurship is a concept that is not widely known in Belarus. Moreover, many people still believe that social services are the responsibility of the government, and do not see them as something to be solved through a business approach.

3.4 Active labour market programmes

This section describes ALMPs supporting youth transition to work provided by the PES, except vocational training services (see section 3.1) and career guidance (see section 3.2).

Services to employers

The President of Belarus has emphasised job creation as a primary target for ensuring full employment. Presidential Decree No 78 of 23 February 2016 on Measures to Improve the Efficiency of the Socioeconomic Complex of the Republic of Belarus sets out the aim of creating at least 50 000 jobs every year. For 2017 the government established a higher goal, to create 70 000 jobs.

Within this framework, the PES plays an important role in actively working with employers. In particular, the PES promotes the creation of jobs for people who have additional rights in the field of employment promotion, such as people with a disability or those released from prison. In order to prevent social tension developing in organisations in which there is an unsustainable financial situation, forced part-time employment and periods of inactivity, the PES provides advisory services to employers and workers on labour legislation and social protection, and on self-employment opportunities. For example, with a view to establishing partnerships with employers, the district employment department of Minsk has set up employment clubs, held specialised working meetings with employers and introduced a questionnaire system for participants in public events to assess the events' effectiveness.

Support for job search

The PES registers unemployed persons and provides job search services for them. However, the number of beneficiaries of these services is rather low. In 2016, 239 200 individuals applied to the PES for assistance in employment, of whom 167 600 were registered as unemployed. Some 159 800 were placed in a job, of whom 109 000 were registered as unemployed (MoLSP, 2017). The reluctance to register with the PES can be explained by the rather low level of unemployment benefits (currently EUR 10–20 per month).

Since 2014 the PES has provided free access to the Nationwide Database of Job Openings. The database includes information on different occupations and on the opportunities available for obtaining the relevant education. Information on 66 professions is currently included in the section on vocational guidance. Users of the portal can subscribe to the regular circulation of jobseekers' CVs to potential employers, and to the emailing of notifications to jobseekers when a new vacancy is posted to the database. To improve the relevance of the information in the database, amendments were made to the Law on Employment of the Population that require employers to inform the PES about new vacancies within five days (previously 14 days), and to notify the PES when the vacancy is filled.

The regional PES actively works with employers to inform them about changes in labour legislation and employment policies, and to ensure that timely and accurate information is provided about the availability of vacancies. This work has proved to be effective: in the Gomel region, for example, the number of registered vacancies almost doubled between January and March 2016 and as of 1 April 2016, it amounted to 6 400 vacancies.

Temporary employment of unemployed young people (Youth Practice)

Youth Practice aims to provide unemployed young people with skills and practical work experience and to improve their competitiveness in the labour market. It is organised by the PES on a contractual basis with organisations and companies. Young people are employed on a fixed-term employment contract for a period of up to six months. The employment contract specifies profession and qualification, and sets out individual training needs. Every year the PES conducts negotiations with employers on the possibility of finding student work places within the framework of Youth Practice. Employers who organise temporary employment for unemployed young people are entitled to receive

partial compensation for the payment of salary. The compensation cannot exceed the amount of the minimum wage. According to information from the MoLSP, in the period January–August 2016, 451 unemployed young people were temporarily employed.

Support for adaptation in the workplace

The status of ‘young specialist’ is awarded for the period of a compulsory work placement obtained through the graduate work placement system. Young specialists are entitled to a range of social guarantees, including opportunities for continuing professional development, financial support (20% salary supplement, reallocation compensation) and housing support. In addition to the basic package of guarantees for all young specialists, guarantees and benefits are provided at the regional level or in specific economic spheres according to the need for certain specialists; for example, there are a number of measures to encourage the relocation of young specialists to rural areas.

Reservation of jobs for vulnerable groups

The legislation determines the procedure for reserving jobs for people who are in particular need of social protection and are not able to compete on the labour market on an equal footing. These people constitute about 20% of the total number of those who are registered unemployed. The list of vulnerable groups includes young people under the age of 21 seeking their first job, orphans aged 18–23, parents in single-parent families, and individuals with a disability. The PES establishes quotas for employers (regardless of the form of ownership) with a view to securing employment for people in vulnerable groups.

The proposal for the quota is based on an assessment of employment development in the region and a database of unemployed people. Employers analyse the proposals and each year they inform the PES of the number of vacancies (by category) that they could reserve for vulnerable individuals and the potential for creating new jobs for their employment. Based on information received from employers, the PES develops the draft decision of local executive and administrative bodies on the quota. The decision indicates which specific employers have reserved jobs for a particular number of people, as well as the minimum number of jobs created.

Integration into the labour market of people with a disability

SPSPEP 2016–2020 sets out an objective to improve measures for the rehabilitation of people with a disability. This includes organising training courses for those with a visual impairment on computer technology using modern methods, and training courses for people with a disability on financial literacy and business stimulation.

Individuals with a disability are entitled to professional rehabilitation, which aims to ensure their competitiveness in the labour market. The PES provides special support measures to people with disabilities, including:

- funding and reimbursement of costs for the creation and maintenance of jobs for those with disabilities according to the employers’ applications;
- organisation and funding of measures to assist those with disabilities to adapt to labour activity;
- arrangement of training courses for persons with disabilities on financial literacy and the stimulation of economic activity based on modern methodologies.

The process of creating jobs for people with disabilities is complex and is affected by unfavourable economic factors. Over the past five years, 2 500 persons with disabilities were given assistance to adapt to labour activity and almost 600 special work places were created. Within this framework, youth organisations, NGOs and private organisations are also implementing various initiatives. For example, in 2017 the Institute of IT and Business Administration (a private institution of additional education) began implementing the Education and Professional Growth for People with Disabilities to Obtain Jobs and Gain Economic Independence project within the framework of the small grants

programme of the US Embassy in Belarus. The Development of Personal and Interpersonal Skills (Soft Skills) for Building a Successful Career project and the How to Turn Your Hobby into a Profession project offer people with disabilities free distance education.

Support for starting entrepreneurial activity

The PES assists unemployed individuals to start entrepreneurial activity through consulting services, training, and financial support in the form of a subsidy. The MoLSP's Institute of Advanced Training and Retraining organises a three-week entrepreneurship training course. The course is open to the public, but it is free of charge only for unemployed individuals who are referred by the PES.

On completion of the training, unemployed people are required to develop a business plan for their chosen activity (for example, handicraft activities, agro-ecotourism services, etc.) and submit it to the PES. Following approval of the business plan, the individual is entitled to receive a subsidy to the value of 11 minimum salaries, to the value of 15 minimum salaries for agro-ecotourism activities and 20 minimum salaries for entrepreneurial activities based on the results of scientific and technical research and development. The funds provided to individuals in the form of a subsidy may be used for the purchase of tools, machinery, equipment, and raw materials, to pay for services, and for other purposes relating to the organisation of entrepreneurial activities. According to information from MoLSP, subsidies were provided to 1 810 unemployed persons in 2016 (MoLSP, 2017).

Paid public works

The PES organises paid public work for those who are unemployed with the aim of satisfying labour demand for socially useful work, providing job opportunities for those who do not have any other source of income and maintaining the motivation to work among jobseekers. Paid public works have a socially useful value, and include work in housing and communal services, work on the ecological improvement of land (landscaping), work in construction organisations, agricultural work, and work in long-term unfilled vacancies (more than three months). In 2016, 55 800 persons were employed in paid public works (MoLSP, 2017).

4. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

There are a large number of policy measures in Belarus to support youth transition to work. They are implemented by a range of different actors and have various objectives. However, it is difficult to assess their effectiveness owing to the lack of regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In this context, this chapter analyses the main institutional and operational constraints that have a negative impact on the quality and efficiency of youth policy measures and proposes actions that could help to overcome the constraints and meet the government's goal of ensuring youth employment.

Enhancing the coordination of stakeholders

The coordination of various stakeholders is challenging in many countries, including Belarus. As youth policy is multisectoral and cuts across many different areas of governance, interministerial cooperation is a vital mechanism for its implementation. While the MoE is a leading institution in youth policy, other ministries and institutions working in non-youth-specific sectors also have a significant role in youth policy implementation according to their mandate. However, interaction between the various state institutions involved is not sufficiently effective. The focus of state institutions on their own institutional objectives, functions and tasks often limits the implementation of interrelated measures. The system-wide approach that is declared in normative legal acts needs further development.

There is currently no common understanding of the importance of the role of young people in the future development of the national economy. This requires youth policy to be discussed at a high political level and to be considered in the context of the national economic and structural industrial policies. In this regard, the MoE needs to develop a more proactive approach to the coordination of youth-related initiatives and to ensure greater political visibility of these initiatives.

It is not only governmental institutions that take part in the development and implementation of youth policy, but also various other stakeholders, such as public and private educational institutions, enterprises, public organisations, NGOs and international organisations. However, positive experiences from different initiatives are not always widely disseminated and analysed by decision-makers at the national and local levels. The organisation of dedicated debates involving youth representatives, the dissemination of good practice examples, and other outreach activities can contribute to this end.

Improving the attractiveness of VET

Skills mismatch is a growing concern in Belarus, with businesses reporting that the inadequately educated workforce is an obstacle for their economic performance. The overall negative image of the blue-collar occupations that prevails in society has promoted an influx of graduates from higher education institutions. At the same time, there is a lack of specialists with vocational education in the labour market.

There is a need to improve the image of vocational education as an effective transition channel between the education system and the labour market in order to encourage more young people to opt for technical and vocational qualifications. This requires, first, the development and implementation of a modern NQF model that embraces the specific characteristics of the national economy and international trends in this area and, second, an improvement in the quality of VET by revising curricula, training trainers and creating pathways between general and vocational education. Training programmes should be flexible, diversified and customised to address the divergent needs of the most vulnerable groups of young people.

To ensure that VET is more responsive to labour market needs, cooperation should be fostered between employers and (formal and informal) education and training institutions. Such cooperation is

needed for the development of up-to-date curricula that are appropriate to the current technologies and practices in the world of work. Cooperation is also needed to enable students to access internships while they are studying and to find a job after graduating. Although there are some examples of effective partnerships between education and the private sector, they are too limited in scope to produce nationwide results. These initiatives could be scaled up to include a broader set of industries, companies, and educational and training institutions.

Providing opportunities for continuing skills development within a lifelong learning perspective

In the current social and economic situation, young people should be prepared to constantly update their knowledge and continue to develop skills so that they are able to adapt to rapidly evolving labour market needs. Belarus has a system of continuing adult education that offers opportunities to acquire additional knowledge and develop new skills after formal training. Nevertheless, the forms and methods of continuing education need further improvement both in terms of their content and methods of training and in terms of their relevance to the labour market demand. Interactive and participatory methods are especially relevant in gaining the interest of young people in learning and the development of skills. The use of new technologies – from distance learning to digitalised teaching and learning materials – has the potential to attract more young people.

Providing more opportunities to gain work experience

Work experience is a crucial component in preparing young people for the transition to work. It enables individuals to develop the practical skills needed in the workplace, including the soft skills that employers look for in entry-level workers, to increase their knowledge about workplace settings and to establish connections with potential employers that can help in future job searches. Graduates with work experience are more likely to find a job that is well matched to their level of qualification than those who have had no such experience.

In Belarus work experience is one component of a wide range of youth programmes, including those that operate in schools and those in community settings, such as student work teams. Although work-based learning in secondary specialised (professional) schools, technical vocational schools and higher education institutions is steadily expanding, the resource base of educational institutions is limited, and this affects the quality of learning. To increase the availability of work placements and opportunities for practical learning, the government could consider the establishment of incentives for employers.

Enhancing vocational and career guidance

The skills needed in today's globally competitive labour market are complex and constantly changing. Not only is the workplace itself changing rapidly, but individual career opportunities are also evolving. Some traditional careers have become obsolete, while new ones are emerging at a rapid rate. In this context, young people require more and better information about different career paths, and need to be motivated to use them. In Belarus there is an established system of career guidance services within the education system. However, vocational guidance in schools focuses mainly on immediate decisions that young people face on leaving school, such as a course of study or a job.

More efforts are needed to ensure that young people obtain good-quality vocational guidance that helps them to develop career management skills. For schools, this means building career education into the curriculum and linking it to students' overall development; introducing more student-centred approaches to support students in developing their identities in primary school; and offering guidance in career planning throughout secondary school, ensuring that students understand the usefulness and relevance of their studies. This could be achieved by creating career formation centres in educational institutions to ensure the practical orientation of students' professional training, taking into account their professional interests, not only on a planned basis but also on an initiative basis,

including the development of public–private partnerships and active interaction with public organisations and NGOs.

Another important challenge is to make career guidance more widely available throughout adulthood. Such provision is currently underdeveloped and is offered mainly to unemployed people accessing PES services that concentrate on short-term employment options rather than on longer-term career development and career planning.

Fostering youth entrepreneurial activities

Young people are traditionally considered to be more ready than older people to accept the risks associated with self-employment or entrepreneurship. However, Belarus has a relatively low level of youth entrepreneurship. Young entrepreneurs report the following issues as major challenges: the need for specialised education, the lack of experienced and qualified mentors, the absence of an entrepreneurial culture, the difficulties in obtaining start-up capital, the lack of well-known positive examples among their predecessors and the low level of motivation among their peers. At the same time, they acknowledge that Belarus has the essential prerequisites for the successful development of youth entrepreneurship, such as plenty of vacant business niches, low levels of competition and a relatively easy registration system for new businesses and start-ups.

Although increasing attention has been paid to the development of entrepreneurship culture, and although various different initiatives are being implemented in this area, there are a number of problematic issues. First, the number of young people covered by these initiatives is insignificant. For example, competitions for entrepreneurial youth projects conducted by various governmental and non-governmental organisations need to include more young people and more support for the implementation of promising projects. Second, there is a need for better interaction among organisations involved in business-support activities. Third, more attention should be paid to the development of an entrepreneurial mind-set and the promotion of successful entrepreneurs as role models. Fourth, there is a need for training in entrepreneurial thinking and action, and in other areas such as creativity and innovation. Fifth, entrepreneurship support programmes do not address the particular needs of vulnerable youth groups.

The government could consider including entrepreneurial learning in school curricula to ensure that young people acquire the competences and skills they need to pursue entrepreneurship and to lay the groundwork for developing a culture of entrepreneurship. It should also consider providing more youth entrepreneurship support programmes, including relevant infrastructure, information campaigns, mentoring, capacity building for different stakeholders, training and educational programmes, and seed funding.

Better targeting of ALMPs

The PES can play an important role in bringing young people into employment. Young people often lack information about promising educational pathways and job opportunities, particularly at the beginning of their transition from education to employment. In Belarus, the PES has a limited role in job matching because only a small number of young people and employers use the service. Limited cooperation with employers is a cross-cutting issue that hampers the effectiveness of the implementation of ALMPs. As interaction with young people requires a high level of professionalism from PES specialists, there is a need to strengthen the PES in order for more efficient service delivery. This would require capacity development and regular staff training.

Young people are not a homogeneous group and different youth sub-groups have a varying set of constraints that hinder their entry into the labour market. Thus, it is essential to tailor programmes to the particular needs of these divergent groups and to analyse the employment and participation barriers that they face. In Belarus the number of measures directly supporting youth transition is rather limited. Although people with a disability are singled out as one of the target groups in the government

programmes implemented by the MoE and the MoLSP, the support measures are not sufficient and should be further developed. Young women with children need to be identified as a vulnerable group of youth, and support measures should be provided to encourage their employment. Graduates need additional support in obtaining their first job, as many employers require practical experience that they do not have.

Young people see IT as a powerful tool for creating and maintaining relationships with their peers and for helping them to feel part of a larger youth culture. Social media could contribute significantly to the strengthening of links between young people, the PES and employers. In developing the PES online portal, it is important to make links with youth internet sites. This would raise awareness among young people about the available employment opportunities, labour market developments, training and education opportunities, etc.

Improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Results-based evaluation and monitoring systems are crucial for improving the governance and effectiveness of youth policy measures and for ensuring efficient use of public resources. Evaluation and monitoring systems could be used as a tool to verify both whether the measures are implemented correctly and whether these are the right programmes to be implemented. In Belarus, monitoring and evaluation is a weak point in the system. Tracking beneficiaries following the provision of services is generally lacking in all types of activities provided to young people.

Although many of the initiatives, including international cooperation programmes, seem to have a positive impact on the employment of young people, owing to the lack of impact assessment there is no accurate data to objectively evaluate their effectiveness. There is a need to establish a results-based monitoring system that would provide data on programme outcomes, such as insertion rates and wages following programme completion, as well as to analyse qualitative aspects such as the quality of jobs found, whether jobs match labour market needs and employee expectations, whether employment is sustainable and whether job placements are effective.

ANNEX: PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS SUPPORTING YOUTH TRANSITION TO WORK IN BELARUS

	Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities
Skills development							
1	SPEYP 2016–2020 Sub-programme: Development of vocational education and training and specialised secondary education	Students (age group 15–30)	MoE, Republican Institute of VET, specialised secondary education institutions, vocational schools	National	National budget: BYN 952 914 506.72 (BYN 1 650 600 of which is from the Centralised Innovation Fund) Local budgets: BYN 2 236 540 292.52 Funds from income-generating activities: BYN 369 070 725.40	70 270 students in 2015/16 in vocational schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the quality of training Aligning the content of vocational education to labour market needs
2	SPEYP 2016–2020 Sub-programme: Development of the higher education system	Students (age group 17–30)	MoE, higher education institutions	National	National budget: BYN 3 245 718 839.16 (BYN 8 162 500 of which is from the Centralised Innovation Fund) Funds from income-generating activities: BYN 1 768 260 475.80	313 200 students in 2016:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the quality of training and the effectiveness of practice-oriented training and deepening ties with employers Increasing the competitiveness of higher education in the world educational space Improving the planning system and optimisation of the structure of training
3	SPEYP 2016–2020 Sub-programme: Training of personnel for nuclear power	Students (age group 17–30)	MoE, higher education institutions	National	National budget: BYN 20 731 797.30	185 students accepted annually for training in nuclear energy specialisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated training of employees for the nuclear power industry

	Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities
4	SPEYP 2016–2020 Sub-programme: Development of the adult education system	Students	MoE, higher education institutions	National	National budget: BYN 196 448 564.10 Local budgets: BYN 114 671 332.77 Funds from income-generating activities: BYN 188 412 447.12	400 000 students (2016) 380 000 students (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvement of adult education content in accordance with the needs of economic sectors
5	SPEYP 2016–2020 Sub-programme: Development of the system of additional education for children and youth	Children and youth	MoE and relevant organisations	National	National budget: BYN 34 595 088.35 Local budgets: BYN 1 477 340 665.17 Funds from income-generating activities: BYN 32 424 688.16	393 100 school children and students enrolled in activities (on 1 January 2016) 110 000 individuals studying in children's art schools (on 1 January 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of additional education for children and young people
6	Economic Education in the MoE: Programme of Continuous Education of Children and Young People in the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020	Pupils and students (age group 14–30)	MoE, regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee, BRYU, educational institutions	National	Not defined	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activities to promote entrepreneurship as a behavioural model and a life strategy
7	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 1 of Sub-programme 3: Improvement of the system of measures for the rehabilitation of disabled people	Persons with a disability (age group 17–30)	MoLSP	National	National budget: 1. BYN 13 732 2. BYN 33 985	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training for visually impaired people: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. on computer technologies 2. on financial literacy and business stimulation

	Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities
8	Projects aimed at building leadership, civic and social responsibility, professional skills	Young people (age group 14–30)	BRYU, Belarusian National Youth Council 'RADA', Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs, public organisations, NGOs, international organisations and organisations conducting international projects abroad	National, local and international	Funds from organisations and donors	480 000 young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Civil-patriotic and cultural-leisure projects ▪ Student detachment movement ▪ Volunteer movement ▪ Educational programmes ▪ Leadership development projects ▪ Professional skills development projects
9	House of Understanding (programme aimed at developing the capacity of NGOs in Belarus)	All persons, including young people	ODB Brussels	International	Donor funds	2 000 representatives of Belarusian NGOs and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural, educational, professional and sociopolitical projects, including cooperation, training sessions, seminars, discussions, etc.
10	Projects: Academy of Youth Policy Academy the First Youth Café	Young people (age group 14–30)	Belarusian National Youth Council 'RADA'	National	Donor funds	20 youth organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshops on European and Belarusian youth policy and its history, activities to promote the interests of young people and train youth activists
11	Projects of Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs: International Summer University of UNESCO Clubs Winter University of UNESCO Clubs Volunteer camps in Belarus and abroad;	Young people (age group 14–30)	Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs	National and international	Donor funds	Number of members: 1 000–2 000 a year Annual number of young people: around 30 000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational programmes and projects

	Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities
	Model UN Linguistic camps Academy of UNESCO Clubs Spring and autumn festivals of UNESCO Clubs in Grodno International Festival of Living Water of Friendship in Gomel						
12	EU European Scholarship Scheme for Young Belarusians and the youth actions of Erasmus+	Young people (students and teachers)	EU, universities in Belarus	International	EUR 11.5 million		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and training
13	Project to support the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises across Belarus (2018–2021)	All persons, including young people	EU, UNDP	International	Donor funds	Grants will be provided to at least 200 SMEs, social enterprises and NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of business knowledge, start-up support and access to affordable finance
14	Education Modernisation Project	Young people	World Bank	National	USD 50 million loan from World Bank	120 general secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of access to quality learning environment in 120 general secondary schools through the rehabilitation of school facilities and the provision of laboratory equipment for physics, chemistry, biology and IT classes

Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities	
Career guidance							
15	Section on Labour and Economic Education in the MoE: Programme of continuous education of children and young people in the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020	Pupils and students (age group 14–30)	MoE, regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee, BRYU, educational institutions	National	Not defined	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of vocational guidance in educational institutions
16	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 2 of Sub-programme 1: Ensuring effective youth career guidance	Students and graduates	MoE, MoLSP, regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	PES resources	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career guidance services
17	SPEYP 2016–2020 Sub-programme: Youth policy	Young people (age group 15–30)	MoE, relevant organisations	National	National budget: BYN 12 000 947.53 Local budgets: BYN 3 301 148.40	Specific proportion of young people taking part in civil-patriotic events: 76% in 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the effectiveness of work on vocational guidance
First work experience							
18	SPEYP 2016–2020 Sub-programme: Youth policy	Young people (age group 15–30)	MoE, relevant organisations	National	National budget: BYN 12 000 947.53 Local budgets: BYN 3 301 148.40	Specific proportion of young people taking part in civil-patriotic events: 76% in 2017 Student detachment movement: 70 100 people in 2017 Volunteer movement: 58 000 people in 2017 Young people involved in development of youth self-government: 78 400 people in 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-formal training, leadership, social responsibility, support for socially significant and public youth initiatives Increasing the effectiveness of work on vocational guidance and the organisation of youth employment in free time (main work); support for entrepreneurial initiatives; development of the volunteer movement and student detachment movement

	Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities
19	Measures to promote the development and financing of SMEs Annex 2 of the State Programme On Small and Medium Entrepreneurship for 2016–2020	Persons looking for a job, including young people	Ministry of Economy, regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive	National	National budget (including funds allocated by the Belarusian Fund for Support of Entrepreneurs): BYN 12 657 616.40 Local budgets: BYN 70 453 030	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for the development of SMEs
20	Measures to develop an innovative infrastructure and national innovation system Annex 5 of the State Programme on Innovative Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020	Persons looking for a job, including young people	SCST, technology parks, technology transfer centres, innovative enterprises	National	Republican budget, local innovation funds, organisations' own funds, bank loans	Creation of 9 000 new jobs by 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of the activities of scientific and technological parks and technology transfer centres Within the framework of the implementation of projects, the creation of new industries that are of decisive importance for the innovative development and the innovation infrastructure
21	Competitions for start-ups for young people	Young people	SCST, Start-up Technologies (private company), international organisations, etc.	National	Donor funds	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for young people initiating start-ups
22	Project: Promotion of employment and self-employment of the population in small and medium-sized towns in the Republic of Belarus UNDP programme	Residents of Belarus, including young people	UNDP and Ministry of Economy with the financial support of the Russian Federation	Donor funds	Donor funds	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of employment and self-employment of the population in small and medium-sized towns in Belarus

	Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities
23	Programme: Women in Business	Female entrepreneurs, including young women	Belarusian People's Bank, Belinvestbank and Idea Bank with the support of the EBRD	National	Total loan funds allocated under the programme in Belarus: USD 10 million	More than 100 women took part in the project (as of 1 March 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for the development of women's entrepreneurship
24	Project for the development and support of women's entrepreneurship, I am Successful, the international programme Women in Business	Female entrepreneurs, including young women	Belinvestbank with the support of the EBRD	National		Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financing, financial advice on doing business, increasing entrepreneurial skills through master classes for practitioners in various fields of activity, as well as networking
25	Start-up event: Youth in entrepreneurship	Students (mostly in age group 17–30)	Belarusian State Economic University, higher education institutions	Regional		37 projects in the final in 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis and development of business ideas and projects
26	Summer schools on social entrepreneurship for teenagers: SEI Youth: My First Business	Young people	NGO New Faces, ODB Brussels	National	Donor funds	Not defined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social entrepreneurship training for young people and teenagers
27	Republican contest of youth innovation projects	Pupils and students (age group 14–23)	MoE, Mobile TeleSystems JLLC	National	National budget, Fund Mobile TeleSystems	2016: total of 55 projects, including 13 semi-final projects, 6 winning projects, 1 special prize project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training in project development and assistance with practical implementation
28	International championship: Youth and Entrepreneurship	Students (age group 17–30)	Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives, higher education institutions	National		About 3 000 students and team leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of training for future managers and specialists, and assistance in their employment

Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities	
Active labour market programmes							
29	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 3 of Sub-programme 1: Stimulation of the economic activity of the population, involvement of economically inactive people in the workplace	Pupils and students (age group 14–30)	Regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	BYN 27 540 190	29 200 persons in 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary employment of young people studying in educational institutions, in their free time
30	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 1 of Sub-programme 1: Ensuring a balance of labour supply and demand in the labour market	Graduates	MoLSP, regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	Funding from organisations	25 990 technical and vocational education and training graduates More than 21 600 specialised secondary education graduates 65 200 higher education graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the labour and social adaptation of young professionals and young workers (employees)
31	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 3 in Sub-programme 1: Employment of graduates	Graduates	Regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 5 777 850	540 participants in 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth Practice programme (temporary jobs)
32	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 2 of Sub-programme 1: Promoting the improvement of labour quality and competitiveness of the workforce	Unemployed individuals, including young people	Regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 29 014 780 Funds from repayment of earlier budgetary loans: BYN 200 000	11 000 people in 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational training for special vulnerable categories of unemployed people
33	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 3 of Sub-programme 1: Job creation for people with a disability	Persons with a disability, including young people	Regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	Funds transferred from FSPP: 1. BYN 11 163 182 2. BYN 18 334 400 Repayment of loans: BYN 1 135 500	67 jobs in 2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptation to work for people with disabilities Compensation for the costs of creating and retaining jobs for people with disabilities

	Title of programme/project	Target group	Implementing institutions	Level	Funding	Number of beneficiaries	Main Activities
34	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 1 of Sub-programme 1: Ensuring a balance of labour supply and demand in the labour market	Families of unemployed people, including youth families	Regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 2 110 760	In 2016, 151 families, including young families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Financial support for relocation to another locality for employment purposes
35	SPSPEP 2016–2020 Objective 3 of Sub-programme 1: Involvement of economically inactive people in labour activity (people with a disability, women with young children, persons of retirement age and others), improvement of institutional, organisational and financial mechanisms for promoting employment of the population	Persons who are dismissed or are looking for jobs, including young people and those who are unemployed	MoLSP, regional executive committees, Minsk City Executive Committee	National	<p>1, 2. Financing at the expense of organisations that conduct the activities</p> <p>3. Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 47 297 863</p> <p>Repayment of loans: BYN 612 819</p> <p>4. Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 673 690</p> <p>5. Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 26 399 130</p> <p>Repayment of loans: BYN 1 050 000</p> <p>6. Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 23 692 445</p> <p>7. Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 33 800</p> <p>8. Funds transferred from FSPP: BYN 1 066 690</p> <p>Funds from FSPP: BYN 10 917</p>	In 2016, reservation of 20 200 jobs, and 7 000 unemployed people into employment More than 870 people trained in the basics of entrepreneurship 1 810 unemployed people received subsidies for business organisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Socially responsible enterprise restructuring 2. Reservation of jobs, priority for vulnerable groups of the population 3. Social guarantees for unemployed 4. Employment of unemployed individuals released from correctional institutions 5. Support for entrepreneurship 6. Public works 7. Flexible forms of employment 8. Public information

ACRONYMS

ALMP	Active labour market programme
BIBC	Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee
BRYU	Belarusian Republican Youth Union
BYN	Belarusian rouble
EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECLAB	European College of Liberal Arts in Belarus
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FSPF	Fund for Social Protection of Population
GDP	Gross domestic product
IBT	Institute of Business Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information technology
LFS	Labour force survey
LMIS	Labour market information system
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NEET	(Young people) not in education, employment or training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National qualification framework
PES	Public employment service
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RADA	Belarusian National Youth Council
RIPO	Republican Institute for Vocational Education
SCST	State Committee for Science and Technology
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SPEYP	State Programme on Education and Youth Policy (2016–2020)
SPSPEP	State Programme on Social Protection and Employment Promotion (2016–2020)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US dollar
VET	Vocational education and training

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