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### Task 3\_3

**Role of social partners and policy makers in developing, implementing and monitoring youth-oriented policies**

# **COUNTRY REPORT**

# **SLOVENIA**



# Role of social partners and policy makers in developing, implementing and monitoring youth-oriented policies in Slovenia

*The case studies of Ljubljana and Celje*

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## PART A. COUNTRY OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE FOR YOUTH POLICIES

### 1 Introduction: methodology and contents

The report examines the characteristics of youth policies in Slovenia, with a particular focus on policies, adopted and implemented on the urban administrative level. The goal of the report is to present the framework and identify key actors in the field of youth policy making and implementation at both the national and local levels, focusing specifically on the case study analysis of two medium-sized cities, Ljubljana and Celje. The report aims to highlight how these cities approach youth policy and the challenges they face in preparing and implementing them.

The first part of the report provides an overview of key national policies targeting young people in Slovenia. The second part focuses on urban youth policies through an in-depth analysis of youth strategies in Ljubljana and Celje, examining the Youth Strategy for Ljubljana (City municipality of Ljubljana, 2016) and the Local Youth Programme for Celje 2021–2027 (City Municipality of Celje, 2022). These documents are analysed as the primary youth-oriented policies in the selected cities. To further illustrate the youth situation in both cities, a set of indicators was presented, showing data at the municipal or city level. The indicators cover areas such as the number of young people, employment by sector, employment and unemployment rates, educational opportunities, and housing availability.

Based on desk research of key youth policies in Ljubljana and Celje, the main actors involved in both the preparation and implementation of local youth policies were identified. To gain deeper insight into the youth policymaking and implementation processes in these cities, interviews were conducted with the relevant actors. In Ljubljana, eight interviews were completed, while in Celje, six were carried out (for details see the list in the Annex 1). Additionally, one focus group was held in each city, in Ljubljana on September, 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and in Celje, on September, 13<sup>th</sup> 2024. For summarisation of results, check Annex 2.

The aim of the interviews and focus groups was to assess the effectiveness and implementation of the youth measures outlined in the local youth strategies across various youth-related areas. These activities also helped identify key challenges in youth policymaking and highlighted areas that require further attention and additional measures.

For both Ljubljana and Celje, the respective youth policies were put into focus of discussion, with results of each policy's effectiveness and impact being explored.

## 2 Key characteristics of collective bargaining systems in Slovenia

In Slovenia, collective bargaining serves as a dialogue between trade unions and employers, aimed at maintaining or improving the relationship between employers and employees. Through collective bargaining, trade unions seek to ensure the conclusion of collective agreements that provide favourable working conditions and protect employees (Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, 2023a). As such, collective bargaining can serve as a governance instrument for shaping labour relations, including youth-oriented employment policies. However, youth-related bargaining occurs exclusively at the national level and is not specifically focused on the urban context due to the size and territorial characteristics of the country.

The structure for collective bargaining in Slovenia is tripartite, involving the government, trade unions, and business associations. The Economic and Social Council serves as a platform that facilitates social dialogue, with collective bargaining being one of its areas of focus, addressing employment issues, including precarity (Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia, 2018; Economic and Social Council, n.d.).

Collective bargaining can take place both at the sectoral and company levels. Sectoral agreements focus on specific sectors, such as the public sector and retail, and are only applicable within those sectors. These agreements may also address specific social groups, such as working parents, working mothers, and young workers (Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, 2023b). However, issues concerning young workers are primarily handled at the national level rather than sector-specific.

Collective bargaining agreements primarily focus on employment protection, aiming to increase job security and social benefits. At the national level, the Youth Plus trade union has participated in bargaining specifically targeting young people. As a result, since 2020, the minimum hourly rate for student work has been aligned with the minimum wage (Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, 2019). Additionally, through collective bargaining, they succeeded in abolishing unpaid internships (Youth Plus, 2020). Both achievements were aimed at youth at the national level and were not specifically focused on the urban context.

Youth-specific policies, particularly in areas such as employment and training, can exist at both the national and local levels. However, they may not necessarily result from collective bargaining. For example, the City Municipality of Ljubljana annually allocates staff scholarships specifically for vocational training, targeting both professional high school programmes and specific university programmes (City Municipality of Ljubljana, 2024).

Although collective bargaining agreements in Slovenia are established at the national or sectoral level, their outcomes are implemented at the local urban level as well. They are particularly relevant in urban centres, which typically have higher populations of working students and young employed workers, including those in precarious employment.

The most recent collective bargaining in September 2024 focused on employment-related issues. The government and trade unions from the public sector reached an agreement on salary law, concerning salary coordination in the public sector, aimed at securing better working conditions for public-sector employees (Ministry for Public Administration, 2024).

Regarding the situation of youth in Slovenia, one of the most pressing issues is precarity; however, no collective bargaining has yet been held on this topic. In 2023, the Ministry of Education published a public tender titled “With Youth Work Against Youth Precarity” (slo. *Z mladinskim delom proti prekarnosti mladih*). The aim of this tender is to educate young people and youth workers about the issue of precarious youth work, with the support of youth sector organisations. Young people aged 15 to 29 will be empowered with knowledge about their labour and social rights. The tender is partially financed by the European Union through the European Social Fund Plus and is implemented as part of the European Cohesion Policy Programme for the 2021–2027 period in Slovenia. Its goals include creating a more social and inclusive European Union, a responsive labour market, and improving access to employment, particularly for young people. Of the 50 projects awarded funding, one is national, while 49 are pilot projects—27 covering Eastern Slovenia and 22 covering Western Slovenia (Mlad.si, 2024).

In addition to collective bargaining, trade unions also monitor the situation and implementation of employment-related measures and collective bargaining agreements. In Slovenia, the trade union Youth Plus specifically conducts research on the circumstances of young people, publishing various reports and providing recommendations. Youth Plus

researched the situation of young precarious workers to explore their position in the labour market (Youth Plus, 2021). While the research provided recommendations, it served primarily as an informative document.



### 3 National institutional framework for youth policies

At the national level, the main document specifically addressing youth is the **Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013–2022** (Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport, Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, 2013).<sup>1</sup> This programme serves as the foundation for creating local and municipal youth strategies and programmes. It focuses on key areas relevant to youth, such as education, employment, housing, health and well-being, youth engagement in policymaking, social inclusion, culture, and youth organisations. For each area, the document outlines key actors responsible for implementing measures, identifies the necessary financial resources, defines indicators to monitor outcomes, and sets specific goals.

The legal framework for youth policies in Slovenia is outlined in the **Youth Sector Act** (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2010), passed in 2010. This act defines the youth sector and its areas, which include youth autonomy, mobility, volunteering, employment, and social inclusion, among others. It also establishes the responsibilities of national and local authorities, as well as other organisations actively involved in the youth sector.

At the national level, the key actor for youth-related policymaking in Slovenia is the **National Office for Youth**. It coordinates activities within the framework of youth policies and aims to provide measures to improve the situation of young people in the country. The office monitors the condition of youth and works in collaboration with both national and local actors.

Another national actor involved in youth-related policymaking is the **Youth Council of Slovenia**, a non-profit umbrella association of youth organisations at the national level. It also represents young people at the European level and aims to promote youth work and informal education. Additionally, it serves as a key representative and advocate for the interests of young people in Slovenia.

Regarding specific youth-related areas, other national actors are involved, primarily in the implementation of measures. In the field of employment, the key actor is the **National Employment Service**, which is responsible for executing various youth-targeted

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<sup>1</sup> The next programme, covering the period 2024–2032, is currently under preparation.

employment measures. The **Public Scholarship, Development, Disability, and Maintenance Fund** also plays a significant role in implementing training and employment-related initiatives.

In addition to the National Youth Programme, other national documents also focus on youth. **The Guidelines for the Implementation of Active Employment Policy Measures for the Period 2021–2025** (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2020) recognise young people as a vulnerable group in the labour market. The Ministry also developed the **Youth Guarantee Scheme** (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2016), specifically targeting young unemployed individuals (aged up to 29), with the goal of equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to secure employment. For example, from 2014 to 2019, over 113.000 young people benefited from the scheme, with more than 31.000 gaining employment through subsidies. Approximately 314,3 million euros were spent on these youth guarantee measures during the same period (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2020).

Youth is also recognised as a vulnerable group in the **Resolution on the National Housing Programme 2015–2025** (Ministry of Environment and Space, 2015), which introduces a special youth scheme to support young people facing housing issues for the first time. The **Resolution on the National Programme of Social Protection for the Period 2022–2030** (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2022) specifically targets at-risk young individuals, among others. Additionally, the **Resolution on the National Mental Health Programme 2018–2028** (Ministry of Health, 2018) focuses on health and well-being, identifying youth as one of its key target groups.

#### **4 Specific programmes or plans in the field of urban youth policies**

In Slovenia, urban youth policies are grounded in national strategies and programmes addressing youth issues, with the Resolution on the National Youth Programme 2013–2022 and the Youth Sector Act serving as the main guiding documents. Other national programmes mentioned in the previous subchapter (see 3 National institutional framework for youth policies) can also contribute to the development of local urban youth policies, providing additional input and guidelines for municipalities in preparing and implementing youth-focused strategies at the urban level. Such local policies are usually adopted for the bigger-size municipalities, the municipalities with the status of city municipality in particular. There are 12 city municipalities altogether in Slovenia.

Certain municipalities also adopt additional acts to address youth issues in their local communities, aiming to define local youth-related policymaking, support youth organisations, and allocate financial resources for youth programmes and projects. For instance, the City Municipality of Celje adopted such an act on youth in 2015, which served as a foundation for designing local youth policy and establishing the framework for implementing youth-related measures (City Municipality of Celje, 2022).

The area of local youth policies, including their design and implementation, is primarily under the authority of local municipal administration. Therefore, municipal programmes, acts, and strategies can also inform youth policies, and conversely, youth strategies may serve as inputs for other local strategies, such as sustainable urban policies, tourism development policies etc.

## 5 Role of national trade unions and other social actors in the design and implementation of national youth programmes and policies

In Slovenia, trade unions are not directly involved in youth programmes and policies at the urban level, as their role is primarily national or sectoral. Additionally, Slovenia does not have locally specific trade unions; therefore, trade unions are not a relevant actor in urban youth policymaking. However, they may be involved in youth-related topics at the national level.

National trade unions represent, among others, the interests of youth in the labour market, advocating for policies that enhance employment opportunities and working conditions. They may also engage in national bargaining tables, which serve as platforms for negotiating agreements that could impact youth as well. National trade unions are also involved in fostering dialogue among different actors from the public and private sectors, as well as civil society. Additionally, trade unions can participate in evaluating the results of national youth policies (Medical and Social Care Union of Slovenia, 2017).

Moreover, there are other non-institutional actors more directly involved in youth-related policymaking. One such actor is **Movit**, an association specifically focused on youth learning mobility and solidarity in the youth sector at local, regional, and national levels. It engages in activities that promote youth work and informal learning. Movit collaborates with the National Youth Office and participates in youth-related activities within the framework of **Erasmus+** (Movit, n.d.). Another non-governmental organisation, the **Youth Network Mama**, is a national network of organisations that operate as youth centres (Youth network Mama, n.d.). **Local youth centres**, such as those in Ljubljana, are part of this network. Additionally, **centres for social work** are also involved in urban youth policies, as they can actively participate in local policy design.

At the local level, business companies may play a role in policy implementation, taking responsibility for certain measures, such as granting scholarships. However, they typically focus on one specific economic activity.

## PART B. CASE STUDIES OF THE ROLE OF POLICY NETWORKS IN YOUTH POLICY OUTCOMES

### 1 Introduction: selection of cities and policy case studies

In Slovenia, Ljubljana and Celje were chosen as two medium-sized cities for case study analysis. Both cities have already been selected for the case study in the country report on young people's position in the labour market and labour market policies. Although the criteria defined medium-sized cities as those with populations between 50.000 and 300.000 inhabitants, excluding national capitals, Ljubljana – the capital of Slovenia, was chosen due to its significance. As the largest city in Slovenia, with approximately 287.000 inhabitants in 2023, Ljubljana is the country's primary economic, educational, cultural, and political centre, home to Slovenia's largest university.

On the other hand, Celje, with around 37.000 inhabitants in 2023, is the fourth largest city in Slovenia. Despite falling below the 50.000 population threshold, Celje is considered a medium-sized city by Slovenian standards. It plays an important role as a regional hub for education and economy, particularly in Savinjska region. Although Celje lacks a university, it serves as a key centre for secondary, upper secondary, and non-tertiary education, attracting a large youth population from the surrounding areas.

Both selected cities, have repeatedly been awarded the Youth-Friendly Municipality Certificate by the Institute for Youth Policy and the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia. This recognition highlights their efforts in addressing youth-specific issues and successfully implementing policies aimed at young people. Both cities acknowledge the importance of youth as a vital part of the local community and actively work to improve their quality of life by introducing and implementing various measures and initiatives addressing their needs (City Municipality of Ljubljana, 2016; City Municipality of Celje, 2022).

Both Ljubljana and Celje have established strategic documents focused on youth: Ljubljana has a youth strategy, while Celje has a local youth programme. Rather than providing separate policies for specific areas relevant to youth, these documents serve as comprehensive strategies that address a wide range of youth-related issues. This approach reflects a broader trend in Slovenia, both at the national and local levels, where it is

common to have integrated youth strategies that cover multiple areas, rather than distinct policies for each individual aspect of youth-related areas.

The key document addressing youth in Ljubljana is the **Strategy of the Municipality of Ljubljana for the Young 2016–2025: Ljubljana – City of the Young for the Young**. This strategy serves as the primary and sole document specifically focused on youth, making it the selected case study policy for Ljubljana. It covers crucial areas relevant to young people: 1) youth centres, 2) youth work and programmes, 3) education and training, 4) employment and entrepreneurship, 5) youth housing, 6) healthy lifestyles, 7) sports, 8) culture, and 9) environmental protection. For each of these areas, the strategy outlines specific goals and the corresponding measures to achieve them.

As there are various measures foreseen, it was decided to evaluate those measures especially on the areas of **youth work and social inclusion of youth**, and **housing for youth**. The area of youth work and youth programmes is considered one of the most successful in terms of implemented measures. Conversely, housing remains one of the most challenging areas, as the issue of affordable and social housing for youth is notably limited. However, as all youth-related areas are inter-related, other aspects were considered as well. As evaluating the success or failure of a measure is a complex task, the evaluation is an overview of the state on different areas and was done with the help of the interviews with different relevant actors and a focus group, both in Ljubljana and Celje.

In Celje, the key document addressing youth is the **Local Youth Programme in the City Municipality of Celje: Youth are Celje 2022–2027**, which has been selected as the case study policy for the city. This programme is the only document specifically targeting youth and is currently in its second edition, with the first edition covering the period from 2015 to 2020. The current programme outlines 29 concrete measures across ten key areas related to youth. These areas include: 1) employment and entrepreneurship, 2) housing policy, 3) mental and physical well-being, 4) environment, 5) informal education, 6) infrastructure, 7) youth organisations, 8) dialogue with decision-makers, 9) information dissemination, and 10) culture and leisure. Each area is addressed through targeted measures aimed at improving the quality of life for youth in Celje.

For Celje, the entire Local Youth Programme was analysed to assess the current situation and the programme's impact across various youth-related areas. The analysis explored the effectiveness of measures implemented in different sectors and identified the challenges young people in Celje face, which may require further attention.

## 2 The context of Ljubljana and Celje

### 2.1 Brief introduction to the cities

#### Ljubljana

Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, is located in the central part of the country, within Osrednjeslovenska NUTS3 region. The city is divided into 17 residential districts and attracts young people from other regions of Slovenia, offering opportunities for both study and work, as well as hosting international exchange students.

Although Ljubljana's overall population increased between 2011 and 2023, with growth exceeding 105%, the number of young people slightly declined during the same period. In 2011, nearly 54.000 young people aged 15 to 29 resided in the city, while in 2023, this number dropped to just over 52.000. The increasing aging index, which stood at approximately 140 in 2022, further indicates a less favourable demographic situation. Ljubljana has a predominantly service-based economy, with over 80% of its workforce employed in the services sector. Youth unemployment has improved significantly, dropping to less than 10% in 2023 for those aged 15 to 24. Additionally, the city is a popular tourist destination, attracting more than 1,1 million visitors in 2023.



Figures 1a and b: View of the Ljubljana city. (Photo: Pina Klara Petrović Jesenovec)



## Celje

Celje, the fourth-largest city in Slovenia, is in the eastern part of the country, within Savinjska NUTS3 region. The city, excluding the wider municipality, is divided into 10 residential districts, with an additional nine local communities in the municipality. While Celje has a strong industrial history, with its major industrial company—Zink Factory Celje—still in operation, the technological sector has grown increasingly important in recent years. Celje is also a significant regional educational hub, with several secondary schools that attract young people from surrounding areas. The city's population has remained relatively stable since 2011, slightly above 37.000. However, the number of young people aged 15 to 29 decreased from more than 6.300 in 2011 to about 5.100 in 2023. The city's aging population is reflected in its high aging index, which was over 150 in 2022.

Although approximately 70% of the workforce in Celje is employed in the services sector as of 2023, the manufacturing and construction sectors continue to play a significant role. Youth unemployment, for those aged 15 to 24, dropped significantly, from over 30% in 2011 to about 10% in 2023. Celje is not a major tourist destination, but tourism has been growing, with nearly 60.000 tourist visits in 2023. The city also has a notable population of foreign workers, many of whom are from Kosovo (SURS, 2022).



Figures 2a and b: View of the Celje city (Photo: Pina Klara Petrović Jesenovec)

## 2.2 Indicators at the city level

The overview of indicators shows situation on various areas, including demography, employment, education and housing, either on municipal or city level for Ljubljana and Celje.<sup>2</sup> Data for three indicators (average age of leaving the parental home, average age of having the first child and total public expenditure on education) was collected on national level.

Table 1: Selected indicators for Ljubljana and Celje

Indicator	City	2007	2011	2015	2019	2023	Territorial level	Type	Source <sup>3</sup>
Total population	Ljubljana		272.220	278.789	284.355	287.076	City	Absolute number	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		37.520	37.540	37.875	37.188			
Youth population (15-24)	Ljubljana		34.099	33.485	32.968	35.037	City	Absolute number	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		3.673	3.108	3.056	3.167			
Youth population (25-29)	Ljubljana		19.648	18.888	17.037	17.020	City	Absolute number	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		2.682	2.387	1.961	1.953			
Youth population (30-34)	Ljubljana		21.498	21.172	19.977	18.065	City	Absolute number	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		3.137	2.889	2.673	2.220			
Young-age dependency ratio (pop 15< 15-64 population)	Ljubljana		18,88	20,48	21,72	21,74	City	Ratio	<a href="#">SURS</a> (own calculation)
	Celje		19,25	21,25	22,09	22,38			
Old-age dependency ratio (65+/15-64 population)	Ljubljana		24,39	26,31	29,31	30,97	City	Ratio	<a href="#">SURS</a> (own calculation)
	Celje		26,08	28,09	30,92	34,93			
% of foreigners on the total population	Ljubljana		7	8,7	11,5	13,6	Municipality	%	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		6,5	8,6	12	14,7			
% of people with tertiary education	Ljubljana		27,37	32,09	35,71	37,32	City	%	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		21,67	24,74	26,8	28,09			
% of employed people (15-64)	Ljubljana	62,2	57,6	57,3	66	68,6	Municipality	%	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje	58,9	57,3	56,8	67,3	72,5			
% of employed youth (15-24)	Ljubljana		9,97	7,09	13,67	13,86	Municipality	%	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		12,72	10,79	26,06	28,01			
% of unemployed people (15-64)	Ljubljana	6,8	11	12,6	8	5,1	Municipality	%	<a href="#">SURS</a> , Employment Service: Rates of registered unemployment by territorial units
	Celje	10,2	14,6	16,1	9,5	5,9			
% of unemployed youth (15-24)	Ljubljana		19,9	27,2	13,63	9,06	Municipality	%	<a href="#">SiStat</a> , Employment Service: Registered unemployed persons
	Celje		32,3	36,5	18,02	10,6			
% of population over 15 with basic or less education	Ljubljana		21,22	18,72	16,81	16,55	City	%	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		25,02	22,81	20,6	20,9			
Average monthly income per person	Ljubljana			780,98	962,76		Municipality	EUR	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje			696,19	850,82				

<sup>2</sup> In some cases, data for 2007 could not be provided as the population census regulation changed in 2008.

<sup>3</sup> The resources for these data are solely mentioned in Table 1 and are not added to the Resources list.

Housing market price per square metre	Ljubljana	2.660	2.500*	2.040"	2.800	3.990	City	EUR	<a href="#">Geodetski inštitut Slovenije</a>
	Celje	1.280	1250*	1.050*	1.320	2.180			
<b>Distribution of employment by sector:</b>							Municipality	%	SURS: Working population
Agriculture/mining (primary): A-B	Ljubljana	0,5	0,4	0,3	0,2	0,2			
	Celje	1,1	1,2	0,7	0,6	0,4			
Manufacturing: C	Ljubljana	10,0	9,2	9,2	9,3	9,2			
	Celje	17,9	17,0	17,1	17,2	17,3			
Construction: F	Ljubljana	9,3	6,0	4,3	4,8	5,5			
	Celje	13,5	10,2	6,9	7,9	10,8			
Services: D-T, F excluded	Ljubljana	80,2	84,4	86,2	85,7	85,1			
	Celje	67,5	71,6	75,2	74,3	71,5			
Available beds for tourists in the city	Ljubljana	6.425	8.182	10.030	20.945	21.607	Municipality	Number	<a href="#">SURS (2007), SURS (2011, 2015), SURS (2019, 2023)</a>
	Celje	293	610	909	1.258	938			
Universities in the city	Ljubljana	1	1	1	1	1	City	Number	<a href="#">MVŠZI</a>
	Celje	0	0	0	0	0			
Post-secondary non-tertiary centres	Ljubljana					17	City	Number	<a href="#">MIZŠ</a>
	Celje					4			
Secondary/Upper secondary schools	Ljubljana					35	City	Number	<a href="#">MIZŠ</a>
	Celje					11			
Unemployment benefits received by people looking for work (15-29)	Ljubljana		3.190	2.890	2.316	1.756	Municipality	Number of beneficiaries	Employment Service: Recipients of monetary compensation
	Celje		692	684	667	614			
Social housing units	Ljubljana		3.753	4.107	4.274	4.578	Municipality	Number	JSS MOL, Nepremičnine Celje: Number of public rental housing units
	Celje				1.935	2.012			
Take-up rates of children 1-2 in early childhood education	Ljubljana		64,8	69,5	73,4	73,9	City	%	<a href="#">SURS</a>
	Celje		63	60,2	67,9	65,1			
Average age of leaving the parental home	SI	30	29,2	28,2	27,7	29,1	Country	Age	<a href="#">Eurostat: (yth_demo_030)</a>
Average age of having the first child	SI	28,1	28,4	28,7	28,9	29**	Country	Age	<a href="#">Eurostat: (demo_find)</a>
Total public expenditure on education	SI		5,54	4,91	4,89	5,27**	Country	% of GDP	<a href="#">SURS</a>

No data

\* average price per m2 for used apartment

\*\* data for 2022

From 2007 to 2023, both cities show similar trends, including a decline in the youth population (see Figure 3) and increases in the aging index and dependency ratios, with Celje being more affected. The biggest change was a 29% drop of the population in age 30 to 34 years in Celje. Contrary to that, a minor increase was recorded only for the age category 15 to 24 years in Ljubljana (+2,8%); meaning that in general cities have been losing young population in the last 10 years or so.

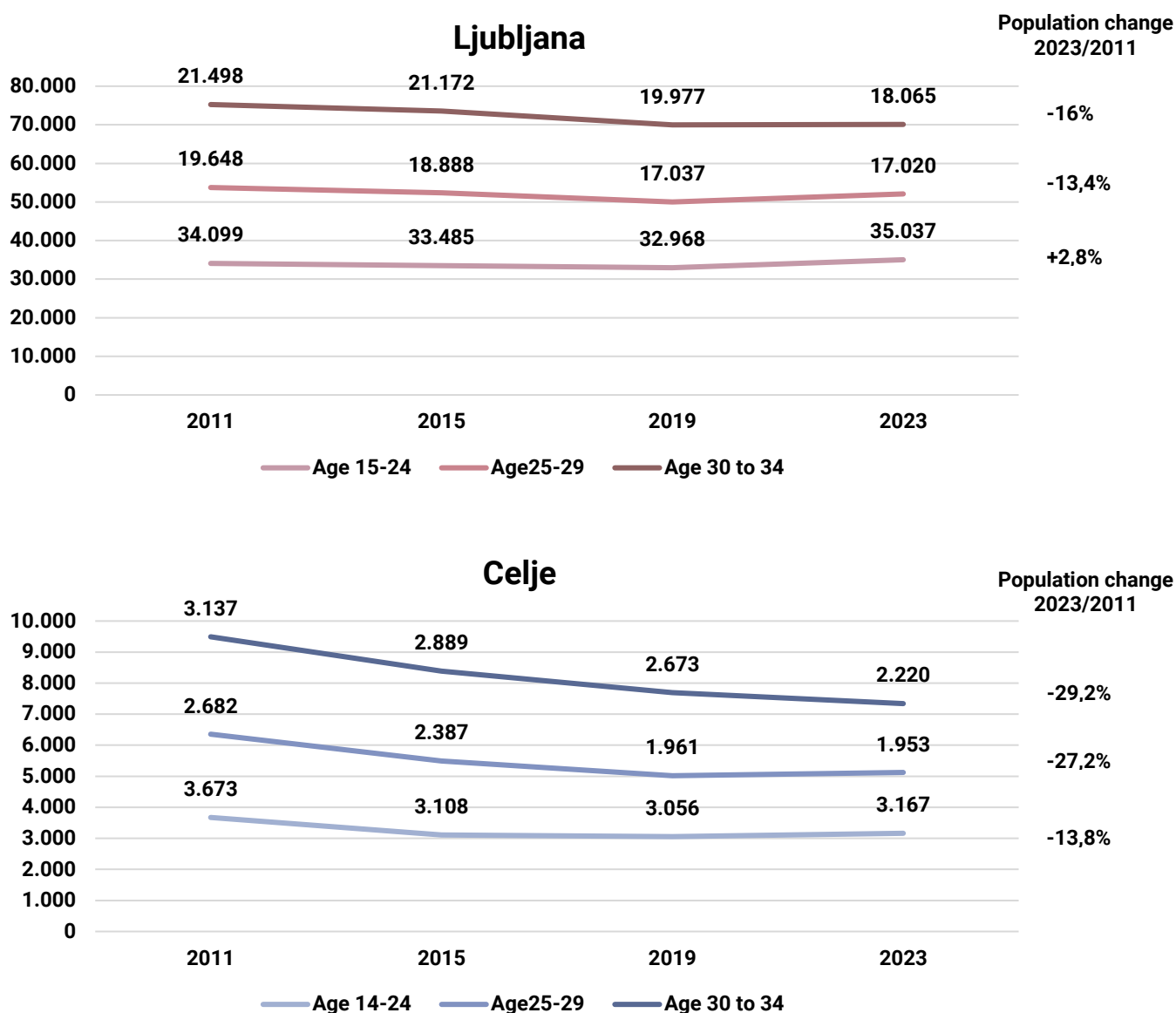
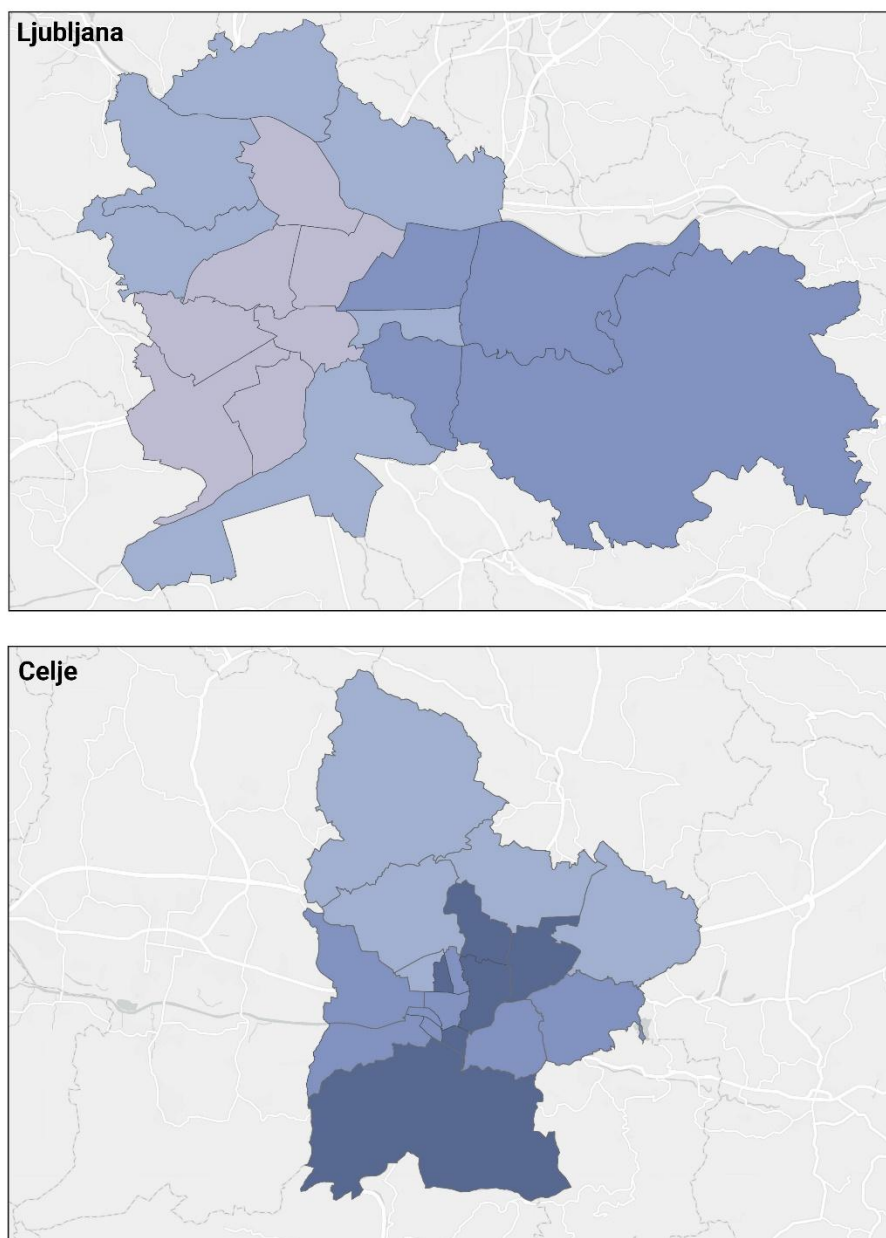


Figure 3: Population change in the period 2011 – 2023 for the age groups 15 – 24 (third line), 25 – 29 (middle line) and 30 – 34 (first line) for Ljubljana and Celje (source: [SURS](#))

However, according to the Table 1 some differences exist between the cities: Ljubljana has a higher share of people with tertiary education (38% in 2023), compared to Celje’s 28%.

Figure 4 (see next page) specifically shows the shares of young people with higher education in residential districts of Ljubljana and Celje, indicating that in 2023, the shares were higher in Ljubljana. What stands out is the city centre of Ljubljana, where more than 25% of young population has higher education.



**Share of persons with higher education in the age group 15 - 29**

**Legend**

- Under 15%
- 15% - 20%
- 20% - 25%
- Above 25%

▲  
Ljubljana: M 1:100.000  
Celje: M 1:83.000

Figure 4: Share of young people with higher education in Ljubljana and Celje in 2023 by residential districts (source: SURS – Residents, aged 15–29 years by education, local and district communities, municipalities of Celje and Ljubljana, Slovenia, January 1, 2023)

The shares of young people with higher education are lower in Celje due to Celje's strong industrial sector, where jobs requiring lower or secondary education are more common. As a result, employment in construction and manufacturing is about twice as high in Celje (see Figure 5), and the share of those with only basic education is also higher (nearly 21% in 2023, while this share for Ljubljana was less than 17%).

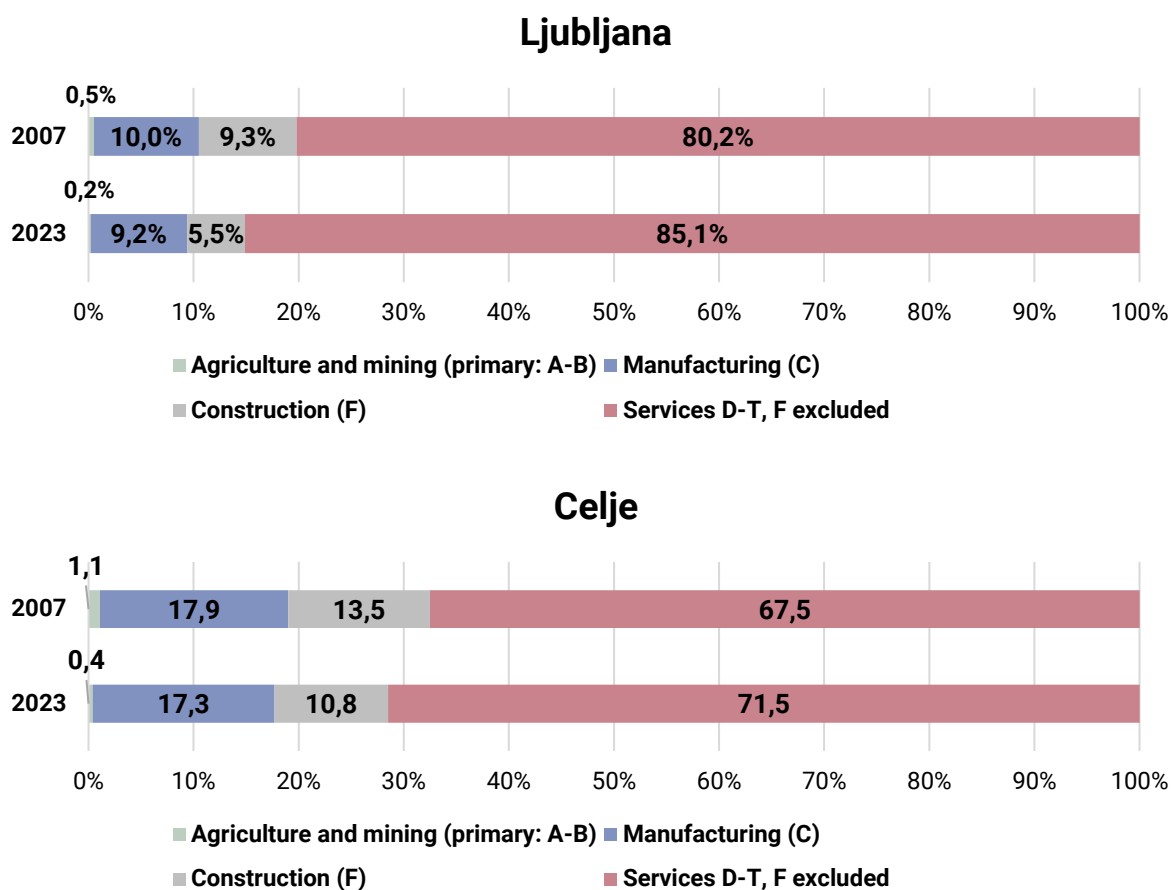


Figure 5: Shares of employed persons in 2007 and 2023 by activity sectors for Ljubljana and Celje (source: SURS - Working population)

Figure 6 compares **the unemployment rates between youth** (aged 15 to 24) and the entire working-age population (aged 15 to 64). In recent years, the youth unemployment rates have been higher than those of the overall working-age population. In 2023, the youth unemployment rate in Celje was nearly five times higher than the overall rate, while in Ljubljana, it was nearly three times higher for youth.

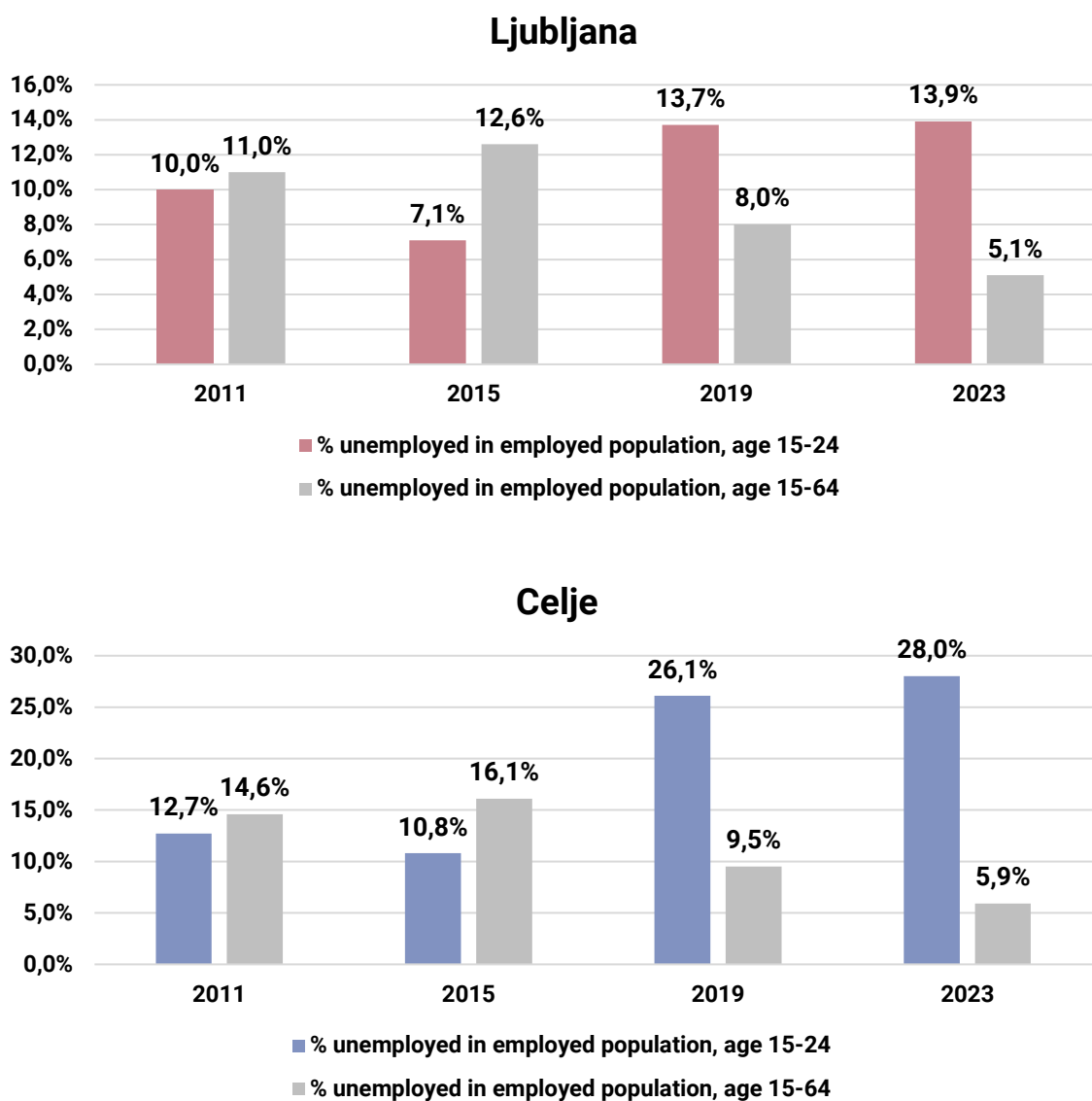


Figure 6: Shares of unemployed individuals during the period 2011–2023 for both Ljubljana and Celje, comparing youth and the entire working-age population. (source: [SURS](#))

Figure 7 shows the shares of unemployed youth by residential districts in Ljubljana and Celje in 2023. It can be observed that the shares in Ljubljana's residential districts were lower than those in Celje.

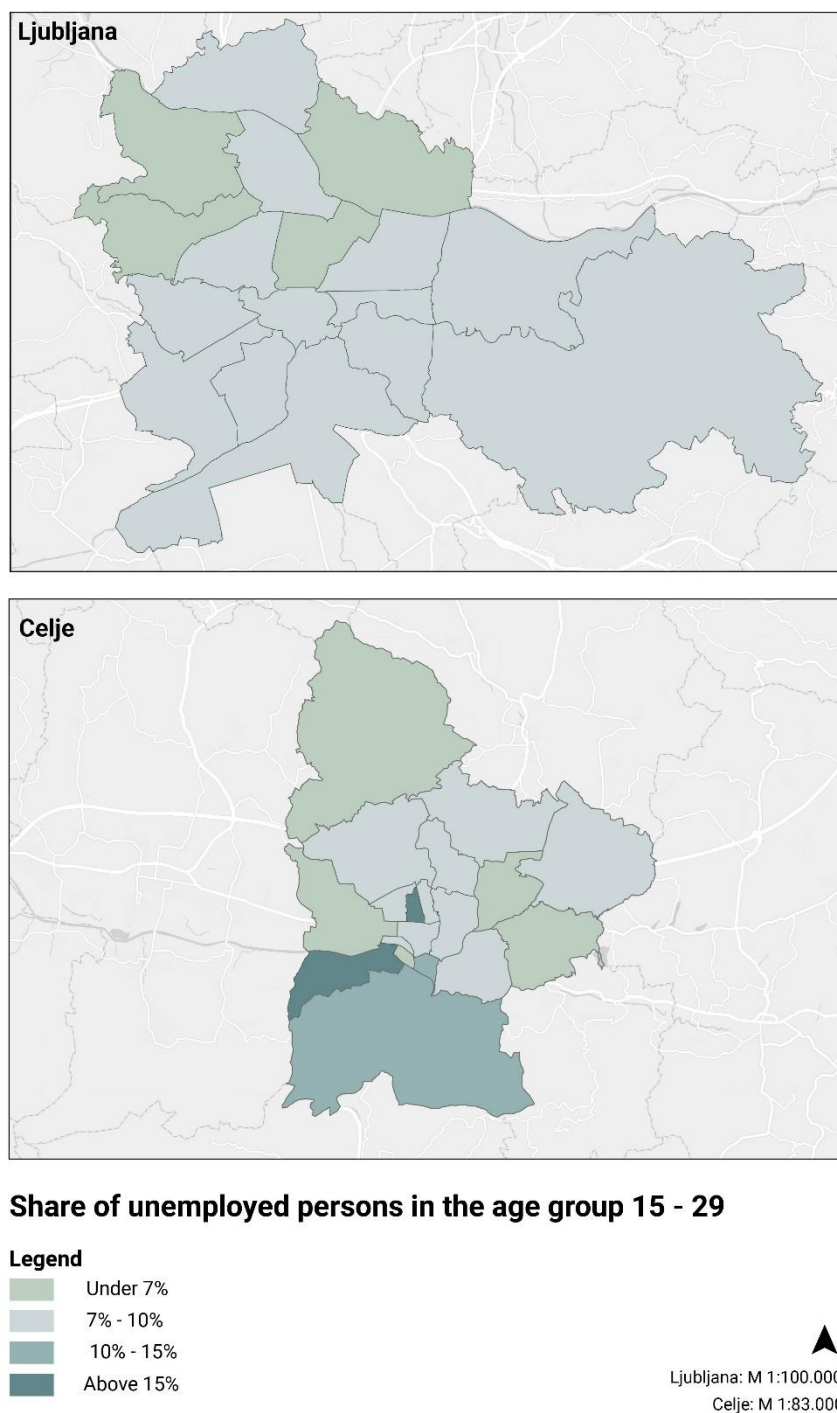


Figure 7: Share of unemployed young people in Ljubljana in Celje in 2023 by residential districts (source: SURS – Inhabitants aged 15–29 by activity status, local and district communities, municipalities of Celje and Ljubljana, Slovenia, January 1, 2023)



Both cities face **rising housing prices**, with Ljubljana reaching nearly 4.000 EUR per m<sup>2</sup> in 2023, while prices in Celje were lower at around 2.200 EUR per m<sup>2</sup>, though net income is also lower in Celje. Tourism shows a notable difference, as Ljubljana is a major tourist destination, while Celje has only recently seen growth in this sector. The availability of educational institutions is significantly higher in Ljubljana, reflecting its size and status as the capital. However, despite Ljubljana having nearly eight times the population, the number of social housing units was only twice as high—around 4.600 EUR in Ljubljana compared to 2.000 EUR in Celje in 2023.

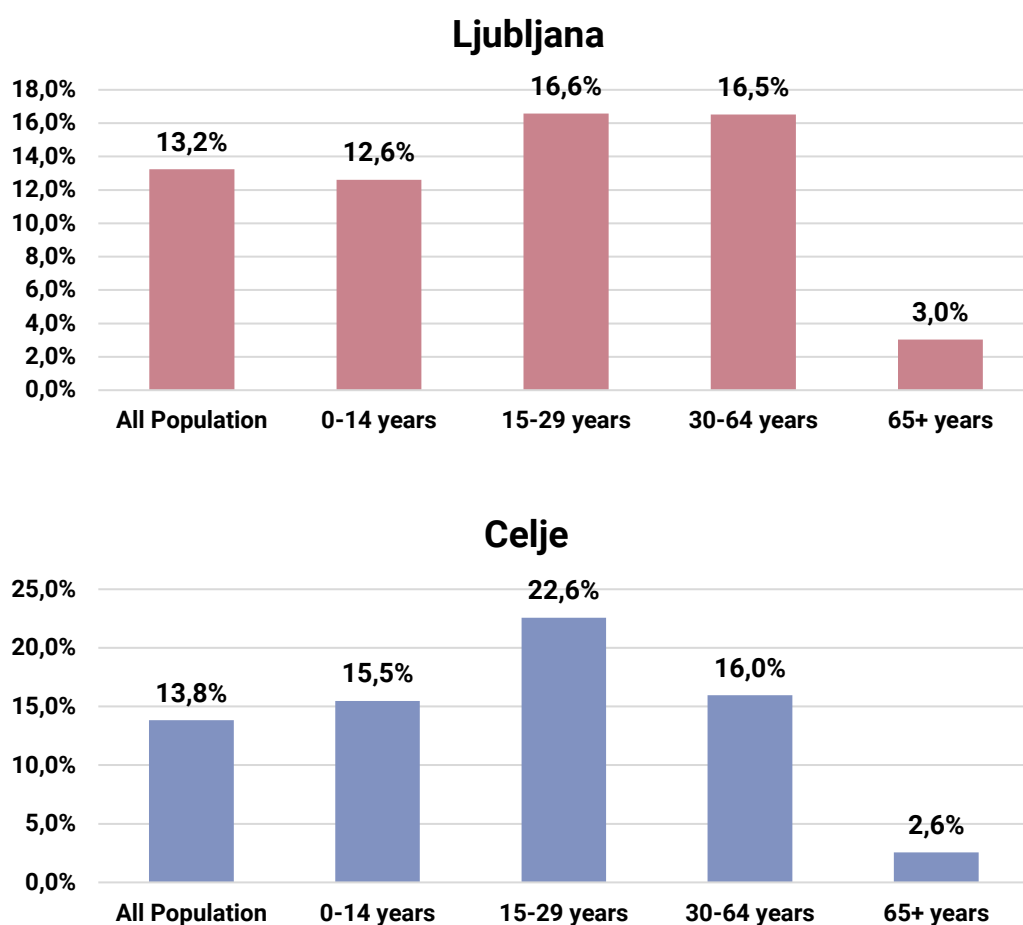


Figure 8: Shares of foreigners among population in Ljubljana and Celje in 2023 (source: SURS – percentage of foreign population according to their place of birth and selected age groups (children, youth, adults, elderly)

Both Ljubljana and Celje have a **significant share of populations of foreign origin**<sup>4</sup> (see Figures 8 and 9). When comparing the overall population, the share is similar for both cities,

<sup>4</sup> Hereby, the indicator and the data available tells us about the youth population according to the place of birth which is either domestic or foreign.

ranging between 13% and 14%. However, the share of foreigners among youth (aged 15 to 29) is the highest in both cities, particularly in Celje, where it reaches nearly 23%.

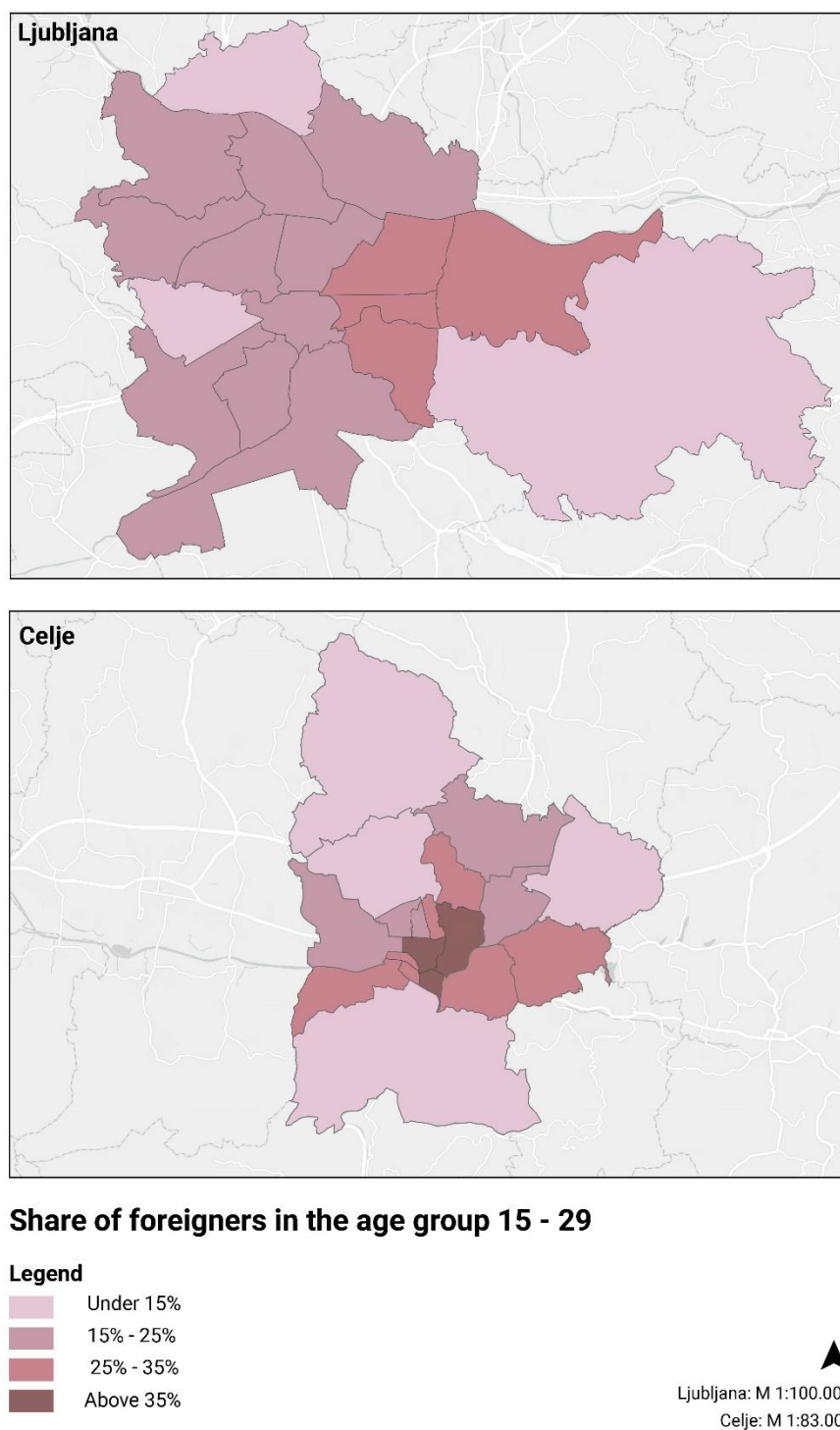


Figure 9: Share of foreigners among youth in Ljubljana and Celje in 2023 by residential districts (source: SURS – Inhabitants aged 15–29 by first place of residence, local and district communities, municipalities of Celje and Ljubljana, Slovenia, January 1, 2023)

According to the Figures 8, the share of foreigners significantly falls with the age. The Figure 9 shows that in the city centre of Celje most of the districts have a share of youth of foreign origin higher than 25%. Ljubljana can be pretty well divided into three parts of city: the most eastern part with the least youth, the central-east part with 25 to 35% of youth of foreign origin and the western part where percentage is mostly between 15% to 25%.

The maps (Figure 10 and 11) display the residential districts of Ljubljana and Celje based on the average net annual income per capita<sup>5</sup>, at the same time comparing the situation for the entire population and specifically for young people (age group 15 to 29). The maps display the change in average net annual income per capita during the period 2015–2022, highlighting an increase in income values across all residential districts in both Ljubljana and Celje. Comparing the entire population and the youth, in both cities, the average annual net income per capita is higher for the entire population. The spatial distribution in Ljubljana can be commented for all inhabitants that the city is mostly divided into the western and eastern part, where the western part is more well-off. Interestingly, the data for the youth and the year 2019 does not show any spatial disparities.

From the Figure 11 that shows situation in Celje, it can be concluded that initial situation in 2015 shows some difference between the youth and the adults, but in year 2022 the gap is already bigger. The city centre stands out in terms of income, with lower values compared to other residential districts.

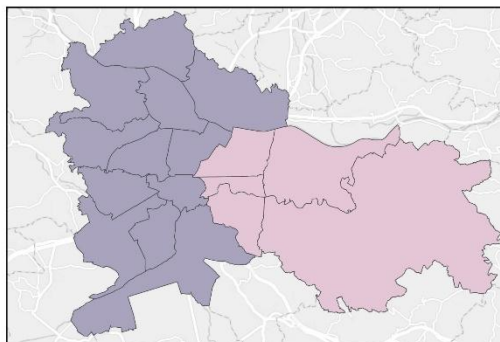
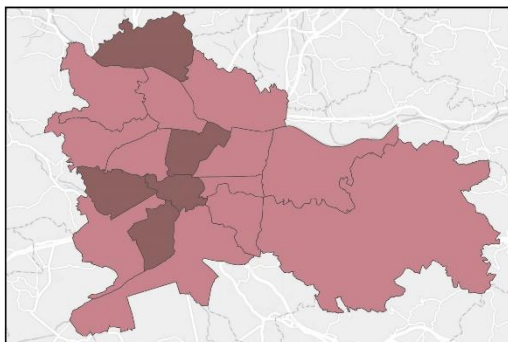
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<sup>5</sup> The average was calculated for the entire population and not only considering the employed persons.

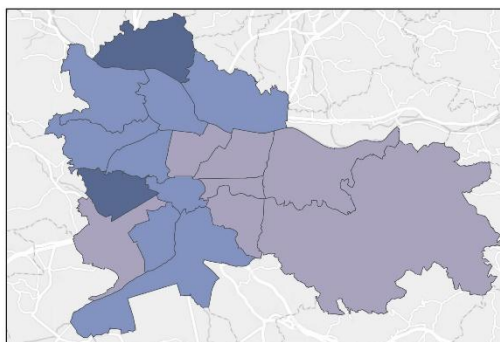
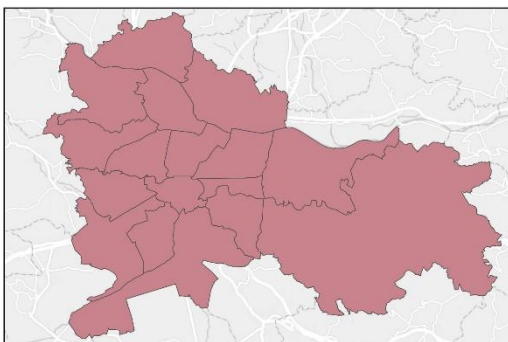
**Age group 15 - 29**

**All inhabitants**

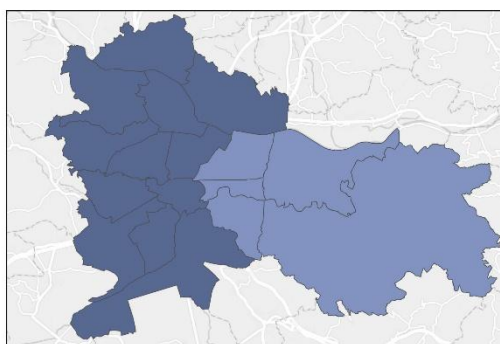
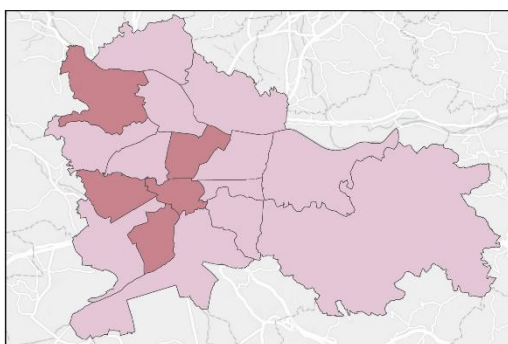
2015



2019



2022



**Ljubljana: Residential districts by average annual net income per capita**

**Legend**

 Under 4.000 EUR	 9.000 - 11.500 EUR
 4.000 - 6.500 EUR	 11.500 - 13.000 EUR
 6.500 - 9.000 EUR	 Above 13.000 EUR


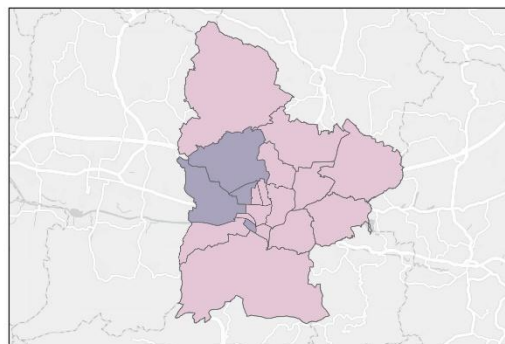
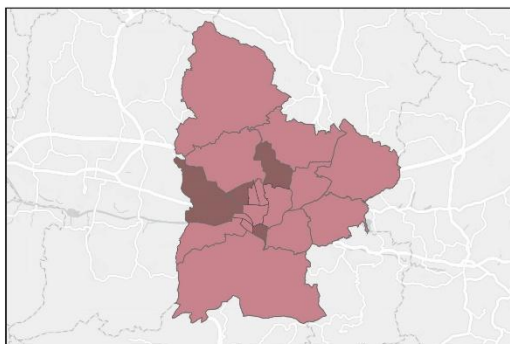
Ljubljana: M 1:100.000 

Figure 10: Residential districts of Ljubljana by average annual net income per capita for the years 2015, 2019 and 2022 (source: SURS – Department of Demographic Statistics and Living Standards)

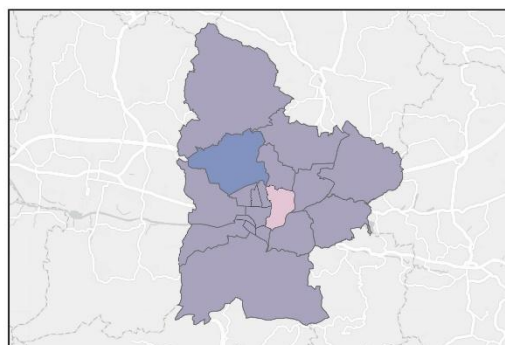
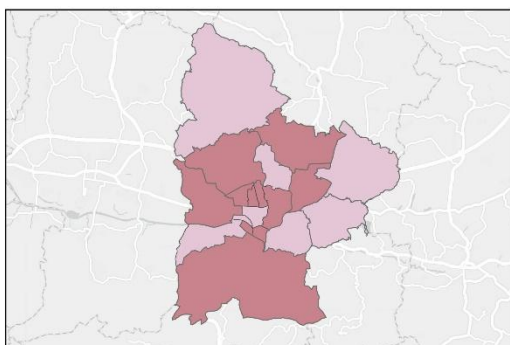
**Age group 15 - 29**

**All inhabitants**

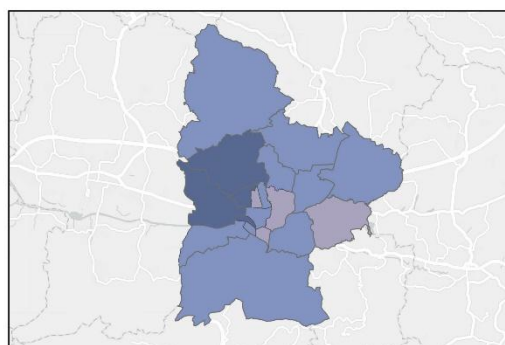
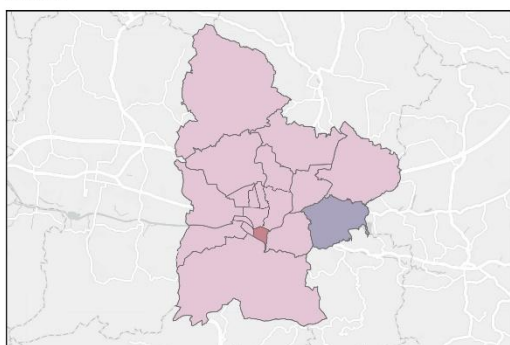
2015



2019



2022



**Celje: Residential districts by average annual net income per capita**

**Legend**

 Under 4.000 EUR	 9.000 - 11.500 EUR
 4.000 - 6.500 EUR	 11.500 - 13.000 EUR
 6.500 - 9.000 EUR	 Above 13.000 EUR

  
Celje: M 1:83.000

Figure 11: Residential districts of Celje by average annual net income per capita for the age group 15–29 for the years 2015, 2019 and 2022 (source: SURS – Department of Demographic Statistics and Living Standards)

## 2.3 The demand for youth policies at the city level

### Ljubljana

In Ljubljana, interviews highlighted that the City Municipality is highly cooperative with youth organisations, listens to their needs, considers their feedback on youth-related issues, and actively supports youth activities. None of the actors reported difficulties in working with the Municipal Office for Youth, as it actively engages other actors in both policymaking and implementation. However, it was noted that despite this active engagement, the municipality does not always provide sufficient funding for youth-related activities, requiring youth organisations to secure additional funding from other sources, most common the funding available from EU.

As the most urgent topic to be address in relation to youth, **poor housing situation** was mentioned. The public call for the allocation of non-profit apartments for young people was recognised as a good practice but more of a “pilot project” that does not sufficiently address the issue of unaffordable housing for youth. A larger number of apartments is needed to effectively tackle this problem, with students being particularly affected as current student dormitories are inadequate. The availability of housing in Ljubljana is limited and expensive for young people, with prices reaching nearly 4.000 EUR per m<sup>2</sup> in 2023. As a result, students must compete with others for housing. This issue is linked to the city's gentrification, as many vacant apartments are rented short-term to tourists, while others remain empty as investment properties. Interviewees emphasised the need to regulate both short-term tourist rentals and investment property purchases to increase housing availability for young people.

**The lack of adequate public spaces for young people to spend their free time** was also identified as a problem. In some neighbourhoods, infrastructure like benches is deliberately removed to discourage young people from gathering. Some sports fields are locked after certain hours to prevent vandalism, making them inaccessible to youth. Additionally, there is **a shortage of spaces where young people can engage in unstructured activities**. While the number of youth centres was recognised as sufficient, these centres primarily offer structured activities. Rural parts of the municipality, in particular, lack spaces where young people can freely spend their time.

The issue of **decent work** was also raised as a concern. While there are many opportunities for student work and part-time jobs, these positions are often precarious and do not provide long-term stability for young people. Due to high living costs in Ljubljana, students are forced to work, limiting their ability to fully focus on their studies. Additionally, young people are vulnerable to exploitation, often working atypical hours, being denied sick leave, and sometimes not being paid. Despite relatively low unemployment rates, even after completing their studies, young people struggle to find stable jobs. As a result of these challenges, there has been a rise in anxiety among young people, highlighting the need for targeted measures to address these issues.



Figure 12a and b: Photos from the focus groups in respective cities. (Author: Pina Klara Petrović Jesenovec)

### Celje

Besides the objective data and indicators, the demand for youth policies and relevant issues have been discussed in interviews and focus groups. What they mentioned as positive is that municipality is committed to young people's dialogue with decision makers and that they intend to finance the youth projects via the participatory budget as well. In 2026, the municipality will allocate 10.000 EUR through the participatory budget to support projects proposed by young people themselves. As a contradiction to this willingness the pupils mentioned that the ideas that were created under the Youth for Celje project were not carried out and supported financially as it was promised ahead of the projects.

The next challenges related to the spatial dimensions of quality of life were mentioned. First is definitely **the housing issue** whereas the prices on the property market are not friendly to the youth and have doubled in last five years (from 1.320 EUR in 2019 to 2.180 EUR per m<sup>2</sup>

in 2023), and **the subventions and non-profit offer are very limited**. Thus, the youth struggles to become independent and become tenants. In relation to the infrastructure, also **poor recreational infrastructure** was mentioned as something that needs to be addressed. On one side, they suggested some recreational offer could be cheaper, on the other there should be more and better maintained infrastructure.

In relation to quality of life, cultural life was assessed as well: **lack of events, leisure facilities, clubs and concerts for young people** was mentioned. As unfortunate, the mentioned as well the bowling alley which closed down. Also, more spaces for unstructured socialising activities could be offered.

As the last issue **the poor safety** was mentioned as problematic, especially for young females that do not feel safe in the streets to walk alone, especially not at night. Also, an ongoing issue of **vandalism and theft** was mentioned, particularly in secondary schools.



### 3 Youth policy subsystem in Ljubljana and Celje

Both Ljubljana and Celje have strategies specifically designed for the youth. These strategies serve as primary documents aimed at young people, including indicators, goals, and measures covering various youth-related topics.

Additionally, there are other relevant strategies that at least partially address youth issues.

In Ljubljana, the **Strategy for the Development of Social Care in Ljubljana from 2021 to 2027** (City Municipality of Ljubljana, 2021) and the **Sustainable Urban Strategy of the City of Ljubljana 2014–2030** (City Municipality of Ljubljana, 2015) include provisions for youth, covering areas such as youth work, employment, education, housing, and social inclusion. The **Culture Strategy of the City of Ljubljana 2024–2027** (City Municipality of Ljubljana, 2024) focuses, among other things, on young artists. It also addresses the cultural offerings for young people and the issue of providing suitable spaces for young artists to practice or perform. The Strategy of the Municipality of Ljubljana for the Young 2016–2025 is one of the inputs for the **Strategy for the Development of Rural and Urban Agriculture in the Municipality of Ljubljana for the period 2021–2027** (City Municipality of Ljubljana, 2022), which, among other things, targets the young population in the rural hinterlands of Ljubljana.

Celje also has several strategic documents; however, apart from the local youth programme, none specifically addresses the youth, though they do mention it. Among such strategies that mention youth but do not focus on it are the **Sustainable Strategy for Quality Co-habitation and Collaboration of All Generations in the City Municipality of Celje** (City Municipality of Celje, 2021), the **Sustainable Urban Strategy of the City Municipality of Celje** (City Municipality of Celje, 2015), and the **Tourism Development Strategy in the City Municipality of Celje 2024–2029 with Guidelines until 2031** (City Municipality of Celje, 2024). The tourism strategy includes provisions for youth participation in local tourism. Compared to Ljubljana, Celje has fewer strategies, being a smaller city.

#### 3.1 Institutional level: municipal frame in charge of youth policies

The institutional frames of Ljubljana and Celje are different due to multiple reasons. Firstly, Ljubljana is a capital, so the city benefits indirectly as well from hosting the national

institutions, relevant for the youth, while at the same time has built also the local institutional network. In both municipality the **municipality administration** serves as a major policy maker, also in charge of implementation by providing support and finances, however, the difference is that Ljubljana has its own independent Office for Youth (slo. *Urad za mladino*), while in Celje the Department of social matters handles this topic as well.

Among its responsibilities, the municipal Office for Youth monitors the situation of young people in Ljubljana (target group: ages 15 to 29), promotes youth participation in policy-making, supports youth centres across various districts, and provides assistance to youth organisations. Additionally, the office oversees public calls for youth projects and programmes. It also works with relevant actors at both the national and municipal levels, including the Employment Service of Slovenia, the City of Ljubljana’s Public Housing Fund, and the National Office for Youth.

As part of the public institutional framework are **Social Work Centres** (slo. *Center za socialno delo*, shorter CSD) which are 16 in Slovenia, Ljubljana and Celje both have their own centres, namely CSD Ljubljana and CSD Celje. Social Work Centres are the main institutions to distribute social benefits, including rent subvention, parental leave, state scholarships, family support, social support and other help, needed by general and specific population. In Ljubljana, CSD runs as well the programme “Cona korak” (in translation “Step zone”), available to the vulnerable youth (primarily aged 18 to 29) coming from at-risk families, predominantly from more deprived Ljubljana neighbourhoods, e.g., Fužine, Moste and Polje, but not necessarily only from these neighbourhoods.

Table 2: List of some of the main actors engaged in youth-related policy-making and implementation in Ljubljana<sup>6</sup> and Celje

	Ljubljana	Celje
<b>Policy maker</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ City Municipality of Ljubljana:</li> <li>Office for Youth</li> <li>_ (Ljubljana Youth Council)<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ City Municipality of Celje:</li> <li>Social activities department</li> <li>_ Celje Youth Council</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> In Ljubljana, there are about 50 to 60 organisations being active in the youth-sector, therefore, only some of them are listed in the Table 2. For more organisations, please, see: <https://www.ljubljana.si/sl/moja-ljubljana/mladi-v-ljubljani/aktivnosti-za-mlade/mladinske-organizacije/>.

<sup>7</sup> The Youth Council in Ljubljana, while being one of the key collaborators with the municipal Office for Youth, is currently inactive due to difficulties in finding suitable staff who are willing to engage actively in policy-

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Celje youth centre</li> <li>_ Commission for the youth-related questions</li> </ul>
<b>Sectoral public institutes (state services; implementation of national policies)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Employment Service</li> <li>_ National Youth Office</li> <li>_ University of Ljubljana</li> <li>_ High schools in Ljubljana</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Employment Service</li> <li>_ National Youth Office</li> <li>_ High schools in Celje</li> </ul>
<b>Local public institutes – local policy implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Young Dragons</li> <li>_ Youth Centre Vič</li> <li>_ CSD CONA</li> <li>_ CSD Ljubljana, unit Vič Rudnik</li> <li>_ CSD Ljubljana, unit Moste Polje</li> <li>_ CSD Ljubljana Centre</li> <li>_ City of Ljubljana’s Public Housing Fund</li> <li>_ Centre Rog</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Celje youth centre</li> <li>_ Incubator of the Savinjska region</li> <li>_ Celje real estate company (slo. <i>Nepremičnine Celje</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Non-profit or private organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ TiPovej! organisation</li> <li>_ Nefiks Association</li> <li>_ Voluntariat Association</li> <li>_ DrogArt Association</li> <li>_ Institute Bob</li> <li>_ Youth Information Advisory Centre of Slovenia – MISSS</li> <li>_ Association for Non-Violent Communication</li> <li>_ Ključ Association</li> <li>_ Legebitra</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Don Bosco Centre</li> <li>_ Students’ club of the Municipality of Celje</li> <li>_ Scouts</li> </ul>

making and implementation. However, during the period when the youth strategy was being prepared, the council made significant contributions.

## Ljubljana

In Ljubljana, multiple youth non-profit organisations are presented which both, engage in the preparation of the policies, but are mostly in charge of delivering its measures. Such organisations that target a general youth are:



- **Mladi zmaji** (eng. *Young Dragons*) – public institute – Besides the Municipal Office for youth, the main actor in youth-related policymaking and implementation of measures. They are the primary youth organisation in Ljubljana, offering a variety of activities, including the establishment of youth centres in various residential districts, the operation of a mobile youth centre, youth street work, a mobile psychosocial counselling programme, and other initiatives. For more, see: <https://mladizmaji.si/>.



- **Zavod Bob** – non-governmental institute – It is actively involved in youth work, offering youth street work, a youth centre, and various programmes and activities for young people, including non-formal learning. Additionally, it provides a space for them to conduct their own activities, such as workshops and music rehearsals. For more, see: <https://www.zavod-bob.si/>.



- **CONA** – community programmes for the youth – CONA operates five daily centres for youth facing challenges in their development: CONA Fužine, CONA Korak, CONA Most, CONA Polje, and CONA Cent'r. Within these centres, they provide counselling and street youth work. For more, see: <https://www.csd-slovenije.si/csd-ljubljana/enota-ljubljana-moste-polje/cona/>.



- **Skala Don Bosco Institute** – private non-profit organisation – It operates a youth centre, securing a safe environment for the youth, offering various activities, such as workshops and recreation. It operates within the catholic Salesianum Institute. For more, see: <https://skala.ie/>.



- **TiPovej!** – institute for creative society, status of youth organisation in public interest – It offers activities focused on individual personal growth and non-formal learning. Additionally, it participated in evaluating the results of the Ljubljana youth strategy. For more, see: <https://www.tipovej.org/en/>.



- **Centre Rog** – a creative hub – It offers young people the opportunity to use the space, equipment, and tools to create their own products at an affordable rental cost. Additionally, it provides mentorship and special programmes for these young individuals. For more, see: <https://center-rog.si/en/>.



- **Career centres of the University of Ljubljana:** providing various activities for university students, including career counselling, job orientation, and workshops. While the career centres are not directly involved in designing or implementing the youth strategy, they contribute to the implementation of its measures through their activities. For more, see: <https://www.uni-lj.si/en/study/career-centres>.



- **Nefiks Association:** supporting youth organisations by providing knowledge on documenting and registering informal education and the impacts of youth work. For more, see: <https://nefiks.si/>.



- **Zadrugator – Institute for Housing and Spatial Studies:** conducting analyses at the local level (not only in Ljubljana) regarding the housing situation and exploring ways to address the issue of unaffordable housing for all, not just specifically the youth. For more, see: <https://zadrugator.org/o-nas/>.

There are plenty other organisations targeting young people in Ljubljana, therefore not all are mentioned here.

Due to the large population of students in the city, an important player in Ljubljana is as well **University of Ljubljana** that provides several services to the youth, such as career orientation, mental support and organises student council which has a say in how the university operates, support students and cooperates with other student organisations.

**Student organisation of University of Ljubljana** is an independent institution which plays an important role in supporting quality of life of the students, including tackling subventions for food (Slovene unique system where the state subsidises meals in restaurants, cafeteria), sport programmes, social and health wellbeing, support to international students to settle in Ljubljana and else. A specific of Ljubljana is also that they have a **Public Health Centre for Students** (slo. *Zdravstveni dom za študente*), established by the University, for students as the main target group, providing basic health care to Slovenian and international students when they temporarily live in Ljubljana.

Ljubljana offers various support also in the field of employment. Besides the local office of public institute **Employment Service of Slovenia** (slo. *Zavod za zaposlovanje RS*) which provides support service for the labour market, such as unemployment benefits, prequalification trainings etc. There are also various support institutions that either help you start the career – **Ljubljana incubator** (slo. *Ljubljana incubator*) or provide youth with the equipment that is otherwise expensive but necessary for certain professions. Such service is offered by **Centre Rog**, a public institute, established by the City Municipality of Ljubljana, as a result of renovation of an old industrial building in the city centre.

### Celje

In Celje the institutional setting is not so complex. The services that the state offers, are the same and include, both, the **Social Work Centre** and the **Employment Service of Slovenia**. The **municipality administration, more into detail the Department of Social Matters**, is the main policy maker who supports the implementation as well, both content-wise and financially. The departmental tasks relate to social activities and services, management of public institutes under the municipalities' umbrella and the work on following topics concerning youth:

- Primary education and youth research work
- Secondary and tertiary education and youth activities
- Social and health security, concession distribution in these two services
- Rental subventions
- Culture
- Sport

Within the Department, there are seven offices, each with its own area of activity, and one sub department: culture, sport, tourism, primary and music education, early childhood education, social and health care, youth, science, and adult education. Department of Social Matters runs an interesting project “The youth for Celje” (slo. *Mladi za Celje*) which is a long-running project supporting the research among the youth. It runs for 46 years already, its partners include all primary and secondary schools in Celje, along with affiliated primary schools from the surrounding area of the city municipality. In the 2024/2025 school year, students from higher vocational schools in Celje can also take part. Each year, around 120 research projects are completed and stored in the Celje Central Library, where they are also made available online. Project’s main aim is to promote science and technology among the youth and spur innovation.



Figure 13: Website of “Mladi za Celje” project – a long running project, supporting research among the youth

The municipality also established the **Commission for the youth-related questions** which is a consultancy body of the mayor to comprehensively cover youth-related topics, such as strategic and development programmes for the youth, evaluation of the policy decisions and other relevant questions. The commission also co-operates with youth organisations. The second most relevant and also most active actor is the **Youth Center Celje** (slo. *Mladinski centre Celje*), a public institute, established by the municipality to serve as a community centre for youth, implementing the local programme for youth, providing activities for youth inclusion, recreation, and other projects to contribute to the quality of

life of youth. On the location of the centre, the hostel is located as well, so it serves as a generator for networking of the youth. Besides the youth centre there is another centre which enables youth activities, namely **Don Bosco centre**, which also offers a daily centre for the youth and offers various other services for the vulnerable youth.

Within the institution framework, the municipality established as well the **Youth Council** (slo. *Mladinski svet*) with the task of contributing to local youth policy-making and bringing together youth organisations, associations, clubs and other organised groups of young people that work in the area of Celje. Apart from this, the **Council of High School Pupils** (slo. *Dijaški svet*), also actively contributes to policy making in the field of youth. Similar to Ljubljana, also Celje has an **incubator** (slo. *Inkubator Savinjske regije*) to foster business ideas and proposal of the youth and help them ease transfer to the business world. They offer consultancy, mentorship programme, expert programme, lab and organise start up weekends.

### **3.2 Social level: list and description of relevant non-institutional actors usually involved across all local youth policies**

As non-institutional actors the **student clubs** could be identified as one such informal organisations. They join the students by the location of their origin and mostly organise activities during weekends, when students arrive home from their university towns. Among such activities are leisure-related events (concerts, cinema), but can be also something related to the labour market or a policy initiative. In Ljubljana, there are multiple student clubs, however, in Celje there is only one.

Otherwise, it is difficult to point at the individual, non-institutionalised actors for Ljubljana or Celje. In Ljubljana, we could add the autonomous space “Plac” which serves for informal gathering of the youth, or the society “Kralji ulice” which is a society, supporting homeless in the city.

### **3.3 Role of trade unions in the design and implementation of urban youth policies**

In Slovenia, trade unions typically do not participate in the design or implementation of local youth policies. As a result, none of the trade unions were involved in the development of



the selected youth policies in Ljubljana or Celje. Trade unions primarily focus on activities at the national level, such as collective bargaining, and therefore do not engage specifically in local or urban policies. However, they may play an active role in national employment-related policies and measures, collaborating with national government bodies, ministries, the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, and the National Employment Service.

Moreover, it is not explicitly defined that trade unions should play an active role in the fields of education and training, nor are they required to be involved in policymaking (Kresal Šoltes and Kresal, 2014). Trade unions do not have the authority to monitor the implementation of measures related to education and training. However, following a change in legislation in 2013, trade unions were granted more opportunities to actively participate in the implementation of employment-related measures (Kresal Šoltes and Kresal, 2014).

The trade union Youth Plus, specifically aimed at students, high school students, and young unemployed people, although based in Ljubljana, does not participate in urban youth-related policymaking. Its activities are focused on the national level.

### **3.4. Remarks on the urban policy subsystem**

The complexity of the urban policy subsystem depends on the size of the city and its role in the functional network settlement system. Since Ljubljana is a capital city of Slovenia and has almost 10 times more people, the variety and number of institutions is much higher than in Celje. However, this does not mean, that Celje does not have sufficient institutional framework for youth policy implementation, it just means that fewer actors perform multiple activities targeting youth. Otherwise, the types of actors occurring in both cities are the same.

In Ljubljana, the municipal Office for Youth serves not only as a policy-maker and implementer of youth-targeted measures but also helps coordinate youth organisations and fund their activities. In Celje, the municipality is similarly engaged in policy-making and funding youth-targeted activities, such as those conducted by the Celje Youth Centre. However, the number of youth organisations and other entities actively addressing young

people in Celje is much lower due to the city's smaller size compared to Ljubljana. Consequently, while more than 50 organisations may be involved in youth-related measures in Ljubljana, the number of implementors in Celje is significantly lower. In Celje, one of the key local actors involved in both policy-making and implementation is the Celje Youth Centre. In contrast, while youth centres in Ljubljana can contribute to policy-making and are the main implementors of certain measures, the municipal Office for Youth plays a key role in the city. In Celje the youth-related activities seem to depend on a smaller group of people, whether in Ljubljana there are multiple institutions, thus potential for conflicts is larger there.

## 4 Ljubljana \_ Policy 1

### 4.1 Presentation of the policy

The **Strategy of the Municipality of Ljubljana for the Young 2016–2025: Ljubljana – City of Young for Young** was adopted in 2016. This is the first edition of such a strategy in Ljubljana, with plans to develop a new strategy every ten years for the following decade.<sup>8</sup>

The **Office for Youth**, part of the municipal Department for Culture, is the primary body responsible for local youth policies, as well as the author and one of the main implementers of the strategy. The strategy covers nine key areas with additional focus on priorities identified by young people themselves, which served as the basis for shaping the key strategic areas. The document consists of 71 pages and is divided into five chapters:

- 1) Foreword
- 2) Long-term goals of the Strategy for Youth 2016–2025
- 3) Principles of implementing the Strategy for Youth 2016–2025
- 4) Goals and measures by specific areas (divided in 11 subchapters: Ten key priorities as seen by young people; Network of Youth Centres Ljubljana: professional, systematic and continuous work with young people; Youth work, programmes and projects for young people; Youth and education and training; Youth employment and entrepreneurship development; Youth and housing; Youth and healthy lifestyles; Youth sports; Youth in culture and art; Youth and environmental protection and nature conservation; Summary of objectives and measures)
- 5) Resources

During the preparation process, the office closely collaborated with other actors, including non-institutional actors, other municipal departments, and youth organisations. The main activities related to the strategy's preparation took place in 2015, during which the primary public debate was held. As part of this debate, a public forum was organized on the draft strategy, along with a panel discussion led by young people themselves. The youth had significant input in providing opinions on the draft text of the strategy. In addition to gathering opinions, comments, and proposals for the draft strategy, the public debate

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<sup>8</sup> As the current strategy is coming to an end, preparations for the next ten-year strategy are already underway together with the evaluation of the results of current strategy.

aimed to create the first chapter of the strategy, titled *Ten Key Priorities of Young People, as determined by young people*. The goal was to actively involve young people in urban youth policymaking, giving them a voice in designing the policy, including them in the implementation of measures, and evaluating the strategy's results.

The strategy follows a structured approach: for each area, an analysis of the current situation is presented, followed by a list of goals and measures. Each goal has defined indicators to measure and monitor the success of its achievement. Additionally, each measure identifies the key actors responsible for its implementation, the main financial resources, and the timeline for its implementation.

#### 4.2. Identity card of the policy

*Name:* Strategy of Municipality of Ljubljana for the Young 2016–2025: Ljubljana – City of Young for Young

*Topics* (the topics selected for more detailed analysis are in **bold**):

- **Ensuring social inclusion:**
  - Youth centres network and possibilities for socialising
  - Youth work and programmes for the youth
- Education and training
- Employment opportunities
- **Housing**
- Healthy lifestyles
- Sports and recreation
- Culture and art
- Environment protection

*Beneficiaries/target group:* primary, young population aged 15 to 29, living in Ljubljana

*Content:*

Policy goals: Across all youth-related areas, the strategy includes a total of 14 goals.

Table 3: Strategical goals according to youth-related topics

Topics	Goals
<b>Network of Youth Centres Ljubljana: professional, systematic and continuous work with young people</b>	G01: Continuously increase the number of children and young people who actively, creatively, and safely spend their free time in youth centres, aiming for at least a 5% annual growth in participation in youth programmes.
<b>Youth work, programmes and projects for young people</b>	G02: Increase the number and scope of programmes and projects by non-governmental organisations in the youth sector, aiming to reach at least 50.000 participants annually by 2020. Strengthen the youth sector by increasing employment opportunities for young people in youth organisations.
	G03: Strengthen street youth work by expanding programmes led by qualified street youth workers and improving the overall quality of street youth work.
	G04: Strengthen youth projects in the rural areas by implementing at least one project in eight rural locations by 2020.
<b>Youth and education and training</b>	G05: Maintain high involvement of young people (ages 15–24) in the education system within the City Municipality of Ljubljana through active local policies.
	G06: Reduce the proportion of unemployed young people aged 15 to 29 who are not engaged in formal education.
<b>Youth employment and entrepreneurship development</b>	G07: Reduce the youth unemployment rate in the City Municipality of Ljubljana to below both the EU and Slovenian averages.
	G08: Increase the share of permanently employed young people from the categories of dropouts and those difficult to employ, including the unemployed not in formal education, by at least 30% by 2020.
<b>Youth and housing</b>	G09: Implement a new mechanism in the City Municipality of Ljubljana's Housing Programme for 2016 to increase the annual support for young people facing housing challenges by at least 5%.
<b>Youth and healthy lifestyles</b>	G10: Strengthen awareness among young people about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and responsible self-care.

<b>Youth sports</b>	G11: Increase the number of young people who engage in sports at least twice a week by 2% annually.
<b>Youth in culture and art</b>	G12: Increase the number of young people who participate in cultural activities by 10% annually, boost active involvement in cultural creation by 2% annually, and create at least 50 jobs for young people in culture each year from 2016 onwards.
<b>Youth and environmental protection and nature conservation</b>	G13: Engage young people in environmental protection and connect them with nature. G14: Encourage habit changes to reduce the environmental impact of young people.

*Policy instruments:* The strategy includes 38 measures across various topics. However, only the measures related to the selected areas of social inclusion and housing are listed here, as other areas were not analysed in detail due to the complexity of the policy. Therefore, 11 out of the 38 measures are included below.

Table 4: Measures addressing youth social inclusion and housing

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Measures</b>
<b>Network of Youth Centres Ljubljana: professional, systematic and continuous work with young people</b>	M01: Establish a network of at least 20 youth centres in the City Municipality of Ljubljana by 2020 to systematically provide comprehensive support for young people.
	M02: Assess the criteria for youth centres to obtain membership in the Ljubljana Youth Centres network and grant the status accordingly.
	M03: Develop a standard for the activities of the Ljubljana Youth Centres network and a quality monitoring method
	M04: Prioritise the establishment of new youth centres in areas of the City Municipality of Ljubljana identified as grey zones requiring continuous and systematic engagement with young people.
	M05: Establish a larger youth centre in the city centre as part of the Ljubljana Youth Centres network by 2018.

**Youth work, programmes and projects for young people**

M06: Increase funding for co-financing projects and programmes of non-profit organisations in the youth sector within the City Municipality of Ljubljana, distinguishing between support for high-quality multi-year initiatives and smaller projects. Introduce a mechanism to support smaller projects by organisations and individuals that align with at least one goal of the Strategy.

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M07: In 2016, create a separate public tender or designated section within the tender for supporting street youth work.

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M08: Continuously implement activities to reduce vandalism in Ljubljana, focusing on raising awareness among final-year elementary school pupils and high school students, along with street youth work in areas most affected by public property damage.

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**Youth and housing**

M09: In 2016, the City Municipality of Ljubljana's Public Housing Fund will publish a targeted public tender for approximately 30 non-profit apartments for young people, making it a regular component of the municipal housing programme.

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M10: Establish priority criteria for awarding non-profit apartments that specifically focus on young people and young families.

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M11: When planning new neighbourhoods, prioritise the inclusion of public spaces and areas for young people.

*Expected results*

Expected results are outlined in the strategy itself, specifically for each strategic topic, in the case of this report, the focus was on youth social inclusion and housing.

Youth work and social inclusion

**Youth centres** in various residential districts will be the key enablers, ensuring that young people can spend their free time according to their needs and wishes. These centres will provide young people with: 1) opportunities for socialisation; 2) the strengthening of lifelong competencies acquired through informal education; 3) access to information; 4)

encouragement for active participation and volunteer activities; 5) connections with the social environment; and 6) opportunities for mobility and international activities.

The creation of a **network of Ljubljana Youth Centres** will unite neighbourhood youth centres managed by the public institution Young Dragons, day centres for young people managed by Centres for Social Work, and youth centres organised by non-governmental organisations. This network will form a professional system of organisations that systematically and continuously implement programmes for young people (measure 1).

Youth centres will operate at least 20 hours per week. New centres will be established in areas where none currently exist, or where there are no youth-targeted services (e.g., Ljubljana – Centre, rural residential districts) (measure 4). **A central youth centre** will be created in the city (Palača Cukrarna), serving as the hub for all youth centres in Ljubljana (measure 1). Non-governmental youth organisations will receive increased funding to conduct activities for young people, particularly for youth street work (measures 6 and 7).

### Housing

Young residents of Ljubljana (aged 18 to 29) are given the opportunity to access affordable housing in the city, allowing them to become independent from their primary family and start their own (measures 9 and 10). The City Municipality of Ljubljana (Municipal Office for Youth), in collaboration with the City Municipality of Ljubljana's Public Housing Fund, will issue a **public tender every two years specifically aimed at young people**. In each tender, 30 apartments will be available: 10 for young families, 10 for young couples, and 10 for young individuals. Those who secure an apartment will be granted a 10-year lease, after which they will be placed on a priority list for apartments through the general public tender for rental housing allocation to all residents.

As it is a very complex task to determine who is “more in need” of an apartment, basic criteria will be established that young applicants must meet (e.g., income level). However, once the applicants meet these criteria, they will all be entered into a draw, where ten “winners” will be selected for each of the tender's categories.



## *Achieved results*

### Youth work and social inclusion

In 2024, 19 youth centres were operating in 17 residential districts (up from seven when the strategy was first adopted). All youth centres, including those managed by non-governmental organisations, are connected to the **Ljubljana youth centre network**. In 2023, the "Night of Youth Centres" was held for the first time (a promotional event to raise awareness of youth centres' work). The centres are interconnected, collaborate with each other, and conduct trainings for youth workers from various centres and organisations.

A **mobile psychosocial counselling programme** (slo. *MOPS*) is implemented through the Public Institute Young Dragons, and youth worker trainings are provided based on identified needs. To reach more remote residential districts and hamlets, such as Janče, a mobile youth centre, Ljuba and Drago, was established, operating in different locations each day.

All youth centres have implemented a monitoring and evaluation system, using the same framework across the network. This system is based on the Logbook model,<sup>9</sup> daily monitoring activities, visitor numbers, demographic data, and includes two evaluation questionnaires—one for the groups operating within the centres and another for the overall functioning of the centres. The city's main youth centre is currently (2024) under construction, with the Palača Cukrarna building undergoing renovation and expected to open in 2026. The municipality regularly publishes public tenders for youth organisations and funds their activities. There are around 50 to 60 youth organisations regularly applying.

A measure that emerged in response to identified needs is **the creation of programme networks**. These networks are operational, bringing together key organisations in specific fields to exchange information and collaborate on individual topics. They cover various areas, share good practices, and provide mutual training. One example is **L'mit**, a network in the field of information and advice. There is also a network **Mlada ulica** for youth street work, which coordinates street actions and organises a festival for youth street work. Another network **Ključ** focuses on the prevention of violence among and against young people, coordinated by the association Ključ (ang. *Key*). The **Kroj** (ang. *Cut*) network, coordinated by the Nefiks Institute, supports career development, while the **Most** (ang.

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<sup>9</sup> A model developed through an Erasmus+ international project coordinated by a network in Sweden.

*Bridge*) network, coordinated by Voluntariat, focuses on international cooperation. Each network centres on a specific theme, with the goal of connecting key players and fostering development in its respective area. These programme networks were founded and are financed by the municipal Office for Youth.

### Housing

By 2024, a total of 101 apartments were allocated to young people through three public tenders for dedicated rental apartments. In the first two tenders, 30 apartments were available each time, with 10 in each category. In the third edition, the number of available apartments increased to 60. Furthermore, in the fourth edition (autumn 2024), 75 apartments are available for young people. Additionally, young tenants can now lease apartments for an indefinite period, no longer limited to 10 years. In this fourth edition, 25 apartments will be allocated to young families, 25 to young couples, and 25 to young individuals. All apartments offered in these tenders are new and are rented at non-profit rates. In 2024, the rent for a 45 m<sup>2</sup> apartment is approximately 230 EUR.

### *Nature of policy change*

Before the adoption of the Strategy of Municipality of Ljubljana for the Young 2016–2025: Ljubljana – City of Young for Young, there were no specific youth policies in Ljubljana. Youth-related issues were covered in other strategic documents, such as the Education Development Strategy in the City Municipality of Ljubljana for the period 2009–2019 and the Culture Development Strategy in the City Municipality of Ljubljana for the period 2012–2015. The youth strategy was developed when Ljubljana was preparing to become the Green Capital of Europe (2016), at which time young people were recognised as one of the city's key social groups, prompting the need for a strategy specifically addressing their needs (City Municipality of Ljubljana, 2016).

The creation of certain measures, such as the L'mit programme network, in response to identified needs during the validity period of the youth strategy demonstrates the policy's flexibility. To achieve the goals in the field of the “Network of Youth Centres Ljubljana: professional, systematic, and continuous work with young people,” the measures were adjusted accordingly. Furthermore, the diversity of offerings among youth centres highlights the adaptability of the measures within the same field, tailoring the services to meet the

specific needs of each micro-location. Similarly, in the area of housing, the increase in the number of apartments available in later public tenders reflects the measure's responsiveness to growing needs.

The priority areas of the youth strategy shifted over time. For instance, in its early years, youth employment was recognised as one of the most pressing youth-related issues in Ljubljana. In response, the City Municipality of Ljubljana placed significant emphasis on this area, launching the project Cool Job! (slo: *Kul služba!*). However, with the decline in unemployment rates among young people in Ljubljana (and considering the municipality's limited authority in this area and the lack of indicator data available at the city level), the City Municipality decided not to extend the project. While the flexibility to shift focus areas can be seen as positive, allowing the strategy to respond to current needs, it also presents a potential drawback. When an area is no longer viewed as a priority, the activity of measures in that area should not necessarily decrease, as ongoing efforts might still be required.

### 4.3 Policy network

#### *Description*

In Ljubljana, public institutions play a key role, either through the municipal administration or through organisations that municipality has established. The main actor in youth-related policy-making is the municipal **Office for Youth**, which is also the author of the youth strategy and the primary financier of youth organisations. In addition to the municipal Office for Youth, the public institute **Young Dragons** (slo: *Mladi zmaji*), established by the City Municipality of Ljubljana, is another key player in youth-related policy-making and is instrumental in implementing measures targeting youth social inclusion. While all other active youth organisations, clubs, and associations may also be involved in policy implementation, they can actively engage in policy design and contribute to the preparation of the strategy.

The municipality also previously had a **Youth Council**, which was intended to be one of the most relevant partners in the dialogue concerning the situation of youth. However, since the Youth Council declared bankruptcy due to a lack of interest in engaging in local youth policy-making, the municipality stopped its support and funding.

Among the other institutions established by the municipality is the **City of Ljubljana’s Public Housing Fund**, which is an important collaborator in implementing housing-related measures.

Important institutional actors in Ljubljana also include those funded by the state, such as **Social Work Centres** and the **Employment Service of Slovenia**. The Employment Service is one of the key players in the area of employment and collaborates with the municipality to implement certain measures (such as the CoolJob! project). In the area of social inclusion, **Social Work Centres** are key actors, particularly in targeting at-risk youth and engaging in the implementation of measures.

Among local actors are organisations established by the Catholic Church and other Catholic associations, such as the **Skala Don Bosco Institute** and the **Salesian Youth Centre Rakovnik**, which are engaged in the implementation of measures regarding youth social inclusion.

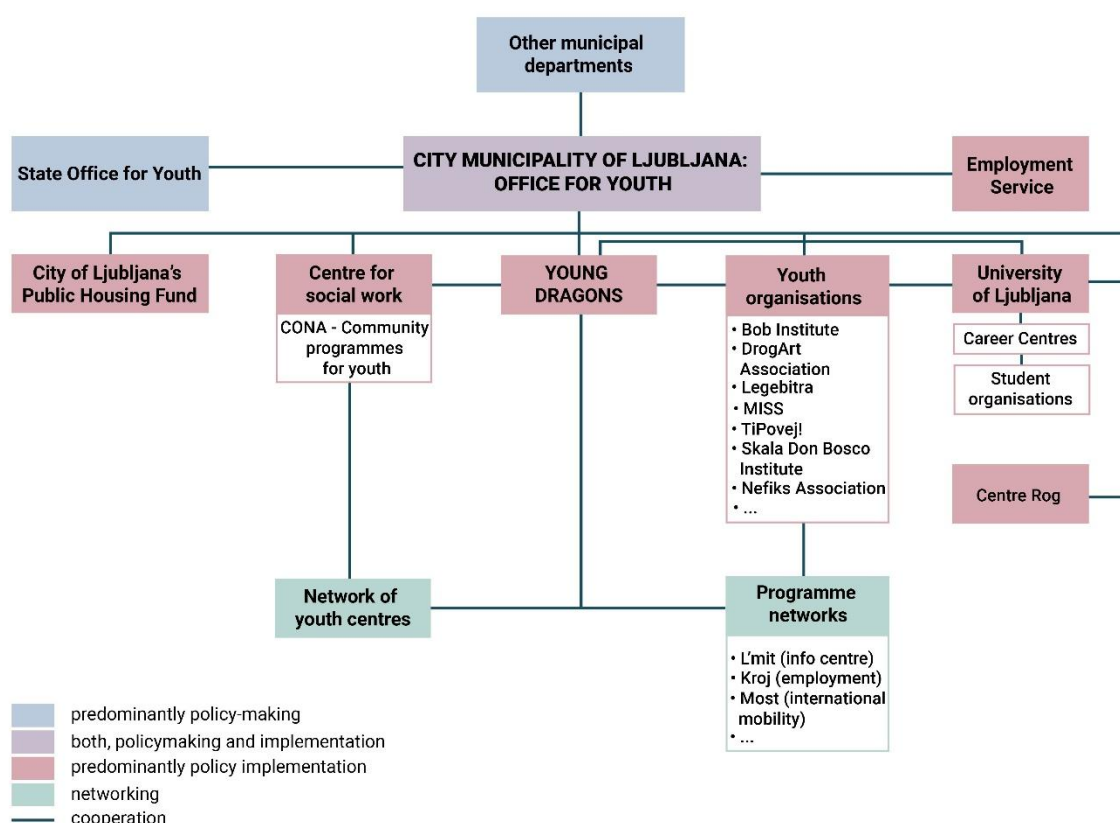


Figure 14: Policy network in the City Municipality of Ljubljana

### *Interactions*

The municipal youth policy network is very open to interactions as the cooperation among all actors and the youth as well is supported. The Municipal Office for Youth organises an **annual consultation on current or prominent issues affecting youth** in Ljubljana.

Representatives from youth organisations are invited to report on the challenges they face in their work and to share insights from their areas. Every four years, the Municipal Office for Youth prepares a **strategy implementation report for the Municipal Council**. This report is discussed in a public debate, to which young people, along with representatives from organisations working on youth-related issues, are invited.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, the first chapter of the youth strategy was written in direct collaboration with young people. It was shaped through a public debate on the draft strategy, during which young people highlighted ten key goals, either independently or through youth organisations, in a panel discussion. Their proposals were reviewed by an ad hoc committee of experts in the youth sector, which approved the final version of the priorities. These priorities were included in the chapter in their original form. The committee consisted of 12 members, including representatives from the Youth Council of Ljubljana, the Public Institution Young Dragons, the Youth Office of the Republic of Slovenia, social work centres, non-governmental organisations, the Sports Department of the City Administration of Ljubljana, and the Municipal Youth Office.

**Interactions among actors are frequent.** Organisations working on youth-related issues not only have the opportunity to participate in discussions but are also invited by the municipality to provide feedback. Youth organisations are connected through programme networks (e.g., L'mit, Kroj, and Most), which further support their collaboration and efforts to address youth-related issues. Both municipal and non-governmental organisations actively engage with other associations working in Ljubljana (e.g., the Association of Intercultural Dialogue and Cultural Education Association Pina), jointly organising various activities. As a result, the policy network in Ljubljana is open to cooperation beyond organisations exclusively focused on youth.

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<sup>10</sup> The draft of such implementation report has been prepared in 2024, however, it has not been shared with us since it is not public yet.

The policy network in Ljubljana is stable, well-organised, and well-coordinated. However, interviews revealed a drawback: the absence of an active Youth Council, which could further connect youth organisations. Despite this, the dialogue among local actors in the youth sector is reported to be constructive, open, and inclusive. With the preparation of a new youth strategy currently underway, even more interaction is anticipated, as representatives from youth organisations will be invited to contribute to the new policy design. As a result, the next strategy is expected to be even more responsive to the current issues and needs of youth in Ljubljana.

#### 4.4 Remarks and comments on the policy

##### Youth work and social inclusion

According to some interviewed actors, the area of social inclusion is one of the most successful, with measures being effectively implemented. Youth organisations, including non-governmental organisations (such as the Institute Bob) and social actors (such as Centres for Social Work), are regularly invited to report on the situations they encounter in their work and to propose actions to the municipality or other relevant actors.

In many cases, interviewed actors from youth organisations and centres for social work stated that **youth centres are vitally important for young people with migrant backgrounds or those from deprived or at-risk families**. For these individuals, youth centres may be the only secure space available, making it crucial that measures to support the work of such organisations are effectively implemented.

Youth centres strive to be accessible to all young people, not just those from families facing social and economic challenges, while also addressing the specific needs of their local communities. The programs are tailored to the needs of the young people in the district where each centre is located. For example, Youth Centre Legebitra is dedicated to LGBT youth, while several other centres, such as Skala, Salesian Youth Centre Rakovnik, and Youth Centre Vič, are closely connected to the Catholic Church. 'Ulca' (the word means a street in the slang) is focused on urban sports, such as hip hop and skateboarding. This diversity demonstrates the flexibility of the measure, adapting to the specific needs of each micro-location.

The creation of programme networks in response to identified needs demonstrates the flexibility of the policy. However, **a key criticism** from certain youth organisations regarding the area of youth work and social inclusion **is that the indicators used to measure the success of implemented measures and programmes are primarily quantitative**. It should be emphasised that the nature of youth work is inherently qualitative, and this should be better reflected in the evaluation of such programs.

### Housing

The increase in the number of apartments available in the third and fourth editions of the public tender reflects the measure's adaptability in responding to growing needs. In terms of youth housing, the City Municipality of Ljubljana is one of the most proactive municipalities in Slovenia, actively addressing the issue of unavailable and unaffordable housing, particularly for young people. Its public tender for dedicated rental apartments for youth is regarded as a good practice by various actors who participated in interviews during the preparation of this report, as it offers a viable way to provide affordable housing for young people. However, since housing remains one of the most pressing issues for both young people and other social groups in Ljubljana (and Slovenia in general), this measure does not fundamentally solve the problem of unaffordable housing.

The main criticism of this measure is that apartments are ultimately allocated by draw, meaning applicants must be "lucky" to secure a unit. While establishing additional criteria to rank applicants based on need would be highly complex and difficult to implement fairly, selecting among those who meet the basic criteria was seen as the most practical solution.

## **5 Celje \_ Policy 1**

### **5.1 Presentation of the policy**

**The local programme of youth in the City Municipality of Celje 2022–2027** (slo. *Lokalni program za mladino v Mestni občini Celje Mladi so Celje 2022-2027*) was adopted in 2022, so it is a fairly new policy. It represents a follow-up document of the programme, valid for the period 2015-2020. The current document was prepared by the Celje Youth Centre and the project group which was composed of employees of the municipality, and a representative of the Youth Council Celje.

The policy consists of seven chapters and has 67 pages altogether:

- 1) Foreword
- 2) Terminology and definition of the youth sector
- 3) Legislative framework of the youth sector in Slovenia and the City Municipality of Celje
- 4) Existing activities of the youth sector in Celje
- 5) Analysis of the current situation and explanation of the preparation process of the programme
- 6) Measures proposal for the youth sector development
- 7) References

The preparation process of the policy which took place between December 2019 and March 2021 was very open and integrative, consulting all the valid actors in municipality. The project group had a working weekend in a mountain hut in Celje (status quo analysis, identification of challenges and youth organisations, preparation of the survey), a survey was performed in 2020, public presentation of the findings followed (December 2020) and two more public consultations were carried out in January and February 2021. The public consultations resulted in preparation of the measures according to the identified fields. Those were: employment and small business, housing policy, psychological and physical wellness, environment, activation and youth organisation, infrastructure, informal education, informing and communication, dialog with decision makers, and culture and leisure time.

Based on the interviews, the preparation process was legitimate, open and inclusive since it consulted a broad group of actors, relevant for the youth-sector policy making.

## **5.2 Identity card of the policy**

*Name:* The local programme of youth in the City Municipality of Celje 2022-2027 (slo. *Lokalni program za mladino v Mestni občini Celje Mladi so Celje 2022-2027*)

*Topic:* Integrative youth policy



*Beneficiaries/target group:* youth, living the City Municipality of Celje, defined as **age group between 15 and 29 years.**

*Content:*

*a) Policy goals:* the policy has no specific goals written.

*b) Policy instruments:* there are 29 measures listed altogether. Such measures were selected that are not written in other strategies already and programmes, but are relevant to the youth. The measures are defined in such a way that it is possible to follow their implementation, that the finance is reserved and process of implementation is foreseen. Furthermore, the actors and their roles are defined in support of realisation of individual measure. Although, in the programme, the measures are not topic-related, hereby, we have sorted them among the topics: employment, education, infrastructure and housing, financial and organisation support for youth organisations, cultural activities, and other topics.

Measures:

Topic	Measures
<b>Employment</b>	<p>M02: Securing annual trainings of new youth workers, employed through the programme of public work which will carry out activities for the youth and with youth, under the guidance of the Youth Centre Celje</p> <p>M07: Establishment of the scheme connecting the youth with employers and successful businessman in the local community</p> <p>M08: Supporting educational and consultancy programmes and projects to empower small business among youth (Incubator of Savinjska region)</p> <p>M09 Securing holiday work for youth on the topic of social responsibility</p> <p>M10 Participation of youth in preparing tourist offer in City Municipality of Celje</p> <p>M29 Securing better possibilities of carrying out the pupils' and students' praxis in the municipal administration and other public institutions of the local community</p>
<b>Education</b>	<p>M04: Improving the informing of the youth about possibilities for non-formal education, creative spending of the leisure time, voluntary and international possibilities with support of mobile application</p>

	<p>M25 Establishing information and communication activities about the dialog in schools, establishment of the so-called info ambassador</p> <p>M26 Establishing the system of networking between the schools and youth organisations</p>
<b>Infrastructure and housing</b>	<p>M06: Possibility of using municipal sport infrastructure for free in the time of school holidays for pupils</p> <p>M11 Improving accessibility of housing for the youth and young families by increasing the number of non-profit rental apartments which are then based on the call assigned to the youth</p> <p>M13 Enabling accessibility of outdoor spaces for creative art activities in the outdoor</p> <p>M15 Increase the number of smart benches for youth and young families</p> <p>M16 Securing the possibility to rent garden lots for youth and young families</p> <p>M17 Support development of urban sports on the suitable areas and supply necessary spatial conditions for carrying out these sports</p> <p>M18 Securing infrastructure for the youth work and youth where the youth centre gets additional space and the possibility to use already existing space in city neighbourhoods</p> <p>M21 City municipality of Celje secures spaces for youth organisation activities</p> <p>M28 Solving the housing problem for the young families</p>
<b>Financial and organisational support for youth organisations</b>	<p>M01: Renewal of the regulation about conditions, criteria and processes to co-finance projects and programmes targeting youth in City Municipality of Celje</p> <p>M03: Establishment of the youth street work and/or the youth neighbourhood work</p> <p>M05: Securing the money for co-financing the Youth Centre Celje</p> <p>M22: Youth centre Celje on annual basis organises networking and connection events for youth organisations</p> <p>M23: Integration of Youth centre Celje and other organisation into the vertical of education institutions</p> <p>M24: Continuous support to the functioning of the Youth Council and the Commission for the youth-related questions</p>

<b>Culture activities</b>	<p>M12: Securing the spaces for music, dance and theatre rehearsals and also organisation of smaller concerts, dancing evenings and other events for the youth</p> <p>M14: Concerts of popular groups</p> <p>M19: Bigger concert hall in Celje</p>
<b>Other</b>	<p>M20: Organisation of seminars and workshops on the topic of healthy life and securing the out-of-school access to psychosocial content</p> <p>M27: Prolonging the certificate of the “Municipality, friendly to the youth”</p>

### *Expected results*

Expected results are written under each of the measure separately, some of them are quantified and have time limit, while the others are descriptive, thus difficult to measure. Many of them are also the logical consequence of the measure: if the measure says ‘develop an application’, then the result is a developed application. Thus, we are not listing again all 29 measures, but some of the more generalised ones:

- Increase in number of youth sector workers that are well trained and competent;
- Continue systematic, frequent and good implementation of youth sector work in the City Municipality of Celje;
- Support healthy lifestyle and sport recreation among youth; support the active leisure time and good psychophysical condition of the youth;
- Support employment and development of business in the local environment;
- Improvement of the youth competences and new knowledge; supporting creativeness and active participation of the youth;
- Support of the reach cultural and music life;
- Support co-operation among youth sector organisations and other actors in the youth sector; contribution to the youth policy making etc.

### *d) Achieved results*

The policy has only been adopted in 2022, so the evaluation has not been done yet. However, the report on activities related to the youth programme is included in the activity

reports of the Celje Youth Centre. The achieved results can be reported from the information we gathered via interviews, namely:

- the title of the Celje, a youth friendly municipality has been prolonged (M27);
- the Youth centre Celje has stated to offer its activities on satellite locations, e.g. in neighbourhoods (M18);
- Youth centre Celje continues to participate in the whole vertical of the youth sector organisations and also continues to have a role of a major actors in the city municipality of Celje (M5, M21, M23).

From the interviews, it can also be concluded that implementations of some of the measures is currently not so successful. For example, the Youth centre Celje interviewed the youth about what concerts of popular groups they should organise, but got only named the groups that are not accessible for such a locality than Celje (M14). What was also mentioned in the talks, is that the youth could be more proactive in organising informal spaces for their activities, namely, the municipality could offer them empty and partially dilapidated spaces, however, they would need to invest some work into sorting them out.

#### *e) Nature of policy change*

The policy change that the policy predicts is in a way linear – the measures and objectives continue from the previous local programme, however, for certain measures it is as well teleological (going into direction of certain goals). Some of the measures also directly and specifically mention activities related to actors networking and change of powers of individual actors, which means that policy change is inspired to happen via empowering the actors, both in terms of their engagement in policy making and co-operating with each other (M22 – annual meetings of youth sector organisation and the municipality, M23 – integration of Youth centre Celje and other organisations into the vertical of education sector actors, M24 – continue the support for the Youth council functioning and the Commission for the youth questions), and better knowledge about policies and informing of the youth population (M25 – establishment of school info ambassador). The mentioned measures of co-operation are also intended to build alliances among youth organisation and in this way increase the negotiating power and impact into policy implementation and

preparation (also M26 establishing the system of networking between schools and youth organisations).

### 5.3 Policy network

#### *Description*

In Celje the institutional setting is mostly based on public institution, either being the municipality administration or the public institutes, established by the municipality. The services that the state offers, are the same and include, both, the **Social Work Centre** and the **Employment Service of Slovenia**. The **municipality administration, more into detail the Department of Social Matters**, is the main policy maker who supports the implementation as well, both content-wise and financially. The municipality also established the **Commission for the youth-related questions** which is a consultancy body of the mayor to comprehensively cover youth-related topics, such as strategic and development programmes for the youth, evaluation of the policy decisions and other relevant questions. The commission also co-operates with youth organisations.

The second most relevant and also most active actor is the **Youth Centre Celje** (slo. *Mladinski center Celje*), a public institute, established by the municipality to serve as a community centre for youth, implementing the local programme for youth, providing activities for youth inclusion, recreation, and other projects to contribute to the quality of life of youth. Besides the youth centre there is another centre which enables youth activities, namely **Don Bosco centre**, which also offers a daily centre for the youth and offers various other services for the vulnerable youth. According to the interviews, the two centres have lately started to co-operate on individual projects, more concretely, the youth centre offered expertise in acquiring EU and other funds for Don Bosco's activities.

Within the institution framework, there is as well the **Youth Council** (slo. *Mladinski svet*). The tasks of the Youth Council (see <https://mscelje.si/>) are currently the following ones:

- Connecting the youth organisations, following the principles of co-operation, equality and respect of autonomy of every organisation (Society of scouts RDGO; Leo Club Celje knights; Club of students of Celje municipality);

- Developing the youth sector in Celje – together with the members the youth sector in Celje is developed, together with the youth policy on the local level;
- Implementing the call to stop the “precarious work of youth” – the purpose of this call is to increase the job security of the youth as a vulnerable group on the labour market.

Another local actor is the **Real Estate Company Celje** (slo: *Nepremičnine Celje*), which specifically contributes to the implementation of measures related to housing. The company was established by the City Municipality of Celje.

Apart from this, the **Club of Students Celje** (slo. *Klub študentov občine Celje*, see <https://www.ksoc.si/>) represent a voluntary and non-political society which joins students and pupils with the purpose of connecting, informing and organising youth sector related content and projects at the Administrative unit Celje. The club is active locally and participates with the organisational bodies of the Slovenian Association of Student Clubs, Student Organisation of Slovenia and other organisations. In the news section they inform students about actual information for scholarships, relevant youth-related events in Celje and other activities. **Council of High School Pupils** (slo. *Dijaški svet*), joins the pupils of high schools in Celje and actively contributes to policy making in the field of youth.

### *Interactions*

The policy network in Celje is limited to a few actors whose relations are differently strong and frequent. The two most active actors are the municipality and the Youth Centre of Celje, the first one as policy makers, and the second one as the most active institution in the locality, implementing the youth policy. They possess the knowledge and human resources to absorb EU funds, run projects, are well connected also in the vertical structures of Slovenian youth organisation, and most importantly, have very tight connections and legitimacy to the local community. With the café and hostel they are running, they offer a place where the youth and other locals, also foreign visitors, can meet and exchange information. According to the local programme for youth, important tasks are assigned to them, including joining the youth actors in Celje.

Other relevant actors in the network are the Youth Council (also connects three youth organisations in Celje) and the Pupils council which represent the voice of the youth and join

also the policy making processes. Judging from the interviews, they are not that much involved with implementation of policies, except for the Youth Council implementing the call against precarious work.

Other members of the network are the local incubator, Don Bosco centre, Club of Students Celje, high schools, and other local services which are not necessarily engaged in the policy making, but into carrying out individual measures.

The network seems to be a stable one with the clear roles of individual actors and connections between them. As gathered from the interviews and the local programme, there is initiative to establish more relations and connection between some of the actors, either through the particular projects or networking events, e.g. joint sport day of the Youth Centre and the centre for functionally deprived people was mentioned as an example. Network also strikes as opened and willing to receive new actors to join the dialog.

The role of the social dialog is well recognised since the local programme for youth was prepared in open dialog with the relevant actors, drafting and brainstorming the ideas. From the interviews, it can also be concluded that the mentioned actors are in frequent contact and approach solving the youth-related issues together. The Youth Centre Celje as one of the major actors in the network seems open towards the others and their co-operation.

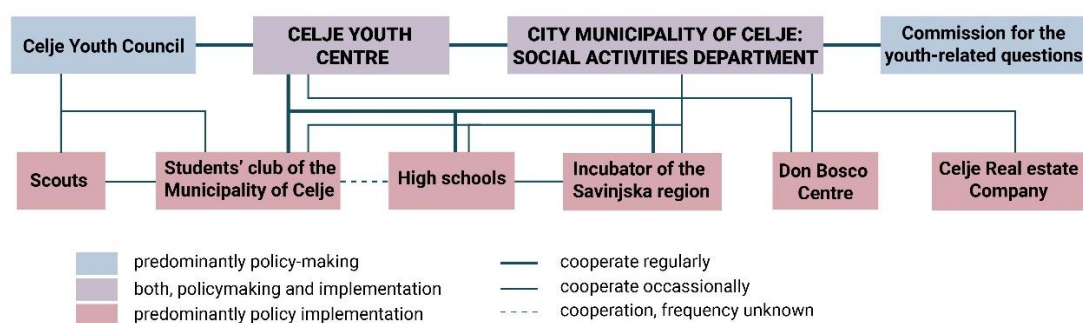


Figure 15: Policy network in the City Municipality of Celje

#### 5.4 Remarks and comments on the policy

The Local programme “Youth are Celje” 2022-2027 is a five-year local strategy that addresses most of the youth-related challenges identified in the analysis as well. The

strengths of the policy are that it is very concrete in measures – each of them is described more into details with foreseen result, resources for implementation, actors and the time frame. Another strength of the policy is that it was prepared with the inclusion and social dialogue with the youth.

However, what the policy is missing is a strategic note, identifying the core long term objectives the policy wants to address. Now, these goals need to be derived from the analysis (done very thoroughly and in participative manner) and from the measures themselves. For some of the measures it is also unclear what financial resources are available for their implementations, so their feasibility might be questionable. Comparing the major issues identified in the focus group: safety of the youth, leisure activities for young people, housing and student meals, the programme is addressing the leisure activities and the housing, but not the safety and the student meals. Regarding the pupils and student meals a contradictory information was presented by the interviewees: the youth reported the choice is limited, while one of the actors described the available locations where the youth can eat subsidised meals. The safety of the youth in the streets was discussed both in focus groups and in some of the interviews, however, the local programme also indirectly addresses these issues by providing various places for the youth to meet outdoors, e.g. recreational infrastructure, places for outdoor art, informal places to meet etc. Housing is addressed by a specific call for the youth and young families that is supposed to be carried out regularly, possibly every two years, however, only two call were carried out till today (autumn 2024) and it is uncertain when the next could be held as there are currently no new apartments available. How youth has described in the focus groups, this topic has not been addressed aggressively enough.

To conclude, as the local programme for youth has been only valid for two years now, the appropriate time for intermediate evaluation would be next year and then at the end of the period in year 2027. As interviewees have told us, some of the measures are well under way, while the others have not been addressed yet or not successfully enough (e.g., in the area of youth mental well-being).



## 6 Conclusion

- **Are the two cities a favourable environment for the inclusion of youth?**

In general, it can be concluded that yes, both Ljubljana and Celje, are cities with favourable environment for the inclusion of youth. In Ljubljana and Celje multiple actors provide programmes and activities to improve inclusion of youth. In both cities there is a network or in the case of Ljubljana even networks to connect various youth organizations, such as youth centres, representatives of students' clubs and others. Youth is equally encouraged to provide feedback to the policy makers by participating in annual consultation for the youth, evaluation of policies and by engaging in Youth Council as a policy making organisation (currently, only in operation in Celje). The strength of the Celje network is that it is not too complex, so it is easy for the youth to engage with various actors.

- **Are the policies under scrutiny a best practice for youth inclusion in your country?**

Both examples, have elements that can be considered good practice for youth inclusion in Slovenia. Ljubljana's strategy was evaluated as good and comprehensive, covering all important youth-related topics. More to that, the municipality specifically established municipal offices for the youth, which is the owner of the policy and supervises its implementation. However, also some weaknesses were mentioned in regards to this strategy, for example, that implementation is poorer in the field of employment and the co-operation between the employment service and the office for the youth could be better, with the service being more responsive to the local needs.

Celje example could serve as a good practice because it was built on a social dialogue and participative process, reflecting on the youth sector and its challenges in the town.

- **What are the conditions for their success?**

The conditions for success are few. First one is that in both municipalities the policies were developed in the dialogue with the youth, so that their needs could be directly identified and incorporated into the documents. In this way, also the legitimacy of the document increased. Second, in both municipalities there is an institution that is an owner of the policy, namely, that they take care of the implementation of the policy and supervise or intensively engaged in the process. In Ljubljana, Municipal Office for Youth also offers good

financial support. Financial support was recognised as crucial by most of the interviewees and participants in the focus group. In addition, also a good and functional cooperation between various and crucial actors can be beneficial to the success,

Ljubljana: good financial support by the Municipal office for youth; good cooperation between various actors, municipality as the main actor; different quality of co-operation

- **Are they a suitable case for transferability in other European contexts?**

In the European context, the participative preparation process could be promoted and inclusion of various actors, together with the constant dialogue with the youth. Celje example might be of interest since it represents a policy document (more like an action plan) in the context of a small-size town (up to 50.000 inhabitants) that can be relevant for many other towns of the same scale.

- **What are the pre-conditions for their success?**

The precondition for successful transferability are engaged actors, sufficient financial resources and a stable and well functional local network of the youth sector.

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## ANNEX

- List of interviewees
- Summary of themes emerged in focus groups
- Questions for actors involved in the design or implementation of the policy/initiative/project/action
- Protocol for the focus groups

## ANNEX 1: List of interviewees

Ljubljana	Celje
City Municipality of Ljubljana: Municipal office for youth (2 interviews)	City Municipality of Celje: Service for youth, science and adult education
Centre for social work: CONA - Community programmes for young people	Celje youth centre, person 1
Bob Institute: non-governmental organisation for ensuring social inclusion of youth (2 interviews)	Celje youth centre, person 2
Cooperative Zadrugator: Institute for Housing and Spatial Studies	Incubator of Savinjska region
Public institute Young Dragons: Mobile psycho-social counselling	Salesian Youth Centre
Career centres of the University of Ljubljana	Youth council of Celje

## ANNEX 2: Summary of themes emerged in focus groups

The focus group in Ljubljana was conducted on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024, with six participants, including representatives from a non-governmental organisation focused on ensuring social inclusion of youth, the Centre for Social Work: Community Programs for Young People, the Democratic Studentship Programme, and the creative hub – Centre Rog. In Celje, the focus group took place on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2024, with five attendees, including representatives from local high schools and the local student community. In both focus groups, participants discussed the situation for youth in their respective cities, the opportunities available for young people, local youth policies, and the effectiveness or shortcomings in implementing measures. They also highlighted key observations, including the most challenging areas in both cities that require priority action.

### Ljubljana

- More young people's involvement in policy-making is needed.
- Implementing measures presents a bigger challenge than designing a strategy.
- Employment targets set in the youth strategy are not being met.
- Housing remains the least achieved target.
- The City Municipality of Ljubljana has limited authority, which sometimes restricts its ability to engage in implementing measures.
- Successful actions are those designed in response to a perceived need (e.g., creating networks).
- There are challenges in the area of youth sports.
- There is a lack of spaces for young artists.
- There is a lack of spaces for unstructured activities for young people (and others as well).
- Young people should be involved in all policy areas, not just youth policies.
- A problem with the timing of actions: at certain points, one area becomes a priority while others are neglected, even though they are equally important.
- There is an issue with accessibility to appropriate premises (e.g., for crisis accommodation).

Areas where action should be prioritised:

- Decent work
- Housing



## Celje

- The municipality is committed to young people’s dialogue with decision-makers, and the participatory budget will provide young people with financial resources to propose projects.
- There is a lack of municipal support for youth recreation.
- Young people miss informative posts (e.g., on municipal social media); there are opportunities for young people, but they are not receiving adequate information about them.
- There is a shortage of spaces for unstructured socialising and activities.
- There is a lack of events, leisure facilities, clubs, and concerts for young people (e.g., no more bowling, which used to be available).
- Despite promises, the municipality has failed to implement projects developed by young people as part of the Youth for Celje project.
- Safety is a concern, as Celje is not considered safe for teenagers and young women to walk alone, especially at night.
- There is an ongoing issue of vandalism and theft, particularly in secondary schools.

### Areas where action should be prioritised:

- Safety
- Leisure facilities for young people
- Housing
- Student meals

### **ANNEX 3: Questions for actors involved in the design or implementation of the policy/initiative/project/action**

Potential interviewees:

- \_ municipality: youth office or other relevant department, service
- \_ social stakeholder: youth NGO, trade union, CSD, other relevant public institution, company
- \_ youth representative: youth centre, youth council, student club or other relevant target group of young people

1. To start with, we would like to know in which key area for young people do you work and what is your role?

2.a Are you familiar with the Ljubljana Youth Strategy/Local Youth Programme? Have you been involved in the preparation of this policy?

If yes, then sub-question 2.b: What was your role in the preparation process and how was it organised?

3.a Could you assess the success of the implementation of the strategy?

Sub-question 3.b: Have encountered any problems during the process of the implementation of the strategy?

4.a Are you involved in the implementation of the strategy?

4.b. Did you encounter any difficulties in implementing it (initiative/project)? Which ones?/Otherwise, please comment if you happen to know of any problems with implementation.

5.a Could you also comment on the success of the strategy in the area of youth work and social inclusion of young people/housing for young people?

Sub-question 5b: What has been particularly successfully or unsuccessfully implemented?

Sub-question 5.c: What do you think caused the measures not to be implemented or to be implemented unsuccessfully?

6. Who do you think are the key actors in the implementation of youth policies/actions/projects in Ljubljana/Celje?

7. How would you assess the participation of these actors and their involvement in policy development and implementation?

8. Which area relevant for youth do you think should be addressed as a priority (e.g. housing, employment and training, youth work, social inclusion)?

## ANNEX 4: Protocol for the focus groups

### Objectives:

- Explore characteristics of local youth policies
- Identify success or failure factors for youth policies, actions, initiatives, projects
- Identify key actors involved in the design and implementation of youth projects, actions

Area: municipalities Ljubljana and Celje/cities Ljubljana and Celje

Target group: actors involved in the design and implementation of youth policies, actions, initiatives or projects. Between 5 and 12 participants per group.

Location: Ljubljana, Celje

Duration: 90 to 120 minutes

Participants sign a participation agreement and permission to take photographs.

### **Proposed questions and focus group process**

A short introduction to the Back in Town project and an explanation of the purpose of the focus group.

1. To start with, we would like to know in which key area for young people do you work and what is your role? *The most relevant areas for young people are: employment, housing, education, dialogue with decision-makers, youth work, social inclusion, mental and physical well-being, and leisure opportunities and infrastructure.* Explain how you contribute to the design or implementation of actions/initiatives/projects in your chosen field.

The first section aims to identify the key actors in the field of youth policy at local level.

*Youth policy is understood as a set of actions in a specific field. It is designed either by the EU or by the state/local communities to improve the position of young people in society.*

2.a Who do you think are the key actors involved in the preparation of a youth strategy/programme, e.g. Youth Strategy/Local Youth Programme? What about for implementation?

Optional: 2.b Who are the other key actors (e.g. local businesses, educational institutions, trade associations, NGOs, sports clubs) and what is their role in the development and implementation of youth policies?

3.a Do you think that the various actors were sufficiently involved in the process of drafting this policy? Have they also cooperated with each other in this process? What was the form of the cooperation?

3.b Is there any permanent form of cooperation between these actors, e.g. working group, network, platform, etc.? What is the role of each stakeholder in this.

3.c What about the involvement of young people as city residents? Have they had enough opportunities to make suggestions for policy measures or content?

In the next section, we will look at the relevance and effectiveness of local youth policy.

4. What is the relevance of youth policy and its actions in the broader context of urban policies? How effective do you think these measures are (e.g. in facilitating young people's transition to the labour market, for young people's inclusion in society)? (*Question to be adapted depending on the field of expertise of the participants.*)

5.a. Can you give examples of successful actions or projects or initiatives in support of the implementation of the strategy in which you have participated or are aware, and which, where possible, actively involve youth organisations, trade unions and other representatives of the civil society?

5.b Now we wonder if you could give us an example of a failed measure/project and if you might know the reasons for its failure.

5.c. In which of the areas highlighted by the policy is the most action being taken and what are these actions: financial, organisational, etc.?

6. Which area relevant for youth do you think should be addressed as a priority (*e.g. housing, employment and training, youth work, social inclusion*)?

7. What do you think is the key to the success of a youth policy, project or action?

*Thank you for your cooperation*

*Signature list*