

REGIONAL RESEARCH PAPER

**YOUTH
POLICIES
IN THE
WESTERN
BALKANS
AND THE
EU**



Wilfried
Martens Centre
for European Studies



**KONRAD
ADENAUER
STIFTUNG**

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Authors:

Ivan Jovanov and Ilija Stankovski



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Authors:

Ivan Jovanov
Ilija Stankovski

Coordination:

Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes
Davor Pasoski

Proofreading:

Tiina Fahrni

Design and Preparation:

Dejan Kuzmanovski

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WHY THIS PAPER?

Promises to young people tend to top the list during campaign seasons and plunge down during governing seasons. Young people tend to be branded as the future of the society, but how much are they really the present?

The situation of young people in the European (EU) context and the context of the Western Balkans 6 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo,¹ Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro) is riddled with ongoing challenges such as youth unemployment, which, in the EU, amounted to 15% in 2019² (with peaks of more than 30% in several EU countries). In the WB6 countries, meanwhile, the youth unemployment rate is among the highest in the world with 35%.³

While young people in the WB6 countries show considerable interest in politics and voting, they are clearly under-represented in politics and share a feeling of not being valued. Research for various International organisations (such as UNDP and the Westminster Foundation) shows that between 55% and 84% of the young people in WB6 voted in the last national elections, which is way above the national average in those countries. At the same time, according to Eurobarometer, the high turnout at the European elections in 2019 was driven by a rise in the involvement of young people, with more young citizens under the age of 25 (+14 per cent more than in 2014) and 25-39 year olds (+12 per cent more than in 2014) voting.

- 1 This designation is without prejudice to the positions expressed by the EU Member States on Kosovo's status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice Opinion of 22 July 2010 on Kosovo's declaration of independence.
- 2 European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036#:~:text=More%20than%203.3%20million%20young,\(NEETs\)%20in%20the%20EU](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1036#:~:text=More%20than%203.3%20million%20young,(NEETs)%20in%20the%20EU).
- 3 Economic Issues in the Western Balkans, European Fund for the Balkans and Democracy for Development, 2019, p.3

The WB6 countries and the EU also share a demographic issue, albeit in a different sense: on the one hand, the so-called “brain drain” of highly skilled workers damages the economies and societies in the WB countries, while on the other, the European Union is faced with an increased ageing of the population.

Several key European and regional initiatives have been launched during the last years, especially for the WB6 region, in order to bring it closer to the EU, but also to strengthen the cooperation among young people. The EU remains the main strategic partner of the region, providing funds and support through various programmes (IPA, Erasmus+, etc). Further on, building upon the successful example of the Franco-German Youth Office, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)⁴ was launched in 2016 in order to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region by means of youth exchange programs.

However, considering the issues and data mentioned above, the question arises how much political parties, the key policy makers in all countries, focus on and prioritise young people and youth policies. How are youth policies structured, and do they reflect the needs of young people?

Based on those questions, we decided to launch this research paper to examine the quality of youth policies and its development within the EPP and KAS partner parties in the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as in Croatia and Slovenia. The latter are included due to their closeness to the region and their membership in the EU.

4 More about the work of RYCO is available at: <https://www.rycowb.org/>

WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE?

In this paper, we used two main approaches:

1. DESK ANALYSIS:

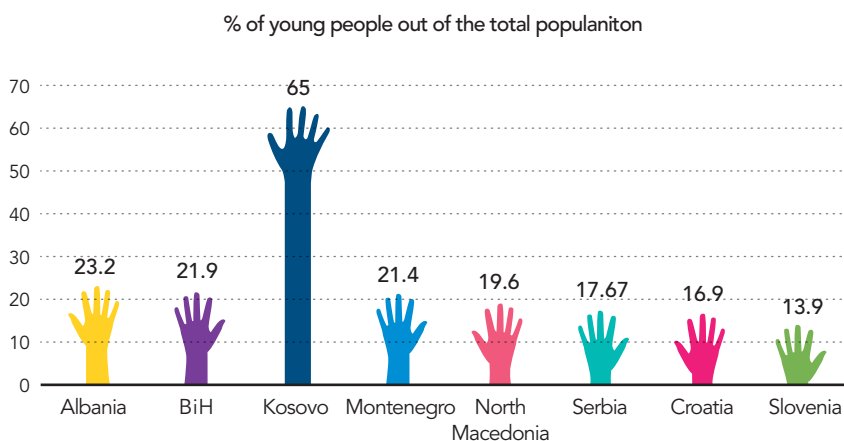
- › analysis of key youth policies and documents in the European Union;
- › analysis of key youth policies and documents in the Western Balkans region.

2. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS:

semi-structured interviews with 9 representatives of EPP-affiliated and KAS partner parties were conducted in order to determine how youth policies are structured and what the role of young people in policy development is.

KEY FINDINGS

The status of young people in the targeted countries is either regulated with a specific law (i.e. Law on Youth, Law on Youth Participation) or a key strategic document, such as a national strategy. The age range for defining young people lies between 15 and 30. Generally, WB6 countries have a larger percentage of youth population with regard to the total population than the European Union, as can be seen from the chart below:



National dimension of youth policies

Except for Albania and Croatia, all countries have some form of legal regulation of the status and definition of young people. The most common type is a law on youth, which can be found in BiH, Serbia, and Montenegro, followed by a law on youth participation, as in Kosovo and North Macedonia. It should be mentioned that Slovenia was the first country in the region to regulate the status of young people, lifting it on a level of public interest by means of the Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector.

| COUNTRY | LEGAL REGULATION OF YOUTH STATUS | TYPE OF LAW |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Albania | NO | / |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | YES | Law on Youth |
| Kosovo | YES | Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth |
| Montenegro | YES | Law on Youth |
| North Macedonia | YES | Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies |
| Serbia | YES | Law on Youth |
| Croatia | NO | / |
| Slovenia | YES | Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector |

Key documents on young people

| COUNTRY | TYPE OF KEY DOCUMENT |
|------------------------|---|
| Albania | National Youth Action Plan |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Law on Volunteer Work |
| Kosovo | National Youth Strategy |
| Montenegro | National Youth Strategy |
| North Macedonia | National Youth Strategy |
| Serbia | National Youth Strategy |
| Croatia | National Youth Program |
| Slovenia | -Youth Council Act -National Programme for Youth |

The most common key document for improving the status of young people is the national youth strategy, which is adopted by the governments and usually is drafted for a 10-year period. Exceptions from this practice are Albania, Croatia and Slovenia, which do not have any national youth programmes or action plans, while Bosnia and Herzegovina has a document only in the area of volunteering.

Structures for dealing with youth issues

| COUNTRY | TYPE OF STRUCTURE |
|------------------------|--|
| Albania | National Youth Service |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | -Commission for Coordination of Youth issues in BiH -Youth municipal officers |
| Kosovo | -Municipal Directorates for Culture, Youth, and Sports -Youth Action Councils |
| Montenegro | / |
| North Macedonia | -Parliamentarian Club for Youth Affairs and Policies |
| Serbia | -Fund for Young Talents -Youth Council -Local Youth Offices |
| Croatia | Youth Advisory Boards |
| Slovenia | National Youth Council |

Youth structures are the most diverse category in this paper, as each country has introduces different national and local bodies. Each country has a youth ministry, agency or department. Only Montenegro lack other structures, apart from those.

Serbia and Slovenia both have national youth councils regulated by law, which is a good practice. Kosovo and Croatia have local youth councils which are also regulated by law, while BiH has adopted youth municipal officers. North Macedonia has a unique informal structure, namely the Parliamentar Club for Youth Affairs and Policies, while Albania has a national youth service.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON YOUTH POLICIES

EU Youth Strategy

The EU Youth Strategy represents the framework for EU youth policy cooperation 2019 – 2027, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018. The EU Youth Strategy focuses on three core areas of action around the three words **engage, connect, and empower**. **Engage:** The EU Youth Strategy aims towards a meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people.⁵ **Connect:** Young people in Europe are getting more and more connected. Relations, connections, and exchange of experience are a pivotal asset for solidarity and the future development of the European Union. This connection is best fostered through different forms of mobility. **Empower:** Empowerment of young people means encouraging them to take charge of their own lives. Today, young people across Europe are facing diverse challenges and youth work in all its forms can serve as a catalyst for empowerment. The EU Youth Strategy is based on several instruments, such as mutual learning activities, Future National Activities Planners, the EU Youth Dialogue, the EU Youth Strategy Platform, and evidence-base tools.

11 European Youth Goals

During a 2017-2018 dialogue process, which involved young people from all over the European Union and was aimed at collecting their voices and contribute together to creating the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, 11 European Youth Goals were developed:

1. Connecting EU with Youth;
2. Equality of All Genders;
3. Inclusive Societies;
4. Information & Constructive Dialogue;
5. Mental Health & Wellbeing;
6. Moving Rural Youth Forward;

5 The EU Youth Strategy is available at: https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy/engage_en

7. Quality Employment for All;
8. Quality Learning;
9. Space and Participation for All;
10. Sustainable Green Europe;
11. Youth Organisations & European Programmes.

These goals identify cross-sectoral areas that affect young people's lives and point out challenges, thereby representing views of young people from all over Europe.

Youth priorities of the European People's Party

The European People's Party (EPP) is a European political party whose member parties are Christian-democratic, conservative and liberal-conservative. It includes 83 parties and partners from 43 countries and is the largest and most influential political family. The EPP's main goal is a democratic, transparent and efficient Europe that is close to its citizens.

The EPP's main document on youth issues is the *EPP Manifesto 2019*.⁶ **"Let's open the next chapter for Europe together"**, created for the 2019 elections to the European Parliament. Therein, young people of Europe are mentioned in four priorities.

Within the thematic area **"We take care of our families"**, young people are mentioned in the first objective, namely improving the housing situation for young people for them to be able to raise a family.

Furthermore, young people are a target group within the priorities for decreasing youth unemployment within the thematic area **"We will create a dynamic economy that creates 5 million new jobs"** which focuses on igniting the spirit of entrepreneurship and providing financing schemes.

The thematic area **"We will create new opportunities for young people"** is entirely focused on increasing the opportunities for young people to preserve their way of life in their own home communities and find quality jobs. This part targets two main goals: *a) expanding the Erasmus programmes for all, especially non-academics and b) expanding the DiscoverEU Interrail for all 18-year-olds.*

6 EPP Manifesto, "Let's open the next chapter for Europe together", 2019, available of the following link: <https://www.epp.eu/papers/epp-manifesto/>

Young people are also mentioned in the first goal of the thematic area **“We defend strong farmers growing healthy food”**, in terms of providing additional incentives for both young and female farmers in order to safeguard the future of the rural areas.

Youth of the European People’s Party

Youth of the European People’s Party (YEPP) is an umbrella organisation of European political youth organisations and the official youth wing of the European People’s Party. YEPP brings together 63 centre-right youth political organisations from 39 European countries.

Youth Election Manifesto 2019: Youth of the European People’s Party

Young people and policies within the European People’s Party are first and foremost represented by YEPP. On a European level, youth-related questions and issues are currently covered by the YEPP Election Manifesto 2019.⁷

The Election Manifesto 2019 was YEPP’s youth election programme for the 2019 elections to the European Parliament, defining YEPP’s priorities regarding the young people of Europe. It consists of 5 main priorities, namely:

1. Digital Europe
2. Climate change
3. Social cohesion
4. Sustainable Europe
5. Future of Europe

The first priority, **“Digital Europe”**, is focused on tackling challenges and opportunities arising from digital technology in two main areas: **education** and **job creation**. Facing the loss of jobs that are replaced by artificial intelligence, the implementation of changing work models, as well as a significant stagnation of incomes in advanced economies, access to modern **education** that nurtures the skill sets for tomorrow’s labour market is a key priority. Further investments in educational infrastructure are necessary to foster the development of innovative and enterprising young people who are the bearers of the new development cycle in Europe. The EU’s ERASMUS+ programme needs support in order to further foster cooperation in education, vocational training, youth and sports, in addition to youth mobility. In the area of **job creation**, it is necessary

7 Election Manifesto, Youth of European People’s Party, 2019, available at: http://youthpepp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EUE2019_Manifesto.pdf

to build business environments for young entrepreneurs who create jobs and provide new added-value to the EU's economy.

Reducing climate change is the main goal within the second priority, **"Climate change"**. This goal is planned to be achieved by creating new sustainable solutions to decrease the use of fossil fuels and coal, accommodating start-ups and the voluntary sector, as well as businesses that pursue more environment friendly solutions, in order to take a step towards a more sustainable future. EU investments in renewable energy sources should be increased, and thereby, more alternatives for the people will be created, moving away from a waste economy towards a circular economy and thus making an effort to save the oceans for the future generations, as well as encouraging the private sector to make similar choices.

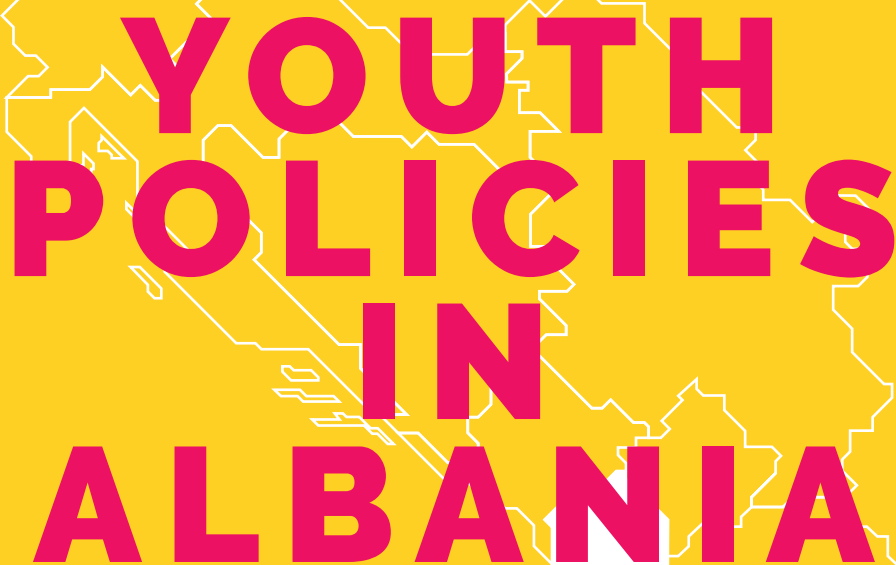
"Social cohesion", the third main priority, aims to decrease economic, social and demographic imbalances across Europe, to tackle the negative demographic trends amplified by the brain drain phenomenon that generates additional social inequalities between different European regions.

To achieve social cohesion, it is vital to develop ways to expedite inclusion, to strengthen social cohesion mechanisms, and to create more equal opportunities for young Europeans, both in urban and rural areas. A demographic revitalisation has to be initiated by creating quality and well-paid jobs, making affordable housing available for young people and young families, as well as ensuring a good work-life balance.

The fourth priority, **"Sustainable Europe"**, aims to ease the effects of the global changes caused by technological progress, globalisation, and shifting demographics by engaging the European Institutions, Member States and social partners in a social dialogue with the aim of both developing a new social contract and preparing for the future of the European Social Market Economy.

Last but not least, the priority **"Future of Europe"** addresses two main areas. In the area of **integration**, stronger common policies should be created on EU level, addressing security, such as the fight against terrorism and organised crime, defence policies and securing external borders, as well as climate policy. With regard to the **institutional framework**, an institutional architecture that addresses current deficiencies and systemic challenges has to be created. Within this area, YEPP demands increasing the flexibility of procedures in order to achieve more efficiency in decision making.

COUNTRY REPORT



**YOUTH
POLICIES
IN
ALBANIA**



YOUTH POLICIES IN ALBANIA

Overview

Albania does not have a youth law yet. Therefore, there is no legal definition of youth by age. Youth is not mentioned as a legal concept in the Albanian Constitution either. The single important youth policy document is the National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020, in which youth is defined by the age of 15-29. The same age definition is used by the Institute of Statistics in Tirana (INSTAT), based on research and statistic demands.

According to the last statistics published by INSTAT, the age group 15 - 29 constitutes 23,2% of the overall population, or 661 365 persons.⁸

National dimension of youth policy

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MESY) is the designated institution for creating and monitoring the implementation of youth policies in the Republic of Albania, but youth issues are not restricted to this ministry. The Ministry of Finance and Economy is responsible for youth entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Justice for juvenile delinquency, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection for youth health and social inclusion, etc. Within the MESY, the Youth Development Programme Sector is responsible for youth issues, supervised by the Directory of Programme Development for Education, Sports and Youth. The National Youth Service (NYS) is responsible for implementing youth policies by means of Regional Youth Centres (RYCs). On the other hand, there is also a parliamentary committee that discusses youth issues, namely the Committee for Education and Public Information Tools.

8 Report on the population of Albania as of 1st of January 2020, Institute of statistics – Tirana (INSTAT), February 2020, available at: http://instat.gov.al/media/6850/population-on-1-january-2020__.pdf

In 2015, Albania introduced the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS), an advisory body affiliated to the Prime Minister's Office responsible for ensuring cooperation between state institutions and civil society organisations. The role of the NCCS is to increase transparency in public decision making by greater engagement of the civil society in the process. Youth organisations are represented in the Council.

Based on the Administrative Reform that was legally finalised in 2014, the Republic of Albania is composed of 61 municipalities. Local youth structures are created based on the municipalities' strategic priorities, but there is not yet a by-law on mandatory administrative structures on the local level.

YOUTH LEGISLATION

National Youth Action Plan

The National Youth Action Plan (NYAP) 2015-2020⁹ is the sole legal act to regulate the implementation of youth activities at the local and national level. It was adopted in 2015 by the Government of Albania.

Compared to the previous Action Plan, the NYAP consists of concrete activities, each of them containing indicators, budget costs, responsible entities and time frames. The idea behind this action plan was to draft a concrete and measurable document to improve youth quality of life and enhance their status by the creation of additional opportunities, to develop and coordinate cross-sectoral youth policies in education, employment, health, culture, as well as to increase full youth participation in society and decision making.

National Employment and Skills Strategy¹⁰

The main objective of this strategy is to identify and design proper employment promotion and vocational training policies in order to create quality jobs and life-long employment opportunities. The strategy centres on increasing decent

9 National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020, published by the The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY), available at: https://albania.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/no.41-%20plani%20kombetar%20i%20veprimit%20per%20rinine%202015-2020_ENG.pdf

10 National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY), available at: https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/NESS-ENG-8-1-15_final-version.pdf

work opportunities by efficient labour market policies, offering quality vocational education and training for youth and adults, promoting social inclusion and cohesion, as well as strengthening the labour market and qualification system. In accordance with the government's programme, this strategy considers vocational training and employment as two limbs of the same body, implying that vocational education and training services are closely linked to employment services. The aim is to provide vocational training opportunities to jobseekers, which can lead to their employment afterwards.

Regional dimension of youth policy

Albania is one of the founding partners of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), an independent institutional mechanism. Co-founders are Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. RYCO aims to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation among the youth in the region through several youth exchange programmes.

European dimension of youth policy

Albania has been a partner of the Council of Europe in the framework of several projects. The Council's Programmatic Co-operation Document 2015-2017 on Albania addresses youth in terms of support to the development and implementation of an open, evidence-based and inclusive youth policy, with young people participating in its definition and implementation. The Directory for Coordination of Youth Policy serves as a contact point for the No Hate Speech Campaign launched by the Council of Europe in 2012, which aims to combat online racism discrimination by mobilising young people and youth organisations to recognise and act against these human rights violations.

Albania participates in several international boards, conferences and campaigns which aim to increase collaboration with important youth actors.



THE CASE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ALBANIA AND THE YOUTH FORUM OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY¹¹

The Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë, PDSH) has been an associate member of EPP since 2003 and is one of the two largest political parties in the country, however currently in opposition.

The Youth Forum of the Democratic Party (Forumi Rinor i Partisë Demokratike, FRPD) is the main platform for young people within the party.

| | |
|--|---|
| Decision making potential | The chair of the Youth Forum is an ex officio member of the General Board of the political party. |
| Young persons ¹² in key positions | None ¹³ |
| Process of defining youth priorities | The youth priorities of the Democratic Party of Albania are defined by the Youth Forum in their entirety, based on state data and research conducted by civil society organisations, as well as questionnaires and polls conducted with young people in the entire country. |
| Means for detecting needs of young people | The Youth Forum is conducting polls on different youth-related topics with different target groups among young people. |

11 The data was obtained during an in-depth interview with Mr. Belind Kellici, President of the Youth Forum, on 25.11.2020.

12 The EU Strategy defines young people as persons between 15 and 29. Most EU countries define young people as persons between 14/15 and 29/30. There are some countries that adhere to the “prolonged youth age model” with 35 years as the upper limit, such as Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Ukraine. For the purposes of this paper, we also adhere to that model for the definition of young persons in key political positions.

13 All of the PDSH Members of Parliament resigned from their posts in 2019.

| | |
|---|---|
| Main priorities for young people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment, with a focus on providing 10000 paid internships and reducing taxes for companies that employ young people up to 29 years. - Quality of education, with a focus on reducing tuition fees, increasing the budget for education and research, and improving student dormitories. |
| Recommendations for increased influence of young people | Introducing a quality youth law, establishing youth centres, creating policies for improving the sector of tourism as a potential for economic growth. |

Good practice example regarding decision making:

The statute of the party guarantees that the Youth Forum will be represented in the party's highest decision-making body, the General Council, with no less than 15% of the composition, and that at least 10% of the winning spots in national and local elections be designated for members of the Youth Forum.



"Now, for the first time, we as a youth wing are fully involved in the process of defining the youth priorities, and for the first time, the youth programme and priorities are created by us."

"The influence of the young people is huge, since Albania is experiencing very turbulent political times."

"We need policies that will target the two main issues, education and youth employment, and create a better living environment for the young people"

Belind Kellici

COUNTRY REPORT

YOUTH POLICIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZE- GOVINA



YOUTH POLICIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Overview

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are two definitions of youth, which are, however, basically similar. They can be found in two laws that regulate youth matters: the “Law on the Youth of the Federation of BiH” and the “Republika Srpska (RS) Law on Youth Organising”.

In the Federation of BiH, “young people” or “youth” stands for persons aged 15 to 30; while in RS, youth are defined as aged 16 to 30. Based on the Demographic Statistics Bulletin¹⁴ and the last census conducted in 2019, there are 773,850 young persons, accounting for 21,9% of the total population.

National dimension of youth policy

At the state level, within the BiH Council of Ministers, youth issues are addressed by the Commission for the Coordination of Youth issues in BiH (CCYI BiH) in terms of their coordination within the country, with the international community, and with the non-governmental sector. Following the 2009 decision of the BiH Council of Ministers, the CCYI BiH became a standing body within the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH. Except for the CCYI BiH, there are no significant youth-related capacities within the BiH Council of Ministers.

Within the Ministry of Civil Affairs, there is no division in charge of youth. The Division for Science and Culture within this Ministry provides technical assistance to the CCYI BiH.

There are youth officers in 50 municipalities, i.e. government servants who, among other things, deal with youth issues. They represent a link between the municipality administration and youth associations. Having passed a training for youth officers, they have the necessary expertise for the local level. In most of the municipalities, the establishment of youth officers led to positive changes in the local community and to the creation of local youth strategies. In 70-80 municipalities, i.e. 60% of all municipalities in BiH, there are special working bodies called ‘commission’ or ‘youth board’. These bodies work within the municipality council/parliament and have competences in youth issues, often along with other bodies.

14 Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Demography”, 2020, available at: http://www.bhas.ba/data/Publikacije/Bilteni/2020/DEM_00_2019_TB_0_HR.pdf

YOUTH LEGISLATION

Legislation on youth work is one of the key issues for young people and the youth sector that needs to be improved in the future. Therefore, existing laws on youth work have to be amended and new laws have to be adopted in RS, as well as in the Federation of BiH and the Brčko District of BiH.

The Law on Volunteer Work was adopted in RS in July 2008. It determines the legal framework for regulating the concept of volunteering, which can have a positive impact on the field of youth work, among others.

Strategies, programmes and action plans for youth work and non-formal education/learning

In 2008, in accordance with the findings from the “Study on Youth Employment”, the project “Youth Employment in BiH” was initiated, supported by the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency and the Austrian Technical Cooperation Agency with a funding of €2M. In cooperation with the CCYI BiH and the entity governments in BiH, the Canadian organisation CIDA supported the drafting of the document ‘Policy for Youth Health’, which was adopted at entity level.

Other than this, there have been a few bigger events, such are CIVITAS youth camps, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights’ youth schools of human rights, a Kids festival, as well as some other educational and youth work events in the entire BiH territory. However, most events are held in Sarajevo and Banja Luka.

Regional dimension of youth policy

Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

European dimension of youth policy

In April 2009, the Delegation of the EU in BiH announced an ‘individual service contract forecast’ for the project “EU Support to the Coordination and Implementation of the BiH National Youth Policy” in the framework of the IPA programme for 2008. The project value was €0.5M.

At the level of BiH, the two most important strategies directed at EU integration, the Strategy of Integration of BiH into the EU and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, also include sections dedicated to youth issues.



THE CASE OF THE PARTY FOR DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS AND THE YOUTH COUNCIL OF THE PARTY FOR DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS¹⁵

The Party for Democratic Progress (Partija demokratskog progresa, PDP)¹⁶ has been an observing member of the EPP family since 2004 and is currently in opposition in the Parliament of Republika Srpska.

The Youth Council of the Party for Democratic Progress (Savjet mladih partije demokratskog progresa, SMPDP) is the main platform for young people within the party.

| | |
|---|--|
| Decision making potential | The President of the SMPDP is a member of the Presidency of the Party by virtue of office and participates in the decision-making processes at the central party level. |
| Young persons in key positions | One Member in the Parliament of Republika Srpska (out of seven) and the Mayor of the Capital of Republika Srpska, Banja Luka. |
| Process of defining youth priorities | Local branches of SMPDP consult with young people and gather opinions. These opinions are discussed in the Youth Council, and the President then presents them to the Presidency of the party. |
| Means for detecting needs of young people | The main approach at detecting the needs is by local consultation with young members of SMPDP. |

15 The data was obtained during an in-depth interview with Mr. Nikola Novaković, President of the Youth Council of the Party for Democratic Progress, on 07.12.2020.

16 In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are four parties that are members in the EPP and/or KAS partner parties. All four parties were invited to answer, however only PDP responded to our invitation.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Main priorities for young people</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment, with a focus on internship for young people after graduation. - Housing, with a focus on subsidies for buying real-estate property for young couples. - Sports, with a focus on an increased number of scholarships for young athletes. |
| <p>Recommendations for increased influence of young people</p> | <p>Improving digitalisation in the educational system, enforcing the rule of law and giving young people a chance to take up key positions, improving quality of life by means of employment and entrepreneurship support for starting a business.</p> |

Good practice example for defining youth priorities:

In between election cycles, SMPDP uses specific mobile applications (such as MindOmo) to create maps, priorities and actions for young people and to give them the opportunity to collaboratively engage in giving suggestions and proposing measures.

"I recommend that every person joins politics at least once in his/her life, because young people do not have a real picture about it."

"We are trying to include young people in politics and key positions"



"We don't have bad laws, but they are not implemented well."

Nikola Novaković

COUNTRY REPORT



YOUTH POLICIES IN KOSOVO

Overview

In Kosovo, the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth is the official document that defines young people as persons aged between 15 and 24.

Youth represents Kosovo's largest population group, with over 35% of the inhabitants being between 15 and 24, while a total of over 65% are under 30. 70% of the active youth are unemployed, and only a limited number of them study at a university.¹⁷

National dimension of youth policy

The main central authority in charge for youth policies is the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS). It is responsible for developing policies and strategies for the youth sector, including the identification of vulnerable groups of youth, developing programmes to address their needs, and promoting clubs, groups and youth associations. In addition, the Ministry is responsible for developing and implementing relevant legislation for the establishment and functioning of organisations, clubs, groups, and youth associations. Within the Ministry, at the central level, the Department of Youth holds overall responsibility for the youth sector in Kosovo.

The Department develops, co-ordinates and implements policies. Therefore, the MCYS co-operates closely with other government ministries, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), in the area of youth policy. The MCYS is responsible for policy development and co-ordination, while the other ministries are responsible for delivering the actual services to youth groups.

The main responsibility of implementing youth policies at the local level lies with the Directorate for Culture, Youth and Sport. All 38 municipalities except one have established municipal directorates for culture, youth, and sports issues or similar bodies.

In addition, youth representative bodies such as youth action councils (Central Youth Action Council and the Local Youth Action Council) and youth centres are relevant actors in terms of participating in designing policies and advocating youth matters.

17 State portal of Kosovo, accessed on 01.12.2020 available at: <https://www.rks-gov.net/EN/f109/culture-and-free-time/youth>

YOUTH LEGISLATION

National Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth¹⁸

The law was adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo on 30 September 2009, and it came into force on 5 November 2009. It was compiled by the Department for Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, with the support of UNICEF and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and in co-operation with the International Council for National Youth Policies and a group of local law experts in Prishtina. The law aims to strengthen the participation of youth in decision-making processes in order to improve their quality of life, as well as their social status. It has a total of 19 articles and incorporates the responsibilities of different central and local institutions and youth organisations in order to ensure wide youth participation in public life. In addition, it defines voluntary work and informal education of young people and provides instruction for licensing the so-called “Youth Centers”.

National Youth Strategy

The Youth Strategy 2019 – 2023,¹⁹ including the Action Plan, is a comprehensive strategy of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports for young people. It aims to improve the situation of youngsters aged between 15 and 24, including all parties of interest from the governmental and non-governmental sectors. The Strategy also aims to encourage co-operation between youth organisations whose activities relate to youth, as well as between central and municipal bodies, to help strengthen youth policies and programmes. Its strategic objectives are mobilisation of youth for participation, representation and active citizenship, providing skills and preparing youth for the labour market, as well as a healthy and safe environment for young people. The Strategy's main purpose is the idea of bringing Kosovar youth closer to the best European principles and practices, in particular concerning their own needs.

18 National Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Kosovo_2009_Youth_Law.pdf

19 Strategy for Youth 2019-2023, Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport, available at: https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategy_for_Youth_2019-2023.pdf

Regional dimension of youth policy

Kosovo became a founder and member of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office by ratifying a law on the establishment of the Regional Youth Co-operation Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO). Additionally, Kosovo signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Albania in July 2015. The MoU aims to strengthen the co-operation between countries in terms of initiating common youth policies and programmes. The parties agreed to organise a 'Youth Week' each year in Prishtina and Tirana (or any other city, according to mutual agreement).

European dimension of youth policy

Regarding international co-operation, the OSCE mission in Kosovo continuously supports the participation of young people in policy design and decision making by closely working with central and local institutions, youth civil society organisations, and young individuals. The OSCE mission drafted a Participatory Handbook for Local Youth Action Council (LYAC), designed to increase LYAC members' understanding of the role, function and responsibilities of the Council, and to share good practice. Co-operation on youth matters is also reflected within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with special emphasis on youth employability, gender equality, and social inclusion. Within the framework of its Innovation Lab project, UNICEF supports young people to discover and propose innovative ideas in order to address various challenges that Kosovo's society is facing.



THE CASE OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE OF KOSOVO AND THE YOUTH FORUM OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE OF KOSOVO²⁰

The Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës, LDK) has been an observing member of EPP since 2012 and is currently part of the government coalition in the Kosovar Parliament, with 28 out of 120 seats.²¹

The Youth Forum of the Democratic League of Kosovo (Forumi Rinor - LDK) is the main platform for young people within the party.

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| Decision making potential | The president of the Youth Forum takes part in all the party meetings and is represented with an equal vote as other members of the general council of LDK. |
| Young persons in key positions | Four members are MP's in the Parliament, including Mr. Fidan Rekalju (President of Youth Forum of LDK) |
| Process of defining youth priorities | Step 1: Local branches of the Youth Forum hold annual meetings for defining measures and priorities. Step 2: The input from the local branches is discussed by the Youth Forum leadership. Step 3: The President of the Youth Forum informs the leadership of the party about the priorities it has to consider regarding youth. |
| Means for detecting needs of young people | The Youth Forum conducts polls on different youth-related topics, with different target groups among young people. |

21 The Government of Kosovo is composed of several coalition parties: Democratic League of Kosovo (with 28 MP's), the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (14 MP's), The Social Democratic Initiative (3 MP's), New Kosovo Alliance (3 MP's). The Government is also supported by 5 independent MP's and 18MP's from the national minorities.

| | |
|---|---|
| Main priorities for young people | Enhancing the educational system, creating new jobs and opportunities for youth, and creating hand-in-hand programmes that provide the youth with the needed skills for joining the market. |
| Recommendations for increased influence of young people | Introduction of national youth policy that includes direct policies regarding social protection, gender equality, equality regarding ethnicity, unemployment, formal education, and equal rights and opportunities. |

Good practice example regarding decision making:

The statute of the party guarantees that the Youth Forum will be represented in the party's highest decision-making body, the General Council, with no less than 15% of the composition, and that at least 10% of the winning spots in national and local elections be designated for members of the Youth Forum



Within our party, young people are provided with an adequate space, having the possibility to join the Youth Forum

"When trying to define priorities and measures for young people, we turn to them and ask them about what it is that they need and like."

"I believe that, as a country, we should have a national youth policy that creates better conditions for learning, experiencing and facing new opportunities for the young people of Kosovo to develop skills, knowledge and competences"

Fidan Rekalii

COUNTRY REPORT

An outline map of Montenegro is centered in the background. The map is white with a thin black border, showing the country's geographical shape. The text is overlaid on this map.

YOUTH POLICIES IN MONTENEGRO



YOUTH POLICIES IN MONTENEGRO

Overview

In accordance with the Youth Law, young people are persons between 15 and 30. According to the latest census (2011), Montenegro has 620,029 inhabitants, out of which 132,702, or 21.4%, are young people aged 15 to 29. In Montenegro, the share of young people in this age group is higher than in the European Union, where they account for 17.4% of the population.²²

National dimension of youth policy

The Directorate for Youth and Sports has the mandate to develop and coordinate the implementation of youth policy and legislation, coordinate cross-sectoral cooperation, support local youth policy development, and develop cooperation with NGOs, international partners, etc. The Directorate is supervised by the Ministry of Education.

Other relevant government institutions (ministries, agencies, bureaus) develop and implement sectoral policies related to youth, cooperating with and reporting to the Directorate for Youth and Sports.

The bodies competent for specific areas of youth policy are obliged to cooperate in the implementation of youth policy and appoint their contact person for youth issues, who coordinates activities related to youth policy and cooperates with the Directorate in planning, implementing and evaluating the Youth Strategy. Structures dealing with youth within the local self-governments are secretariats, local youth offices and local councils on youth issues.

²² Statistical Office of Montenegro, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <https://www.monstat.org/eng/page.php?id=393&pageid=57>

YOUTH LEGISLATION

Law on Youth

In July 2016, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted the Law on Youth,²³ which was the first time that the country introduced a law that ensures the implementation of a joint policy in this area. The Law on Youth stipulates an improvement of the social position of youth in all areas, provides conditions for supporting youth in organising themselves and in their social activities, as well as their participation in decision making, development and fulfilment of their personal and social potential. The Youth Law stipulates that youth policies be planned, implemented and improved based on the youth's real needs, empiric and practical knowledge as well as research, regular monitoring and assessment of their situation, with young people actively involved in this process.

National Youth Strategy

In line with the law, the Government of Montenegro adopted the National Youth Strategy 2017-2021²⁴ in September 2016, which clearly positions youth as a matter of interest to Montenegro and, in a holistic approach, envisages intersectoral and interdepartmental co-operation of youth policy actors. The Strategy defines six key priorities (outcomes) regarding Montenegrin youth:

1. young people achieve economic and social security through improved access to the labour market and employment;
2. young people have access to quality education;
3. young people are active citizens, involved, motivated, proactive, and participate in decision-making and community development processes, in the creation of policies and their implementation;
4. young people are healthy and safe and have access to an adequate support system for transition to adulthood and self-realisation;

23 Law on Youth, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: [https://makanje.me/downloads/uploadDokumenta/Zakon-o-mladima-\(2019\)-1573028279927.pdf](https://makanje.me/downloads/uploadDokumenta/Zakon-o-mladima-(2019)-1573028279927.pdf)

24 Strategy for Youth 2017-2021, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <http://www.strategijazamlade.me/>

5. young people have access to quality cultural content as creators and consumers; and
6. a normative and institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy has been established.

The key priorities for youth defined in this Strategy are the result of a comprehensive participatory drafting process. Not only the stakeholders and interested parties took part in this process, but, first and foremost, young people throughout Montenegro. Besides the identification of key priorities for the period 2017-2021, the Strategy also defines the measures, sub-measures and activities that need to be implemented in order to fulfil the defined priorities, as well as the actors in charge for their implementation. To that purpose, the Directorate for Youth takes up a central institutional position, coordinating the entire process with the support and in cooperation with the other entities, including governmental and non-governmental institutions. An integral part of the Strategy is the Implementation Plan, which includes general measures and sub-measures that should lead to the fulfilment of key outcomes within the planned deadline, and determines the entities accountable for their implementation.

Regional dimension of youth policy

By ratifying a law on the establishment of the Regional Youth Co-operation Office (RYCO), Montenegro became a founding member of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office.

European dimension of youth policy

Montenegro contributes to the European Youth Foundation and to the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card.

Based on available data, Montenegro is progressively using the ERASMUS+ programme.



THE CASE OF THE BOSNIAK PARTY AND THE YOUTH FORUM OF THE BOSNIAK PARTY²⁵

The Bosniak Party (Bošnjačka stranka, BS) is an ethnic minority party which joined the EPP in 2019 as an associate member. The party is represented in the Montenegrin Parliament with three seats.

The Youth Forum of the Bosniak Party (Forum mladih Bošnjačke stranke, FMBS) is the main platform for young people within the party.

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| Decision making potential | Young people are not directly represented in the main decision-making structures of the party. |
| Young persons in key positions | One Member of the Montenegrin Parliament. |
| Process of defining youth priorities | The FMBS periodically meets, discusses and then proposes solutions or initiatives to the party, ministry or institution within the system. |
| Means for detecting needs of young people | The FMBS does not use specific methods for the detection of young people's needs. BS carries out annual surveys of the rating of their key representatives, in which the FMBS representatives usually receive a high rating. |

25 The data was obtained during an in-depth interview with Mr. Sead Shahman, President of the Youth Forum of the Bosniak Party, on 25.11.2020.

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| <p>Main priorities for young people</p> | <p>Education, with a focus on providing state scholarships for young people and dual education with theory and practice. Employment, with a focus on paid internships for young people after finishing their university studies.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation for increased influence of young people</p> | <p>The mobility of young people in Montenegro on the regional and European levels needs to increase in order to help overcoming the prejudices in the society.</p> |

Good practice example:

The Presidency of the BS appoints a youth coordinator who reports on youth-related issues.

“Every good initiative which is in line with the main policies of the party is understood can be accepted.”


“The older generation is more experienced and maybe better connected, while can be a weakness for young people that they need to organise better.”



“The mobility of young people in the region, as well as overcoming stereotypes is very important for our region.”

Sead Shahman

COUNTRY REPORT



YOUTH POLICIES IN NORTH MACEDONIA



YOUTH POLICIES IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Overview

The term 'young people' refers to persons between the age of 15 and 29. Young people are a category with huge potential as a key resource for social progress, but also highly vulnerable to social and economic changes. According to the latest statistics, 439 746 persons are between 15 and 29 years old, which is 19,6% of the total population of North Macedonia.²⁶

National dimension of youth policy

The main government body in charge of youth is the Agency for Youth and Sport (AfYS), an institutions with its own budget and responsibilities. Although not a ministry, the AfYS is an independent institution that does not report to any particular governmental ministry, but responds directly to the Prime Minister.

Another important body with regard to youth issues is the Parliamentarian Club for Youth Affairs and Policies. The Club was established within the framework of the National Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, following the example of the European Parliament and other Western European parliaments. It is an informal National Assembly body composed of members of all parliamentary parties, whose goal is to pursue the interests of young people in cooperation with youth organisations, informal youth groups and party youth.

The process of establishing independent counselling bodies within the municipal councils, the so-called Local Youth Councils, is still ongoing. According to the Agency for Youth and Sport, in 2017, there were 63 Local Youth Councils in 80 municipalities. The main goal of these Councils is to represent young people in the municipal decision making process.

26 State Statistic Office, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/>

YOUTH LEGISLATION

National Youth Strategy (NYS)

The National Youth Strategy²⁷ (NYS) aims to improve the general position and satisfy the needs and interests of the young people. The only specialized legislative youth document, it was adopted by the Government in February 2016, for the period until 2025. It is divided into nine thematic areas: youth participation, youth information, local youth work, education, employment and support prior to employment, culture, sport, health, and quality of life.

Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies

The process of creating and establishing the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies,²⁸ an initiative of the Parliamentarian Club for Youth Issues and Policies, started in March 2018 with a public debate in the National Assembly. It was conducted as a joint initiative of MPs, institutions and youth organisations. The main goals of the Law are to regulate the forms of youth organisations, the models of participation of young people in the process of creating youth policies and decision-making related to them, strategic documents at national and local level, activities and measures taken by state administration bodies and local self-government units for promoting the position of young people in society, as well as informing and jointly planning activities related to and for young people.

Regional dimension of youth policy

North Macedonia is part of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). The Agreement on the Establishment of RYCO was signed by six Western Balkans Prime Ministers at the Western Balkans Summit held in Paris on 4 July 2016.

27 National Youth Strategy, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <http://strategijazamla-di.mk/node/3>

28 Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <https://dejure.mk/zakon/zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki>

The latest example of youth policy and neighbourly cooperation is the introduction of the Youth Cooperation Office between North Macedonia and Greece, following the example of the Franco-German youth cooperation office. The kick-start of the process was announced in January 2020, however, it has slowed down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

European dimension of youth policy

The Agency for Youth and Sport disseminates information on the Council of Europe's programmes in the field of youth to relevant organisations and participates in its structures (CDEJ). Youth organisations are active in the Advisory Council on Youth. The country is also represented in the Network of European Knowledge Centres on Youth Policy. For many years, North Macedonia was a partner country in the Youth and Youth in Action Programmes of the European Commission. In 2013, following the establishment of the National Agency for Youth Educational Programmes and Mobility responsible for the implementation of Erasmus+, North Macedonia became a full programme country. EU programmes had and still have great impact on Macedonian youth NGOs, which use them very successfully.



THE CASE OF VMRO-DPMNE AND THE YOUTH FORCES UNION OF VMRO-DPMNE²⁹

VMRO-DPMNE (Vnatrešna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo)³⁰ has been an associate member of EPP since 2007. It is one of the two largest political parties in the country, currently in opposition.

The Youth Forces Union of VMRO-DPMNE (Unija na mladi sili, UMS) is the main platform for young people within the party.

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| Decision making potential | The President of the UMS is a member of the Presidency of the Party and participates in the decision-making processes at the central party level by virtue of office. |
| Young persons in key positions | Five Members of the National Assembly. ³¹ |
| Process of defining youth priorities | Step 1: Meetings with members of the Youth Forces in order to obtain their opinion regarding youth priorities. Step 2: Surveys among the general public in order to specify the needs and problems of young people. Step 3: Creating working groups that consist of young people and experts from different fields, using the entire human potential of the political party. |

30 The party's name translated in English is IMRO-DPMNU (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity).

31 At the 2020 elections, the party (including its coalition partners) won 44 out of 120 seats. A full list of their Members of the Assembly is available at: <https://www.vmro-dpmne.org.mk/index.php/pratenicka-grupa>

| | |
|--|--|
| Means for detecting needs of young people | VMRO-DPMNE conducts surveys in order to determine the needs of the young people. Most surveys on youth issue are, conducted among the general public, based on a representative sample. |
| Main priorities for young people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment, with a focus on quality jobs. - Quality of life, with a focus on scholarships and better student facilities. - Education, with focus on tackling the educational challenges caused by the COVID-19 crisis. |
| Recommendation for increased influence of young people | Stimulating critical thinking among young people, improving pluralism in student and high school organisations, improving educational standards, policies for stimulating and retaining young doctors. |

Good practice example:

Creation of a youth programme, separate from the party's main election programme, for the upcoming elections.

"Young people are not stimulated to think and fight for their better future, which is a handicap in the society"

"One of my commitments as President is to create a separate youth programme for the next elections in order to bring the measures and priorities closer to the youth."



„The young people in this country are apathetic with regard to all social and political processes, which results in their lack of interest to join political parties and other organisations that are working on tackling youth-related issues.“

Sergej Popov

COUNTRY REPORT

YOUTH POLICIES IN SERBIA



YOUTH POLICIES IN SERBIA

Overview

In Serbia, youth or young people are defined as persons between 15 and 30 years. Based on the assessment of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, there were 1,227,252 young people aged 15-30 living in Serbia in 2020, representing 17.67% of the total population.³²

National dimension of youth policy

The main national public authority for youth-related issues is the Ministry of Youth and Sport. It has been in charge of the development and improvement of the youth policy, the implementation of the national policy, national strategy for youth, action plans and programmes; encouraging young people to organise themselves and to participate in social activities; counselling and teaching young people about employment and volunteer work; encouraging non-formal education of young people; and the cooperation with youth associations in organising international youth events in Serbia, etc., since 2007.

Another important institution for young people is the Fund for Young Talents of the Republic of Serbia, established by the Government with the aim of supporting the most successful students who excelled in their academic achievements. Being a part of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Fund targets the same age group as the Youth Sector.

Within the Parliament of Serbia, there is a parliamentary committee in charge of youth issues. In the National Assembly of Serbia, the Committee on Education, Science, Technological Development and Information Society is responsible for youth issues.

In accordance with the Law on Youth, the Government issued a decision on the establishment of the Youth Council on 24 January 2014, taking a significant step forward in the monitoring and further development of the national youth policy. The Youth Council is a cross-sectorial and advisory body on youth issues. It was established by the Government at the proposal of the Ministry of

32 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/en-us/oblasti/stanovnistvo/procene-stanovnistva/>

Youth and Sports, which promotes and coordinates the activities related to the development and implementation of youth policy and proposes measures for its improvement. The Youth Council is chaired by the Minister of Youth and Sports and has 24 members (representatives of ministries, provincial administrative body responsible for youth affairs, youth associations and associations for youth, youth offices, representatives of national minority councils, experts), eight of which directly represent young people.

One of the specifics of Serbia are the youth offices. Youth offices are important for the effective encouragement of youth policy development at a local level, a service for creating programmes and supporting initiatives. As an integral part of the local self-government, their job is to explore the needs of young people, to launch and implement a local action plan, to establish cooperation with all relevant partners, to inform young people, and to realise youth projects. So far, 137 local self-governments (out of 174 in total) have established a youth office.

YOUTH LEGISLATION

The Law on Youth

The Law on Youth³³ was adopted by the National Assembly on July 5, 2011. The Law defines the framework and conditions for supporting young people in organising, social activities and developing and realising potential for personal and social benefit. It also defines the youth sector structure, with clearly specified competencies, rights, obligations and responsibilities, depending on the level of reference, recognising the autonomy of youth associations and umbrella federations. The Law stipulates the establishment of the Youth Council, where young people are represented along with other important actors in this area, as well as youth councils on the provincial and local level. In addition, the Law on Youth defines the role of youth offices, and determines public interest in the youth sector domain at the republic, provincial and local level.

33 Law on Youth of the Republic on Serbia, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: https://www.mos.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Zakon_o_mladima.pdf

National Youth Strategy 2015-2025

The National Youth Strategy 2015-2025,³⁴ adopted by the Government in February 2015, is a comprehensive document outlining the priority objectives, the implementation of which should contribute to an active and equal participation of young people in various areas of social life. The National Youth Strategy defines nine strategic goals.

Regional dimension of youth policy

Serbia is one of the founding member of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office.

European dimension of youth policy

A representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports is a member of the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ). Serbia also has a representative from the civil sector in the Advisory Council on Youth 2020-2021.

In line with the strategic commitment of Serbia to join the EU, the “EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowerment, a Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)” and the “Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18)” served as references for drafting the National Youth Strategy 2015-2025.

Since 2019, Serbia has been a fully-fledged member of the ERASMUS+ programme. For the first time, Serbian institutions can participate in all parts of the programme without restrictions, as coordinators or partners in all projects. Currently, Serbia does not fully participate in the European Solidarity Corps.

34 National Youth Strategy 2015-2025, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <https://www.mos.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/download-manager-files/Nacionalna%20strategija%20za%20mlade%20-%20SR.pdf>

THE CASE OF THE SERBIAN PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND THE YOUTH UNION OF THE SERBIAN PROGRESSIVE PARTY³⁵

The Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska Napredna Stranka-SNS) has been a member of EPP since 2016. It is one of the largest political parties in the country and has been in power since 2012.

The Youth Union of the Serbian Progressive Party (Unija mladih Srpske napredne stranke), is the main platform for young people within the SNS.

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|---|---|
| Decision making potential | The President of the Youth Union is a member of the Presidency of the Party. |
| Young persons in key positions | Out of 171 MP's in the Serbian Parliament, 60 are young persons. |
| Process of defining youth priorities | The local branches of the Youth Union meet regularly to discuss the youth needs and priorities on a local level. Members of the local branches are presenting the conclusions to representatives of the local government. Questions which are considered to be a national priority, are addressed to the board of the Youth Union, after which the President of the Youth Union has a chance to present those specific issues\conclusions at Party Presidency meeting |
| Means for detecting needs of young people | The Ministry of Youth is conducting annual researches for the position of the young people in Serbia, but also, the party is using specialized agencies for their own researches. Additionally, the local branches are conducting surveys with the young people on a local level. |

35 The data was obtained during an in-depth interview with Mr. Milan M. Savić, an active member of the Serbian Progressive Party and Member of the Serbian Parliament.

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| <p>Main priorities for young people</p> | <p>Nine priorities for young people were being stressed out: 1. Increasing the youth employment, 2. Increasing the quality and possibilities for the young people to develop competences and qualifications, 3. Active involvement of youth in the society, 4. Health, 5. To increase the condition for development of security culture, 6. Support for social involvement of young people at risk, 7. Mobility within international programs, 8. Better system for informing the young people and the community, 9. Increasing the involvement of youth in cultural happenings.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation for increased influence of young people</p> | <p>Increasing the involvement of the representatives of the economy and the youth sector within the local committees for employment, Increasing the active measures for employment for the young people, and encouraging them to better use of the current "start-up programs" for young entrepreneurs.</p> |

Good practice example regarding decision making:

Out of the 60 young Members of Parliament, 42 come from the Union of Youth.



"Around 80% of our work is focused at the local level and conducted by the local branches, since we are representatives of the people."

"Within the party program for the election this year, around 50% of the priorities were youth related."

"Regarding the position of the young people, I would say that it's not the best, and there is so much more to do, but in the last 5 or 6 years, the status of the young people in the country has been constantly and significantly improving, and it remains as our priority."

Milan M. Savić

COUNTRY REPORT

An outline map of Croatia is centered on the page. The map is white with a black border. The title text is overlaid on the map.

YOUTH POLICIES IN CROATIA



YOUTH POLICIES IN CROATIA

Overview

The ratio of youth in Croatia has been decreasing for decades. According to the last population estimation by the Croatian Bureau of Statistic in 2018, there are 690,767 young people aged 15-29 years (16.9% of the population).³⁶

National dimension of youth policy

The Department of Youth within the Ministry for Social Policy and Youth is the main national body in this sector, aiming to develop the cooperation between competent national authorities and institutions to work with young people, in particular taking into account the development and implementation of a structured dialogue, cooperate with professional and research institutions and civil society organisations in the country and abroad. The Department of Youth also monitors the implementation of the Youth Advisory Boards Act, implements measures, coordinates and monitors the implementation of the National Programme for Young People, and performs administrative tasks for the Youth Council of the Croatian Government.

The Youth Department's main task is to raise the quality of life for youth and to achieve long term commitment to the creation of social, educational, cultural, material and other conditions for the permanent benefit of youth and their active, full and responsible participation in society. The Youth Department also drafts laws, strategies and other documents, creates a public policy for youth and implements measures in accordance with national regulations and documents.

In Croatia, there is also a Parliament committee in charge of youth issues that establishes and monitors the implementation of policies, as well as the process of enacting legislation and other regulations, in order to have full control in the policy making process.

36 State Statistical Office of Croatia, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: https://www.dzs.hr/PXWeb/Selection.aspx?px_path=Stanovni%20a1tvo__Procjene%20stanovni%20a1tva&px_tableid=SP21_1.px&px_language=hr&px_db=Stanovni%20a1tvo&rxid=d86bb537-4962-42b9-a4e1-b499ab02b316

YOUTH LEGISLATION

The Constitution

In the Croatian Constitution, young people are mentioned twice: first, the proclaimed state assumes responsibility to provide a favourable environment for youth welfare, and second, special protection at work for youth is stipulated. In addition, there are several legislative acts relevant for young people.

Youth Advisory Board Act³⁷

This act's goal is to enhance the participation of young people in public affairs of their interest, active engagement of young people in public life, and their informed participation at the local level. The Advisory Boards' members are young representatives in the municipality/city assembly or council. The Boards are part of the regional/local representative body of local authorities, and they are responsible for the preparation of youth-related acts and decisions of the assembly or the council.

National Policy Programmes on youth

The latest National Youth Programme (NYP) is the main strategic document, covering 9 strategic areas for the improvement of young people's lives. It carries forward the two previous Programmes, 2014-2017 and 2009-2013. Currently, the NYP 2020-2024 is still to be adopted by the Croatian Government.

European dimension of youth policy

In accordance with the recommendation and guidelines of the Council of Europe aimed at proactive activity on the Internet and in the community, the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth established a National Board for the national implementation of the Council's "No Hate Speech Movement" campaign. When Croatia joined the EU, a structured dialogue with young people was initiated, with the National Working Group for a structured dialogue with young people being in charge of its implementation. There is no specific national strategy for following up on the EU Youth Strategy. However, the EU Youth Strategy, as well as EU Work Plans for Youth are taken into account while planning national measures and activities.

37 Youth Advisory Board Act, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: https://www.zakon.hr/z/716/Zakon-o-savjetima-mladih?fbclid=IwAR0L_1OTaK5LLb8BHoh1QAOn9Qk_jEPOZKS3THHbNiihtw0UEx9DAuT73XQ



THE CASE OF THE CROATIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION AND THE YOUTH OF THE CROATIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION³⁸

The Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, HDZ) has been an ordinary member of the EPP family since 2002. The party won a majority of seats in the 2020 elections, thus being the main party in power.

The Youth of the Croatian Democratic Union (Mladež Hrvatske demokratske zajednice, MHDZ) is the main platform for young people within the party.

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| Decision making potential | The President of the MHDZ is a member of the Presidency of the Party by virtue of office and participates in the decision-making processes at the central party level. |
| Young persons in key positions | Two ministers in the current Government ³⁹ and one Member of the European Parliament ⁴⁰ . |
| Process of defining youth priorities | 4 Committees of young people generate measures which are adopted by the National Committee (Parliament) of MHDZ and then presented to the Party presidency. |

38 The data was obtained during an in-depth interview with Mr. Ivan Vidiš, President of the Youth of the Croatian Democratic Union, on 26.11.2020.

39 The Croatian Government has 17 Ministers. A full list is available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/clanovi-vlade/66>

40 Croatia has 11 representatives in the European Parliament. A comprehensive list of representatives is available at: <https://www.sabor.hr/hr/europski-poslovi/zastupnici-u-europskom-parlamentu>

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| Means for detecting needs of young people | MHDZ usually relies on contemporary research data to determine the needs of the young people. However, some form of data analysis is being undertaken when proposing specific measures. |
| Main priorities for young people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment, with focus for payed trainships, increasing the wage for young people through lower taxation and using EU funds for young entrepreneurs. - Education, with a focus on scholarships for young people who are at social risk, deficient professions and STEM. Housing, with a focus on tax exemption for personal income tax and providing state loans. |
| Recommendations for increased influence of young people | Continuous education of party members in political literacy, media literacy, financial literacy. |

Good practice example for defining youth priorities:

In between election cycles, MHDZ tasks four working committees composed of young people to generate policy briefs which will be later blended into the final programme for young people. These committees are not limited to party members only, but open to interested persons and experts to join.

"We are a generation of young people that have great ideas. But we have to be aware and propose solutions which are realistic and attainable."

Our priorities for the next four years will be to increase the minimal wage, to maintain tax exemptions, to invest in economy and to use EU funds



"I think our voice is heard, and in the wake of the election period, together with the senior members of the party, we are closely collaborating and voice our opinion on the election program"

Ivan Vidiš

COUNTRY REPORT



YOUTH POLICIES IN SLOVENIA

Overview

According to the Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector, “youth” are defined as young people and young adults of both genders aged between 15 and 29 years. Currently, there are 312 030 young people in the country, accounting for 13.9% of the total population.⁴¹

National dimension of youth policy

The national public authority responsible for youth and the realisation of the public interest in the youth sector is the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, an independent body within the Ministry for Education, Science and Sport. The Office for Youth prepares regulations and measures for the youth sector. It promotes non-formal learning processes to increase the competences of youth in their transition from childhood to adulthood. It develops suitable mechanisms for supporting youth organisations and organisations for youth, which are of key importance to promoting active youth participation. In 2009, the Slovenian Government established the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, a consultative body that proposes measures and monitors the consideration of youth interests in various public policies at a national level. The Council gives the Government and the responsible ministries incentives and suggestions for the regulation of youth matters and, in particular, promotes youth participation in these processes. The Council, which consists of an equal number of representatives of youth organisations and various ministries, is chaired by the Minister of Education and Sport.

41 Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <https://pxweb.stat.si/SiStatData/pxweb/en/Data/-/05C1002S.px/>

YOUTH LEGISLATION

Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector

The Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector⁴² is the most comprehensive and binding official document that addresses the needs and/or rights of young people and stipulates how youth issues should be addressed.

The Act was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia on 18 May 2010, promulgated on 28 May 2010, and entered into force on 12 June 2010.

In accordance with the Act, youth policy is a harmonised set of measures of various sectoral public policies with the purpose of promoting and facilitating the integration of youth into the economic, cultural and political life of the community and appropriate support mechanisms for developing youth work and the operation of youth organisations, in cooperation with autonomous and democratic representatives of youth organisations, as well as professional and other organisations.

The Act also defines some terms, such as youth policy and youth work. It is the first law which systematically regulates the youth sector and also serves as a basis for the adoption of the National Programme for Youth, the key strategic document comprehensively specifying the development of public policies intended for youth until 2022.

Youth Council Act

Youth Council Act⁴³ was adopted by the National Assembly on 19 July 2000 and amended on 18 May 2010. The Act regulates the status, operation, activities and financing of the National Youth Council of Slovenia and local community youth councils. The National Youth Council of Slovenia is a voluntary association of national youth organisations with the status of an organisation of public interest in the youth sector, in accordance with the Act regulating Public Interest in the Youth Sector. The National Youth Council has 11 full members and 2 associate members. In accordance with the Youth Council Act, the National Youth Council of Slovenia and the local community youth councils implement or participate in the implementation of youth work and other activities in the field of the youth

42 Act on Public Interest in the Youth Sector, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO5834>

43 Youth Council Act, accessed on 01.12.2020 and available at: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO2614>

sector in accordance with the Act Regulating Public Interest in the Youth Sector; provide the conditions for the operation and development of forms of interest for the association of young people; provide for the participation of young people in adopting statutory and other regulations that have an impact on the life and work of young people; perform other tasks for promoting the interests of young people defined by the basic act. The local community youth councils unite youth organisations as defined in the Act Regulating the Public Interest in the Youth Sector, with at least 90% of members and 70% of the members of the management aged between 15 and 29.

National Policy Programmes on youth

The National Programme for Youth adopted in 2013 for the period 2013-2022 defines the scope, objectives and priorities in the fields of education, employment and entrepreneurship, housing, health and well-being, the social position of youth, the development of the youth sector, culture and creativity, heritage, and media. It also defines key challenges and an approach at monitoring its implementation. Action plans are prepared for the period of one or two years.

European dimension of youth policy

The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth disseminates the information on the Council of Europe's programmes in the field of youth to relevant organisations.

The Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme is implemented by the National Agency Institute MOVIT. Erasmus+: Youth in Action program is a strong instrument of youth policy in Slovenia and has a very strong influence and position in the development of youth policy, especially on a local level. There are numerous good practices of Erasmus+ projects influencing the local communities to set up a fund for youth activities to ensure their follow up.

The National Programme for Youth is to a large extent in accordance with the EU Youth Strategy.

THE CASE OF NOVA SLOVENIA AND YOUNG SLOVENIA⁴⁴

New Slovenia (Nova Slovenija) has an ordinary member party of EPP since 2000. Currently, it has 7 seats in the National Parliament of Slovenia and is one of the parties in the governing coalition.

Young Slovenia (Mlada Slovenija) is the main platform for young people within the party.

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| Decision making potential | Young Slovenia is on an equal level with all others bodies of the political party. It has one representative in the Executive board of the party and three representatives in the Party Council, the highest decision-making body. |
| Young persons in key positions | One member of Young Slovenia is an acting Member of National Parliament. |
| Process of defining youth priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The priorities are defined in discussion with the members of the youth wing and members of civil society organisations. - Representatives of the youth wing discuss those priorities with the ministers and their party leaders to create solutions, or even write their own policy proposals. These proposals are also sent to the members of their parliamentary group. |
| Means for detecting needs of young people | The political party conducts polls every six months to gather the opinions of the young people regarding their needs and concerns. Additionally, in the process of segmentation of voters, ⁴⁵ they map the needs of the young people in the country. |

44 The data was obtained during an in-depth interview with Katja Berk Bevc, President of Young Slovenia, on 07.12.2020.

45 "Voter segments": political polling of specific target groups, registered voters and likely voters.


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| <p>Main priorities for young people</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education, in terms of adjusting the educational system to the needs of the economy, as well as diversifying the choice of educational institutions at all levels. - Economy, with a focus on lowering the taxes for young people, especially for young entrepreneurs. - Quality of life, with a focus on improving the conditions for starting a family, in terms of financial support, support for purchasing a house/apartment and a vehicle, as well as better support for women to get back to work after having a child. Support for young farmers in the rural areas. Programmes for bringing back young people who left the country. - Digitalisation of state services for young people and decreasing bureaucracy. |
| <p>Recommendations for increased influence of young people</p> | <p>Improving the level of participation of young people, since Slovenia is considered to have strong civil society sector, with many youth organisations and the National Youth Council.</p> |

Good practice example regarding decision making:

Young Slovenia, along with the youth wings of the other parties, is member of the National Youth Council of Slovenia, where they cooperate and discuss youth policies

"We still have the problem of Brain Drain in the country. Many of the young people are still going to live or work in other countries like Germany and Austria."

"We can create better opportunities in terms of having good possibilities in the country to prosper and develop talent."



"It's important for us to involve young people in policy creation, because this way they have the feeling that they can do something to change things and will be willing to stay in the country."

Katja Berk Bevc

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



CONCLUSIONS

Youth policies in the Western Balkans countries, Croatia, and Slovenia are largely structured around the current situation concerning young people in each of the countries. As we can see from the analysis, there is no clear-cut pattern for the design of youth policies. One of the most common feature in all countries (except Albania and Croatia) is for a law to define the area of youth policies and guide the measures related to it (Law on Youth, Law on Engagement or Law on Youth Policies). This is the first tier of structuring youth policies.

The second tier is the strategy level, which is usually a comprehensive and long-term document which has specific targets and goals for improving the situation of young people. This is most often regulated with youth strategy documents and national youth actions plan. These documents are adopted for a five to ten-year period.

The third tier are the local bodies and structures, which usually result from policies and strategies in the form of local youth councils, local youth offices and other informal and ad-hoc bodies, such as committees and clubs for young people.

It is interesting that two of the analysed countries, Slovenia and Serbia, stipulate a National Youth Council (NYC) in their laws. Slovenia also offers direct state funding for its NYC.

Our case studies of the EPP member parties and KAS partner parties show that young people have the possibility to exert influence within their party's structures. In 7 out of 8 cases, the youth wing president is ex officio appointed as a member of the presidency of the party, thus receiving a platform to voice youth needs and priorities.

When it comes to young persons in key positions within the institutions, with the exception of the Serbian Progressive Party, the representation of young people is modest. It would be interesting to thoroughly examine the causes of this under-representation in a research paper which would deal with this issue, as it was not included in the research questions of this paper.

The main way for political parties to detect the needs of youth is by surveys among the population and based on internal party consultations. The Croatian

Democratic Union is an exception, since it includes non-party members in its discussions on needs and policy development.

The discussed parties' main priorities with regard to young people concern the following areas: economy, education and employment. One issue that all countries have in common is unfortunately the phenomenon of brain drain, which was addressed by every interviewee in our research.

Last but not least, we have identified interesting and innovative principles of best practices that each youth wing uses in its work and communicating with young people. We include them in the recommendation of this paper, too.

Comparing the EU Youth Strategy and the YEPP Manifesto to the priorities of the discussed parties, we can see that there is a relatively low connection among them. This is also the case with the Croatian Democratic Union and Young Slovenia in EU member states. The reason for this are different national realities and needs of young people. However, the priorities from the YEPP Manifesto were taken into account during the elections to European Parliament in both Slovenia and Croatia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Structuring National Policies

- › Introducing laws on the regulation of youth areas and youth policies. Laws for youth regulation.
- › Regular assessment of key documents for young people and creating measures for quality youth policies using the 11 indicators.⁴⁶
- › When developing measures for youth policies to take into consideration the key European and International documents related to young people (ex. European Youth Strategy, Sustainable Development Goals, etc.).
- › Regulation of youth organising with a focus on state recognition and support of the National Youth Councils (as it is the case in Slovenia).
- › Considering the impact of COVID-19 on young people, introducing mitigation strategies for young people in terms of crisis.

For Youth Participation

- › Adopting quotas for guaranteed positions in party lists for young people at national and local elections.
- › Improving the inclusion of non-party and non-affiliated persons in creating policy proposals.
- › Utilising existing models and structures for the inclusion of young people in civic space, such as local youth councils, local youth offices etc.

Political Parties Level

- › Introducing a permanent model for defining youth needs and priorities based on evidence.
- › Developing separate youth-related programmes of greater appeal to young people, according to the Election Manifesto of the Youth of European People's Party.
- › Increasing the cooperation between the youth wings of the parties through already existing regional platforms such as RYCO.
- › Utilizing social and new media for greater interaction and inclusion of young people in generating input for policy creation.
- › Establishing permanent policy creation units of young people within the parties.
- › Continuous and structural investments in the political education of young people.

46 The 11 indicators for Quality Youth Policies were developed by Mr. Peter Lauritzen and the European Youth Forum. They are available at - https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/un-yin/documents/CoE_indicators.pdf

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Wilfried
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