1. What are the main urgent issues related to youth

With respect to the shift from the world order of industrial society to the world of work in knowledge societies it may tend to take the transition from the demand side to the supply side seriously. In the ‘golden years’ of the welfare state – in the 1960s and early 1970s – the demand for work was ever increasing. The division of labour into manual and intellectual labour was a stable trend constituted as a product of industrial society. The dominant perspective is closely linked to mass production systems, intensive productivity gains, and the capacity to produce goods as well as hierarchical forms of work organization and control. This logic always has contributed to a massive alienation of workers and to an extensive de-skilling of the work force. This leads to the assumption that work becomes fragmented, specialized, etc. For our project, it is however important to take into account that even an unskilled young person could get a job at a factory and later get an apprenticeship.

However, the unanswered question is: Would precarious youth fit better to the world of work in industrial societies?

2. How do policies address these issues?

Young people aged 16-24/29 years without accomplished primary or secondary school has been highlighted by politicians from all parties.

The challenge, then, is to reflect upon what such youngsters do in times of mass unemployment. A majority of the stakeholders points to education as a means through which a young person could get a job, competing with other young persons and during which the most educated should win ("may the best man win"). Although we have contradictory evidences and more education may lead to educational inflation, etc., this is the central strategy of Danish youth policies.

There have been a newly shift from a rights perspective on disadvantaged youth’s living situation to a demand for further education as the means to combat poverty. This is followed up with less real opportunity for exit and economic sanctions have furthermore been introduced. It would be recommended to balance between rights and demands, where the demands should be able to be met in more ways than mainly education.

3. How to increase capability-friendly policies?

Our study pointed to the fact that professionals play an important role for young people; thus, they have basically to look at the young people as whole persons. Based on this principle the types of intervention need to be integrated. To be integrated means that
professionals are mentoring, coordinating, and organizing the daily tasks. Holistic policy intervention has to be about more than just addressing social problems or personal vulnerability. It must also be about promoting well-being. And it must be about recognition and respect. Further, a work-life balance as a newer tendency may strengthen the rights of youth to work. Under these conditions work – not only labour but care, self-development, active citizenship and the like – is within range. Moreover, disadvantaged youth would get their life-chances improved by means of the new technologies.

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 320136.