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#ReLOaD

Research and Assessment of Local Policies Pertaining to Youth and Youth Perceptions/Needs in 15 Local Self-Governments

*Regional Programme on Local Democracy
in the Western Balkans*

Summary of Findings and Conclusions



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2) implementation officially started on 1 January 2021, as a continuation of the previous phase of the Programme ReLOaD, which had been successfully completed in December 2020. The Programme is being implemented in six countries and territories of the Western Balkans until 2024. ReLOaD2 is funded by the European Union from the Multi-Country Civil Society Facility and co-funded by the UNDP and local self-governments to be covered by the Programme.

The goal of the ReLOaD2 Programme, as in the previous phase, is to strengthen partnerships between local self-governments and civil society in the Western Balkans by disseminating a successful model of transparent project funding for NGOs. In the second phase of the Programme, the intervention will be aimed at improving the position of youth at the local level, by strengthening the participatory development of youth policies and joint action with local self-governments in this direction.

The foregoing activities of the ReLOaD2 Programme in Montenegro will be implemented in five clusters of local self-governments/municipalities in Montenegro:

Tara – the municipalities of Mojkovac, Kolasin and Pljevlja

Coastal Mates – the municipalities of Budva, Herceg Novi, Kotor and Tivat

Together for the North - the municipalities of Andrijevisa and Berane

Niksic and Pluzine Together – the municipalities of Niksic and Pluzine

Central Region - Podgorica Capital City, Old Royal Capital Cetinje, Golubovci municipality within Podgorica Capital City – and Danilovgrad municipality.

As part of the ReLOaD2 initiative, a **research and assessment of the local policies pertaining to youth and youth perceptions/needs was conducted**, whose main results are presented in this document. The main goal of this research is to assess the local policies pertaining to youth and youth needs in 15 Montenegrin municipalities, with the aim of using the obtained results as a basis for further development of efficient local youth policies. The research was focused on the experiences, roles and attitudes of youth in local communities, as well as the identification of their needs, aspirations and expectations from the community in which they lived. The research covered municipalities from all five mentioned clusters.

The Project was implemented by the Institute for Strategic Studies and Prognoses whose main team members were the following:

- Jadranka Kaludjerovic, PhD, Social Science Expert with more than 20 years of experience, in charge of project supervision;
- Vojin Golubovic, PhD, and Milika Mirkovic, PhD, Experts on Socio-Economic Analysis with more than 15 years of experience, in charge of project implementation;
- Vuk Cadjenovic, MA, Public Opinion Research Expert, in charge of supervising field research among youth;
- Ivana Vojvodic, MA, Youth Policy Expert, in charge of analyzing national and local youth policies;

- Melisa Muratovic, MA, Ivan Piper, MA, Igor Kilibarda, MA, Iva Vukcevic and Andjela Lucic, in charge of conducting focus groups and interviews and providing assistance in data analysis.

The operational methodology applied included a desk research and field research.

Desk research included: collecting and analyzing strategic documents and legislation, action plans and programmes aimed at youth at the national level; collecting and analyzing policies, strategic documents, support programs and projects pertaining to youth and their empowerment at the local level; collecting and analyzing research and studies pertaining to youth and youth needs by domestic and/or international organizations; collecting and analyzing data from statistical sources in Montenegro and municipalities; and collecting and analyzing other relevant documents that directly or partially target the youth population. The conducted desk research provides a detailed insight into the most important youth policies and programmes both at the national level and at the level of the 15 municipalities covered by the research.

Field research conducted in November and December 2021 included: conducting a youth survey research in all municipalities covered by the project; organizing focus groups with youth and representatives of non-governmental organizations dealing with youth and organizing in-depth interviews with decision makers at the local level (specifically representatives of municipalities and local offices of the Employment Agency), as well as decision makers at the national level.

Quantitative research included a total of 1818 young people in all 15 target municipalities. The total sample included **51.6%** male and **48.4%** female respondents. The structure of the sample ensured the representativeness of the results at the municipal level. The survey research was conducted on a stratified sample (5 strata) and using the CAPI method, which allowed the collection and verification of results in real time. Data were processed in SPSS. The survey questionnaire included 71 questions. The questions covered a whole set of areas important for the life and engagement of youth.

A total of 92 young people participated in the focus groups (15 focus groups in Podgorica, Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Golubovci, Kotor, Tivat, Budva, Herceg Novi, Kolasin, Mojkovac, Pljevlja, Andrijevisa, Berane, Niksic and Pluzine).

In-depth interviews were conducted **with 23 representatives** of various institutions at the local level. Local self-government representatives were interviewed in all municipalities. Representatives of local offices of the Employment Agency were also interviewed in most municipalities. In the municipalities where this was not the case, representatives of relevant NGOs were interviewed. At the national level, representatives of the line Ministry, i.e. Sports and Youth Administration, were interviewed.

Focus groups and interviews were conducted based on semi-structured questionnaires, which covered a variety of topics. The conducted field research provides detailed information on the youth needs and perceptions in each of the selected local self-governments in different areas including education, employment, leisure-time, youth services, youth participation in community life, and youth cooperation. In addition, the research pays special attention to the needs of vulnerable categories: socially excluded young people; young people with disabilities; young members of minority groups; young people who are neither working nor in the

educational process. Special attention was paid to the gender dimension of the analyzed issues, so all the obtained data were presented and analyzed by gender.

Based on desk research and all elements of field research, a detailed report was prepared that summarized the findings and defined individual and general recommendations for the development of policies, programmes and projects aimed at youth. All findings, conclusions and recommendations were defined for each of the 15 municipalities, for all areas covered by the research and for different economic sectors, and as such, represent a high-quality basis for adopting and creating national and local policies and programmes and activities aimed at youth.

2. SUMMARY

This report presents the basic findings of a survey conducted to obtain objective information on the youth perceptions and needs, as well as local youth policies in 15 local self-governments (five clusters) participating in the ReLOaD Programme in Montenegro. The applied methodology included a previously established detailed action plan in order to best meet the set task and fulfill the research goal, i.e. to provide a comprehensive overview of youth policy, and then create findings and recommendations concerning the needs/ perceptions of young people in each selected local self-government.

The report is based on **desk research and empirical research**. **Desk research** is based on analysis of the legislative and institutional framework, i.e. laws, regulations, national strategies, national and local action plans, programmes and reports of public institutions that directly or indirectly target young people in Montenegro, define or analyze youth-oriented policies or provide some information on the results of the policies themselves. In addition, available databases at the national level were reviewed, as well as the latest reports from domestic and international organizations dealing with the situation of young people in Montenegro.

Empirical research was conducted based on a conducted **quantitative research with young people**, as well as **in-depth interviews** and **focus groups** with **key stakeholders** concerning the position of young people in Montenegro and in selected municipalities. Quantitative research was conducted based on a survey with young people from 15 selected municipalities. This research was conducted on a representative sample of 1818 young people from selected municipalities (**51.6%** male, and **48.4%** female), preceded by an adequately defined stratification and allocation, as well as a framework for the selection of respondents. The target population included young people aged 15-30, and the sample was defined for each municipality and cluster separately. The questionnaire (survey) was prepared in communication with the UNDP and relevant institutions and sets of questions were created to form a clearer picture of the current position of young people in the education system, labor market, their involvement in community life on various bases, and also to identify some of their needs, lifestyles and aspirations. Gender equality was considered during the entire quantitative research, and the obtained data were sex disaggregated.

In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of local self-governments and local offices of the Employment Agency, as well as with representatives of the non-governmental sector dealing with youth issues. Focus groups included young people themselves and were conducted in order to gain deeper insight into the experiences, roles and attitudes of young people in local communities, through discussions and interview findings, in accordance with their identified needs, aspirations and expectations from the system and community. This methodology ultimately made it possible for the conducted research and the obtained results to serve as the basis for the development of efficient local youth policies.

2.1. Legislative, strategic and institutional framework

Young people make up almost a fifth of the total population of Montenegro. The focus of policy makers on youth is clear through the established legislative and institutional framework at the

national level. The legislative framework dealing with youth issues in Montenegro is defined through the **Youth Law**, which defines the instrument for creating and implementing youth policy - the Program on achieving public interest in the field of youth policy which is established every two years and defines priority areas. Measures and activities aimed at improving the position of young people and ensuring cross-sectoral cooperation of all institutions dealing with youth policy are prescribed. The strategic framework at the national level is defined by the **National Youth Strategy**. The most recent Strategy covered the period from **2017 to 2021**, and no new strategy has been adopted yet. The Strategy also includes an Action Plan for its implementation, with general measures and sub-measures and the Framework for monitoring and evaluating the Strategy implementation. The youth-related strategic and legislative framework at the national level is also defined by other sectoral strategies and laws related to labor, education, health, rights and the like.

The line Ministry prepares and adopts the **National Action Plan for the Strategy** implementation, at least for a period of two years, in cooperation with public institutions, non-governmental organizations and other youth policy stakeholders and in accordance with key strategic priorities. The plans are financed from regular budget funds, as well as from relevant funds of international organizations, to improve the position of young people and implement youth policy. Youth policies are mainly funded at the national level through action plans, as provided for in the annual budgets of the line ministry. In addition, many international organizations support the youth policy development and implementation process by funding youth-related projects. However, there is a lack of a clear donor coordination mechanism, and there is no single database of various donors and supported projects and programs for young people, which leads to insufficient exchange of information on youth projects and carries the risk of overlapping activities. A sustainable funding system is necessary for the implementation of youth policies, which implies the need for continuous investment in human resources, projects and activities that not only relate to young people but also directly involve them.

The most important institution in the field of youth policy is **the Sports and Youth Administration**, which operates within the line ministry. In addition to the Sports and Youth Administration, other public institutions (ministries and agencies) are focused on youth policies, such as those dealing with employment, social welfare, economic development and encouraging entrepreneurship, etc. The Youth Law stipulates the establishment of the Youth Council, as an expert and advisory body. The Council, however, does not currently exist. Some institutions and organizations of Montenegro are involved in various international and regional youth cooperation platforms.

In addition, concerning the legal, strategic and institutional framework at the local level, the **Youth Law envisages the preparation of two-year Local Action Plans for Youth** as the main instruments for the implementation of youth policy. Such plans were adopted in all municipalities for the period 2020-2021 and aligned with the National Youth Strategy 2017-2021. At the local level, the institutional framework includes local secretariats, local youth councils, youth services, educational and health institutions, centers for social protection and day care centers, local offices of the Employment Agency, cultural and sports centers, and numerous NGOs. The Youth Law also provides for Local Youth Councils.

Despite the legislative and institutional framework, **research has shown** that there were still **some limitations**. Although the Law on Local Self-Government stipulates that local self-

government bodies (secretariats, administrations and directorates) are established to perform local self-government activities, including activities related to youth, it is common practice that youth issues are dealt with by administrative bodies that also deal with other matters, due to limited administrative and financial capacities. In addition, **only some municipalities have youth offices that implement youth policies**, including measures from local youth action plans. Youth clubs have not been established in all municipalities as well, which indicates clear differences at the local level when it comes to the development of the institutional framework regarding youth policy. The involvement of many institutions at the local level in the planning and implementation of youth strategies is limited due to lack of capacity. Opportunities for funding youth policies are also limited. Although some municipalities have budget lines related to youth, these funds are quite modest, and yet in some cases the financial support is increased through the participation of those secretariats and bodies that are not directly in charge of youth. Therefore, the overall allocation for youth policies is difficult to estimate. Although there is a framework, the results of youth policy implementation are still modest or unknown, which can be attributed to the lack of a holistic approach that would enable more efficient cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination (both nationally and locally) and synchronize the efforts of different stakeholders in this area.

2.2. Main empirical research findings

Speaking of young people themselves, the findings of this Research show that, although Local Youth Action Plans include research findings on youth needs at the local level, working group proposals and suggestions from public consultations, **young people in most municipalities are neither familiar with the legislative and strategic framework that applies to them nor aware of the mechanisms available to them for involvement in decision-making**. In addition, in terms of participation in such activities, previous experiences of young people are mostly negative, while their involvement is formal and usually does not result in accepting the proposals of young people.

Insufficient information and somewhat lack of interest of young people was identified, which indicates the need for much greater youth involvement in creating strategic documents and plans for that target population, in addition to the need to implement activities aimed at motivating young people to take a more proactive approach. In this context, the underutilization of modern and attractive information distribution channels was recognized, such as social networks and applications through which young people could be more efficiently informed about policies, calls, advice and various issues related to youth in various fields such as education, employment, cultural events, opportunities for business development, etc.

On a scale of 1-10, the satisfaction with their own lives is most often rated between 5 and 6 by the young people from 15 municipalities participating in the ReLOaD Programme. There is no significant statistical difference among young men and women regarding their satisfaction – young women tend to be slightly more satisfied in 8¹ out of 15 municipalities. Young people in the municipality of Cetinje are the least satisfied with their own life. By far **the most important reason for dissatisfaction in most municipalities and clusters is the poor overall quality of life, followed by poor employment opportunities**. A bad situation in the labor market in the cluster

¹ Pljevlja, Kolašin, Kotor, Tivat, Berane, Nikšić, Podgorica, Golubovci.

of Berane and Andrijevisa municipalities is recognized as the most important reason for youth dissatisfaction. **Youth unemployment is a burning social problem in all municipalities.** The lack of opportunities for developing their own business, the quality of formal education offered, but also the lack of non-formal education, as well as the availability and quality of cultural, sports and other facilities for young people stand out as present reasons for dissatisfaction among the majority of young people surveyed in 15 municipalities. All this affects the thinking of young people about leaving both the municipality and the country. In addition, in some municipalities, **it is worrying that pronounced social tensions are indicated as the reason for the desire to leave the municipality.** This was particularly pronounced in **Pljevlja**, where as many as **45.1% of young people surveyed mentioned that reason.** It is evident that young man is more prepared to leave the country due to social tensions. In addition, in Pljevlja and to a large extent among the youth from the Old Royal Capital Cetinje, the lack of cultural, entertainment, sports and other events is also the most prevalent reason for wanting to leave the municipality. On average, **33.4% of young people from these 15 municipalities covered by the Research want to leave Montenegro**, and there is the highest percentage of young women in the municipalities of **Danilovgrad (68.3%), Cetinje (52.4%) and Andrijevisa (51.9%).** However, in case of average share in all surveyed municipalities, young men are more likely to consider leaving their municipalities.

Young people from education system most often **express a desire to work in the state administration or public institution (35%) or a large private company (26%). There is a small percentage of those who think about start-ups (1.3%) or NGOs (0.9%).** Almost a third of the surveyed young people point out that they most often lack courage (32.1%) to start their own business, and they also recognize the lack of expertise (14.8%) and creativity (13.8%). Young women show slightly higher preference towards working in state administration or public institution. They also make up majority of young people wishing to work in NGO sector. When it come to preferences towards business sector, there is no significant statistical difference between sexes. All this indicates that a systematic approach, considering needs and challenges of both young women and men, is needed in order to change the attitude of young people regarding the search for secure employment in the state administration. They need a role model to focus more on entrepreneurship or employment in other sectors.

Speaking about the desired location of employment, young people from as many as six municipalities (Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Kotor, Budva, Tivat and Andrijevisa) would like it to be in another country, while young people from the municipalities of Pluzine, Berane, Kolasin, Mojkovac and Herceg Novi expressed a desire for internal migration (to other municipalities in Montenegro). Only in three larger municipalities (Podgorica, Niksic, Pljevlja), young people would like to get a job in their municipality. Therefore, improving the general business environment with a special attitude and creative incentive policies towards young entrepreneurs would be stimulating not only in terms of employment opportunities, but also for developing a sense of community care for young people and to some extent, addressing the above migration trends.

More than half of the respondents (57.8%), mostly male, do not believe that there is a job opportunity for them. In particular this is pronounced in the municipalities of Kolasin, Budva, Pluzine and Pljevlja. On the other hand, young people from the municipality of Tivat believe that there are such opportunities in their municipality. The most frequently pointed out obstacles that young people face in finding employment are related to the general lack of jobs, which is most often recognized among young people from as many as seven municipalities. Another

reason for the difficult employment of young people in 15 municipalities is employment "through connections".

Such thinking may lead to distrust in the institutions of the system, as indicated by the fact that **almost a third (31.9%) of young people surveyed did not register with the Employment Agency** and, as the most common reason, they pointed out that **they did not see the benefit of registration - 63.3%**. Beforementioned was dominantly a perception of young men², although in certain municipalities there was no significant statistical difference in perception between young men and women. In addition, to a large extent young people are not informed about the policies and programs implemented by the Employment Agency - 71.8%. This percentage is even higher when it comes to policies related to improving the business environment and opportunities for self-employment - 80.4%. Although the Employment Agency offers certain programs and promotional campaigns, these data point to the need for a different approach in informing young people about the opportunities offered to them. The existing capacities would be thus valorized and the activities and trust of young people would be increased in cooperation with this institution. In addition, some programs were assessed as inefficient and young people pointed out the shortcomings of vocational training programs, due to weak mechanisms to oversee the program implementation and sanction abuses.

The problem of youth **unemployment** is also indicated by the **fact that as many as 28.4% of young people surveyed have been waiting for employment for more than a year after completing formal education**. The largest number of young people who took more than a year to find a job is in the municipalities in the north: Pljevlja - 61.8%, Berane - 47.4% and Pluzine - 40.7%. Young people generally believe that the knowledge they acquire through the formal education system is not a sufficient starting point for easily finding a job. This is especially evident among young people from Pluzine (62.3%), Budva (54.2%) and Herceg Novi (48.8%), while the most positive responses were in the municipalities of Pljevlja (64.9%), Berane (54.5%) and Tivat (51.3%). **Almost half of the surveyed young people from 15 municipalities in Montenegro believe that their peers who study abroad have a higher chance of employment in Montenegro - 48.8%**. Almost a third of the surveyed young people have a job position that does not correspond to the level of acquired qualifications or the field of their schooling/study - 30.5%. This is specifically pronounced among young people in Budva - 64.3%.

More than two thirds of respondents (68%) have not attended any form of non-formal education, and the reason they point out is that this type of education does not exist in their municipality, they do not need it, and the reason can be found in the fact that 70% of unemployed young people believe that no additional training can help with employment or career advancement because "persons are employed through connections, not through qualifications". Young women are much more involved in the informal education.

However, **those who have gone through some forms of non-formal education point out its extreme importance**. Young people are of the opinion that the formal education system does not encourage, reward or sufficiently understand the interest and orientation of young people towards non-formal education. Understanding the importance, promotion and emphasis of non-formal education through the formal education system is therefore a prerequisite for the real potential of this type of education. There is a need for stronger synergy and substantial, not only

² Pljevlja, Kolašin, Kotor, Budva, Andrijevica, Cetinje, Golubovci.

formal support of educational institutions to various forms of associations in which young people are already active, such as student parliaments, but also support and initiation of forums, lectures on various topics and contents to be presented in the most likable way to young people in particular environments.

Opportunities in the labor market, among other factors (pandemic, dissatisfaction with the quality of life, etc.), are reflected in the reduced overall youth activity in many areas. Negative development opportunities affect the lack of desire of young people to progress, and especially the loss of interest. **For example, 43.7% of young people surveyed never attend cultural events** (museums, galleries and theaters); a third of them go to concerts and musical shows only a few times a year or less often; a quarter of them never engage in physical activity; almost half (47.6%) never attend sporting events, and 37.5% have no hobbies. This challenge was frequently more expressed by young men, except in Danilovgrad, where young women were more likely to report this.

In addition, over 80% of them do not visit a local youth club or participate in the activities of local NGOs. The problem of forming a group of "passive youth" is recognized by institutions, NGOs and young people themselves. Therefore, promoting activism among young people, encouraging critical thinking and guiding young people to take initiatives is key to solving this problem.

In addition, the findings of the Research show that the offer of content for young people is quite concentrated in large areas (from various forms of non-formal education to various cultural, sports and other content), which leads to a situation where young people from smaller and remote municipalities, due to inability to participate, have too much free time that they have nowhere to spend. Therefore, the decentralization of activities organized for young people seems necessary, in addition to initiating the construction of cultural and sports infrastructure, especially in smaller municipalities, as well as cultural and sports events.

The Research also points to the **growing problem of division among young people, especially on political grounds**, which leads to additional problems such as **an increase in hate speech and intolerance**. The findings of focus groups with **young people indicate that young people often do not appreciate diversity, have many prejudices towards people with disabilities, people who have lower social status and similar categories of society**. In addition to the identified discrimination against vulnerable categories of the population, such as youth with disabilities and special needs, the identified problem relates to the attitude of the institutions themselves towards these persons. One should work in particular on the acceptance of diversity among young people in order to reduce the level of discrimination against vulnerable categories - people with disabilities and members of minority groups (RE population, LGBTIQ+, NEET, youth from rural areas). Discrimination among young people is a multidimensional problem and requires an integrated approach.

It is encouraging that a significant majority of young people in all 15 municipalities covered by the Research **had no mental or health problems during lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic**. However, in some municipalities, a significant percentage of young people stated that they had mental or health problems (Pljevlja - 28.9%, Berane - 27.8% and Andrijevica - 18.4%). **The family is the main support for young people in these situations, and the percentage of those who turn to professional services is very small**. Therefore, it is necessary to work on promoting

the importance of mental health among young people, in addition to strengthening services that would help them in situations where they face health problems (both mental and addiction).

The largest percentage of young people in all 15 municipalities do not see themselves as creative makers. The highest percentage of those who declared themselves as creative makers is among young people in Kotor (33.9%), Andrijevica (22.4%), Tivat (21.7%) and Budva (20.4%). If we add to this data information that young people use social networks every day and that information, communication and consumption of educational content most often takes place via smartphones, it is evident that **we need to work on creating programs that will encourage creativity in young people.** In addition, the existing knowledge of young people about ICT technologies needs to be developed in a direction that will enable the development and expression of creativity and/or increase their employability in both domestic and international markets.

3. DESK RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In Montenegro, **youth** are a group of people defined by the age criterion, those over the age of **15 years up to the age of 30 years old**. This is the definition used in the **Law on Youth**³ and Youth National and Local Policies. As persons under the age of 18 are considered to be children, there is some overlap between the group of children and young people. There is also an overlap with the group of adolescents, usually considered as a group of people between the ages of 13 and 19. Already at the age of 15, young people can formally join the labor market and adult education programs. This age is the limit until which most children complete compulsory primary education.

According to the Law on Social Protection, young people are between 18 and 26 years old. According to this Law, young people up to the age of 26 can be beneficiaries of various specific social services and material benefits.

The Criminal Law of Montenegro defines adolescents as persons aged 14 to 18⁴. A child over the age of 14 is considered a juvenile and can be held legally liable for his or her actions.⁵ A person between the ages of 18 and 21 is considered a young adult and can be treated as a juvenile.

The most recent census was conducted more than 10 years ago, in 2011. According to the census, Montenegro has 620,029 inhabitants, while the projection of MONSTAT for 2020 is similar with 621,306 inhabitants. In 2011, there were 132,702 young people aged 15 to 29. **This means that every fifth citizen of Montenegro is young (21.4%)**. The majority of young people (66.1%) live in urban areas, while every third young person (33.9%) lives in rural areas of Montenegro.

At the time of this Research, young people born between 1992. and 2007. were surveyed. They spent their childhood and adult life in a period of continuous social and economic transition in Montenegro and various phases of social turmoil or instability, including the COVID-19 pandemic that began two years ago. The reality of young people is diverse, while all of them in this period move from childhood to adulthood. Youth policies have to be tailored to the identified youth needs, based on government-youth dialogue, available resources and scientifically relevant data. Therefore, youth policies have to provide pathways to solutions to individual and group challenges that young people face in a particular area, at a particular time and for a particular period.

Youth policies also have to view young people as a resource, as the future of the local area, region and state. This means that youth policies have to tend to fit in or be compatible with other national policies in the areas of civic participation, volunteering, education, health, poverty and structural inequality reduction, social protection, rule of law, human rights,

3 Law on Youth ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 025/19 dated 30 April 2019)

4 <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/3351/file/MNE-media-MNEpublication75.pdf>

5 <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/3351/file/MNE-media-MNEpublication75.pdf>

democratization, labor market, demography, sports, culture, regional and local development, sustainable development and more.

The **Youth Law⁶ provides a detailed guidance on the process of creating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating youth policies.** It stipulates the most important topics and principles of these documents. It defines the role of the line ministry (now the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and the Sports and Youth Administration, which is under this Ministry) responsible for preparing and coordinating youth policy, as well as preparing the annual and final report on implementing local action plans and the Strategy.

Article 14 of the Youth Law stipulates that b that includes measures and activities of youth policy at the local level, harmonized with national action plans, and regularly report on its implementation to the line ministry. As a national action plan can cover a period of up to two years, the same applies to local action plans. Existing action plans at the local level cover the period 2020-2021, with an extension until mid-2022, as proposed by the Ministry due to delays in adopting the National Strategy. Namely, the National Strategy for Youth was valid until 2021, after which the competent Ministry has not adopted a new one until the moment of preparation of this Report.

3.2. Findings from Previous Research

So far, several studies and analyzes have been conducted that provided information on the environment in which young people in Montenegro lived, worked and were educated, as well as on the policies implemented in order to improve their position.

The Research on Youth Needs in Montenegro (IPSOS, 2019)⁷ and the Research on the Position and Needs of High School Students (Juventas, 2020)⁸ provide significant insight into the youth needs in Montenegro. In 2019, young people were most worried about unemployment, the use of psychoactive substances, the economic situation and the education system.⁹ Most of the surveyed young people had some work experience¹⁰. Volunteer work and professional practice are most prevalent among the youngest citizens, and lack of work experience and volunteer work are most prevalent among young people with lower levels of education. **Young people prefer public employment to the private sector.** On the other hand, many young people say that they would be ready to develop entrepreneurship. This attitude is especially present among young people from the south of Montenegro, as well as among those who are already employed¹¹. Most of the interviewed high school students are interested in entrepreneurship, but they believe that the state does not support young people in starting their own business and recognize the lack of incentives for start-ups, including financial support, as a problem¹². The majority (58%) believe that institutions do not support young people to find a job¹³.

⁶ Youth Law ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 025/19 dated 30 April 2019)

⁷ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

⁸ Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

⁹ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

¹⁰ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

¹¹ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

¹² Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

¹³ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

Young citizens of Montenegro have a divided opinion on the quality of education¹⁴. A more positive attitude towards the existing education system is more common among young people from the north of Montenegro, from rural areas and those who are currently unemployed¹⁵. The majority of young people (54%) say that there are not enough non-formal trainings for youth in their local community, although non-formal education is perceived as important at different levels of personal and professional development. The most common choices of non-formal youth education topics include employment, health, entrepreneurship, arts and culture, democracy and human rights and emotions.¹⁶ An interesting finding is that the majority (58%) of young people believe that "there are opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge outside the formal education system" and say that "the Internet, courses and practical experience are seen as the main sources of this knowledge and skills."¹⁷

Speaking of security, high school students are concerned about the use of psychoactive substances, crime, lack of traffic culture, violence, tensions in society based on national belonging or religion. At the same time, **only 12% of high school students participated in a program that promoted tolerance and anti-discrimination.**¹⁸

Young people need spaces for youth and more artistic, sports and cultural events at the local level¹⁹. High school students need spaces adapted to youth to spend their free time. Almost half of the respondents (43%) stated that they missed cinema, while the most common answers included sports centers, concert halls and youth clubs or centers²⁰. Four out of ten young people have heard of youth services, and the vast majority (around 75%) have a positive attitude towards these services²¹. On average, every second young citizen of Montenegro believes that young people are interested in being involved in decision-making on matters that directly concern them, and the same percentage of young people believe that the Government of Montenegro encourages this youth involvement²². A quarter of young people say they are largely willing to participate in the decision-making process. Lower readiness is more common among young male respondents, and higher among young people with higher education, as well as among young citizens from the south of Montenegro²³. High school students would like to participate more actively in decision-making on topics that interest them and to be better informed about the work of institutions²⁴. Almost 3 out of 4 (73%) surveyed high school students believe that young people do not have enough influence on political processes and decisions²⁵. The majority of young people (56%) believe that it is important that young people are informed about the work of local and state institutions. Most respondents believe that student parliaments are not active enough. Almost one third of the total youth population is informed about the existence of the National Youth Strategy and the Law on Youth²⁶.

¹⁴ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

¹⁵ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

¹⁶ Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

¹⁷ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

¹⁸ Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

¹⁹ Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

²⁰ Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

²¹ Juventas (2020), The position and needs of young people in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

²² IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

²³ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

²⁴ Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

²⁵ Juventas (2020), The Youth Position and Needs in Montenegro, a representative study among high school students

²⁶ IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2019), Youth Needs Assessment in Montenegro

The research **“Shared Futures: Youth Perceptions of Peace in the Western Balkans” (UNDP, 2021)**²⁷ conducted in 2021 clearly shows that young people recognize that they themselves have an important role to play in generating change in society. Although on average 19.5% of young people in the region participate in civic activities, this percentage is slightly higher in Montenegro and is at the level of 32.2%. In addition, those who are not involved show interest in being more active, especially in areas such as helping the poor and marginalized groups (23.9% of respondents would be involved in these activities), democracy and human rights (17.3%) and building peace and reconciliation (15.7%). The survey showed that education and employment played a significant role in youth engagement. Namely, respondents with a higher level of education or employees also had stronger beliefs about self-efficiency (the importance of their own engagement) than their peers who had a lower level of education or the unemployed. Across the region, as in Montenegro, youth satisfaction with management systems and institutions is relatively low, while satisfaction with civil society and youth organizations is somewhat higher, but still low (average score in Montenegro is 3 on a scale of 1-complete dissatisfaction to 5-complete satisfaction). The lowest satisfaction of young people in Montenegro, just like in other countries, is related to employment opportunities (score 2.2 on a scale from 1 to 5). The percentage of young people who reported being discriminated against based on political affiliation or ethnicity, or hate speech in the past 12 months is slightly higher in Montenegro than in other countries. When asked if they had aspirations to move abroad, 49% of Montenegrin respondents said yes.

The research **Mapping Youth Policies and Identifying Existing Support for Financing Youth Action in the Western Balkans (WBYR, 2021)**²⁸, which included Montenegro, provides an overview of youth policy frameworks and youth participation in social activities, identifying available funding frameworks and mapping gaps in financing. The report concludes that there is a legal framework for young people in Montenegro, but that its implementation is insufficient mainly due to the lack of efficient and sustainable cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination. The report also notes the low capacity of current ministries or sectors within local governments in charge of youth policy, as well as the lack of political will to work in this area. Challenges to be addressed include coordinating activities at the national and local level, improving indicator-based reporting practices and providing competent social workers in youth services. The report concludes that youth participation in youth organizations is low and should be increased through the use of existing mechanisms, but mainly through the recognition of young people’s voices. Regarding the financing of youth actions, most of them are financed from the budget (through the financing of activities envisaged by action plans defined on the basis of the National Youth Strategy) and by international organizations (through the financing of youth projects and offering external expertise as needed). However, the report clearly points to a lack of resources to improve the youth situation, as well as a lack of an adequate donor coordination mechanism. Based on the analysis, the report recommends increasing the capacity of youth bodies in local governments, ensuring sustainable and continuous funding of youth policies and programs, strengthening the capacity to monitor the implementation of youth policies and generating new

²⁷ UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, RYCO (2021), Shared Futures: Youth Perceptions on Peace in the Western Balkans

²⁸ WBYL (2021), Mapping of youth policies and identification of existing support and gaps in financing of Youth Actions in the Western Balkans –Montenegro Report

forms of NGO activities to increase the number of young individuals involved in the creation and implementation of these programs.

The population of Roma and Egyptians is a particularly endangered population in Montenegro. **The Analysis of Legal and Institutional Mechanisms for Providing Services for Social Integration of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro (ROMACTED; 2019)**²⁹ concludes that some progress has been made in terms of social integration of this population, especially in strengthening legal (normative) guarantee of equality and protection against discrimination. However, as stated in the report, practice unequivocally shows that the impact of such normative guarantees on Roma and Egyptians is limited, especially at the systemic level. The report mentions three most dominant problems: unavailability and non-networking of data related to Roma and Egyptians; lack of effective mechanisms for coordination of Roma and Egyptian social integration policies both at the local and national level; and inadequate allocation of funds to finance social integration of Roma and Egyptians (both those from the budget and donor funds). Regarding specific areas, the report emphasizes that there are some pronounced problems faced by this population in terms of the following: housing (buildings unfit for human habitation and legal status of ownership); education (low enrollment in primary and especially secondary schools); health care (lack of information and unregulated status and consequently low level of exercise of rights). In addition, this population faces poor participation in the labor market (they usually have access to lower paid and seasonal jobs) and employment incentive programs, as well as social services. These observations are confirmed by the research conducted within the project **Identifying and mapping relevant challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian community in Montenegro (Programme ROMACTED; 2019)**³⁰, which analyzes the situation of this population in eight Montenegrin municipalities. The study shows that the situation in which this population finds itself is difficult and very complex. Although education is considered a starting point for overcoming the "vicious circle" of problems in which members of this population find themselves, municipalities also need to do their best and invest in the quality/quantity of services and prevention, and not in mitigation. The report confirms that discrimination against the Roma and Egyptian population remains widespread, both in the public and private sector. However, as mentioned, the situation has improved significantly in many aspects lately, but the changes in most cases are the result of conscious individuals or projects that unfortunately do not become a permanent part of the institutional environment. The research shows that some additional direct support is necessary for further integration of this population, which is why the importance of improving the work of associates for social inclusion and teaching assistants is especially emphasized.

3.3. Legislative, Strategic and Institutional Framework at the National Level

Umbrella law and strategy: The legislative framework dealing with youth issues in Montenegro is defined by the Youth Law. The first Youth Law was adopted at the session of the Montenegrin Parliament on 20 September 2016. For the first time, it regulates youth policy and labor in Montenegro, defines the activities of entities that participate in its creation and implementation,

²⁹ Programme ROMACTED (2019), Analysis of Legal and Institutional Mechanisms for Providing Services for Social Integration of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, including an analysis of uncovered competencies and missing support services

³⁰ Programme ROMACTED (2019), Identifying and mapping relevant challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian community in Montenegro

and regulates issues of interest to youth action. The new Youth Law was adopted on 4 April 2019.

The amended Youth Law adopted a new instrument for the creation and implementation of youth policy: the Program on achieving public interest in the field of youth policy.³¹ The program prescribes measures and activities aimed at improving the position of young people and provides cross-sectoral cooperation of all institutions dealing with youth policy. The program is adopted every two years. In order to define priority areas, the line ministry prepares a Needs Assessment. Thus, in 2020, the Ministry of Sports and Youth³² prepared a Needs Assessment³³ which covered nine key areas:

1. Creating and improving youth policy;
2. Establishing an institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy;
3. Creating and improving operating conditions for youth services;
4. Encouraging proactive youth participation in the creation and implementation of youth policy at the state and local level;
5. Instructing young people about mechanisms for their inclusion in active employment measures;
6. Encouraging youth involvement in the creation of cultural content;
7. Encouraging youth mobility;
8. Encouraging youth inclusion in non-formal education;
9. Promoting healthy lifestyles and volunteerism among young people.

The first Program was adopted by the Government on 16 January 2020, and approximately €700,000 was allocated for the Program implementation in 2020. The Program includes measures and activities aimed at youth in Montenegro, which are defined within the above areas of public interest.

The strategic framework at the national level is defined by the National Youth Strategy. In the previous three decades, two National Youth Strategies were created: the National Youth Action Plan 2006-2011 (NYAP) and the Youth Strategy 2017-2021. The latest strategy expired on 31 December 2021, and no new strategy has been adopted yet. The Strategy also includes an Implementation Action Plan, with general measures and sub-measures and a Framework for monitoring and evaluating the Strategy implementation. The Ministry of Education was responsible for the Strategy implementation until 2016, from 2016 to 2020 it was the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and since December 2020 it has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (hereinafter MESCS).

MESCS develops and adopts the National Action Plan (NAP) for the Strategy implementation in accordance with key priorities for a period of at least two years, in cooperation with public institutions, NGOs and other youth policy stakeholders. NAP specifies the priority measures to be implemented and describes the key activities to be implemented. The plans are financed from regular budget funds, but also from the funds of international organizations, in order to improve the position of youth and implement youth policy. In the first quarter of the current year, MESCS prepares an annual report on the Action Plan implementation for the previous year and submits it to the Government for adoption.

Sectoral strategies and laws: At the national level, the strategic and legislative framework related to youth is also defined in the following documents:

³¹ Article 5 paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Youth Law ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 25/2019; <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}>) (Accessed on 23 March 2022)

³² Today's Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports

³³ 2020 Youth Needs Assessment, 2020, <https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=415877&rType=2&file=Analiza%20potreba%20mladih%202020.%20god..d%20ocx> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

- Law on NGOs³⁴ (2017)
- Law on Social and Child Protection³⁵ (2017)
- Health Care Law³⁶ (2021)
- Labor Law³⁷ (2021)
- Law on Education and Upbringing: Adult Education (2011)³⁸, Law on Gymnasium (2021)³⁹, Law on Vocational Education (2010)⁴⁰, General Law on Education and Upbringing (2017)⁴¹, Law on Vocational Training for Persons with Higher Education (2012).⁴²
- Law on Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Procedure⁴³ (2018)
- Sports Law⁴⁴ (2021)
- Law on Culture⁴⁵ (2020)
- Law on Prohibition of Discrimination⁴⁶ (2017)
- Laws on Media: Media Law⁴⁷ (2020), Law on Public Broadcaster Radio and Television of Montenegro⁴⁸, Law on Electronic Media⁴⁹ (2020)
- National Strategy for Employment and Human Resources Development⁵⁰ (2016 - 2020)
- Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child⁵¹ (2019 - 2023)
- Program to Combat HIV/AIDS⁵² (2021 - 2023)
- Strategy for Protecting and Improving Mental Health in Montenegro⁵³ (2019 - 2023)
- Smart Specialization Strategy of Montenegro⁵⁴ (2019 - 2024)
- Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Abuse of Montenegro⁵⁵ (2013 - 2020), it is new, in the phase of development
- Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence with the Action Plan (2017 - 2021)
- Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System⁵⁶ (2018 - 2022)
- Inclusive Education Strategy of Montenegro⁵⁷ (2019 - 2025)
- Public Information Strategy on the Accession of Montenegro to the EU⁵⁸ (2019 - 2022)

34 ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 39/2011 and 37/2017)

35 ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 27/2013, 1/2015, 42/2015, 47/2015, 56/2016, 66/2016, 1/2017, 31/2017 – Decision of the Constitutional Court, 42/2017 and 5)

36 ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 3/2016, 39/2016, 2/2017, 44/2018, 24/2019 – state laws, 82/2020 and 8/2021)

37 ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 74/2019 and 8/2021)

38 Adult Education Law ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 20 dated 15 April 2011)

39 Law on Gymnasium ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 64/2002, 49/2007 and "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 45/2010, 39/2013, 47/2017 and 145/2021.

40 Law on Vocational Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro", 64 dated 28 November 2002 and 49/07; "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 45 dated 4 August 2010 and 39/13).

41 "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 64/2002, 31/2005 and 49/2007, and "Official Gazette of Montenegro", 4/2008 – state law, 21/2009 – state law, 45/2010, 40/2011 – state law, 45 /2011, 36/2013 – decision of the Constitutional Courts, 39/2013, 44/2013 – transl. and 47/2017)

42 Law on Vocational Training of Persons with Higher Education ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 38 dated 19 July 2012)

43 Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 064/11 dated 29 December 2011, 001/18 dated 4 January 2018)

44 Sports Law ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 44/2018 and 123/2021.

45 Law on Culture ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 038/12 dated 19 July 2012)

46 Law on Prohibition of Discrimination ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 46/2010, 40/2011 – state law, 18/2014 and 42/2017)

47 Media Law ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 82/2020 dated 6 August 2020)

48 Law on National Public Broadcaster Radio-Television of Montenegro ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 80/2020 dated 4 August 2020)

49 Law on Electronic Media ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 46/2010, 40/2011 – state law, 53/2011, 6/2013, 55/2016, 92/2017 and 82/2020 – state law)

50 National Strategy for Employment and Human Resources Development 2016-2020

51 Strategy for Exercising the Rights of the Child 2019 - 2023

52 Program to Combat HIV/AIDS 2021-2023

53 Montenegro Mental Health Protection and Improvement Strategy 2019-2023

54 Smart Specialization Strategy of Montenegro 2019-2024

55 Montenegro Strategy for the Prevention of Drug Abuse 2013-2020

56 Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System 2018-2022

57 Montenegro Inclusive Education Strategy 2019-2025

58 Public Information Strategy for Montenegro's Accession to the European Union

- Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians⁵⁹ (2021 - 2025)
- Strategy for Improving the Quality of Lives of LGBT Persons in Montenegro⁶⁰ (2019 - 2023)
- National Strategy for Gender Equality of Montenegro⁶¹ (2021 - 2025)

Line Ministry and Administration: At the national level, the most important institution in the field of youth policy is the Sports and Youth Administration, which operates within the MESCS. The basic competencies of the Administration are the following: creation and improvement of youth policy; creating and developing strategies, action plans and programs for young people; cooperation with the non-governmental sector and other entities in order to improve youth policy; encouraging proactive youth participation in the creation and implementation of youth policy at the national and local levels; encouraging youth involvement in non-formal education and encouraging regional and international cooperation in the field of youth policy.

The Law on Youth also prescribes the establishment of the Youth Council, as an expert and advisory body⁶². The Council members are representatives of the Ministry, Administration, municipality, central association, youth organizations, organizations for youth and other forms of youth organization and experts in the field of youth policy. Issues of importance for the work of the Youth Council are defined by the Act on the Establishment of the Youth Council⁶³. Some activities of the Youth Council include giving recommendations for the improvement of youth policy, participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Youth Strategy. The Council operated from 2006 to 2011 and is now awaiting re-establishment. The Law on Youth also envisages the possibility of establishing Local Youth Councils.

Other ministries and institutions: Various public bodies at the state level are obliged to cooperate in the process of preparation, implementation and evaluation of youth policies and to appoint a contact person for youth who will be responsible for coordination and cooperation in the field of youth policy, as well as coordination between the Administration and the Youth Council⁶⁴. In addition to the Sports and Youth Administration, the most important public institutions in the field of youth policies include the Employment Agency, Ministry of Economic Development, Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare.

3.4. Legislative, Strategic and Institutional Framework at the Local Level

LYAP: The Law on Youth envisages the creation of Local Action Plans for Youth, as the main instruments for the implementation of youth policy at the local level. These plans are in line with the National Youth Strategy and the National Action Plan. In addition, LYAPs include research findings on the needs of young people at the local level, working group proposals and suggestions from public consultations. Same as the National Action Plan, LYAPs are adopted for a period of two years, while implementation reports are submitted to the line Ministry annually. The most recent LYAPs covered the period of 2020-2021. The report from January 2021 reads that 24 municipalities adopted LYAP, and are in the process of their implementation⁶⁵. MESCS

⁵⁹ Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025

⁶⁰ Strategy for Improving the Quality of Living of LGBTI Persons in Montenegro 2019-2023

⁶¹ National Strategy for Gender Equality of Montenegro 2021 - 2025

⁶² Youth Law, transposed to the Youth Strategy 2017-2021

⁶³ Youth Law, transposed to the Youth Strategy 2017-2021

⁶⁴ Youth Strategy 2017-2021

⁶⁵ RCC, 2021, Mapping of youth policies and identification of existing support and gaps in financing of youth actions in the Western Balkans, Montenegro Report

informed local governments, due to delays in the National Strategy and Action Plan for Youth for the current year, to extend their Action Plans until 1 July 2022.

Municipalities also enact **local regulations** governing the establishment of youth-related bodies. Local regulations rely on national laws governing the work of local governments and laws relating to youth. For example, Podgorica Capital City, based on their Statute, the Law on Local Self-Government and the Law on Youth, passed a Decision establishing the Youth Council of the Capital City, which defines the Council’s rights and responsibilities, structure (number, composition, conditions and election of members) and method of operation.

The institutional framework at the local level includes local secretariats, local youth councils, youth services, educational and health institutions, social protection centers and day care centers, local offices of the Employment Agency, cultural and sports centers, and numerous NGOs.

Local Self-Government Bodies Responsible for Youth Policy

The Law on Local Self-Government stipulates that local self-government bodies (secretariats, administrations and directorates) shall be formed to perform local self-government activities. The secretariats in each municipality include those that deal with youth issues and youth policy (e.g. the Secretariat for Social Affairs, the Secretariat for Culture and Sports, Youth and Social Welfare, etc.). These secretariats usually have additional roles and tasks and are not focused exclusively on youth. In some municipalities, there are also youth offices that operationally implement youth policy and/or implement some measures from Local Youth Action Plans. Some municipalities have youth clubs that can be centers of youth activities (Table 1). This shows that the situation differs from one municipality to the other, when it comes to the institutional framework concerning youth policy. While some municipalities have competent secretariats or even youth offices, other municipalities have no competent secretariat for youth policy.

Table 1: *Municipalities and names of youth centers/clubs in Montenegro*

Municipality	Name of Youth Service
<i>Podgorica</i>	Youth Center Podgorica
<i>Cetinje</i>	Youth Club Cetinje
<i>Bar</i>	Youth Club Bar
<i>Kotor</i>	Youth Club Kotor
<i>Niksic</i>	Youth Club Niksic
<i>Danilovgrad</i>	Youth Club Danilovgrad
<i>Savnik</i>	Youth Club Savnik
<i>Mojkovac</i>	Youth Club Mojkovac
<i>Pljevlja</i>	Youth Club Pljevlja
<i>Plav</i>	Youth Club Plav
<i>Petnjica</i>	Youth Club Petnjica

There are various institutions at the local level that should be involved in the planning and implementation of Youth Strategies, and yet many of them lack capacity.

Local Youth Councils

The Law on Youth stipulates that: "in order to encourage and improve the development of youth policy, strengthen cooperation and improve the position of young people at the local level, a Local Youth Council may be established in the municipality, as an expert advisory body. The Local Youth Council includes representatives of municipal bodies responsible for youth policy and non-governmental organizations that implement youth policy. In addition, the Law on Youth stipulates that at least one member of this Council must come from the non-governmental sector and that "the representative of non-governmental organizations implementing youth policy shall be the one who has the support of most of these NGOs and is elected through a public call."

Youth Services (Youth Centers and Youth Clubs)

The Law on Youth defines the establishment of youth services (Youth Centers and Youth Clubs) (Table 1). There is currently one Youth Center (in Podgorica) and 10 Youth Clubs (Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Niksic, Savnik, Petnjica, Plav, Mojkovac, Pljevlja, Kotor and Bar). Pursuant to Article 25 of the Law on Youth, the Government of Montenegro, i.e. the line Ministry, may allocate up to €30,000 per year to support the efforts of local self-government in providing conditions for the establishment of youth services. On the other hand, in some cases, such as the municipality of Budva, the local government has independently established a Youth Club, which is funded from the local budget⁶⁶.

Other Youth Services

There are primary and secondary schools in each municipality, while 18 of 25 municipalities have Primary Healthcare Centers with youth counseling. There are faculties and universities in Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, Berane, Bar, Kotor and Cetinje. Student parliaments are established within primary and secondary schools. Student parliaments and student associations are institutional representative bodies of university students, established with the aim of improving student living conditions. Student parliaments have their representatives in different bodies and thus participate in the decision-making process on behalf of students. The goal of these organizations is to encourage student activism and involve students in social processes.

Non-formal education is offered at all levels of education and there is capacity to improve it. At some faculties and universities there are career centers, sports centers, cultural centers, entrepreneurship centers, etc.

There are 18 Primary Healthcare Centers in Montenegro, some of which include Youth Counseling Centers, Mental Health Centers, Substitution Therapy Centers, Reproductive Health Counseling Centers and other types of so-called Population counseling. When necessary, young people from municipalities that do not provide services must travel to the nearest Primary Healthcare Centers that offer this type of support. It is important to note that the formal existence of a Youth Counseling Center or a Mental Health Center does not guarantee that a

⁶⁶ Youth Law ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", 025/19 dated 30 April 2019)

young person will be provided with the necessary service at a basic level of quality. There are Mental Health Centers in Bar, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Niksic, Kotor, Podgorica, Ulcinj, Pljevlja, while the Primary Healthcare Center in Zabljak employs a psychiatrist.

Some municipalities have established their own services for the prevention and/or treatment of addiction, such as drug prevention offices or, for example, the Kakaricka Gora Public Institution, founded by Podgorica Capital City.

Each municipality has a Center for Social Work, which has the role of providing material benefits, emergency social protection services and referring its users to other available services. Young people up to 26 years of age are one of the priority groups of these centers; this applies in particular to young people with disabilities, young people who have been protected by public institutions, children and young people in conflict with the law, young people in the RE population, young people who use psychoactive substances, victims of violence or young people in need of social protection due to other circumstances. Operational results of the Centers for Social Work in the field of youth are very limited due to the following reasons: "1) the number of employees, especially those that work directly with youth, is not sufficient to provide high-quality services; 2) only 17.3% of the total number of employees follow relevant professional procedures; 3) on average, skilled workers work on 44 cases at a time".⁶⁷

Day-care centers have been established in Podgorica, Niksic, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Berane, Cetinje, Mojkovac, Herceg Novi, Rozaje, Ulcinj, Plav, Danilovgrad and Bijela. There, young people with disabilities can receive various support services for living in the community. A total of 248 persons used day-care centers in 2019⁶⁸.

The Employment Agency of Montenegro has local services that implement programs at the local level (employment offices). These local offices provide career counseling, connect jobseekers with potential employers, and provide a variety of courses for job seekers. The Employment Agency and the University of Montenegro have a Career Center at the University of Montenegro in Podgorica. There are also additional support programs for jobseekers, such as public works, where the unemployed can be employed for several months, or support for entrepreneurs through grants and mentoring programs.

The Investment and Development Fund provides various support lines to entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises, where a special credit line is dedicated to young entrepreneurs.

In some municipalities, there are cultural centers or youth cultural centers that should have youth-oriented programs and involve young people in creating cultural content. Each municipality has at least one cultural institution that is used or could be used by young people.

NGO Sector

There are no official data on the number of youth organizations - youth-led or those that implement youth programs, so no approximate number of civil society organizations working with young people can be provided. Some organizations continuously work on issues of importance to young people, through participation in working groups, monitoring activities

⁶⁷ Analysis of the work of Centers for Social Work in Montenegro", UNICEF in Montenegro, 2020, available at <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/9551/file/MNE-media-MNEpublication506.pdf>, (accessed on 5 January 2021)

⁶⁸ p. 76. M. Pejovic, *Mapiranje politika za mlade i utvrđivanje postojeće podrške i jaza u finansiranju akcija za mlade na Zapadnom Balkanu – Izveštaj Montenegro, RCC, Podgorica, 2011.* (Mapping Youth Policies and Identifying Existing Support and Gap in Financing Youth Action in the Western Balkans – Report Montenegro, RCC, Podgorica, 2011)

and/or in international networks. Their projects are funded by various donors and operationally supported by both domestic and international organizations such as: ADP-Zid, Juventas, Forum MNE, UMHCG, Prima, CAZAS, SOS Podgorica, Center for Civic Education, Bonum, Proactiv, Red Cross and others. Examples of active organizations at the local level include the Youth Cultural Center Herceg Novi, Seventh Youth Force Budva, New Horizon Ulcinj, *Da zaživi selo (Village Revival) Pljevlja, Sjeverna Zemlja (Northern Land) Berane, 9 December Danilovgrad, Naša Budućnost (Our Future), ALD Nikšić*, and others. Some organizations have been active for a short period and yet reached a great number of young people with their programs, such as the Union of High School Students, which achieved remarkable results both in the country and abroad, and the Union of Young Entrepreneurs. Some organizations focus on a specific vulnerable group of youth, e.g. the NGO Roma Youth Organization - Phiren Amenca, or specific human rights issues, e.g. LGBTQA+ rights, like Spectra and Queer Montenegro.⁶⁹ Some of the organizations that have been active for a short period, but have reached a large number of young people with their programs include the Union of High School Students, which has achieved notable results nationally and internationally, and the Union of Young Entrepreneurs. Some organizations focus on a specific vulnerable group of young people, for example, the NGO Roma Youth Organization - Phiren Amenca, or specific human rights issues, such as LGBTQ rights, like Spectra and Queer Montenegro

Some Montenegrin institutions and organizations are involved in various youth cooperation platforms such as the Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform (WBYCP), RYCO (Regional Youth Cooperation Office), SALTO-YOUTH network, SEEYN - South East Europe Youth Network and Young European Ambassadors (YEA).

Each municipality has NGOs active in areas of interest to local youth policies. The National Youth Strategy also recognized informal groups, youth centers, youth clubs, youth councils and student parliaments as key stakeholders in youth policy.

There are also examples of **organizations funded by foreign donors**. The United Nations agencies - UNDP, UNICEF, OSCE, ILO and others - are in the lead in terms of programs and invested funds in the field of youth, but other donors are not far behind. For example, the "American Corners" in Montenegro were opened in Podgorica, Pljevlja and Cetinje with the joint support of the US Embassy in Podgorica and the mentioned local governments. The content and activities of these organizations are attractive to young people; they are used for learning about cultures, but also as regional resource centers for information sharing and programs. Young people can use different materials in English, borrow books, magazines and movies or search for available literature in different fields. In these places, they can also find out about many available programs and join various activities led by scholarship holders from the United States or alumni of the US Government's exchange program. In addition, young people can attend lectures by experts on a large number of topics related to cultural exchange between countries. Such organizations are important because, among other things, they raise the interest of young people in various educational and cultural contents that are offered to them, increase their information and overall involvement in social topics.

3.5. International Strategic Framework

The international strategic framework includes the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the UN Youth Strategy - Youth 2030, as well as the Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030.

⁶⁹ RCC, 2021, Mapping of youth policies and identification of existing support and gaps in financing of youth actions in the Western Balkans, Montenegro Report

across Europe actively support, defend, promote and enjoy the core values of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and the rule of law".

Following the vision and mission, the CoE Strategy for the Youth Sector 2030 defined thematic priorities: 1. Revitalization of pluralistic democracy; 2. Access to rights; 3. Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies; 4. Youth work.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

✍ Young people in most municipalities **are not familiar with the legislative and strategic framework** that applies to them. In addition, **they do not know the mechanisms available to them for involvement in decision-making**. Young people in all environments need to play a more significant role when it comes to participating in the adoption of regulations and strategic documents. The research showed that the **experience of young people so far is mostly negative in terms of participation in such activities, and the involvement is formal and comes down to the inclusion of those who are already recognized as more active members of the community or based on political affiliation**. However, in order to get a clearer picture of policies and activities that essentially meet the needs of young people, **the coverage of young people must be at a much higher level when creating these documents**. Therefore, it is necessary to work on the promotion and raising awareness of young people about youth activism and existing mechanisms for participation in decision-making that affect them directly or indirectly. This would achieve better targeting of needs at the local level, and the policies and planned activities would be more efficient.

✍ **Lack of information and non-sharing of information is recognized as a huge problem that is present at different levels**, not only between the institutions and the youth, but also among the youth themselves. Awakened the interest of young people through education for various social issues and activities would influence students and other young people to learn about various issues and at the same time activate their natural instinct to share new knowledge with others (peers and other people with whom they are in daily contact). Young people who want to know more are more likely to learn more than other young people. Therefore, **activities that aim to motivate young people to reconsider their own attitudes, thoughts and feelings, can result in greater information**.

✍ The research pointed to significant **passivity of young people in many areas**. There are problems of not understanding the need for much more intensive involvement of young people in all aspects of social life. These problems are visible both among the young population and in the communities themselves. Therefore, it is necessary to **create a continuous campaign to raise awareness of the importance of more intensive youth involvement, and social media should be used as much as possible in achieving this goal**. Information through the official websites of the municipalities is useful, but additional content is also needed. There are many ways to achieve this. Therefore, people can be educated about the importance of more intensive participation of young people on an issue in order to encourage change in the school itself, in the community, but also on social networks. The use of social media to raise public awareness is mostly driven by young people and is a useful tool to raise issues and bring about change. Therefore, creating digital art content can be very effective (as well as videos, live speech, etc.). In addition to the primary goal - raising awareness of the more active role of young people, it can also contribute to the development of useful skills. Using blogs, social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., videos, memes and online petitions are just some of the examples of how they can encourage fast and efficient action and contribute to understanding the importance, values and potential of young people for the community.

☞ **Research on the needs of youth is conducted irregularly, which indicates the need for continuous longitudinal research on the needs of young people in Montenegrin municipalities.** Namely, this research indicated the diversity of problems, opportunities and levels of activity on different issues that young people faced in different environments. These specifics of the environment change over time depending on various factors (socio-economic development, level of implementation of youth policies, etc.). Therefore, it is necessary to **continuously monitor these changes in order to include and understand the effects, new needs, identify new problems and potentials, and accordingly propose new policies that directly or indirectly target young people in the right way.** Research may be organized at different levels by local self-governments, relevant institutions, non-governmental organizations dealing with youth issues, and even youth organizations. Conducting research among young people by youth organizations/organizations working with young people (with the help of other institutions) would contribute not only to better understanding of young people, but would affect the development of various skills of young people directly involved in research (questionnaire development, mathematical skills, critical thinking, interpersonal communication, etc.).

☞ **Youth unemployment is the biggest challenge.** The analysis of official data, but also the findings based on the research itself, indicate that this is a burning social problem that young people face in all municipalities. In addition, **the business environment is generally assessed as unfavorable for young people,** and thus hinders their desire to engage in entrepreneurship and thinking about starting their own business. Opportunities for more permanent employment are mostly related to jobs in public administration, but the **problem of party employment** in almost all municipalities has been recognized there as well. This, among other disadvantages of the environment itself, affects the thinking of young people about leaving both the municipality and the country. Therefore, **improving the general business environment with a special attitude and creative incentive policies towards young entrepreneurs** would be stimulating not only in terms of employment opportunities, but also for developing a sense of community care for young people and, to some extent, solving the above-mentioned migration problems.

☞ A systematic approach is needed to change the attitude of young people towards seeking secure employment in public administration. **Young people need a role model to focus more on entrepreneurship** or employment in other sectors. Therefore, campaigns that would include examples of successful young entrepreneurs are desirable in achieving this goal. Also, **through meaningful and well-designed campaigns, creating and implementing on-site training programs, it is possible to contribute to gaining trust in the private sector, removing prejudices about "bad private business persons", NGO sector that only "takes money", etc.** For example, it is possible to organize joint gatherings of young people from different municipalities where young people from the north could hear from young people from the south about their work experiences, their entrepreneurial endeavors, business ideas and the like.

☞ Also, in almost all municipalities, young people are **not informed about the programs offered by the Employment Agency** (despite the existence of programs and promotional campaigns by the institution). This points to the need for a **different approach in informing young people about the opportunities offered to them** through the Employment Agency, in order to use and valorize existing capacities, and increase youth activity in cooperation with this institution.

☞ An additional problem identified in most municipalities relates to the **abuse of vocational training program participants**. According to previous analyzes of the program, there is a small percentage of young people who get a job after completing vocational training. Therefore, the freedom of the employer to constantly apply for the program and use the benefits of free labor has to be legally regulated. In addition, young people are usually not trained to work in job positions they have applied for, and there is no adequate professional mentoring by the employer in most cases (for example continuous mentoring). This program needs some reform: **establishing the criteria that an employer needs to meet when applying to participate in the program; establishing mechanisms to check the implementation of the program and to sanction abuses. Most of the abuses mentioned above are due to the selection of employers who are not analyzed from the aspect of the programs they offer when applying for the program.**

☞ A similar problem is the identified abuse of practical teaching in secondary vocational schools. Some companies that are part of this program are abusing this opportunity, given that young people are often not given the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge relevant to the field in which they are improving their skills, and the practice actually looks significantly different from what was intended.

☞ The analysis of local labor markets indicate that most municipalities face a mismatch between supply and demand, with **deficient occupations being identified in each municipality. What emerges as a conclusion is that most municipalities (especially small municipalities) face a shortage of medical staff (especially medical doctors and nurses). Also, frequent deficient occupations are found in education, in the area of natural sciences (mathematics, physics, etc.), and in the engineering branches (civil engineers, electrical engineers, etc.)**. Since this concerns university degrees, it is necessary to direct high school students towards these occupations. In addition, migration from small communities is an additional problem due to the lack of the above-mentioned staff, so it is necessary to work on improving the general environment so that young people decide to return to their birthplace and recognize opportunities for their own future. On the other hand, depending on the municipality, certain deficient occupations have been identified at the level of secondary education (especially in the field of catering), so in these cases it is desirable to motivate young people to be retrained, reeducated, etc.

☞ In most areas, it was assessed that the **formal education system neither rewarded nor sufficiently understood the interest and focus of young people on non-formal education. Understanding the importance, promotion and underlining of non-formal education through the formal education system, is therefore a prerequisite for the real potential of this type of education**. However, young people manage to identify the topics needed for youth informal education, which varies from one community to the other. The most common topics of additional education mentioned include multiculturalism, internationalism, gender equality, persons with disabilities, persons with developmental disabilities, how to get into business, integration, volunteerism, first aid, digital technologies and marketing, media literacy, etc.

☞ **In addition, non-formal education offered by the state requires significantly greater decentralization**. This is especially recognized as a problem in small municipalities in the north of Montenegro, because it is stated that most workshops, seminars, courses, trainings, etc., that are recognized as a good opportunity for young people are held in Podgorica. Therefore, localization of these activities is desirable. It is not always feasible for young people from these

municipalities, especially students, to harmonize their personal obligations with the desire to improve in that way. The situation would be significantly different if similar contents for youth were available to them. Other than the student parliament, there are no significant youth channels for seeking to create a more favorable atmosphere for young people. Young people complain about **too much free time that they have nowhere to spend in a quality manner**. This is also another reason for the **decentralization of activities organized for young people**.

☞ **Existing institutional resources, such as established student parliaments, can be used more to promote non-formal education.** Student parliaments provide students with the opportunity to make a positive impact in school, but also to provide many other pieces of practical knowledge and experiences to those who participate in them, starting from the simplified operation of individual institutions, decision-making and forming and expressing their own views on important issues directly related to schools and indirectly to the wider community, learning to listen to the needs of other students, etc. Therefore, systematic support and understanding of the importance of such institutions is necessary.

☞ We need stronger synergy and **substantial, not only formal support of educational institutions for various forms of associations in which young people are already active, such as student parliaments, but also support and initiation of forums, lectures on various topics and contents that will be presented to young people in specific communities in the most likable way** (written, artistic, visual, theatrical form), depending on the identified needs of the community.

☞ **Young people often do not appreciate diversity; they have a lot of prejudices towards individuals with disabilities, people who have lower social status and similar categories of society.** In addition to the **identified discrimination against vulnerable categories of the population, such as young people with special needs**, the identified problem relates to the attitude towards these persons also by the institutions themselves. Although there is formal, legislative and strategic support, in reality the problems still exist. **Discrimination by the teaching staff and local institutions is sometimes present as well.** Opportunities for employment, education and training of these people are limited. **Young people who come from vulnerable categories are approached in a special way, but difficulties are created by employers who are reluctant to accept these people.** In smaller communities, people with disabilities are denied access to many services, and health services are often inaccessible to them, especially due to the lack of specialty doctors. Therefore, it is necessary to work on improving the overall environment and raising awareness of the importance of social inclusion of these people.

☞ Particular work is needed to accept diversity among young people in order to reduce the level of discrimination against vulnerable categories - persons with disabilities and members of minority groups (RE population, LGBTQ, NEET, youth from rural areas). **Discrimination among young people is a multidimensional problem and requires an integrated approach. It is recommended that this issue be resolved indirectly, by connecting young people and their joint involvement in issues of mutual interest**, which will provide an environment in which prejudices will be gradually broken down and discrimination will disappear. This can be contributed to through non-formal education, that is various workshops, seminars, forums aimed at developing tolerance towards diversity, raising awareness of social inclusion, etc.

☞ During the research, and especially during the focus groups with young people, the need of young people for greater "introduction" of social activism in the classroom, but also outside the

school walls with the support of educational institutions was identified. Different forms of education and the involvement of institutions at all levels have been recognized as crucial for the broader perspectives of youth on multiculturalism and tolerance of diversity. **Organizations that provide formal and non-formal education must inform young people about bias or discrimination, in order to recognize various implicit and overt forms of discrimination and be motivated to respond appropriately to these problems.** This is especially true for young people from small single-faith or ethnic communities where divisions are expressed on religious or ethnic grounds, then communities where young people are insufficiently understood or discriminated against on any other grounds (users of psychoactive drugs, persons with disabilities, RE population, etc.).

☞ **The problem of divisions among young people (political divisions have been particularly visible recently)** has been recognized in most communities. It is stated that there is a current increase in hate speech and that there is a great mobilization of young people in political parties which, as organizations, often do not nurture dialogue and tolerance. Often the problem of political divisions is so pronounced among young people **that there would be no cooperation in youth organizations if they had different political views. It is necessary to promote the acceptance of diversity among young people on various grounds, including political attitudes and commitments.** Young people recognize the dominance of political topics in the media and in the public speech of prominent personalities. On the other hand, educational contents are few, as well as those based on topics of importance to all generations. Young people often think that it is in their interest to join certain political parties, because that is the only way to see their progress, due to the great influence of politics in society. Young people often see their long-term growth and development in active participation in political events. Therefore, we need to work on **raising awareness of all the opportunities offered to young people through which they can express their potential.**

☞ Visibility of young people requires more **significant resources that would be available to young activists, which requires support at all levels. A limited amount of funds is evident in most municipalities facing different fiscal burdens. However, youth organizations, together with local governments, could self-engage in establishing funds for various activities.** Raising money is a concrete way for young people to contribute to the community's efforts to address a range of issues - from humanitarian aid to establishing funds for activities aimed at reducing inequalities, combating prejudice, stereotypes, violence, tolerance building campaigns or addressing any other issue in the solution of which young people could be involved, and whose inclusion would create among them a sense of social belonging and usefulness in achieving a social goal.

☞ It is easy to conclude that **young people, and primarily students, should be encouraged to engage in social work. They should be especially encouraged when it comes to issues they care about, but also more intensively included in existing systems of services and institutions** (for example, visits to shelters for victims of violence, offices for drug prevention, etc.). These activities, which should primarily be initiated by the local self-government, would also enable young people to better understand certain problems and increase young people's interest in solving them, reduce the level of prejudice and develop empathy.

☞ The vast majority of young people had no mental or health problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of young people facing these challenges is slightly higher in northern municipalities, and young people most often solve these problems with the help of friends or family. Young people who sought help from counseling or relevant services were not very satisfied with the services. In addition, the lifestyle of most young people cannot be characterized as high quality, given that young people consume tobacco products to a significant extent, very often eat fast food and generally eat unhealthily. Although a very small percentage of young people said during the survey that they did not consume drugs, during the focus group discussions, young people mentioned drug use as one of the significant problems. **Therefore, we should work on programs aiming to improve the health of young people, with special emphasis on mental health, the consequences of consuming tobacco and psychoactive drugs, as well as a healthy diet and healthy lifestyles.** Certainly, activities in these areas should be aimed at raising the awareness of young people on these issues, but primarily we should work on **establishing and developing quality services that would support young people in dealing with these issues.**

☞ In most municipalities, young people expressed dissatisfaction with the cultural and sports program, as well as the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of these activities (shortcomings of sports halls, cinemas, cultural halls, theaters, etc.). This problem is, of course, particularly pronounced in smaller municipalities. **Therefore, it is necessary to work on initiatives that would result in the improvement of infrastructure necessary for these areas, but also on activities that would aim to improve cultural and sports offer (organization of cultural and sports events involving young people, organization of sports clubs and sports competitions, etc.).**

☞ The largest percentage of young people use social networks every day, watch movies and listen to music, all most often via smartphones. In addition, they mostly get information, learn and communicate with each other via smartphones. However, most of the respondents hang out and spend time with friends almost every day. Nevertheless, they read books only a few times a year. Most young people believe that they are able to respond to market demands when it comes to general and specific ICT skills. All of the above indicates an evident growing trend in the use of modern technology in information and education, at the expense of classical methods such as books, literature, magazines, etc. This opens the possibility to use interest in technology and ICT to further improve knowledge and skills of young people in this area, so that it would enable them to create jobs and more actively take part in the local and international labor market. All these observations point to the urgent need to animate young people in order to use their free time in a creative way, i.e. activities that would for example lead to the improvement of reading habits and the development of creativity in young people.

Institute for Strategic Studies and Prognoses



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