

- *Reduce the duration of parental leave from three years to one year and develop child-care facilities.* Extended parental leave has been shown to act as a barrier to the return to employment of parents of young children. To help young parents reconcile their work and family responsibilities, it is suggested to reduce the duration of parental leave to one year and simultaneously to develop good and affordable childcare facilities. Introducing a system of certification for at-home carers would be a cost-effective way of enabling young parents to engage in economic activity. Developing part-time work is another possibility for helping stop the worrying decline in employment rates of young women aged 20-29 from already low levels, especially for those with children below six-years old.
- *Protect youth on flexible forms of contracts from abuse.* As mentioned earlier, flexible forms of contracts have been introduced recently that employ youth for specific tasks with almost no social security. The government should ensure that the use of such contracts is restricted to specific tasks as stipulated by law, and does not substitute for standard employment contracts. In order to avoid abuse, it is recommended that the Labour Inspectorate assess the quality of the labour relationship governing such contracts.

Promoting the geographic mobility of youth

Youth unemployment varies considerably across regions. To some extent this is due to insufficient geographic mobility within the Slovak Republic. The following steps are recommended.

- *Promote internal mobility of jobseekers.* Internal mobility could be facilitated to help jobseekers taking up new employment opportunities in other regions. A programme designed to facilitate the geographic mobility of the unemployed of all ages failed, because it required beneficiaries to change permanent residency. The programme was replaced in 2006 by a new programme financing part of the expenses linked with commuting from the place of permanent or temporary residency to the workplace. This interesting policy innovation should be evaluated to see if it encourages commuting, especially among youth.
- *Develop the rental housing market.* Another factor that limits the movement of youth from depressed to low-unemployment regions is the lack of affordable accommodation in the latter. As a result, 85% of youth aged 20-24 and 60% of those aged 25-29 live with their parents,

often in rural areas and small towns where jobs matching their qualifications are not available. Social housing provided at an affordable price, which at present represents less than 4% of all main residences, should be increased. In addition, private rental housing is almost nonexistent, one reason being the strong legal protection granted to sitting tenants. Such housing, and construction of new accommodation, should be encouraged through the setting of an appropriate legal framework; some of the higher investment in social housing could be targeted towards low-income young households.