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From Classroom to Career: Skills Formation Insights from Slovenian Student Work

Valentina Franca, Vesna Milošević Zupančič *

Abstract. This paper provides a comprehensive evaluation of student work in Slovenia, a unique sui generis form of flexible employment that facilitates the transition from formal education to the labor market. The study employs a multidisciplinary approach, combining a detailed analysis of the fragmented legal framework with empirical findings from a 2025 national survey of 7,523 students. Legally, the research highlights a significant shift from a deregulated system to one integrated into social insurance, featuring a statutory minimum gross hourly rate of 8.98 euros. Despite these protections, the authors argue that the absence of a unified "Act on Student Work" and clear temporal definitions of "occasional work" maintains a state of normative ambiguity that risks disguised employment relationships. From a human resource perspective, the empirical data underscores student work as a critical hybrid learning environment. The findings reveal that primary motivations for student engagement include financial necessity—with 37% of respondents stating they would struggle to afford education without it—and the acquisition of work experience. Thematic analysis identifies significant development in transversal competencies, notably communication, teamwork, and personal autonomy, which align with global labour market demands for resilience and agility. Ultimately, the paper advocates for a centralized legislative instrument to secure legal clarity and optimize the role of student work as a laboratory for sustainable skill formation.

Keywords: *student work, occasional work, learning environment, competence developments.*

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1. Introduction

The integration of young people into the labour market represents one of the most significant socio-economic challenges of contemporary societies¹, with the institution of student work in Slovenia playing a unique, deeply rooted, and multifaceted role. As a specific form of temporary and occasional work available to individuals during their formal education, student work in Slovenia goes beyond merely serving as a social corrective and a means of ensuring financial autonomy. It functions as a key structural mechanism that facilitates and directs the transition from the education system to the sphere of regular employment.

The legal regulation of this field within the Slovenian system continuously faces the challenge of striking a delicate balance between maintaining a high degree of flexibility—driven by the economy’s need for the dynamic adjustment of the workforce—and ensuring adequate labour-law and social protection for young workers. In recent years, the legislative framework has undergone significant transformation through the inclusion of student work in the social insurance system and the introduction of a minimum hourly wage. These reforms have contributed to reducing unfair competition and precariousness, while also opening discussions on the need for a more comprehensive and unified systemic regulation that would more effectively prevent abuses and strengthen the legal position of students.

Beyond its complex legal dimension, the fundamental importance of student work is reflected primarily in its exceptional contribution to skills enhancement and the development of human capital.² As formal educational programmes often struggle to fully meet the rapidly changing demands of the modern labour market, early practical experience is invaluable. Engaging in student work enables young people to gain early exposure to real working environments, where, alongside specific professional knowledge, they intensively develop and consolidate key soft skills such as communication, adaptability, complex problem-solving, and teamwork³. This process of learning through work directly shapes

¹ Broschinski, S. & Assmann, M-L. (2021). The relevance of public employment services for the labour market integration of low-qualified young people – a cross-European perspective. *European Societies* 23 (1): pp. 46–70.

² Ruperčič, M., Hren, J in Kohont, A. (2018). Razvoj kompetenc, pridobljenih s študentskim delom. *Teorija in praksa* 55(2), pp. 263–280.

³ Kohont, A., Ruperčič, M., & Hren Topole, J. (2025). Razvoj kompetenc s študentskim delom. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 63–88). Ljubljana: FDV.

professional identity and helps build early social networks that are often decisive in securing first-time employment.

Empirical findings consistently confirm that student work acts as an important catalyst in the transition to the labour market. Graduates who acquire relevant work experience during their studies demonstrate a statistically significant higher likelihood of obtaining employment more quickly and successfully within the first year after completing their education. Despite its undeniable advantages, however, this transition requires a balanced approach, as excessive involvement in work may negatively affect academic performance and prolong the duration of studies⁴. This suggests that optimal outcomes are achieved when student work is substantively complementary to an individual's field of study. And the number of hours of work is not too high⁵.

Labour market in Slovenia is faced by demographic challenges. The annual number of retirements exceeds the annual number of first job entrants.⁶ The number of people in employment is at the highest levels in the last years. There are 996,000 employed persons by LFS (Labour Force Survey) methodology in the 4th quarter of 2025 or 938,412 persons in employment by registered data in February 2026.⁷ The unemployment rates in Slovenia are among the lowest in EU, the same goes for unemployment rates among the population of young people. EU unemployment rate is at 5,9 % in February 2026, whereas Euro area unemployment rate is at 6,2 %.⁸ In Slovenia, general unemployment rate – Labour Force Survey is at 4.1 % in the 4th quarter 2025⁹, which is

⁴ King, J. E. (2002). *Crucial choices: How students' financial decisions affect their academic success*. Washington DC: Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council on Education.; Dundes, L., & Marx, J. (2006). Balancing work and academics in college: Why do students working 10 to 19 hours per week excel? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8(1), pp. 107–120.

⁵ Kosi, T., Nastav, B., & Šušteršič, J. (2013). Does student employment deteriorate academic performance? The case of Slovenia. *Revija za socialnu politiku* 20 (3): 253-274. Leveson, L., McNeil, N., & Joiner, T. (2013). Persist or withdraw: The importance of external factors in students' departure intentions. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 32(6), 932–945.; Quintini, G., & Martin, S. (2014). *Same Same but Different: School-to-Work Transitions in Emerging and Advanced Economies*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 154.; Neyt, B., Omey, E., Verhaest, D., & Baert, S. (2019). Does student work really affect educational outcomes? A review of the literature. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 33(3), 896–921.

⁶ Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. *Analiza razmer na trgu dela in rezultati srednje in dolgoročnih napovedi potreb trga dela do leta 2039*. Ljubljana.

⁷ SURS - Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office. (2026). *Labour market*.

⁸ Eurostat. (2026). *Unemployment statistics: February 2026*.

⁹ SURS - Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office. (2026). *Labour market*.

significantly lower than in EU. In February 2026, the youth unemployment rate was 15.3% in the EU for youth under 25.¹⁰ The data of Employment Service of Slovenia shows the rate of registered youth unemployment is at 7.8 % for youth between 15 and 29 in January 2026.¹¹ This contribution therefore offers an in-depth scholarly analysis of the Slovenian model of student work, critically focusing on the intersection of its legal regulation and its actual human-resource and economic effects on youth employability. Its central aim is to enrich academic discourse and provide professional support in shaping evidence-based employment and education policies.

2. Legal framework

The legal regulation of student work within the Slovenian legal architecture represents an exceptionally complex, multilayered, and frequently debated socio-legal phenomenon. This specific segment of labor law provokes diverse, often diametrically opposed, and interest-driven viewpoints among social partners, legal scholars, and policymakers.¹² In its fundamental legal essence, student work in the Slovenian framework is treated as a highly specific, *sui generis* form of employment. Special, derogative rules exist exclusively for this strictly defined demographic of workers, justified entirely by their unique status characteristics—namely, their active, formalized participation in the national educational system (as detailed below). This regulatory approach differs significantly from classical labor law institutes and standard employment contracts recognized across comparative European labor jurisdictions.¹³ The original legislative intention was primarily aimed at providing flexible, short-term assistance to economic and non-economic organizations, particularly during summer holidays, and facilitating occasional integration into the labor market during periods when formal

¹⁰ Eurostat. (2026). *Unemployment statistics: February 2026*.

¹¹ ZRSZ - Employment Service of Slovenia. (2026). *Trg dela v številkah - Stopnja registrirane brezposelnosti*.

¹² Ignjatović, M. (2006). Položaj mladih na trgu delovne sile. *IB Revija* 40(4): 66 – 69; Senčur Peček, D. (2013). Zakonite oblike opravljanja dela. *Podjetje in delo* 39(6-7): 921 – 943; Scortegagna Kavčnik, N. (2017). Plačilo in drugi vidiki študentskega dela. *Delavci in delodajalci* 17(2/3): 243 – 262; Tičar, L. (2014). Delovnopravna problematika zaposlovanja in dela mladih. *Delavci in delodajalci* 14(2/3): 147 – 164.

¹³ Franca, V. (2020). Študentsko delo. In Kresal Šoltes, K., Strban, G. in Domadenik, P. (Eds), *Prekarno delo: multidisciplinarna analiza* (pp. 129 – 144). Ljubljana: Pravna fakulteta in Ekonomska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani.

educational processes were suspended. However, in the historical evolution of this institute, the structural and financial advantages of this type of work manifested in such a profound way that its utilization expanded disproportionately. In numerous segments of the labor market, student labor began to seriously undermine and functionally replace standard employment relationships. Judicial and inspection practices from this era recorded extensive cases where students worked continuously for the exact same employer for several years, effectively performing their duties in identical ways as regularly employed workers.¹⁴ This widespread misclassification prompted justified accusations of creating unfair competition in the labor market and operating as a systemic mechanism for social dumping.¹⁵ Today, the macroeconomic situation is substantially different. A pervasive, structural shortage of labor across almost all economic sectors has created conditions wherein the demand for student work vastly exceeds the available supply, compelling employers to proactively improve working conditions and raise hourly rates.¹⁶ While this mitigates immediate pressure for sweeping regulatory changes, it does not resolve the fundamental dogmatic problem regarding the systemic fragmentation and conceptual ambiguity of the legal framework governing this work.

The particularity of the labor law regulation of student work is most evidently manifested in the conspicuous absence of a single, unifying umbrella act that would comprehensively regulate this area. Instead, the normative framework is heavily fragmented, dispersed across numerous legal acts from vastly different domains of law. The cornerstone of this regulatory edifice is the Employment and Insurance Against Unemployment Act,¹⁷ which precisely defines the personal substrate of beneficiaries legally entitled to perform student work. The law strictly

¹⁴ Franca, V. (2025). Temeljni vidiki pravne ureditve študentskega dela. In Domadenik Muren, P. and Milošević Zupančič, V. (2025). *Mladi na trgu dela v Sloveniji*. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 5–22). Ljubljana: EF.

¹⁵ Ignjatović, M. (2006). Položaj mladih na trgu delovne sile. *IB Revija* 40(4): 66 – 69; Senčur Peček, D. (2013). Zakonite oblike opravljanja dela. *Podjetje in delo* 39(6-7): 921 – 943; Scortegagna Kavčnik, N. (2017). Plačilo in drugi vidiki študentskega dela. *Delavci in delodajalci* 17(2/3): 243 – 262; Tičar, L. (2014). Delovnopravna problematika zaposlovanja in dela mladih. *Delavci in delodajalci* 14(2/3): 147 – 164.

¹⁶ Domadenik Muren, P. and Milošević Zupančič, V. (2025). *Mladi na trgu dela v Sloveniji*. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 18–37). Ljubljana: EF.

¹⁷ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 107/06 – UPB do 95/14.

stipulates that this type of work may be performed by high school students who have reached the age of 15, university students, and adult education participants under the age of 26, provided they are actively enrolled in publicly valid educational programs, are not registered as unemployed, and do not hold a concurrent standard employment contract. The subsequent and perhaps most distinct structural feature of the Slovenian regulatory system is the mechanism of labor brokering itself. Unlike standard employment, the legal relationship is not established directly between the worker and the employer, but exclusively through authorized intermediaries, the concessionary employment agencies known as student services.¹⁸ This regulatory architecture establishes a specific, legally complex tripartite relationship. It also gives rise to a highly specific system of financing and taxation. The Fiscal Balance Act¹⁹ mandates the payment of a concession fee amounting to 16 percent of the total receipts, specifically allocated for state scholarships (6 %), the operational funding of the Student Organization of Slovenia (2,7 %),²⁰ and covering the infrastructural costs of the student services themselves (2,7 %). Because an intermediary stands directly between the student and the actual user of their labour, a classic civil law contract is not concluded directly between the performing parties; rather, the legal basis for the performance of work is constituted entirely by the student service referral form.

Even though the Employment Relationships Act, serving as the central codification of Slovenian labor law, does not regulate student work as an independent form of employment contract, it explicitly stipulates that certain fundamental protective provisions of labor law apply directly to students and pupils. These provisions primarily concern the absolute prohibition of discrimination in the workplace, adherence to provisions concerning maximum working time, mandatory breaks during the working day, and statutory daily and weekly rest periods, alongside a pronounced emphasis on the special protection of younger workers who

¹⁸ As regulated in Labour Market Regulation Act, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 80/10 – 83/25.

¹⁹ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 40/12 – 100/25.

²⁰ The Student Organization of Slovenia (ŠOS; <https://www.studentska-org.si/>) is a statutory umbrella institution uniting university and local student organizations to uniformly represent and safeguard the interests of Slovenian students, with a core mission to comprehensively improve their academic, social, and living conditions through proactive engagement in national policymaking and strategic cooperation with governmental and international bodies.

have not yet reached eighteen years of age.²¹ The issue of disguised employment relationships remains one of the most pressing and conceptually challenging issues in this field.²² By legislative design, student work is strictly occasional and temporary; however, the legislation conspicuously fails to quantify these concepts temporally, leaving a regulatory vacuum. In practice, this ambiguity sometimes leads to situations where students perform continuous work with the identical degree of personal subordination as regularly employed staff. According to established jurisprudence, if the labor inspectorate or a competent labor court determines the material existence of all constitutive elements of an employment relationship, a legal fiction is established dictating that a standard employment relationship for an indefinite period has been implicitly concluded.²³ Notwithstanding these crucial safeguards, student work remains an exceptionally flexible form of socio-economic cooperation. It provides employers with an unparalleled mechanism for immediate adaptation to sudden fluctuations in the business process, exempting them from the complex employment procedures mandated for standard hiring and students and pupils with the same flexibility when then need work or when they want to stop working.²⁴ Crucially, both parties may terminate the cooperation at any given time without observing statutory notice periods or paying severance, though this flexibility does not absolve the employer of their inherent responsibilities regarding appropriate management, daily supervision, and the provision of adequate mentorship within the work process.

A definitive turning point in the historical development of the socio-economic status of students is represented by the adoption of the Act Amending the Fiscal Balance Act in 2014, which radically intervened in the previously deregulated framework by introducing the mandatory payment of social security contributions. For the first time, student work

²¹ Articles 6, 27, 142-146, 154-156, 190-193, 177-180 and 211 of the Employment Relationship Act, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 21/13 – 70/25.

²² Franca, V. (2020). Študentsko delo. In Kresal Šoltes, K., Strban, G. in Domadenik, P. (Eds), *Prekarno delo: multidisciplinarna analiza* (pp. 129 – 144). Ljubljana: Pravna fakulteta in Ekonomska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani.

²³ Articles 4, 13 and 180 of the Employment Relationship Act, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 21/13 – 70/25. Employment Relationship Act Articles 4, 13, 18.

²⁴ Franca, V. (2020). Študentsko delo. In Kresal Šoltes, K., Strban, G. in Domadenik, P. (Eds), *Prekarno delo: multidisciplinarna analiza* (pp. 129 – 144). Ljubljana: Pravna fakulteta in Ekonomska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani.

became subject to proportionate contributions for pension and disability insurance, insurance against injury at work, and health insurance. Building upon this foundation of social solidarity, recent legislation has further expanded this array of mandatory levies. Currently, student work is explicitly subject to the newly implemented mandatory contribution for long-term care,²⁵ thereby ensuring that the system of taxation and contributions for student work is further equated with the comprehensive financial burdens arising from regular employment. An even more significant structural instrument that directly mitigates social dumping is the statutory minimum gross hourly rate. Reflecting the most recent and substantial statutory adjustments, the applicable minimum hourly rate stands definitively at 8.98 euros gross, which translates to an effective 7.73 euros net for the performing student and 12.60 euros total cost for employer.²⁶ Such an amount represents a highly pronounced, 23 percent increase compared to the previous reference period. This dramatic upward adjustment is a direct, legally mandated consequence of the statutory harmonization processes stipulated under the Minimum Wage Act,²⁷ utilizing a calculation methodology based on a standardized monthly working obligation of exactly 165 hours. With the implementation of these robust financial measures, minimum wage floors, and comprehensive social contributions, student work demonstrably no longer represents a purely cost-saving alternative for employers seeking to minimize labor expenses.

From the critical perspective of occupational safety and health, it is imperative to emphasize the overarching role of the Health and Safety at Work Act,²⁸ which explicitly equates the student with a standard worker, mandating employers to proactively guarantee the exact same high level of physical safety and ergonomic protection. While the obligation for comprehensive preliminary preventive medical examinations frequently arises, general preventive medical examinations completed within the public education system usually suffice unless the student performs specialized, high-risk tasks. Furthermore, employers are strictly obligated under the Labor and Social Security Registers Act²⁹ to meticulously record

²⁵ Long-Term Care Act, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 84/23, 112/24 and 44/25

²⁶ The minimum hourly rate for student work is legally determined on the basis of Article 130c of the Public Finance Balance Act, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 40/12 – 100/25.

²⁷ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 13/10, 92/15 and 83/18.

²⁸ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 43/11.

²⁹ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 40/06, 50/23 and 24/25.

the utilization of working time, which is vital for ensuring fair payment and constituting the evidentiary foundation for potential inspection oversight. In the effort to prevent systemic abuses, the Labor Inspection Act of 2017³⁰ granted labor inspectors enhanced enforcement powers to identify disguised employment relationships, though proving such violations remains exceptionally demanding due to high evidentiary standards and a frequent lack of interest among students in formalizing their employment.³¹ Consequently, a paramount step toward establishing greater systemic transparency was the establishment of the central student work register maintained by the Student Organization of Slovenia.³² Functioning as a verified personal electronic portfolio for students and a crucial investigative tool for state supervisory authorities, the register is extensively utilized by the Financial Administration to verify the authenticity and timeliness of issued referrals during rigorous field inspections targeting undeclared work. Statistical data unequivocally indicates that the Financial Administration exploits this digital tool significantly more intensively and successfully than the Labor Inspectorate, resulting in a limited number of formal sanctions and fines.³³ Inextricably linked to the holistic legal treatment of student work is the underlying sectoral educational legislation, as systemic abuses of the labor market in the past were largely facilitated by excessively lax academic conditions regarding the maintenance of student status. The widespread phenomenon of fictitious or phantom students—individuals who formally enrolled exclusively to obtain status for work or social rights—caused profound anomalies and distorted labor market statistics. Confronted with this crisis, the legislator intervened decisively across multiple statutes, including the Gimnazija Act,³⁴ the Vocational and Technical Education Act,³⁵ and the Higher Education Act,³⁶ to restrictively define academic

³⁰ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 19/14 and 55/17.

³¹ Reports on the Work of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for the Years 2017–2024, accessible: <https://www.gov.si/assets/organi-v-sestavu/IRSD/LETNA-POROCILA-IRSD>

³² Determined in the Article 123.a of the Labour Market Regulation Act, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 80/10 – 83/25

³³ Franca, V. (2025). Temeljni vidiki pravne ureditve študentskega dela. In Domadenik Muren, P. and Milošević Zupančič, V. (2025). *Mladi na trgu dela v Sloveniji*. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 5–22). Ljubljana: EF.

³⁴ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 1/07, 68/17, 6/18 – ZIO-1, 46/19 and 53/24.

³⁵ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 79/06, 68/17, 46/19 and 53/24.

³⁶ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 56/25.

duties. Strict limitations were introduced regarding the possibility of repeating academic years and transferring between programs. For example, the amended Higher Vocational Education Act explicitly limited the utilization of rights arising from student status to an absolute maximum of three years. The technological linchpin crucial for implementing these restrictions was the establishment of a unified national enrolment register, which allows authorities a real-time overview of an individual's academic history, effectively neutralizing systemic loopholes. Furthermore, socio-economic rights derived from student work are closely intertwined with national tax legislation and the system of social transfers. The Personal Income Tax Act³⁷ establishes a complex, tiered system of taxation depending on whether parents claim the working student as a financially dependent family member. Students are consequently incentivized to retain this status, given that it remains more beneficial for the family unit compared to surpassing the specified amount and becoming independent subjects liable for income tax. Acknowledging the specific nature of this revenue, relevant legislation consistently excludes student work income up to the annual minimum wage from being classified as standard income when assessing a family's material status for various social transfers and other financial obligations.

Despite various legislative advancements, a critical issue remains unresolved at the statutory level: the formal recognition of student work as qualifying work experience for employment conditions. Although many job advertisements require a specific duration of prior experience, which is conventionally interpreted strictly as standard employment or self-employment, students who possess *de facto* practical experience are unable to leverage it *de jure* due to the absence of a clear legal basis. Consequently, since this area is not explicitly regulated for the private sector, the decision to acknowledge student work experience remains entirely within the discretionary domain of individual employers. Conversely, in the highly formalized public sector, the situation is different. The Civil Servants Act³⁸ strictly mandates that only verified time spent in a systematized workplace requiring the exact same, or at most one level lower, formal educational qualification can be legally counted as valid work experience. For student work to be formally recognized as relevant experience in public sector employment, a mere administrative printout of accumulated hours categorically does not suffice; the candidate must meticulously submit

³⁷ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, Nos. 13/11 – 40/25.

³⁸ Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 32/25.

authentic, verifiable documents unambiguously proving they performed demanding professional work at the appropriate level of complexity. A critical evaluation of the current legal regulation of student work in Slovenia leads to the definitive conclusion that, despite numerous well-intentioned improvements over the last decade, the current framework still does not represent an optimal model of comparative labor law regulation. Its pronounced fragmentation causes a severe lack of normative coherence and overall legal clarity. The fundamental problem remains the glaring absence of a clear, temporally quantified statutory definition of the temporary and occasional nature of the work. Although successive legislative changes—particularly the mandatory payment of social security contributions, the integration of long-term care funding, the robust indexing of the minimum hourly rate, and stricter supervision of academic statuses—have significantly improved the baseline economic and social position of students, complacency is unwarranted. The establishment of a unified, comprehensive legal framework—specifically, the drafting and adoption of a new, standalone Act on Student Work that would comprehensively regulate all interconnected rights, obligations, and administrative procedures in one centralized legislative instrument—appears to be one of the most sensible, legally sound, and pressing national priorities.

3. Competence Development and Youth Employability: The Role of Early Work Experience by Student Work

In addition to the legal framework analysis in the first part, the second part of the article focuses on the dimension of competence development. Competencies can be understood as a multidimensional construct that includes an individual's skills and abilities, knowledge, motives, personality traits, values and attitudes, as well as aspects of self-image and social roles. In this article, the term competencies is understood in its broadest sense.³⁹ What is also crucial is not only the competencies that are developed by

³⁹ Boyatzis, R. E. (1982). *The competent manager: A model for effective performance*. Wiley.; Spencer, L. M. in Spencer, S. M. (1993). Definition of a »competency«. V L. M. Spencer in S. M. Spencer (ur.), *Competence at Work: Models for Superior Performance* (pp. 9–15). Wiley.; Dubois, D. D. & Rothwell, W. J. (2004). *Competency-based human resource management*. Davies-Black Publishing.; Svetlik, I. (2005). O kompetencah. V M. S. Pezdirc (ur.), *Kompetence v kadrovske praksi* (pp. 11–28). GV Izobraževanje.; Svetlik, I. in Zupan, N. (ur.). (2009). *Menedžment človeških virov*. FDV.; Svetlik, I. in Kohont, A. (2021). Analiza dela in določanje pričakovanih kompetenc sodelavcev. V A. Kohont in I. Svetlik (ur.), *Menedžment človeških virov* (pp. 121–153). FDV, Založba FDV.

young people, but the competencies required by the employers. The competencies that are perceived as the most important for young people's transition to labour market, defined by HEGESCO, are mastery of one's own field or discipline, the ability to perform well under pressure, the ability to use time efficiently, the ability to work productively with others, and the ability to use computers and the internet effectively.⁴⁰ Because of all the recent technological changes, demographical challenges, geopolitical instabilities etc., some of the competencies needed by future workers must be changed too. World Economic Forum data shows that employers expect 39 % of core skills of workers will change by 2030 and 61 % of core skills will remain the same.⁴¹ First ten needed core skills in 2025 listed by employers are: Analytical thinking; Resilience, flexibility and agility; Leadership and social influence; Creative thinking; Motivation and self-awareness; Technological literacy; Empathy and active listening; Curiosity and lifelong learning; Talent management and Service orientation and customer service.⁴² On the other hand, the skills that are on the rise from 2025 to 2030 are AI and big data (87 % net increase), Networks and cybersecurity (70 % net increase), Technological literacy (68 % net increase), Creative thinking (66 % net increase) and Resilience, flexibility and agility (66 % net increase).⁴³ Therefore, competencies will have to be developed quickly and early, already in the time education and early labour market entry.

The hybrid space between work and education increasingly challenges traditional understandings of skill formation. In Slovenia, student work represents a significant institutionalized form of youth labour market participation and is not merely a temporary employment mechanism but a structured pathway influencing the acquisition of competencies and easing the transition into regular employment. Student work is seen as a mechanism of skills formation and as a bridge between education and employment. Although student work is prevalent in Slovenia, its role in skills formation has often been under-recognised in policy debates. Conventional VET frameworks primarily focus on formal or school-

⁴⁰ Allen, J., Coenen, J., & Humburg, M. (2011). The role of higher education in producing relevant competences. In J. Allen, S. Pavlin, & R. van der Velden (Eds.), *Competencies and early labour market careers of higher education graduates in Europe* (pp. 56–57, 62–63). Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences.

⁴¹ World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of Jobs Report 2025*. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/> (p. 33).

⁴² World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of Jobs Report 2025*. (p. 36).

⁴³ World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of Jobs Report 2025*. (p. 37).

based training, overlooking the structured learning potential embedded in temporary youth employment – student work.

a)

First part of skills analysis is based on the qualitative content analysis of the comprehensive monograph *The Role of Student Work in the Slovenian Labour Market: A Legal, Economic, and Human Resource Analysis*.⁴⁴ Open-ended answers were processed through semantic qualitative coding, complemented by quantitative aggregation. The research problem addressed in this part centres on a key question: “To what extent does Slovenian student work function as a structured space for developing competencies relevant for employability and labour market integration?” Furthermore, two research questions guide the analysis: 1. Which competencies — transversal and job-specific — are developed through student work, according to empirical evidence from the monograph? 2. How does student work contribute to employability and the transition to regular employment?

Empirical findings indicate that student work in Slovenia represents an important context for competence development.⁴⁵ The most consistently reported outcomes are *transversal competencies*, particularly oral communication, teamwork and collaboration, responsibility and reliability, adaptability and flexibility, and problem-solving in everyday work situations. These skills are highlighted across student surveys, employer perspectives, and HR analyses presented in the monograph.

In addition to transversal skills, which are dominating, student work also facilitates the acquisition of *job-specific competencies*, which vary by occupational context and depend heavily on occupational category. Technical skills tend to emerge in ICT, engineering and laboratory environments, customer-service competencies in retail, logistics and hospitality, administrative and organisational competencies in office-based work, and manual skills in production-related jobs. All recognized acquired competencies by students on the Slovenian labour market through student work are enlisted in the Table 1.

⁴⁴ Domadenik Muren, P. & Franca, V. (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* “*The Role of Student Work in the Slovenian Labour Market: A Legal, Economic, and Human Resource Analysis*” (pp. 63–88). Ljubljana: EF.

⁴⁵ Kohont, A., Ruperčič, M., & Hren Topole, J. (2025). Razvoj kompetenc s študentskim delom. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 63–88). Ljubljana: FDV.

Table 1: Acquired competencies in student work (Kohont et al. 2025)

Transversal competencies	Job-specific competencies
Oral communication	Technical skills
Teamwork and collaboration	Customer-service competencies
Responsibility and reliability	Administrative and organisational competencies
Adaptability and flexibility	Manual skills
Problem-solving	

Source: (Kohont et al., 2025).⁴⁶

Beyond specific competencies, student work contributes to *broader aspects of professional development, including increased self-confidence, independence, and clearer career orientation*. Exposure to workplace practices and interactions with supervisors and colleagues enables students to develop an early understanding of organisational expectations. Accordingly, student work can be understood as a hybrid learning environment in which non-formal learning processes support both transversal and occupation-specific skill formation.⁴⁷

Furthermore, findings from Farčnik and Redek⁴⁸ and Milošević Zupančič⁴⁹ demonstrate the role of student work in employability and transition to regular employment. As for employability mechanisms student work *improves employability* through accumulation of relevant work experience, which employers perceive as valuable; signalling effects in recruitment processes; enhanced social capital (contacts, references) and the development of soft skills that align with employer expectations.

⁴⁶ Kohont, A., Ruperčič, M., & Hren Topole, J. (2025). Razvoj kompetenc s študentskim delom. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 63–88). Ljubljana: FDV.

⁴⁷ Kohont, A., Ruperčič, M., & Hren Topole, J. (2025).

⁴⁸ Farčnik, D. and Redek, T. (2025). Študentsko delo in zaposljivost diplomantov. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 87–102). Ljubljana: FDV.

⁴⁹ Milošević Zupančič, V. (2025). Karierni razvoj s študentskim delom in prehod na trg dela. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 59–86). Ljubljana: FDV.

Employers particularly emphasise reliability, communication, teamwork, and initiative.

As for the transition outcomes empirical findings show that students with relevant work experience have higher employment probability after graduation, they experience faster transition into regular employment and those in domain-related student jobs demonstrate greater job–education match upon labour market entry. Thus, student work supports both career exploration and career consolidation.

To sum up, student work fosters the development of both transversal and job-specific skills, enhancing employability and personal growth. Additionally, student work contributes to career development and eases the transition to regular employment. Relevant work experience during studies positively influences graduate employability and employment outcomes. Student work thus functions as a hybrid form of learning and working. It fosters not only professional competencies but also personal maturity and career orientation, bridging the gap between formal education and the dynamic needs of the labour market.

b)

The second skills formation part is based on the analysis of responses collected in the *national survey “Youth and the Labour Market 2025”*.⁵⁰ The survey consisted of 20 questions, including both closed-ended and open-ended questions, and mandatory and optional questions. The survey was conducted in April 2025 among pupils and students performing student work in Slovenia. They are neither regularly employed nor unemployed, but all enrolled into secondary or tertiary education, complemented by temporary student work. The survey conducted among 7,523 young people in Slovenia indicates that the core group of respondents is aged between 18 and 24 (70%). The majority are Slovenian citizens (90,1 %), remaining youth are of different nationalities enrolled into Slovenian schools and faculties (9,9 %). The largest share resides in Ljubljana (18%), followed by Maribor and other medium-sized cities. The sample is predominantly female (63%), which also reflects the higher representation of women in secondary and tertiary education.

The first aim of the analysis was to understand why do pupils and student consider student work important. The results show that primary motivations for engaging in student work are the ability to afford covering personal

⁵⁰ e-Študentski Servis. (2025). *National survey Youth and the Labour Market 2025*.

expenses (79%) and gaining work experience (78%). Over one third young respondents also highlight greater independence and the opportunity to explore different professions. All responses are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: Why Do You Consider Student Work Important? (Multiple Answers Possible)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Financial reasons: It allows me to afford additional things (e.g., driving licence, phone, trips).	5,370	79.2
Work experience: Gaining work experience during education.	5,298	78.1
Quick and reliable income (advance payments).	4,681	69.0
It provides independence and autonomy.	4,287	63.2
Opportunity to try different jobs and employers.	3,844	56.7
Helps me better understand myself (what I like and what I am good at).	3,833	56.5
Learning how to build relationships and communicate.	3,682	54.3
Work can be adjusted to school or study obligations.	3,660	54.0
Learning how to manage money.	3,183	46.9
Work counts in pension contribution period and corresponding pension contributions are paid.	3,024	44.6
Financial security and support for the family.	3,020	44.5
Opportunity to meet an employer with whom I may later be employed.	2,645	39.0
Expanding my (professional) social network.	2,443	36.0

Source: National Youth and Labour Market Survey (e-Študentski Servis, 2025).⁵¹

The second aim was to assess the extent to which student work functions as a financial support mechanism for pupils' and students' education. The survey question being the assessment of the following statement "Without student work, I would find it more difficult to financially afford my studies or education.", response options being: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree,

⁵¹ e-Študentski Servis. (2025). *National survey Youth and the Labour Market 2025*.

Disagree, Strongly disagree. The data show that student work represents financial necessity as nearly two out of five respondents (37%) report that they would find it difficult to finance their secondary or tertiary education without working, whereas approximately one quarter do not perceive such financial pressure. The results are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3: Without student work, I would find it more difficult to financially afford my studies or education.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	1,294	19
Agree	1,246	18.3
Neither agree nor disagree	1,588	23.4
Disagree	1,661	24.5
Strongly disagree	1,004	14.8

Source: National Youth and Labour Market Survey (e-Študentski Servis, 2025).⁵²

In European perspective the results of Eurostudent research show that nearly 80% of students in Eurostudent countries combine their studies with one or more paid jobs, while around 60% of all students work during their study period.⁵³ The financial dimension adds an important social-policy layer. Respondents did not describe student work only as a pathway to experience, but also as a mechanism for financing education and everyday life. The finding that 2 out of 5 respondents would have greater difficulty affording education without student work suggests that student employment plays a dual role: it supports both economic participation in education and competence accumulation. This duality complicates simplistic normative judgments. For many pupils and students, working is not merely a strategic employability investment but also a practical condition for remaining in education. In such cases, the challenge for policy is not whether student work should exist, but how it can be organised in ways that maximise developmental gains while minimising academic risks.

⁵² e-Študentski Servis. (2025). *National survey Youth and the Labour Market 2025*.

⁵³ Hauschildt, K., Gwosć, C., Schirmer, H., & Wartenbergh-Cras, F. (2021). *EUROSTUDENT VII: Synopsis of Indicators 2018–2021*. Wbv. (pp. 146–167).; Nidogon Višnjić, S., Pažur Aničić, K., & Divjak, B. (2024). A systematic review of the literature on student work and academic performance. *Industry and Higher Education*, 0(0), 1–12.

The third aim was to understand what key knowledge or experiences young people acquire through student work. We analysed responses to the open-ended, non-mandatory question: “What key knowledge or experience have you gained through student work?”. The competence analysis is based on 4,602 valid responses of secondary school pupils and tertiary education students. For the analysis, we employed reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke, which comprises five stages: (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, and (5) reporting the results.⁵⁴

Quantitative overview of the frequency of key terms: An analysis of the most frequently occurring words in the responses indicates that the most prominent terms include communication, work with people, responsibility, independence, patience, organisation, cooperation, knowledge, experience, self-confidence, skills, relationships, and adaptability. This suggests that most respondents identified soft skills, personal effectiveness, professional competencies, and adaptability as the key forms of knowledge gained through student work.

Thematic analysis of responses: Using thematic analysis according to the model proposed by Braun and Clarke⁵⁵, the responses clearly reveal the main themes. From 4,602 open-ended responses, we applied inductive coding and grouped similar codes to identify five main themes, presented in Table 4.

⁵⁴ Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) *Using thematic analysis in psychology, Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

⁵⁵ Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) *Using thematic analysis in psychology, Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

Table 4: Thematic analysis of responses: Key knowledge and skills enlisted by students and pupils

Theme	Examples of Subthemes from Responses
Development of Soft Skills	Communication (“communication, working with people”), teamwork (“teamwork, collaboration within a team”), patience, conflict resolution
Personal Effectiveness and Autonomy	Independence, responsibility, self-confidence, assertiveness (“standing up for oneself”), time management
Professional and Organisational Competencies	Work organisation, business communication, project management, work habits, administrative knowledge
Technical and Digital Skills	IT skills (e.g., Excel, programming, use of CRM systems), digital literacy
(Contextual) Understanding of the Work Environment	Understanding organisational culture, insight into company processes, understanding hierarchy, ethical aspects

Source: National Youth and Labour Market Survey (e-Študentski Servis, 2025).⁵⁶

The most prevalent theme is the *development of soft skills*, with communication emerging as the most prominent competency acquired through student work. Communication is mentioned in more than one third of the responses, often in connection with working with people, conflict resolution, negotiation, and expressing oneself in different situations. Respondents emphasise that effective communication is fundamental for workplace success and for building positive professional relationships. In addition to communication, teamwork and the ability to adapt to different groups represent an important component of soft skills, which respondents associate with greater flexibility and learning in real work environments.

A second major theme is *personal effectiveness and autonomy*, where respondents highlight the development of self-confidence, assertiveness, responsibility, and time management skills. These aspects are frequently linked to increased independence at work and broader personal development. Within the category of *professional and organisational competencies*, respondents mention work organisation, business

⁵⁶ e-Študentski Servis. (2025). *National survey Youth and the Labour Market 2025*.

communication, project management, and the development of work habits, indicating the acquisition of practical professional knowledge and skills necessary for the effective performance of job tasks. *Technical and digital skills* are also frequently emphasised. Respondents report gaining competencies such as working with computer software (e.g., Excel), using digital tools (e.g., CRM systems), and basic digital literacy, which enhance their competitiveness in the labour market. Finally, the theme of *(contextual) understanding of the work environment* includes insights into organisational culture, work processes, organisational hierarchy, and ethical considerations, enabling respondents to better understand the broader workplace context and employers' expectations.

Examples of respondents' statements on competencies gained through student work:

"Communication. I now have a better understanding of the real situation in companies—there is theory, and then there is reality, which is often quite different."

"Communication, responsibility, and working under pressure."

"Time management, writing emails, and business communication."

"Adapting to different teams."

"Understanding how corporate culture functions and becoming familiar with HR systems."

"How work is organised in offices and larger companies, and how to deal with demanding people."

"Digital literacy and advanced work in Excel."

"I improved my level of business communication (both oral and written), enhanced my Excel skills, learned how to respond in stressful situations, how to work in a team, and how to stand up for myself."

In addition to positive experiences, some responses also contain *critical reflections*, in which respondents highlight negative aspects of student work, such as exploitation, stress, and a perceived lack of meaning in certain jobs. These responses indicate an awareness of labour market realities and the challenges young people encounter in early work experiences.

The analysis of open-ended responses confirms that young people most frequently report acquiring soft skills during student work—particularly communication and teamwork—as well as personal effectiveness (independence, responsibility), professional competencies (organisation, business communication), technical skills, and a better understanding of the work environment. *Communication and teamwork emerge as the most prominent themes*, suggesting that respondents perceive social skills as fundamental for successful integration into the workplace and for their future career development. The responses also indicate that young

people's experiences vary considerably depending on the type of student job, employer, and work environment. While some respondents report opportunities for more independent work and competence development, others highlight challenges such as limited support or the repetitive nature of certain tasks.

Based on the analysis of open-ended responses, it can be concluded that student work does not only involve the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills, but also represents an important process of personal development. Respondents report increased self-confidence, independence, and a greater capacity to take responsibility, which supports their further personal and professional development. Student work therefore contributes significantly to employability, personal growth, and preparation for future career challenges.

Prevailing reasons for engaging in student work for pupils and students are the ability to afford covering personal and gaining work experience. Student work functions as a financial support mechanism for pupils' and students' education, as 2 out of 5 respondents claim they would find it more difficult to financially afford their education without it. Key knowledge and skills acquired by student work, enlisted by students in pupils, includes: Development of soft skills (with communication being the most frequent answer), personal effectiveness and autonomy, professional and organisational competencies, technical and digital skills and (contextual) understanding of the work environment.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from the analysed sources indicate that the competencies developed through student work correspond closely to several key competencies identified in the HEGESCO project as particularly important for graduates' transition to the labour market. These include mastery of one's own field or discipline, the ability to perform well under pressure, the ability to use time efficiently, the ability to work productively with others, and the ability to use computers and the internet effectively.⁵⁷ The alignment between competencies reported by respondents and those identified in the HEGESCO framework suggests that student work may represent an important complementary environment for the development

⁵⁷ Allen, J., Coenen, J., & Humburg, M. (2011). The role of higher education in producing relevant competences. In J. Allen, S. Pavlin, & R. van der Velden (Eds.), *Competencies and early labour market careers of higher education graduates in Europe* (pp. 56–57, 62–63). Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences. Allen et al., 2011.

of skills relevant to early career integration. These studies support the argument that employability is built on a combination of field-specific knowledge and transversal competencies rather than on disciplinary knowledge alone.

The respondents' emphasis on soft skills (communication), personal effectiveness and autonomy, organisational competencies, and technical and digital skills indicates that student work functions as a hybrid learning environment, combining elements of formal education, learning from experience and early socialisation into workplace norms. In this respect, the results reinforce the view that employability is not determined only by formal qualifications, but also by the extent to which students are able to develop transferable and job-relevant competencies before graduation. This interpretation is consistent with OECD research showing that part-time work alongside education can help young people build technical and soft skills, build social networks, strengthen career confidence and planning, thus improving later labour-market transitions, while excessive work may undermine educational attainment and can have negative effects on academic achievement.⁵⁸

The results also fit well with current labour-market expectations. The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025, based on responses from more than 1,000 employers representing over 14 million workers across 55 economies, identifies analytical thinking as the most sought-after core skill, followed by resilience, flexibility and agility, and leadership and social influence.⁵⁹ At the same time, the fastest-growing skills include AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity, and technological literacy, while curiosity and lifelong learning continue to rise in importance.⁶⁰ The present findings correspond to this broader trend: student work appears to strengthen precisely those human-centred and adaptive capabilities that employers increasingly value in volatile labour markets. Even where student jobs are not highly specialised, they may still create value by fostering communication, responsibility, self-organisation, and contextual understanding of work settings—competencies that are increasingly central in labour-market resilience.

Competencies that are developed in student work strengthen young people's human capital. That is why student work facilitates the

⁵⁸ OECD (2025), "Teenage part-time working: How schools can optimise benefits and reduce risks for secondary school students", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 116, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/0dd35152-en>.

⁵⁹ World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of Jobs Report 2025*.

⁶⁰ World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of Jobs Report 2025*.

development of human capital, and in relation to academic performance it can be interpreted through several theoretical perspectives.⁶¹ Also, other relevant literature shows that part-time work during education also builds social, cultural and human capital.⁶²

An additional contribution of the present study is the finding that student work supports not only competence development, but also career orientation and the transition into regular employment.⁶³ This is in line with comparative European evidence showing that work experience acquired during higher education can improve post-graduation occupational outcomes. Passaretta and Triventi, comparing graduates across four European countries, found that work experience during tertiary education was associated with better labour-market positions after graduation, especially where such experience reduced unemployment risk and skill mismatch.⁶⁴ Student work is beneficial not simply because students work, but because work can provide signalling value, skill acquisition, networks and career information.⁶⁵

Overall, the present findings support the argument that student work can serve as an important bridge between education and employment by fostering transversal skills, practical know-how, personal maturity and

⁶¹ Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. The University of Chicago Press.; Becker, G. S. (2006). The age of human capital. V H. Lauder, P. Brown, J.-A. Dillabough in A. H. Halsey (ur.). *Education, Globalization and Social Change* (pp. 292–294). Oxford University Press.; Nidogon Višnjić, S., Pažur Aničić, K., & Divjak, B. (2024). A systematic review of the literature on student work and academic performance. *Industry and Higher Education*, 0(0), 1–12. (pp. 2–3).

⁶² OECD (2021), “Experiencing the workplace: The importance and benefits for teenagers”. *OECD Education Policy Perspectives*, No. 45, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁶³ Farčnik, D. and Redek, T. (2025). Študentsko delo in zaposljivost diplomantov. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 87–102). Ljubljana: FDV.; Kohont, A., Ruperčič, M., & Hren Topole, J. (2025). Razvoj kompetenc s študentskim delom. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 63–88). Ljubljana: FDV.; Milošević Zupančič, V. (2025). Karierni razvoj s študentskim delom in prehod na trg dela. In P. Domadenik Muren & V. Franca (Eds.), *Vloga študentskega dela na trgu dela v Sloveniji* (pp. 59–86). Ljubljana: FDV.

⁶⁴ Passaretta, G. & Triventi, M. (2015). Work experience during higher education and post-graduation occupational outcomes: A comparative study on four European countries. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 56(3–4).

⁶⁵ Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. The University of Chicago Press; Becker, G. S. (2006). The age of human capital. V H. Lauder, P. Brown, J.-A. Dillabough in A. H. Halsey (ur.). *Education, Globalization and Social Change* (pp. 292–294). Oxford University Press; Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3): pp. 355–374.

clearer career orientation. They also align with the broader European and global literature indicating that employability increasingly depends on a combination of generic, adaptive and work-contextual competencies. However, the findings also point to an important nuance: the developmental value of student work is not guaranteed. It is highest when work is moderate in intensity, offers meaningful learning opportunities, and—ideally—has at least some connection to students' educational or career trajectories. Future research should therefore move beyond the binary question of whether student work is beneficial and examine more precisely under what conditions, for whom, and through which mechanisms student work contributes to employability and social mobility.

The insights extracted from this analysis illustrate that student work in Slovenia should not be understood merely as an income-generating activity, but as a critical developmental context in which young people acquire competencies highly relevant for later labor-market participation. However, capitalizing on these human-resource benefits is inextricably linked to the underlying legal architecture, which currently suffers from pronounced fragmentation and normative ambiguity. While recent legislative reforms have improved the socio-economic position of students through minimum wage guarantees and social security contributions, the fundamental absence of a clear statutory definition regarding the temporary and occasional nature of student work continues to blur the line between educational support and disguised employment. To truly optimize the systemic role of student work as a laboratory for skill development, adopting a unified and comprehensive legal framework remains a pressing national priority to secure legal clarity and protect young workers from systemic abuse.

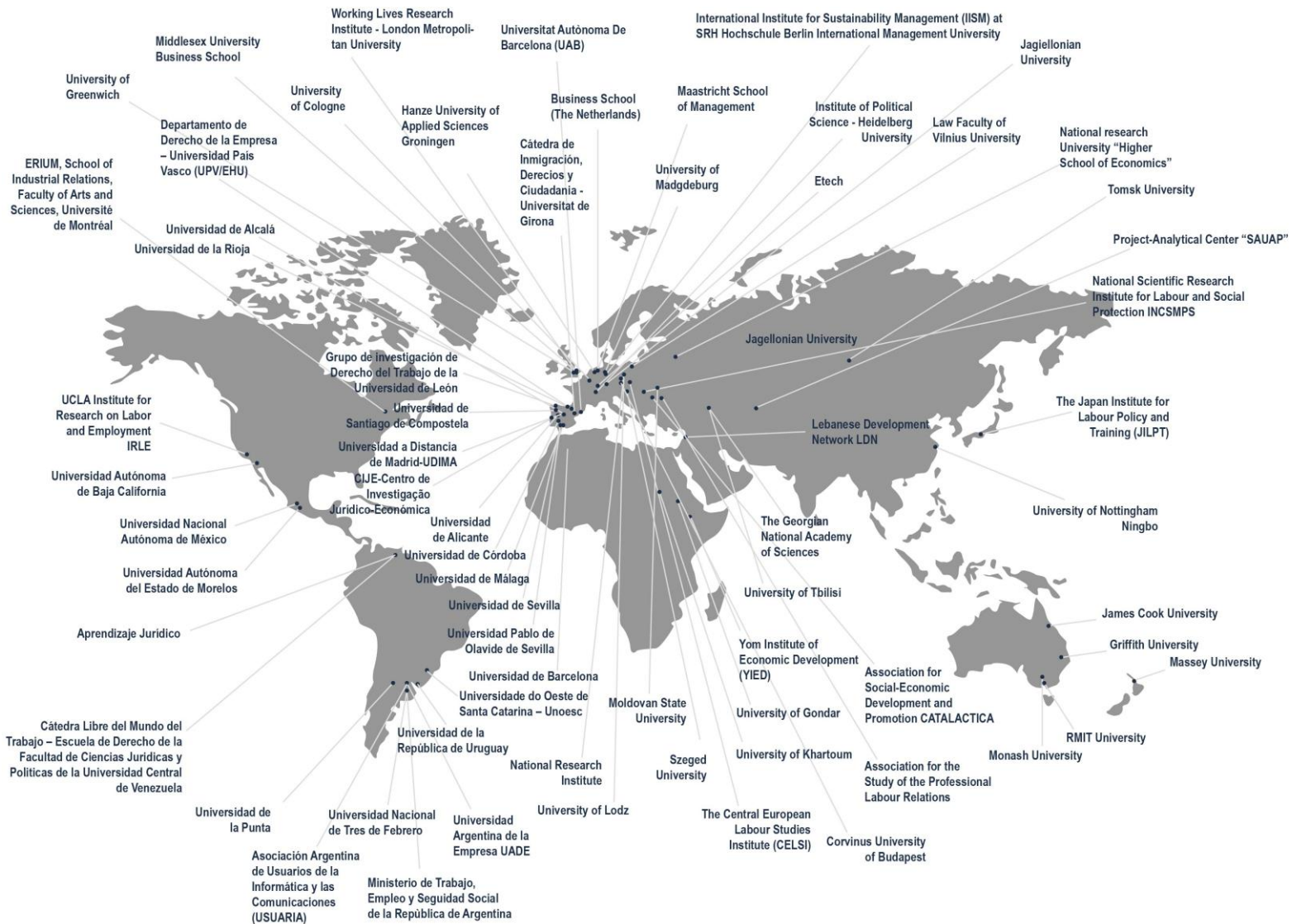
Within this evolving legal landscape, new legislative proposals are emerging that seek to redefine the boundaries of student economic participation, most notably the recent initiative by the New Slovenia (NSi) party to introduce a specific student self-employed status (*študentski s.p.*).⁶⁶ Under the current regulatory framework, students who wish to formalize their entrepreneurial ventures by opening a sole proprietorship immediately forfeit their student status benefits, including health insurance through parents, scholarships, and subsidized living and transport. The proposed legislation aims to eliminate this barrier by

⁶⁶ RTVSLO. (2026). V NSi-ju predlagajo poseben zakon za podjetne študente, accessible: <https://www.rtvsllo.si/slovenija/v-nsi-ju-predlagajo-poseben-zakon-za-podjetne-studente/760142>

allowing young people to operate a business up to a certain income threshold while retaining their vital socio-economic student rights, utilizing a reduced contribution model akin to supplementary or "afternoon" sole proprietorships. This introduces a paradigm shift in how student labour is conceptualized, prompting a critical debate on whether such a measure would ultimately foster youth entrepreneurship or inadvertently harm the established institution of student work.

From an economic and human capital perspective, the introduction of a student self-employed status possesses substantial potential to foster genuine entrepreneurship. It would provide a secure incubator for innovative students to test business ideas, commercialize digital or specialized skills, and seamlessly transition into the regular economy without facing punitive tax burdens or the abrupt loss of their social safety net. By directly rewarding initiative, this status aligns seamlessly with the growing labour market demand for resilience, adaptability, and self-organization. Conversely, from a strict labour-law perspective, this proposal carries significant risks of exacerbating precariousness and undermining the protective mechanisms of traditional student work. Just as standard student labour has historically been exploited to bypass regular employment contracts, a student self-employed status could be weaponized by employers to enforce bogus self-employment. Companies might pressure students to open their own business entity to shift the burden of social security and operational risks entirely onto the young worker, thereby deteriorating their social security and distorting fair competition. Therefore, while legally formalizing student entrepreneurship is a progressive step toward dynamic skills formation, it must be accompanied by stringent regulatory safeguards and rigorous labour inspection oversight to ensure it serves as a launchpad for young innovators rather than a new avenue for labour market exploitation.

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