

MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN KOSOVO*



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Title: MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS - KOSOVO* REPORT

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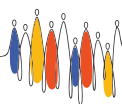
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CYAC	Central Youth Action Council
CSI	Civil Society Organisations
DoY	Department of Youth
EAK	Employment Agency of Kosovo*
ERA	European Reform Agenda
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KAS	Kosovo* Agency of Statistics
KESP	Kosovo* Education Strategic Plan
KYC	Kosovo* Youth Council
EAK	Employment Agency of Kosovo*
LYAC	Local Youth Action Council
LEPY	Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation
LMS	Labour Market Survey
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MF	Ministry of Finance
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MESTI	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
MTEF	Mid-Term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
YSAP	Youth Strategy and Action Plan
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
RAE	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WB	Western Balkans
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YC	Youth Centre



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the current youth policy landscape in Kosovo*. It examines the existing support structures and financial gaps in youth initiatives. Despite the pandemic being over, the report assesses its lasting effects on youth policies. Additionally, it investigates youth involvement in decision-making processes and maps out donor programmes targeted at the youth demographic. The research methodology employed a two-fold approach. Desk research involved a thorough analysis of the legal framework, including laws and strategies, as well as a review of domestic and international reports on youth issues in Kosovo*. Empirical research, on the other hand, was conducted through interviews with key stakeholders, including central and local public officials, representatives of civil society organisations, and members of international donor community.

Kosovo*'s distinctive demographic configuration presents a valuable opportunity, but this window of potential is swiftly diminishing. Kosovo* is frequently noted for having the most youthful population in Europe, with 55% of its inhabitants under 30 years old and more than a third below the age of 18.¹ Despite Kosovo* having a younger population compared to neighbouring economies, the current age structure suggests that the population will age in the future due to relatively low birth rates.² Additionally, the migration of young people from Kosovo* seeking better employment and living conditions in other economies will accelerate this process, diminishing potential to retain a young workforce within. In 2020, a significant number of young individuals in Kosovo* expressed aspirations for migration, with 53% indicating their intent or likelihood to consider it.³ More precisely, approximately one-third of youth (32%) had firm plans to migrate within the next three years, while additional 21% expressed high likelihood of considering such a move.⁴ Urgent action is essential to capitalise on this opportunity before it closes prematurely. The substantial outflow of people, especially young individuals, presents a significant impediment to societal advancement.

When a large portion of youth population leaves, it drains the economy of its most valuable resource—its young, educated, and dynamic workforce. This exodus leads to a brain drain, depriving the economy of innovative thinkers, skilled professionals, and future leaders it needs to thrive. Moreover, this phenomenon worsens existing social and economic disparities. As the youth emigrate in search of better opportunities abroad, Kosovo* not only loses potential entrepreneurs and job creators but also risks fostering a sense of hopelessness among those left behind. This can lead to increased social unrest and a diminished sense of identity. Additionally, the loss of a significant portion of youth demographic weakens the ability to address its challenges effectively, hindering progress in areas such as education, healthcare, and technology.

- 1 UNDP Kosovo*, 2021, *Youth Challenges and Perspectives in Kosovo**. accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/youth-challenges-and-perspectives-kosovo>
- 2 UNICEF, 2016, *The demographic dividend*. (n.d.). accessed 1 November 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/press-releases/demographic-dividend>
- 3 UNDP Kosovo*, 2021, *Youth Challenges and Perspectives in Kosovo**, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/youth-challenges-and-perspectives-kosovo>
- 4 UNDP Kosovo*, 2021, *Youth Challenges and Perspectives in Kosovo**. accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/youth-challenges-and-perspectives-kosovo>



In a research conducted in 2021 by the United Nations Development Programme,⁵ young people expressed their views on the education system. Approximately 63% found the quality of education somewhat satisfactory, compared to 57% in 2018. Moreover, 33% rated it as very satisfactory, a notable increase from 18% in 2018. Interestingly, Serbs from Kosovo* in the focus group expressed higher satisfaction with their education quality in contrast to many Albanian participants from Kosovo* who often perceived the education quality as poor.

Another worrying aspect concerning young people relates to employment. According to the OEGFE study, youth unemployment in Kosovo* is currently at 29%,⁶ and this figure is even higher among women, marginalised groups, and non-majority communities. In 2020, over a third of young individuals aged 15-24 were neither employed, enrolled in education, nor participating in any training programme. Moreover, the unemployment rate among university graduates (ranging between 13.7% and 20.7% in recent years) underscores a significant disparity between educational achievements and demands of the labour market.⁷ This mismatch is combined by low scores in standardised student tests. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened these challenges. According to individuals interviewed within civil society circles, without prompt intervention, Kosovo*'s potential could swiftly transform into a liability.⁸ In this regard, there has been an initiative taken by the Government - Superpuna employment platform, which was launched by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, aiming to facilitate access to the labour market for young people and help businesses engage young workers.⁹

Kosovo* has established an economy-wide Youth Strategy and Action Plan (YSAP) for the period 2019-2023, developed through extensive consultations. However, the implementation of youth policies has been partially impeded due to the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic and political instability within Kosovo*. Progress in the legal framework has primarily been driven by the necessity to align with the European agenda and has received significant support from the donor community. Despite advancements in youth policy framework, the responsible institutions handling youth-related sectors such as education, employment, health, inclusion, culture, art, and sports have yet to adopt a comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach. The analysis of Kosovo*'s youth policy explores the legal and institutional framework, including strategic documents and laws related to youth affairs. While highlighting the accomplishments and strengths of the youth policy, it critically assesses the challenges and identifies crucial areas for improvement. Additionally, the report delves into the financial landscape of youth policy, offering detailed insights into funding mechanisms and government programmes. It assesses the effectiveness of these initiatives, evaluating their alignment with youth policy objectives. Furthermore, it examines youth-related programmes by key donors in Kosovo*, emphasizing their strategies and collaborative efforts. It outlines priority areas for the future, providing a strategic vision for youth development in Kosovo*. Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, the report identifies and analyses successful practices

5 UNDP Kosovo*, 2021, *Youth Challenges and Perspectives in Kosovo**, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/youth-challenges-and-perspectives-kosovo>

6 International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2016, *IFES Kosovo* Works to Engage Youth in Political and Electoral Processes*, accessed 28 October 2023, <https://www.ifes.org/publications/ifes-kosovo-works-engage-youth-political-and-electoral-processes>

7 Kosovo* Agency of Statistics, 2021, *Labour Force Survey Q3*, accessed 5 November 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/surveyLib/index.php/catalog/8313>

8 Interview, Civil Society Representatives, (2023), Interviewed by Egzona Bokshi, 15 October, Pristina

9 Ballkani, 2023. *Kosovë*, Qeveria lanson platformën për punësimin e të rinjve*, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkani/kosove-qeveria-lanson-platformen-per-punesimin-e-te-rinjve/2808183>



in youth-related policies and programmes. These examples serve as models for supporting and empowering the youth.

The report on Kosovo* examines the transformative potential of its young demographic, with over half of its population under 30. Emphasizing immediate action and strategic planning, the report focuses on challenges in employment and education. It sheds light on obstacles hindering educational development and sustainable job opportunities, stressing the need for targeted interventions for both young men and women.

Importantly, the report does not merely highlight challenges but also provides actionable recommendations for various stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, educational institutions, and community leaders. These recommendations offer practical steps for supporting young people effectively, grounded in real-world relevance and applicability.

In summary, this report comprises six chapters that delve into various aspects concerning the youth in Kosovo*. These chapters encompass a wide spectrum of youth-related topics, ranging from general youth population data, legal and policy frameworks, funding structures, essential youth programmes and policies, mechanisms for youth participation, donor initiatives in the youth sector, and identification of best practices and gaps. The aim of this report is to provide readers with an in-depth comprehension of Kosovo*'s youth-related policies and programmes, empowering stakeholders to enact substantial and meaningful changes.



CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

Kosovo* stands on the brink of a transformative opportunity due to its distinctive demographic composition, with more than half of its general population under the age of 30. This demographic opportunity offers a distinctive and pressing chance that calls for prompt action and strategic planning. In this section of the report, a detailed examination of Kosovo*'s demographics will be undertaken, focusing particularly on their manifestation in the areas of employment and education. By further examining these aspects, the aim is to gain a thorough understanding of the challenges that hold back development of educational quality and creation of sustainable job opportunities for youth in Kosovo*. This report will shed light on the realities faced by youth in Kosovo*, emphasizing the critical need for targeted interventions that can harness Kosovo*'s youthful potential and drive sustainable societal progress.

1.1. Age and gender

Kosovo* has a population of approximately 1.8 million according to the last Census held in 2011. Of these, 325,302 belong to the age group 15-24 years old which represents 18.2% of the total population. In terms of gender perspectives among youth, 49.79% are young women and 50.21% are young men.¹⁰

In 2017 Kosovo* Agency of Statistics (KAS) released its second report on Population Projections covering a span of 44 years from 2017-2061, segmented into age cohorts. The 2021 KAS report on Population Projections presented the following data:¹¹

Age group: 15-19 represents 166,100 (85,142 men and 79,904 women)

Age group 20-24 represents 156,295 (77,966 men and 75,684 women)

Age group 25-29 represent s143,377 (66,764 men and 70,801 women)

Compared to the data published by KAS, demographic data published on the official website of the Central Intelligence Agency shows that, as of 2023, Kosovo* is estimated to have a population of 1,964,327 individuals.¹² The demographic breakdown they provide categorises population into different age groups. Individuals aged 0-14 years constitute 23.1% of the total population, with 235,379 males and 218,359 females. The majority of population falls within the age range of 15-64 years, accounting for 68.75% of the total population, with 706,495 males and 643,982 females. The 65 years and older category, comprising the elderly population, makes up 8.15% of the total,

10 "Kosovo* Population Projection 2017-2061, December 2017" Kosovo* Statistics Agency, available at <https://ask.rksgov.net/media/3741/kosovo-population-projection-2017-2061.pdf> (Accessed on 15 November 2020).

11 Ibid

12 Central Intelligence Agency, 2023, "The world factbook – Kosovo*", accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kosovo/>



with 69,676 males and 90,436 females. This comprehensive breakdown provides insights into the distribution of males and females across different age groups in the population.¹³

The young population remains a valuable asset in Kosovo*’s society, and the potential to harness its demographic advantage and transition into a flourishing, sustainable community is evident. However, the current available data present a disquieting scenario. Ongoing opinion polls consistently indicate that a significant proportion of young individuals in Kosovo* are inclined to emigrate, with potentially up to half of them expressing definite or likely intentions to do so.¹⁴

As the last census was done in 2011, its data remains still the official one presented by KAS.

1.2. Education and employment

Kosovo* Statistics Agency indicates that youth employment rate, as of the fourth quarter of 2022, in general is 15.2% for the 15-24 age group, and 41.3% for 25-34 age group.¹⁵ It is widely believed by Kosovo*’s youth that an improvement in the quality of education can have a positive impact on the economy, particularly in terms of employment opportunities.¹⁶ According to the RCC’s Balkan Barometer, 33% of Kosovo*’s population believes that addressing disparities in educational opportunities for young people should be an immediate priority.¹⁷ Improvements and initiatives have been taken regarding employment; the government of Kosovo* has also assured its support, guaranteeing employment opportunities for individuals aged 18 to 25 years.¹⁸ Although the reasons for emigration vary, the quality of education and employment opportunities appears to be among the primary factors influencing the decision to leave.

1.2.1. Education

Education plays a vital role in driving economic growth and is closely linked to personal empowerment and poverty reduction. Research suggests that, on average, an additional year of schooling is associated with a 10 percent increase in an individual’s income.¹⁹ In Kosovo*, data highlights the importance of improving access to education, especially in pre-primary, upper secondary, and early childhood education programmes. In 2020, a greater percentage of young individuals in Kosovo* expressed contentment with their education quality.²⁰ To be specific, approximately 63% indicated

13 Central Intelligence Agency, 2023, *The world factbook – Kosovo**, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/kosovo/>

14 UNDP Kosovo*, 2021, *Youth Challenges and Perspectives in Kosovo**, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/youth-challenges-and-perspectives-kosovo>

15 *Employment and employment-to-population ratio; employment rate, by sex and age group by Employment, Age group, Year, Quarter and Gender*. August 2023, Kosovo* Statistics Agency. Accessed on 30 November 2023. https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata__Labour%20market__Anketa%20e%20Fuqis%20Pun%20tore__Quarterly%20labour%20market/tab4.px/table/tableViewLayout1/

16 Kelmendi, F May 10 2023, *Kosovo*’s youth: Overcoming challenges and creating opportunities*, Österreichische Gesellschaft Für Europapolitik, accessed 3 November 2023, https://www.oegfe.at/policy-briefs/kosovos-youth-overcoming-challenges-and-creating-opportunities/#autorenbox_bottom

17 Regional Cooperation Council, 2022, *BALKAN BAROMETER 2022 Public Opinion Analytical report*, accessed 27 October 2023, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/139/balkan-barometer-public-opinion-2022>

18 Ballkani, 2023, "Kosovë*, Qeveria lanson platformën për punësimin e të rinjve", accessed 12 November 2023, [https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkani/kosovë-qeveria-lanson-platformën-për-punësimin-e-të-rinjve/2808183](https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkani/kosov%20-%20qeveria-lanson-platform%20-%20p%20pun%20-%20simin-e-t%20-%20rinjve/2808183)

19 UNICEF, 2016, *The demographic dividend (n.d.)*. accessed 1 November 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/press-releases/demographic-dividend>

20 UNDP Kosovo*, 2021, *Youth Challenges and Perspectives in Kosovo**, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/youth-challenges-and-perspectives-kosovo>



they found the quality of education somewhat satisfactory. In the same year, there was a slightly higher sense of optimism among young people when asked if they believed their education would be beneficial for securing employment.²¹ Additionally, in the same year, more young individuals in Kosovo* were content with the quality of education they were receiving.²²

Presently, Kosovo* continues to identify its education system as a significant concern, not only for its economic prospects but also for the well-being of its youth. A recent survey reveals that 33% of participants in Kosovo* believe that addressing the disparity in educational opportunities for young people is an urgent matter.²³ This is supported by the OECD study showing that high-quality education remains a top priority in Kosovo* and the broader region.²⁴ Quality education is perceived as a fundamental aspect of life for everyone: students attending school, families, those aspiring for opportunities for their children, individuals planning to have children in the future, and those reliant on younger generations to shape the future of their communities. Education is not only pivotal for innovation and economic advancement but also plays a crucial role in promoting civic engagement, respect for diversity, and upholding the rule of law. Remarkably, quality education emerged as the foremost priority in all four aspirational foresight workshops conducted in Pristina and the surrounding region. Based on an assessment done by OECD in 2021, in the last ten years, Kosovo* has taken significant measures to enhance the quality and relevance of education across all levels.²⁵ Efforts have been directed towards fostering competency-oriented learning through the implementation of competency-based curricula. New educational frameworks focusing on competencies and learning outcomes are being introduced in primary and secondary schools. According to the assessment, the Education Strategic Plan of Kosovo* outlines crucial priorities for educational reform, emphasizing the need for improved data collection, policy monitoring, and assessment methods.

Based on the EU report for 2022, Kosovo* has shown significant improvement in expanding accessibility to pre-primary and primary education in recent years. However, there is a need for further efforts to ensure a fair and comprehensive extension of coverage in both preschool and secondary education.²⁶ According to Kosovo* Report 2023, enrolment rate of children in early childhood education stands at 6.7%, the lowest in the region, while for primary and secondary education the combined enrolment rate of 88.1% is very similar to those of regional peers. Participation of children in pre-school education and care (age 0 <5) remains low, well below the OECD average (over 87%) or the 2020 education and training targets (95%). A continuing challenge is the limited quantity and uneven spread of preschool facilities in Kosovo*, with only 44 public kindergartens present in 23 out of 38 municipalities. This issue is compounded by insufficient infrastructure and a shortage of educational materials. The approval of the new Law on Pre-school Education is still pending, and although the curriculum for education levels 0-2 has been formulated, concerns persist regarding

21 Ibid

22 Ibid

23 Regional Cooperation Council, 2022, *BALKAN BAROMETER 2022 Public Opinion Analytical report*, accessed 27 October 2023, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/139/balkan-barometer-public-opinion-2022>

24 OECD Library, 2021, *International Migration*, accessed 15 October 2023, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org>

25 OECD, 2023, *Unemployment rate by age group (indicator)*, accessed 3 November 2023.

<https://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rate-by-age-group.htm>

26 Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2023, *Kosovo* Report 2023. Communication on EU Enlargement policy*. European Union, accessed 1 November 2023,

https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2023_en



the declining enrolment in higher education, dropping from over 133,000 students in 2017 to more than 95,300 in 2021, with even more worrisome low graduation rates.²⁷

Furthermore, the Education Strategy 2022-2026, prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, aligned with the global pursuit of sustainable development, reflects Kosovo*'s commitment to participate in the broader vision outlined in the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations, with a specific focus on SDG4: "Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all". Consequently, the structure of 2022-2026 Strategy encompasses five pillars.²⁸ The Strategy on Education 2022-2026 is the result of 9-month tireless work of about 150 specialists of various profiles representing all stakeholders: the government, local government, education workers, academic community, civil society, business and development partners, who have brought their best experiences, knowledge and ideas for the advancement of education system. The planning process is supported by the German Government through GIZ Kosovo*.

Education Strategy has 5 strategic objectives, defined for 5 priority areas:

- **SO1:** Increase inclusion and equal access to early childhood education.
- **SO2:** Improve the quality of pre-university education through consolidation of quality assurance mechanisms and provision of quality teaching.
- **SO3:** Harmonisation of vocational education and training with dynamic developments in technology and labour market to serve lifelong learning.
- **SO4:** Improve the quality, integrity and competitiveness of higher education; and
- **SO5:** Use of digital technology to improve services and quality in education, in line with digital transformation trends.²⁹

The Education Strategy relies on existing legislation and recommendations of research reports on education in Kosovo* that have been carried out in recent years. The list of key policy documents, legislation and research reports on which the Education Strategy is based can be found in the annex to this document.

1.2.2. Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training

In 15-24 age group of 29.8% of young people are classified as Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), with a slight difference between genders (29.9% for men and 26.6% for women). The data reveals that having a lower level of education significantly reduces employment prospects. Unemployment rates are closely connected to educational attainment. Individuals with tertiary education exhibit the lowest unemployment rate (19.2%), followed by those with vocational education (26.5%).³⁰

27 MESTI, 2023, *National Education Structure and Fields of Study in Kosovo**, accessed 30 October 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/isc-ed-eng-2022.pdf>

28 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2021, *Education Strategy 2022-2026*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/03-Strategja-e-Arsimit-2022-2026-Eng-Web.pdf>

29 Ibid

30 Ibid



1.2.3. Unemployment rate

Kosovo*'s performance on OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 ranked among the lowest in Europe.³¹ Employer feedback consistently highlights difficulties in hiring due to skill gaps, including both technical and meta-cognitive abilities. High unemployment rates and limited opportunities in the job market, especially for young people, discourage investments in education and skills. Strengthening the education and skills of both the youth and existing workforce is essential. By doing so, Kosovo* can create lasting economic opportunities, foster talent, and retain skilled individuals within the economy, thereby promoting a positive cycle of employment and talent retention.³² In the context of enhancing and professionalising education in Kosovo*, it is important to note that relevant laws and regulations have been established to govern this area. Additionally, several non-governmental organisations have monitored the government's implementation of laws and legal acts pertaining to Vocational Education and Training through their reports.³³

The unemployment rate in Kosovo*, as reported by the Kosovo* Agency of Statistics (KAS), stands at 11.8%.³⁴ One of the main factors that lead to unemployment is education. Therefore, according to the government's Education Strategy for 2022-2026, aimed at addressing unemployment, the sustainable growth and progress depend on unlocking the full capabilities and essential skills required by the labour market. These opportunities are made available through an educational system that promotes continuous learning, commencing from early childhood education and encompassing all types of learning, including formal, non-formal, and informal. The concept of creating such opportunities for lifelong learning is also aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Despite economic growth and an improved business climate, Kosovo* faces severe labour market challenges, with high unemployment and low labour force participation rates. According to the experts and research, several factors contribute to Kosovo*'s high unemployment, including a shortage of new jobs, family-related reasons, and a mismatch between job seekers' skills and employers' requirements.³⁵ Unemployment rates among young people in Kosovo* are alarmingly high. Within the 15-24 age group, nearly half of those in the labour force are unemployed, with 48.6% overall (46.1% for men and 53.5% for women).³⁶ Regrettably, the Education Strategy 2022-2026 does not provide detailed data regarding unemployability of minorities in Kosovo*. In a discussion with an NGO representative from a non-majority group, they pointed out the challenges faced by individuals from these communities in the job market, mainly due to discrimination and limited opportunities.³⁷ Nevertheless, it is important to note that within the strategy, Kosovo* government emphasized efforts that will include planning and subsidising the drafting, reviewing, translating, and adapting of textbooks, as well as preparation of teaching materials (both printed and digital) in the languages spoken by non-majority communities in

31 OECD, 2023, *Unemployment rate by age group (indicator)*, accessed 3 November 2023, <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rate-by-age-group.htm>

32 OECD, 2021, *Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans: Assessing Opportunities and Constraints*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://www2.oecd.org/countries/republicofnorthmacedonia/multi-dimensional-review-of-the-western-balkans-4d5cbc2a-en.htm>

33 Krasniqi, S 2021, *Education and vocational training in Kosovo*, a challenge and objective of the 21st century* accessed 10 November 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351544022_Education_and_Vocational_Training_in_Kosovo_A_Challenge_and_Objective_of_the_21st_Century

34 Kosovo* Agency of Statistics, 2021, *People and Society*, accessed 10 November 2023, <https://ask.rks-gov.net>

35 Avdullahi, A et al 2022, *Women and youth unemployment in Western Balkans with particular focus on Kosovo*. Population and Economics*, accessed 20 October 2023, <https://populationandconomics.pensoft.net/article/76973/>

36 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2021, *Education Strategy 2022-2026*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/03-Strategija-e-Arsimit-2022-2026-Eng-Web.pdf>

37 Interview, non-majority NGO Representatives, (2023), Interviewed by Egzona Bokshi, 17 October, Pristina



Kosovo*. Furthermore, the Education Strategy 2022-2026 has outlined a plan to integrate education that is closely aligned with the requirements of the job market.³⁸ In addition, women's labour force participation in Kosovo* has remained worryingly low, increasing only slightly from 12.6% of women employed in 2018 to 14.1% in 2020, according to official statistics.³⁹ The gender gap in employment is narrowing globally, but in Kosovo*, the unemployment rates for women and youth remain high, posing significant challenges. Despite some efforts, there is no evidence of improving labour market outcomes for women in Kosovo* in recent years.⁴⁰

1.3. Youth Migration

According to an assessment done by the United Nations Development Programme in 2020, aspirations for migration remained prevalent in Kosovo*, with 53% of young individuals indicating they were or likely considering emigration.⁴¹ Based on the study, although this percentage was slightly lower than the 2018 survey's 58%, a higher proportion (32% in 2020 versus 27% in 2018) expressed definite intentions to migrate. The main reasons cited for considering leaving Kosovo* within the next three years were the lack of job opportunities (67%), limited personal prospects (45%), and overall unfavourable economic conditions (39%). Furthermore, the study revealed that a higher percentage of young men (35%) expressed definite consideration for migration compared to young women (28%). When examining ethnicity-specific data, it was observed that young Albanians from Kosovo* were more inclined towards migration (30% definite, 22% likely) in contrast to young Serbs from Kosovo* (22% definite, 23% likely). Among individuals from other non-majority communities, half of them stated that they had considered migrating within the next three years (50%).⁴² Past data consistently show a similar pattern: there was a peak in 2015 when more than 74,000 people emigrated, with only a quarter of that number recorded as immigrants.⁴³ Subsequently, efforts were made to counter this trend for two years. However, the emigration trend intensified again, resulting in negative balances of over 21,000 in 2018 and almost 29,000 in 2019. Between 2015 and 2019, Kosovo* experienced a negative migration balance, with over 120,000 people leaving the economy.⁴⁴

38 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2021, *Education Strategy 2022-2026*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/03-Strategja-e-Arsimit-2022-2026-Eng-Web.pdf>

39 GAP, 2023, *Gender-based discrimination in job vacancies*, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.institutigap.org/news/3066>

40 UNICEF, 2016, *The demographic dividend (n.d.)*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/press-releases/demographic-dividend>

41 Kelmendi, F 2023, May 10, *Kosovo's youth: Overcoming challenges and creating opportunities*. Österreichische Gesellschaft Für Europapolitik, accessed 3 November 2023, https://www.oegfe.at/policy-briefs/kosovos-youth-overcoming-challenges-and-creating-opportunities/#autorenbox_bottom

42 Regional Cooperation Council, 2022, *BALKAN BAROMETER 2022 Public Opinion Analytical report*, accessed 27 October 2023, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/139/balkan-barometer-public-opinion-2022>

43 WFD, 2021, *How much does youth emigration cost Kosovo**, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://www.wfd.org/story/how-much-does-youth-emigration-cost-kosovo>

44 Ibid



CHAPTER 2: YOUTH LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, a comprehensive analysis is conducted on youth policy within the context of Kosovo*. This examination delves into not only the legal and institutional framework but also encompasses a thorough exploration of pertinent strategic documents, action plans, laws, and bylaws related to youth affairs. Through a thorough evaluation, the chapter sheds light on the thus far accomplishments, pinpointing the strengths and successes within the youth policy framework. Simultaneously, it critically assesses the challenges faced, highlighting the obstacles that need to be addressed. Furthermore, this assessment identifies the existing gaps, underscoring the areas where improvements are essential for a more effective and inclusive youth policy. In Kosovo*, the official document determining the age group of young individuals is the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth.⁴⁵

2.1. Constitution

Legally, Article 45(1) of Kosovo* Constitution establishes that individuals become eligible to participate in both local and economy-wide elections upon reaching the age of 18.⁴⁶ The Law No.03/L-145 on Youth Empowerment and Participation (LEPY) defines the age group 15-24 years as young people.⁴⁷ While the Constitution does not offer additional specific references regarding young people, Article 3 underscores the obligation of public authorities to ensure equality for all individuals under the law and to uphold universally recognised fundamental human rights and freedoms. Furthermore, the Criminal Code of Kosovo*, as outlined in Article 17(3), designates the minimum age for criminal liability at 14 years.⁴⁸

2.2. Law on Youth

In 2009, Kosovo* Assembly recognised the vital role of youth activism in youth development with the enactment of the Law on Youth. This foundational legislation was crafted to improve the quality of life and social standing of young individuals, as well as to promote their active involvement in the decision-making process, as articulated in Article 1 of the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth.⁴⁹

45 *Law no. 03/l-145 on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, 2010*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>

46 *Constitution of the Kosovo**, 2017, accessed 1 November 2023, https://mapl.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.CONSTITUTION_OF_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_KOSOVO.pdf

47 *Law no. 03/l-145 on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, 2010*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>

48 *Criminal Code of Kosovo**. Code No. 06/L-074, 2019, accessed 22 October 2023, <https://md.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/A5713395-507E-4538-BED6-2FA2510F3FCD.pdf>

49 *Law no. 03/l-145 on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, 2010*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>



The Law on Youth serves as the legal basis for the establishment of Local Youth Action Councils (LYACs), facilitating youth participation at both central and local levels through the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) and Local Youth Action Councils (LYACs).⁵⁰

CYAC's primary mission revolves around promoting the rights of young individuals and ensuring that the collective voice of the youth resonates with policymakers and decision-makers at various levels. To achieve this mission, CYAC engages in diverse activities such as research, advocacy for youth issues within the government, active participation in the development and implementation of youth policies, organisation of awareness campaigns, and facilitation of youth exchanges.⁵¹

In terms of budget allocation, the Draft Budget for 2021 reduced the allocation for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports from 44 million 176 thousand euros in 2020 to 34 million 905 thousand euros.⁵² However, in 2023, Kosovo* parliament allocated a significantly larger budget of 57 million euros to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.⁵³ For the period 2021-2023, the overall assessment of the cost during the three years of activities as per the Youth Strategy 2019-2023 revealed a total amount of € 11,661,900 dedicated as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Budget allocated for the three strategic objectives for youth.

Strategic Objectives	Budget					Total
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Mobilising youth for participation, representation and active citizenship	€938,500	€1,275,000	€1,266,500	€1,266,500	€1,266,500	€6,013,000
Providing Skills and Preparing Youth for the Labour Market	€334,500	€635,000	€665,000	€695,000	€725,000	€3,054,500
A healthy and safe environment for young people	€319,400	€555,000	€560,000	€580,000	€580,000	€2,594,400

2.3. Strategy for Youth

The key document outlining youth policy implementation is the Kosovo* Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 (KSYAP).⁵⁴ This strategic plan was developed by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Kosovo* in collaboration with various governmental bodies, representatives of local and economy-wide youth organisations, and international organisations operating in Kosovo*. It serves as a vital strategic framework addressing the essential needs and interests of youth for the period from 2019 to 2023. The Strategy's goal is to enhance youth situation in Kosovo* by fostering collaboration between youth organisations and the government. It also aims to strengthen cooperation between central institutions and local bodies to empower youth policies and programmes. The document comprises two sections: a policy document outlining "youth interests and their needs for the 2019-

50 OSCE, 2013, *A guide for new Local Youth Action Council. Participatory Handbook*, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/9/110054.pdf>

51 Ibid

52 Kuvendi i Kosovës*, 2021, *Rinia në Projektbuxhetin e Kosovës**, accessed November 187 [which date 18 or 17 November], 2023, https://kuvendikosoves.org/Uploads/Data/Files/22/Analizebuxhetore_PerspektivaeriniseneProjektligjinerBuxhetin2021_pdf_zqeb3NjSCH.pdf

53 Office of the prime Minister, 2022, *Kryeministri Kurti në Kuvend: Përmes buxhetit të vitit 2023, ta lehtësojmë jetën e qytetarëve e ta zhvillojmë ekonominë*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/blog/kryeministri-kurti-ne-kuvend-permes-buxhetit-te-vitit-2023-ta-lehtesojme-jeten-e-qytetarëve-e-ta-zhvillojme-ekonomine/>

54 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, 2018, *Strategy for Youth 2019-2023. Youth for Participation, Representation and Active Citizenship* accessed 2 November 2023, https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategy_for_Youth_2019-2023.pdf



2023 period”, and an action plan detailing specific activities to be executed within the defined timeframes based on strategic objectives. The Action Plan includes activity implementation periods, responsible and supporting institutions, success indicators, and budget considerations. It undergoes annual review as part of the Strategy’s monitoring framework. KSYAP strives to adhere to European standards and practices in youth affairs, supporting young people in innovation and creative initiatives. The Strategy emphasizes social inclusion as a basic approach and underscores the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration. The document outlines three strategic goals:

1. Mobilisation of youth for participation, representation, and active citizenship
2. Providing Skills and Preparing Youth for the Labour Market
3. A healthy and safe environment for young people

Moreover, KSYAP includes seven core principles: a) adherence to legality, b) active participation, c) equal treatment, d) unified approach that involves sharing experiences and responsibilities, e) respect for information rights, f) formulation based on evidence, and g) focus on sustainability. As outlined in Administrative Instruction No. 02/2010 issued by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, the Department of Youth (DoY) within the Ministry is tasked with crafting policies and strategies for the youth sector.⁵⁵ Based on the analysis of laws related to youth policies, Kosovo* Strategy for Youth 2019-2023 aims to establish comprehensive policies for youth-related issues through inter-institutional collaboration and a cross-sectoral approach.⁵⁶ It emphasizes the exchange of information, experiences, and resources among ministries and local governments to achieve its objectives. The document aligns with the short-term and mid-term plans of the central budget and is in harmony with other development strategies of Kosovo*, although specific references are not provided. The Youth Action Plan outlines the necessary steps for developing the Strategy, identifying relevant stakeholders, responsible bodies, and required funding. The Department of Youth (DoY) leads the monitoring and evaluation process, assessing the implementation based on predetermined indicators. Annually, DoY prepares a progress report, shared with central and local institutions, civil society, international organisations, and the public. This approach showcases DoY’s advanced coordination and monitoring efforts, involving a diverse network of governmental and non-governmental partners.⁵⁷

In May 2023, the drafting process of the economy-level Strategy for Youth 2024-2032 and the Action Plan 2024-2026 was presented, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. The Prime Minister of Kosovo*, Albin Kurti, who participated in this presentation, stated that the economy-level Strategy for Youth is the tool that will bring all institutions to the table to reflect on the specific challenges that young people face in their sector and to develop and implement public policies to serve them.⁵⁸ According to the government, the economy-level Youth Strategy will be the main long-

55 Administrative Instruction no. 9/2010 on Responsibilities and Procedures of Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo*, 2010, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>

56 Boshko Stankovski, 2021, *Contribution of partner countries to EU youth wiki chapter i: Kosovo* youth policy governance*, Council of Europe, accessed 2 November 2023, https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/114007071/Kosovo_YouthWiki_Chapter1.pdf/4fbc5d6c-20b7-43eb-df53-9267a07837d9

57 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, 2018, *Strategy for Youth 2019-2023*, accessed 2 November 2023, https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategjia_per_Rini-2019-2023.pdf

58 Office of the Prime Minister, 2023, *Prime Minister Kurti: Kosovo* is a place of opportunities for young people, for non-majority communities, for everyone*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://kryeministri.rks.net/en/blog/prime-minister-kurti-is-a-place-of-opportunities-for-young-people-for-non-majority-communities-for-everyone/>



term guiding document for the government regarding youth, where each ministry and institution is expected to define its own role. In addition to being development/oriented strategy, it will also be a tool for reforming cross-sectoral policymaking towards youth. The government also indicates that approximately 15 million euros have been designated for direct assistance in the fields of culture, youth, and sports. It underscores that previous support for books was capped at a maximum of 150 thousand euros annually, whereas this year, an allocation of 1 million euros was made.⁵⁹

The economy-level Strategy for Youth covers a nine-year period (2023-2032), and is accompanied by three detailed action plans, starting with the first action plan covering the period 2024-2026 and then continuing with the other two action plans covering the periods 2027-2029 and 2030-2032. The term 'youth', under this Strategy, refers to all persons aged 15 to 29, which is the age group targeted by this Strategy. This term is also provided in the Draft Law on Youth and is in line with the definition of young people used in the European Youth Strategy 2019-2027. This new Youth Strategy will serve as the primary comprehensive document guiding the government's long-term approach to youth-related matters. Each ministry and institution is anticipated to outline its specific role within this framework. Beyond its strategic function, the document will also serve as a tool for reforming cross-sectoral policymaking in relation to youth, in addition to providing guidance for development.⁶⁰

Currently the Strategy is under public consultations, which will be held during November 2023, and its draft does not show the specific budget allocations. Also, even though DoY should prepare a progress report annually, to be shared with central and local institutions, civil society, international organisations, and the public, such reports were not accessible on the ministry's website.

2.4. Action Plan on Youth

The Youth Action Plan, outlined as a distinct document within the YSAP 2019-2023, integrates a five-year Action Plan into the main document. This plan delineates specific measures, activities, responsible individuals, indicators, and a cost projection spanning five years.⁶¹ The estimated expenses for executing the Strategy are approximately EUR 11,600,000 over this period, to be funded by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, along with development agencies.⁶² While the corresponding five-year Action Plan includes clear indicators for monitoring the planned activities, it lacks a formal methodological approach, targets, milestones, baseline data, and other essential elements necessary for designing a robust performance assessment and monitoring framework. Funding for the implementation of Youth Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023 is anticipated to be provided by MCYS/DDI and development agencies.⁶³

59 Ibid

60 Ibid

61 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, 2018, *Strategy for Youth 2019-2023*, accessed 2 November 2023, https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategija_per_Rini-2019-2023.pdf

62 Ibid

63 Ibid



2.5. Institutions dealing with Youth

Article 6 of the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth (LEPY) provides a comprehensive framework outlining the distinct responsibilities within the youth sector.⁶⁴ At the central government level, it mandates development, approval, and execution of policies, documents, and programmes directly related to youth matters, including fostering youth integration and participation in public life. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) serves as the paramount governmental entity tasked with the formulation and implementation of youth policies. Within MCYS, the Department of Youth assumes a multifaceted role. This includes executing the strategy and work plan for the youth sector, conducting an in-depth analysis of the youth sector's current state, encompassing relevant legal frameworks, institutions, programmes, and activities. It also involves identifying and supporting underrepresented youth groups, fostering collaboration among various stakeholders and relevant authorities to translate youth policies into action, promoting the establishment of youth clubs and associations, and actively encouraging financial support for youth initiatives. The Department further plays a pivotal role in providing essential information and assistance to young people, serving as a central point of contact for their needs and concerns.⁶⁵

In parallel, Article 7 of LEPY prescribes the responsibilities of municipal authorities in connection with youth affairs. These responsibilities involve allocating both financial and human resources to support youth programmes, facilitating informal youth education, and providing suitable venues for youth activities within their respective municipalities. Notably, the Youth Divisions operating within all 38 municipalities of Kosovo* serve as key entities for implementing the prevailing legal framework and youth policies. They act as local agents that channel the economy-level youth strategy into regional and community-level actions, ensuring the effective and coordinated execution of youth-related initiatives.⁶⁶

In addition to the municipal level, LEPY establishes a structure that fosters youth participation and representation at both the central and local levels. The Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) serves as the primary advocate for youth organisations at central government institutions, acting as a liaison between these organisations and policymakers. Simultaneously, the Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) are established in all 38 municipalities, playing a pivotal role in facilitating collaboration among public authorities, youth organisations, and international donors to support youth initiatives, as mandated by the law. This collaborative approach strengthens youth engagement, advocacy, and policy implementation, bridging the gap between youth and relevant authorities and fostering a more inclusive, responsive, and effective approach to youth development.⁶⁷

64 Law no. 03/L-145 on Empowerment and participation of youth, 2010, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>

65 MKRS, 2015, *Departamenti i Rinise. Politikat Programore per Rini*, accessed 27 October 2023, <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,9>

66 Law No. 06/L-043 on Freedom of Association in Non-governmental Organisations, 2019, accessed 3 November 2023, https://www.rc-kosovo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LAW_NO_06_L-043_ON_FREEDOM_OF_ASSOCIATION_IN_NON-GOVERNMENTAL_ORGANIZATIONS.pdf

67 Advocacy Centre for Democracy Culture, 2023, *M4Y Municipalities for Youth – Empowering Youth for Change*, accessed 5 November 2023, <https://acdc-kosovo.org/projekti/m4y-municipalities-for-youth-empowering-youth-for-change>



2.6. Other sectors impacting youth

The Government of Kosovo* has introduced the Superpuna employment platform, an initiative led by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers.⁶⁸ This platform's primary goal is to streamline young people's entry into the job market and assist businesses in hiring young employees. The introduction of Superpuna platform is a substantial undertaking by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers, demonstrating the government's dedication to boosting youth employment and aiding employers. It signifies the government's commitment to nurturing skilled workforce. In addition, there are continued endeavours to advance curriculum reform and the improvement of teacher proficiency, focusing on competency-based methods across all educational levels. The emphasis is particularly directed towards key competences outlined by the EU framework and skills relevant to the labour market. According to the EC's assessment of Kosovo*'s Economic Reform Programme 2022-2024, 'improving the quality and relevance of the education system to increase employment and mitigate skills mismatches' is one of Kosovo*'s three structural challenges (EC, 2022b, p. 300).

Efforts are underway to create a new plan for the economy-wide Employment Strategy in employment policy. This plan goes along with the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers' sector strategy for 2018-2022, but it is not fully in action yet. The Ministry also updated the Labour Law, and people gave their opinions on it until November 2022. The update includes changes to how the Employment Agency of Kosovo* (EAK) works. EAK gives money to and sends unemployed people directly to seven Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) which offer short courses. However, EAK cannot oversee all adult training or provide support to these public centres.

The Youth Guarantee is a European initiative to help young workers in the context of high youth unemployment, a key policy priority for EU. This initiative aims to ensure 'that all young people under 30 years of age receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.'⁶⁹ Since 2021, Kosovo* is also working towards implementing the Youth Guarantee Scheme. So far, the Ministry of Labour, Finances and Transfers has created an economy-wide Working Group, consisting of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth, Agency for Employment in Kosovo*, Business Associations and Youth NGO representatives. Together, in October 2022, they created a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, which is yet to be published and implemented.⁷⁰ In terms of funding, the implementation of this economy-wide policy is also foreseen in Flagship 10 of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans communicated from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.⁷¹

68 Ballkani, 2023. *Kosovë*, Qeveria lanson platformën për punësimin e të rinjve*, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/ballkani/kosovë-qeveria-lanson-platformën-për-punësimin-e-të-rinjve/2808183>

69 Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020, *A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee*, Official Journal of the European Union, accessed 13 November 2023, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1104\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1104(01))

70 Interview with the Executive Director of KYC, (2023), Interviewed by Dardane Nuka, 13 November, Pristina

71 EC Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2023, *Kosovo* Report 2023. Communication on EU Enlargement policy*, European Union, accessed 1 November 2023, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2023_en



The Education Strategy for the period 2022-2026, launched in September 2022 by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, indicates a government allocation of 3.5 million euros. This funding is designated for facilitating professional practice for students in vocational education and training schools, offering 106 scholarships to encourage girls to pursue technical profiles and boys to engage in deficit profiles, and providing approximately 1,000 vouchers for vocational school graduates to enrol in information technology courses. The government of Kosovo* emphasizes digitisation as a top priority across various sectors, including administration, health, industry, and notably education.⁷²

The commitment of Kosovo* government and institutions is directed towards maximising opportunities for fulfilment of the highest potential for children and young people, irrespective of gender. According to the Prime Minister Albin Kurti, this commitment extends to both the present and future, encompassing the future of society and the economy, as the education system plays a crucial role in identifying and nurturing the talents of the youth, whether already discovered or yet to be uncovered.⁷³

Furthermore, a recently initiated project led by GIZ and GFA Consulting Group (2021-2024) includes participation of 10 VET schools and one VET centre of competence across nine municipalities. Approximately 5,000 students in the 11th and 12th grades will have the opportunity to engage in company internships across all 58 profiles offered, facilitated by 600 agreements already established with various businesses.⁷⁴

2.7. Critical assessment

The comprehensive analysis of Kosovo*'s youth policy framework reveals both commendable strengths and crucial challenges. On the positive side, Kosovo* has made significant strides by enacting the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth and establishing the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports to oversee youth affairs. The Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023 (KSYAP) is a substantial strategic document aimed at improving the youth situation in the economy. It emphasizes principles such as legality, active participation, and sustainability, aligning with international standards. Additionally, the budget allocation of 57 million euros for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in 2023 demonstrates a financial commitment to youth initiatives. The allocation of funds in the budget is aligned with the priorities and initiatives identified in the strategic plan. The budget is allocated to ensure the necessary resources are available for implementing the planned activities. However, the Strategy does not rigidly obligate the budget as there are many factors, such as economic conditions, unexpected challenges, or changes in organisational priorities, that influence budget decisions. On the flip side, the legal framework is somewhat limited in its reference to young individuals within the Constitution, necessitating more specific recognition and protection of youth rights. The reduction in the 2021 budget for youth-related matters highlights financial uncertainties that can affect youth programmes. Furthermore, ensuring effective inter-

72 Office of the Prime Minister, 2023, *Prime Minister Kurti: Kosovo* is a place of opportunities for young people, for non-majority communities, for everyone*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://kryeministri.rks.net/en/blog/prime-minister-kurti-is-a-place-of-opportunities-for-young-people-for-non-majority-communities-for-everyone/>

73 Ibid

74 GFA, 2023, *Improving Quality of vocational training by system (2021-2024)*, accessed 17 November 2023, https://www.gfa-group.de/projects/Improving_the_quality_of_vocational_training_by_system_-_involvement_of_the_private_sector_3975964.html



institutional collaboration as emphasized by KSYAP, and addressing potential gaps in youth policy implementation are challenges that demand further attention. In summary, while Kosovo* has made commendable efforts in shaping its youth policy framework, it should now focus on bolstering legal protections, financial stability, and effective implementation of its youth policies to ensure holistic development and empowerment of its youth population. DoY's rigorous monitoring and evaluation efforts, detailed in Administrative Instruction No. 02/2010, demonstrate a robust coordination system. However, addressing constitutional gaps and ensuring the alignment of youth policies with broader economy-level strategies are critical areas that demand immediate attention for a more effective and inclusive youth policy in Kosovo*.



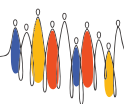
2.8. Key developments over the years

Institution/Legal instrument	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report)	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
Law on Youth	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports established a working group to amend LEPY. Proposed changes included extending the age group to 29, renaming CYAC and LYAC, and recognising voluntary work as work experience. Draft law released for public consultation. Budget for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports was reduced from 44 million 176 thousand in 2020 to 34 million 905 thousand euros. ⁷⁵	Kosovo* Parliament allocated 57 ⁷⁶ million euros to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in 2023. Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports executing Youth Strategy and Action Plan, collaborating with entities, establishing youth clubs, promoting financial support, and disseminating information. According to the changes made to LEPY under 1.1 Youth age is identified as the age group of young people between fifteen (15) and twenty four (24); 1.4 .9. Youth Voluntary Work - Voluntary youth work shall be acknowledged as work experience by the Municipality Directorate for Culture, Youth and Sports and by the Ministry.	While there have been proactive efforts to amend youth legislation and promote youth engagement, the reduction in Ministry's budget in 2020 raises concerns about sustained support for these initiatives. However, the positive allocation of 57 million euros in 2023 shows a potential commitment to youth-focused programmes, which is promising but needs to be consistently maintained for lasting impact.
Ministry of Finance, Labour, and Transfers		The Government of Kosovo* has introduced the Superpuna employment platform, an initiative led by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers	The platform is in the process of implementation. According to the Kosovo* government the Superpuna platform will offer employment opportunities for young people aged 18 to 25; in only 2 months, there are over 4,700 job vacancies, over 6,400 verified job seekers, over 3,700 registered businesses, and over 2,000 work relationships. ⁷⁷ The implementation of Strategy has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore ensuring effective inter-institutional collaboration as emphasized by KSYAP, and addressing potential gaps in youth policy implementation are challenges that need attention for best result and to fill the gaps caused by the pandemic.

75 Koha, 2021, *Budget reduction of 9.2 million euros is projected for the Ministry of Culture for 2021*, accessed 10 November 2023, <https://www.koha.net/en/culture/244220/the-Ministry-of-Culture-is-projected-to-have-a-budget-reduction-of-9-million-euros/>

76 Office of the Prime Minister, 2022, *Kryeministri Kurti në Kuvend: Përmes buxhetit të vitit 2023, ta lehtësojmë jetën e qytetarëve e ta zhvillojmë ekonominë*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/blog/kryeministri-kurti-ne-kuvend-permes-buxhetit-te-vitit-2023-ta-lehtesojme-jeten-e-qytetareve-e-ta-zhvillojme-ekonomine/>

77 Office of the Prime Minister. (2023) *Prime Minister Kurti: Kosovo* is a place of opportunities for young people, for non-majority communities, for everyone*. Accessed on 1 November 2023. <https://kryeministri.rks.net/en/blog/prime-minister-kurti-is-a-place-of-opportunities-for-young-people-for-non-majority-communities-for-everyone/>



CHAPTER 3: YOUTH FUNDING

FRAMEWORK: YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND INSTRUMENTS

In this chapter, the report delves into an extensive examination of youth policy funding, providing in-depth insights into the financial aspects of youth-oriented initiatives. Additionally, it sheds light on various pivotal interventions and government programmes designed to address the needs and concerns of the youth demographic. This analysis goes beyond a mere financial overview; it encompasses a comprehensive understanding of the funding mechanisms and financial allocations dedicated to youth-related policies. Furthermore, it critically assesses the efficacy and impact of these funding initiatives, looking at how well they align with the overarching objectives of youth policy. In essence, this chapter offers a holistic view of the financial landscape of youth policy, its interventions, and the government programmes in place, ultimately seeking to gauge their success and effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities facing the youth in contemporary society.

3.1. Youth policy funding

As stated in the preceding chapter, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports experienced a reduction in its budget in the Draft Budget 2021. Specifically, the budget was decreased by 3.6 million euros or 9.4% when compared to the revised 2020 budget.⁷⁸ Following the advice of the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Science, Technology, Culture, Youth, and Sports, a distinct budget code for youth at the local level was established in Kosovo*'s budget. This measure was taken to ensure that the funds allocated for youth were utilised appropriately, preventing municipalities from diverting these funds for other purposes. Before this reform, budget lines permitted municipalities to redirect funds as they saw fit.⁷⁹ The Law on Budget Allocations for Kosovo* for the Year 2021 designates 34.305.708 euros for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, with 2.209.546 euros allocated specifically for the Youth Programme. Notably, there have been no substantial changes in the allocated funds over the past three years.⁸⁰ The Youth Strategy 2019-2023 has its own action plan which consists of strategic objectives, measures, activities, responsibilities and financial cost of implementation. The strategy action plan is reviewed on a yearly basis in the framework of the monitoring planning set out in the Strategy.

78 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, 2018, *Strategy for Youth 2019-2023*, accessed 2 November 2023, https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategjia_per_Rini-2019-2023.pdf

79 Stankovski B 2021, *Contribution of partner countries to EU youth wiki chapter i: Kosovo* youth policy governance*, Council of Europe, accessed 2 November 2023, https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/114007071/Kosovo_YouthWiki_Chapter1.pdf/4fbc5d6c-20b7-43eb-df53-9267a07837d9

80 *Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law No.07/L-41 on Budget Allocations for the Budget of Kosovo* for 2021*. Accessed on 15 November 2023, https://assembly-kosova.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/DLonamendingtheLawonBudgetallocationsforBudgetofKosovo*2021_Cp8aqukgyk.pdf



The budget allocated for Mobilising Youth for Participation, Representation and Active Citizenship is EUR 6,013.00; the budget for Providing Skills and Preparing Youth for the Labour Market is 3,054,500; the budget allocated for promoting the healthy way of life and well-being of young people is EUR 2,594.40 while the budget allocated for integrating young people into social life through various cultural, sports and recreational activities is EUR 594,400. A closer examination of the last three Kosovo* budgets reveals significant unused funds earmarked for youth, which have simply been carried over from previous fiscal years. This trend has the potential to hinder the implementation of activities outlined in the Action Plan.

Additionally, a recent report by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has highlighted that both central and municipal levels lack sufficient budgetary allocations for youth programming, leading to a sense of isolation and social exclusion among young people.⁸¹ Substantial funding for youth cooperation projects has been allocated by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). RYCO has conducted numerous open calls for proposals, welcoming participants from the Western Balkans region. These initiatives aim to foster collaboration, understanding, and positive interaction among young people from different backgrounds. Additionally, various renowned international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Women,⁸² and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)⁸³ have been actively reallocating their budgets to support youth-related initiatives in Kosovo*. These organisations play a pivotal role in providing financial resources, expertise, and guidance, contributing significantly to the development and implementation of youth-focused programmes in the region. Through their efforts, they enhance the opportunities available to young individuals, promote social inclusion, and empower them to actively participate in shaping their communities’ future.

3.2. Youth project funding

The comprehensive evaluation of the Youth Strategy 2019-2023 indicates that the total cost of implementing activities over the course of five years amounts to EUR 11,661,900. The financing required for the execution of the Youth Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023 was anticipated to come from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) as well as Development Agencies. These entities are responsible for providing the necessary funding to support the initiatives outlined in the Youth Strategy Action Plan spanning from 2019 to 2023.⁸⁴

81 United States Agency for International Development, 2021, *Formative Evaluation of USAID/Kosovo*s Up to Youth Activity*, accessed 6 November 2023, <https://www.usaid.gov/kosovo/fact-sheets/sep-15-2022-youth>

82 UN Women – Albania, 2023, “Voices of YOUth: Gender Equality and Social Cohesion in the Western Balkans” (n.d.), accessed 1 November 2023, <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/09/voices-of-youth-gender-equality-and-social-cohesion-in-the-western-balkans>

83 OSCE Mission in Kosovo*, 2021, *Seventh Dialogue Academy for Young Women, co-hosted by OSCE Mission in Kosovo* and OSCE Mission to Serbia, concludes in Mavrovo*, accessed 20 October 2023, <https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo/519816>

84 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, 2018, *Strategy for Youth 2019-2023*, accessed 2 November 2023, https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategjia_per_Rini-2019-2023.pdf



Table 2. Strategic objectives of Youth Strategy 2019-2023

Strategic Objectives	Budget (€)
Mobilising youth for participation, representation, and active citizenship	6,013,000
Providing Skills and Preparing Youth for the Labour Market	3,054,500
A healthy and safe environment for young people	2,594,400
Total	11,661,900

3.3. Key youth programmes and instruments

Kosovo* is actively fostering development and empowerment of its youth through a range of impactful programmes and instruments. Recognising the unique challenges faced by the young people in Kosovo*, the government, in collaboration with international organisations and non-governmental entities, has implemented comprehensive initiatives aimed at addressing issues related to education, employment, social inclusion, and civic participation.

Education and skill-building programmes, scholarships, and vocational training contribute to enhancing the capabilities of youth from Kosovo*, preparing them for success in a dynamic job market

Additionally, civic engagement initiatives, such as youth councils and forums, create spaces for young voices to participate in democratic processes, fostering a sense of civic responsibility and social cohesion.

As Kosovo* looks towards the future, these programmes play a pivotal role in shaping a generation of empowered, resilient, and socially conscious individuals.

Programmes of MCYS, Department of Youth

As per the Kosovo* Budget, the Department of Youth within the MCYS manages a specific budget allocated for supporting youth initiatives through subsidies and transfers. Additionally, it aims to enhance the working conditions of 38 Local Youth Councils and more than 30 Youth Centres through capital investments. These funds are distributed through public calls, which focus on specific strategic measures outlined in the Strategy for Youth 2019-2023, following thematic criteria rather than programme-based allocations.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports launched a public call for financial support for employment through start-up grants (Decision No. 903/2020). After attending training in entrepreneurship, in 2020, 755 young individuals were prepared for the labour market, surpassing the expected number of 400.⁸⁵ From these trainees, 500 applied for entrepreneurship training and later submitted applications for grants. MKRS selected 167 beneficiaries through the evaluation process, marking a successful initiative in supporting youth employment and entrepreneurship.⁸⁶ Following this initiative, in 2023, the Programme for Balanced Regional Development (BDP) 2023 Grant Scheme was launched by the Ministry of Regional Development aimed at supporting new businesses and

85 MKRS, 2020, *MKRS jep mbeshetje per 167 te rinj perfitues permes granteve per start up*, accessed 10 October 2023, <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,6,2394>

86 Ibid



developing businesses with growth potential and reducing unemployment through the creation of new jobs, with particular emphasis on young people.⁸⁷

Superpuna88 launched by the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers

On 6 February 2023, the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers introduced the Superpuna platform, aiming to provide employment opportunities for both young men and women while offering salary subsidies for employees placed in businesses.⁸⁹ The Superpuna initiative in Kosovo* aims to secure employment opportunities for young individuals aged 18 to 25. Through mediation services, the government connects employers from various sectors, including private, public, and non-governmental organisations, with eligible job seekers. Upon successful mediation, the government subsidises the monthly salary of the worker, providing 264 euros for a duration of 6 months. For employers, this initiative offers the chance to engage up to 50 young employees, receive a salary subsidy, and invest in development of their human resources. On the other hand, job seekers benefit from the opportunity for regular employment lasting at least 6 months, with favourable employment conditions and prospects for professional career development.

The introduction of SuperPuna has garnered support from international collaborators as well. This partnership underscores the collective commitment of international entities to assist Kosovo* in enhancing youth employment and overall economic progress.⁹⁰

The government has set an ambitious goal of generating 10,000 new jobs within the first year of launching SuperPuna. This target underscores the government's dedication to youth employment and emphasizes its resolve to create opportunities for the young workforce. By swiftly creating a substantial number of job opportunities, the government aims to significantly reduce youth unemployment rates and foster economic growth.⁹¹

So far, the current Minister of Finance, Labour and Transfers noted that more than 7,000 young beneficiaries are employed under the Superpuna support scheme. According to the Minister, there are 3,914 girls and 3,872 boys among the beneficiaries. He said that there are a total of 5,832 businesses that have benefited from the youth employment support scheme so far.⁹²

The platform's provision of mediation services stands out, connecting employers across various sectors with eligible job seekers, streamlining the job placement process. The ambitious goal of generating 10,000 new jobs within the first year showcases determination and a forward-thinking approach. Additionally, the inclusion of both young men and women in the programme, with a detailed breakdown of beneficiaries, demonstrates an intentional effort to promote gender inclusivity.

87 Ministry of Regional Development, 2023, *Call for Proposals for Startup and Existing Businesses*, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://mzhr.rks-gov.net/page.aspx?id=1,6>

88 GAP, 2023, *Gender-based discrimination in job vacancies*, accessed 12 November 2023, <https://www.institutigap.org/news/3066>

89 EYE, 2023, *SuperPuna Platform: Connecting Young Job Seekers in Kosovo**, accessed 15 November 2023, <https://helvetas-ks.org/eye/en/superpuna-platform-connecting-young-job-seekers-in-kosovo/>

90 Ibid

91 Ibid

92 Kosovo* Press, 2022, *Minister Murati shows the number of employees with Superpuna*, accessed 20 October 2023, <https://kosovapress.com/en/murati-tregon-numrin-e-te-punesuarve-me-superpuna/>



However, certain areas warrant careful consideration and critical analysis. While the initiative sets an ambitious goal, the current number of employed beneficiaries (7) appears relatively low compared to the targeted 10,000 jobs within the first year. Monitoring scalability and impact will be crucial to assess the programme's effectiveness.

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of Superpuna initiative is vital, requiring an assessment of potential challenges and necessary adjustments beyond the initial stages. The establishment of clear metrics for programme evaluation, including the quality and sustainability of jobs created, as well as the overall impact on reducing youth unemployment rates, is imperative.

Equitable access is another consideration, emphasizing the need to ensure the programme reaches diverse regions and communities in Kosovo*, preventing potential disparities in employment opportunities. Additionally, establishing effective feedback mechanisms from both employers and job seekers is crucial for refining and improving the programme based on real-world experiences.

In summary, while the Superpuna initiative exhibits promising aspects in addressing youth unemployment, a critical analysis reveals areas that require careful attention, including scalability, long-term sustainability, evaluation metrics, equitable access, and feedback mechanisms to optimise its impact and success.

Youth 4 Inclusion, Equality & Trust⁹³

The Peacebuilding Fund, being implemented by UNDP, has allocated a total contribution of \$98,670 (EUR 92,000) to address critical challenges in the region. The project's primary goal is to empower youth in Kosovo* and the Western Balkans to actively participate in constructive conversations, promoting intercultural dialogue, inclusion, gender equality, and mutual understanding. Over two years, this initiative aims to elevate the role of young people in fostering greater comprehension and respect for diversity in the region. The initiative includes two main expected outcomes:

1. Youth-driven platforms will facilitate dialogue, mutual understanding, and gender equality across the Western Balkans,
2. Young journalists and activists from the region will create and advocate for constructive, gender-sensitive narratives across various media and educational, cultural, and sports platforms.

In Kosovo*, the project is in line with the Youth Strategy 2019-2023, which, among other things, highlights the importance of activities and projects focusing on building and enhancing ethnical social cohesion and will support dialogue and communication between different ethnic groups. This includes an Action Plan that aims to improve the situation of young people, encourage cooperation between youth organisations whose activities relate to youth, and between central and municipal bodies to help strengthen youth policies and programmes. Over the years, numerous trust-building initiatives have been implemented in Kosovo* with youth from different communities.⁹⁴

93 UNDP, 2022, *Youth 4 Inclusion, Equality and Trust*, accessed 20 October 2023, <https://www.undp.org/albania/projects/youth-4-inclusion-equality-trust>

94 UNDP, 2022, *Strengthening the role of youth in promoting increased mutual understanding, constructive narrative, respect for diversity, and trust in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo**, accessed 10 November 2023, https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/ALB/20220422%20PBF%20WB%20Regional%20Youth%20Project_Final%20ProDoc_Public.pdf



Output 1 of the project: Collaborative youth platforms advance dialogue, mutual understanding and gender equality across the region. Estimated direct beneficiaries: 4,690 and estimated indirect beneficiaries: 45,260, of which 2,420 direct/7,260 indirect beneficiaries in Kosovo*.⁹⁵

Output 2: Youth journalists and activists across the region create and promote constructive and gender sensitive narratives in the media and through education, culture and sport. Estimated direct beneficiaries: 931 and estimated indirect beneficiaries: 157,7738 of which 2,420 direct/7,260 indirect beneficiaries in Kosovo*.⁹⁶

Additionally, a regional research initiative has already been led by UN Women and carried out by young researchers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, and Serbia, exploring the connections between youth development, gender equality, and social cohesion challenges in the area.

3.4. Critical assessment

The analysis of youth policy funding in Kosovo* reveals a complex financial landscape. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports experienced a budget reduction in 2021, leading to concerns about the effective allocation of funds for youth-related activities.⁹⁷ To address this issue, a distinct budget code for youth at the local level was established to ensure proper fund utilisation. However, despite budgetary allocations, there has been a consistent trend of significant unused funds earmarked for youth in the past few years, potentially hindering the implementation of youth-related initiatives. International organisations, such as EU, RYCO, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, and OSCE, have played a crucial role in reallocating their budgets to support youth-focused programmes in Kosovo*, enhancing opportunities and social inclusion for young individuals. The analysis also highlights the financial requirements for implementing the Youth Strategy Action Plan, with funds expected to be sourced from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and development agencies. Kosovo*'s participation in RYCO fosters regional collaboration and youth exchanges, promoting cooperation based on tolerance and respect for human rights. Furthermore, international organisations, like the EU, OSCE, UNDP, UNICEF, and UN Women, have actively supported youth involvement in policy-making processes and various youth-related programmes. The Peacebuilding Fund's Youth 4 Inclusion, Equality & Trust project aims to address challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly issues related to divisive rhetoric, violence against women, and economic challenges affecting young people in the region. The project aligns with EU strategies and initiatives, emphasizing the importance of promoting positive narratives and unity in the region. The critical analysis underscores the significance of funding and international collaboration in shaping Kosovo*'s youth policy landscape, addressing both opportunities and challenges in this context. In 2023, the implementation of Youth Strategy Action Plan in Kosovo* is anticipated to require financial support, as indicated by the analysis. Funding is expected to be secured from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, along with contributions from development agencies. This financial backing will be instrumental in executing the strategic objectives outlined in the Youth Strategy, ensuring its

95 Ibid

96 Ibid

97 Koha, 2021, *Budget reduction of 9.2 million euros is projected for the Ministry of Culture for 2021*, accessed 10 November 2023, <https://www.koha.net/en/culture/244220/the-Ministry-of-Culture-is-projected-to-have-a-budget-reduction-of-9-million-euros/>

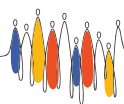


effectiveness in addressing the diverse needs and aspirations of youth population. It is difficult to say whether the Strategy will be applicable and how will that affect all these initiatives as the progress reports need to be reviewed, however they have not been accessible to date.



3.5. Key developments over the years

Source of funding	2020 (based on the previous report)	2021	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
Allocation of funds through the annual budgets of Kosovo* for development and implementation of youth policy	In 2020 the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports allocated a budget of 44,176,000 euros	In 2021, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports allocated a budget of 34.905 million euros	The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports will receive a budget exceeding 57 million euros for 2023	<p>The difference in the allocated budget between 2020 and 2021 is approximately 9.271 million euros. The considerable budget difference will undoubtedly impact the sustainability of youth-focused initiatives.</p> <p>This data raises significant concerns. The budget allocations for youth policy during this three-year period are strikingly low, representing only a minimal fraction of the overall annual central budget. The reduction in funding opportunities has the potential to hinder the capacity of NGOs and youth-focused organisations to carry out their crucial work effectively.</p>
Mobilising youth for participation, representation, and active citizenship	In 2020, an allocation of €1,275,000 was disbursed	In 2021, an allocation of €1,266,500 was disbursed. + In 2022, an allocation of €1,266,500 was disbursed.	In 2023, an allocation of €1,266,500 was disbursed.	<p>Analysing the last Kosovo* budgets, it can be noticed that there are no significant amounts dedicated to youth.</p> <p>This tendency can undermine implementing the activities according to the Action Plan.</p>
Providing Skills and Preparing Youth for the Labour Market	In 2020, an allocation of €635,000 was disbursed.	In 2021, an allocation of €665,000 was disbursed. + In 2022, an allocation of €695,000 was disbursed.	In 2023, an allocation of R €725,000 was disbursed.	<p>A report from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) highlighted that the central government fails to allocate sufficient funds to support positive opportunities for young people. Both central and municipal budget allocations for youth programmes are deemed significantly insufficient, leading to a sense of isolation and social exclusion among the youth (USAID 2021: 6).</p>
A healthy and safe environment for young people	In 2020, an allocation of €555,000 was disbursed.	In 2021, an allocation of €560,000 was disbursed. + In 2022, an allocation of €580,000 was disbursed.	In 2023, an allocation of €580,000 was disbursed.	<p>These years' data reveal that while there has been a slight increase in allocated funds for creating a healthy and safe environment for young people, the incremental growth is relatively small. In light of inflation and evolving needs, this budgetary expansion may not be sufficient to address the complex challenges and requirements of maintaining a genuinely safe and supportive environment for the youth, especially considering the implications of COVID-19 effects. A more substantial financial commitment may be necessary to meet the diverse and dynamic needs of young individuals effectively.</p>



CHAPTER 4: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the mechanisms that currently enable youth participation, offering insights into how young individuals are engaged at both the central and local levels of governance. Additionally, it sheds light on the primary youth organisations and networks operating at the central level, contributing to a better understanding of the structures and platforms through which youth voices and contributions are channelled into the policymaking and decision-making processes. The analysis delves into the frameworks and systems that facilitate youth engagement, offering a nuanced perspective on the intricate web of mechanisms that connect young people to the core of governmental and civic activities.

4.1. Youth engagement and participation in policy: Key mechanisms and processes

To promote active youth engagement in the decision-making process, the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth (LEPY) and its corresponding regulations establish specific youth entities at various levels. These entities encompass the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC), 38 Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) operating in all municipalities, and Local Youth Centres (YC).⁹⁸ Additionally, the Assembly of Kosovo* Youth operates at both central and local levels, actively representing the youth and participating in cross-sectorial working groups. According to the Strategy, the budget for Consolidation, Functionalisation and Empowerment of Youth Organisations is EUR 1,786,500.

LEPY places an obligation on all public institutions to facilitate youth participation and influence in decision-making across various domains, including education, employment, civic education, democracy, urban planning, and rural development. In this context, the Youth Department assumes a pivotal role in designing policies, establishing youth clubs and organisations, allocating budgets and funds for youth initiatives through grants, coordinating efforts among stakeholders and donors, and streamlining procedures to facilitate youth involvement in Kosovo*. According to LEPY Article 7, the Division of Youth, situated within municipal departments of Culture, Youth and Sport, is tasked with promoting youth participation, ideas, and initiatives.⁹⁹

98 Youth Policy, 2014, *Kosovo*-Factsheets on Youth Policy (n.d.)*, accessed 4 November 2023, <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/kosovo/>

99 Law no. 03/I-145 on Empowerment and participation of youth, 2010, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>



4.1.1. Participation at the central level

The Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) serves as the primary body representing youth organisations both at the central and international levels. In 2013, the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) received assistance from the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) to facilitate their engagement in local and economy-level policy- and decision-making processes.¹⁰⁰ It actively contributes to the development and implementation of youth policies, creation of Annual Youth Action Plan, formulation of yearly youth budget, and planning of voluntary and other youth-related activities. However, in 2020, CYAC faced significant challenges, including the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, internal issues such as non-election of new leadership and lack of funds and workspace. These challenges limited CYAC's engagement considerably.

During this period, CYAC could not participate in critical tasks like drafting the youth budget or contributing to the working group amending LEPY. A representative of CYAC highlighted the postponement of elections by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS), citing the impact of legal amendments on the organisation's structure. The pandemic also affected their involvement, compounded by representatives' other commitments and waning enthusiasm for voluntary work. Internal problems further hindered their engagement, preventing them from fulfilling their responsibilities completely. Additionally, CYAC stated that it was not formally invited by MCYS to participate in the working group amending LEPY.

As of now, taking into consideration the disputes with the participation of CYAC in the decision-making processes and representation of youth voice in European, regional or economy-level events and working groups, in June 2021, MCYS reached an informal cooperation agreement with the NGO Kosovar Youth Council (KYC) for participating and representing youth voices of Kosovo* in different opportunities and mechanisms.

The Kosovar Youth Council is one of the oldest youth non-governmental organisations (NGO) established in 1999 in refugee camps in Albania and registered officially later that year in Pristina, Kosovo*. KYC has aspired to act and build a civil society through creating and supporting youth organisations, engaging young men and women in the change making processes, strengthening their capacities, representing their voices, promoting self-organised education and supporting development of youth policies.¹⁰¹ Moreover, under the umbrella of KYC, is also the Student Council of Kosovo* (SCK) founded in 2005. SCK is an economy-level structure representing all students of secondary schools in Kosovo*, with the aim of protecting their interests and rights, and creating a link of cooperation between students and education officials, headmasters, professors, and parents, to effect the improvement of the entire education system.¹⁰² Through its programmes, KYC has access to information and implements activities in 29 municipalities of Kosovo*. More importantly, the structured representative groups of youngsters under the KYC umbrella, at the local level, provide a grass roots approach for interventions and advocat for youth needs and disputes at the economy level.

100 Youth Policy, 2014, *Kosovo*-Factsheets on Youth Policy (n.d.)*, accessed 4 November 2023, <https://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/kosovo/>

101 *Kosovo* Youth Council - Official webpage - About KYC*, accessed 20 November 2023, <https://kyc-ks.org>

102 Ibid



Throughout 2021 to 2023, KYC has been able to represent the young voices from Kosovo* at several events, conferences, meetings and other involvements at European, regional and economy level. Since its engagement, it participated in the Western Balkans Youth Forum (WBYF) (a side event organised in the lead-up to the Western Balkans Berlin Process Summit) in 2021, 2022 and 2023, as participants, facilitators and/or panellists for different topics related to youngsters of Kosovo*. The Prespa Forum Dialogue (PFD) is a platform created by the Government of North Macedonia to enable economies, leaders, organisations, and citizens to build long-term relationships and strengthen partnerships.¹⁰³ There, KYC participated in the role of panellists in PFD 2022 & 2023 and raised its voice to the WB government representatives regarding youth needs. It participated in the International Youth Conference in North Macedonia, Krusevo, in October 2021. It created strong partnerships with Regional Youth Cooperation Office in Pristina, by representing youth voices at RYCO events, such as: coordinative meeting with Umbrella Youth Councils in the region; participating in the creation of RYCO Strategy 2022-24; co-creating Youth, Peace and Security activity plan for the region and implementing it at economy level, etc. The Connecting Youth Platform is composed of all Umbrella Youth Councils in the Western Balkans coming together through signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with one-another, thus coordinating activities in their respective economies and advocating all together for a better region.¹⁰⁴ Through this MoU, KYC was able to connect with NYCs in regular meetings, publish analytic documents for regional policies such as Youth Guarantee, Economic and Investment Plan for WB, Role of WB youth in EU Policy Paper 23, etc. and implement activities under the same topics such as the Young, Wild and Innovative Panel Discussion (three editions 2020, 21 and 22).

Partnership was also created with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) at several levels. Besides participating and representing Kosovo* youngsters in conferences, events and other activities organised by RCC, KYC had a key role in the first edition of the Western Balkans Youth Lab on Unemployment, and it co-lead and managed the second edition of WB Youth Lab under the topic of Mental Health, together with MCYS. Youth Policy Lab brings a participatory and youth centred approach to policy-making processes. It provides a safe space for youth to participate on equal basis with policymakers and engage meaningfully in policy development, policy evaluation or policy revisions based on the principles of co-management and co-production.¹⁰⁵ Through these labs, it was possible to implement economy-wide research on youth unemployment, mental health well-being of youngsters in Kosovo*, advocate for amendment of different Laws and Administrative Instructions under these topics, thus benefiting the youth sector. KYC has also played a crucial role in the consultation process for other strategies, laws and administrative instruction under the topic of youth and education, some of them being: consultations for the Strategy on Education 2022-2026,¹⁰⁶ consultations for the Strategy for Youth 2024-2032, the new Law on youth participation, Law on Mental Health, Administrative Instruction for Career Guidance Centres in VET schools, A.I. for Student Councils, action plans for the economy-level Forum for friendlier schools "Let's Grow Together" (Ministry of Education), action plans for the Local Working Group for Safer Schools (municipality of Pristina).

103 Prespa Forum Dialogue, 2023, *Widened European family by 2023: Mission (IM)possible?*, accessed November 2023, <https://pfd.mk/about/>

104 Connecting Youth – CY, 2021, *Memorandum of Understanding* accessed 19 November 2023, <https://connecting-youth.org/about.php#:~:text=CY%20is%20a%20grassroots%20regional,Council%20of%20Serbia%2C%20Youth%20Network>

105 Regional Cooperation Council on *Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs*, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.rcc.int/pages/158/western-balkans-youth-policy-labs>

106 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2021, *Education Strategy 2022-2026*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/03-Strategija-e-Arsimit-2022-2026-Eng-Web.pdf>



Besides these good examples, Kosovo* is not regularly taking part at regional events due to several reasons. One primary factor is the ongoing political and diplomatic challenges the economy faces, which may hinder its seamless integration into regional platforms. Additionally, resource constraints and competing priorities may limit Kosovo*'s active engagement in regional initiatives, despite the evident benefits of participation. Furthermore, historical and geopolitical complexities in the region can create barriers, impacting the frequency of Kosovo*'s involvement in collaborative endeavours. Not being able to participate in networking events and decision-making tables not only damages the image of Kosovo* in relation to other partners and neighbouring economies, but also the youngsters directly. Taking into consideration the dynamic of youth sector, especially in the region, and reflecting on the actions taken during the past three years at the economy level by KYC, by playing the role of an Umbrella Youth Council, it can be stated that it was adequate at the time for MCYS to provide a quick solution for the representation of the youngsters in policy-making and for the continuation of engagement of youth voices in economy-level, regional and European representation.¹⁰⁷

4.1.2. Participation at local level

Following Administrative Instruction 09/2010 outlining the Responsibilities and Procedures for Establishing and Operating Youth Action Councils in Kosovo*, municipalities are mandated to create local youth action plans to involve youth in decision-making processes. Moreover, Local Youth Action Councils (LYACs) are expected to advocate for youth perspective by actively participating in drafting significant local documents such as municipal budgets, and in the sessions of Municipal Assemblies.¹⁰⁸

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (Ministry) has acknowledged the potential of Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) and expects these youth networks to collaborate as partners in shaping local youth-related policies (Article 10).¹⁰⁹ Consequently, the Law has established a framework for youth engagement, and in 2010, the Ministry issued an Administrative Instruction that grants LYACs a central role. This involves developing a shared vision for youth in each municipality, preparing a youth action plan, and collaborating with other youth organisations (Article 10.1, AI 9/2010 on Responsibilities and Procedures of Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo*).¹¹⁰ Furthermore, during the preparation phase of the Strategy for Youth 2019-2023, consultations were conducted with youth in municipalities, youth organisations, international organisations, municipal youth officials, and other interested youngsters who expressed their opinions and recommendations regarding certain problems faced by youth in the economy.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, the situation is almost the same compared to the last report as currently there is still not enough participation of LYAC in formulating policies related to local youth.

According to the Executive Director of KYC, some of the main struggles that LYAC faces are related to non-sustainable and insufficient funds, or funds overall. Although LYACs are meant to be voluntary

107 Interview with the Executive Director of KYC (2023), Interviewed by Dardane Nuka, 11 November Pristina

108 *Administrative Instruction no. 9/2010 on Responsibilities and Procedures of Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo**, 2010, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzkrks.gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>

109 Article 10. Local Youth Action Council, *Law No. 03/L-145 on Responsibilities and Procedures of Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo**, accessed on 30 November 2023. https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Kosovo_2009_Youth_Law.pdf

110 OSCE, 2013, *A guide for new Local Youth Action Council. Participatory Handbook*, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/9/110054.pdf>

111 Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, 2018, *Strategy for Youth 2019-2023*, accessed 2 November 2023, https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategjia_per_Rini-2019-2023.pdf



structures of participation, they have costs to operate. LYACs facilities are usually relatively small and miss adequate space for day-to-day work, or to meet and implement activities. On the other hand, municipal governments do not allocate enough money for youth related policies. Even when they do, usually the youth sector goes together with the sports and culture sectors, therefore not enough money can be used by LYACs. In addition, another problem that they face is the migration of youngsters from smaller towards bigger municipalities.

Over the last few years there has been a lack of communication and coordination between LYAC with one-another and an even wider gap between LYAC and CYAC.¹¹² Due to the struggles with the election of the new representative of CYAC, collaboration of these structures has been very vague or inexistent. These disputes have created even more struggles in the process of increasing the capacities of LYAC, providing funds at the local level or/and being able to have adequate information about the problems youngsters face at the local level.¹¹³

4.2. Evidence-based youth policy

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) exhibits a dedication to formulating policies based on evidence by drawing insights from diverse sources to shape its strategies. For instance, development of YSAP 2019-2023 involved a thorough analysis of documents from relevant ministries, local governments, youth organisations, and development agencies. Extensive consultations were conducted with key stakeholders, including youth offices, representatives of youth organisations, and donors active in the youth sector. Additionally, MCYS has historically engaged local agencies such as UBO Consulting for mid-term assessments. UNDP's Public Pulse project contributes by providing timely data on institutional and socio-economic stability, offering essential insights into social cohesion and development initiatives in Kosovo*.¹¹⁴

4.3. Establishment and functioning of Youth Councils and umbrella organisations

The Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) was established in 2011 as outlined in Article 8 of LEPY. It operates as a voluntary organisation, representing approximately 130 youth organisations through their Local Youth Action Councils (LYACs).¹¹⁵ CYAC plays a crucial role in advocating for Kosovo* youth organisations before government institutions and actively participates in economy-wide policymaking. Its responsibilities include shaping a unified vision for youth, promoting this vision to economy's authorities and partners, developing action plans to achieve these goals, representing and endorsing the Council's initiatives, and facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange among youth organisations.

In addition to CYAC, another central-level youth organisation, the Assembly of Kosovo* Youth, was independently established in 2009 by young people from Kosovo*. The organisation focuses on

112 Interview with the Executive Director of KYC (2023), Interviewed by Dardane Nuka, 11 November Pristina

113 Ibid

114 UNDP, 2020, *Public Pulse* accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/projects/public-pulse>

115 Administrative Instruction no. 9/2010 on Responsibilities and Procedures of Establishment and Functioning of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo*, 2010, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=7899>



voluntarism, youth activism and participation, and has actively engaged in the working group to amend LEPY. At the local level, similar functions are mirrored through Local Youth Action Councils (LYACs), established in compliance with Administrative Instruction 09/2010. LYACs function as non-governmental organisations, bringing together representatives of youth NGOs within municipalities, representing youth organisations and young people's interests at the local level, as stated in Article 10 of LEPY.¹¹⁶

Additionally, LEPY provides for the establishment of Youth Centres, offering space and resources for youth and youth organisations. The Youth Centre Network - Kosovo*, comprising 20 Youth Centres, serves as a voluntary body actively coordinating activities and promoting the needs of youth sector.¹¹⁷ The main partners of Kosovo* Youth Centres Network is the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, OSCE Mission in Kosovo*, CiviKos, and Kosovo* Youth Development Project (funded by the World Bank).

4.4. Platforms of youth cooperation at the central level

By Youth for Youth (BYFY) programme in Kosovo* empowers marginalised young people to address community issues through NGO projects or social ventures.¹¹⁸ Participants receive mentoring, up to EUR 2,000 in funding, workspace, and access to workshops. The Youth Community Advocacy (YCAP) programme trains marginalised youth to work with decision-makers, conduct community assessments, and implement advocacy campaigns, fostering their engagement with municipal institutions.

The Youth Council of the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo*, established in 2014, is part of the global network initiated by the U.S. Department of State.¹¹⁹ Its mission is to empower Kosovo*'s youth, considering that over 50% of the economy's population is under 30. The Council comprises diverse members, including U.S. alumni, civil society representatives, and students. Their objectives include bridging communication between the U.S. Embassy and youth in Kosovo*, addressing youth-related issues, promoting tolerance and diversity, and encouraging active citizenship through leadership and community service initiatives. The Council operates as neutral, non-political, and non-profit organisation, welcoming individuals from various ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds.

4.5. Regional platforms and networks

Regional Youth Co-operation Office Kosovo* is a member participant of RYCO, whose aim is to promote reconciliation and cooperation of youth and support regional youth exchange alongside the implementation of joint regional programmes. Currently Kosovo* is represented in RYCO governing board by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, while the youth representative of Kosovo* is

116 Stankovski, B 2021, *Contribution of partner countries to EU youth wiki chapter i: Kosovo* youth policy governance*. The Council of Europe, accessed 2 November 2023, https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/114007071/Kosovo_YouthWiki_Chapter1.pdf/4fbc5d6c-20b7-43eb-df53-9267a07837d9

117 Kosovo* Youth Centres' Network Website, *About KYCN*, accessed 20 October 2023. <https://orgs.tigweb.org/kosovo-youth-centers-network>

118 UNICEF, 2017, *Kosovo* programme – Adolescents, Youth and Innovations*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/adolescents-youth-and-innovations>

119 US Embassy in Kosovo*, 2014, *Youth Council of the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo**, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://xk.usembassy.gov/education-culture/youth-council/>



currently in the recruitment process.¹²⁰ Additionally, RYCO office in Kosovo* is collaborating with the European Union Office in Kosovo* and OSCE Mission in Kosovo*.

Connecting Youth Platform. – KYC is representing Kosovo*'s youth in CYP, a platform that promotes youth connectivity in the Balkans. CYP is a grassroots regional youth platform implemented by the Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), together with the umbrella youth organisations of Western Balkan economies, and with the support of the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

Western Balkan Youth Lab (WBYL) is a three-year EU funded and RCC implemented project that kicked off in January 2020 which aims to provide opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making. The project is covering six Western Balkan economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia) in which youth constitutes 21.27% of the overall population.¹²¹ The Western Balkans Youth Lab project strives to create a longer-term structured regional dialogue between youth organisations and economies' administrations focused on jointly developing policies which will increase youth participation in decision-making to improve the overall socio-economic environment for and mobility of youth in the Western Balkan economies through different types of activities.

Young European Ambassadors Kosovo* is represented in YEA. YEA consists of six Ambassadors and six Attaches from across the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. YEA aims to share knowledge about the EU's values and promote the opportunities EU offers. YEA aims to inspire changes within communities of the Western Balkan region and across the EU by allowing youth to share ideas and develop their talents.

4.6. Critical assessment

The key mechanisms and initiatives in Kosovo*, such as the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth (LEPY) and entities like the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC), Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC), and Local Youth Centres (YC), are designed to bridge the gap between young people and government institutions across multiple domains. The Youth Department's role is crucial in facilitating youth engagement through policies, grants, and coordination. While CYAC has played a significant role in shaping youth policies, challenges in 2020, including the impact of COVID-19, leadership issues, financial constraints, and workspace challenges, have hindered its effectiveness in critical tasks.

At the local level, Administrative Instruction 09/2010 outlines responsibilities for Youth Action Councils, emphasizing the importance of local youth action plans and the role of LYACs in advocating for youth perspectives in municipal documents. The Ministry expects LYACs to collaborate in shaping local youth-related policies. These mechanisms form a framework for youth engagement, showcasing a commitment to enhancing participation at various levels.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) adopts an evidence-based approach for the YSAP 2019-2023, utilising consultations, studies commissioned by donors, and data from sources such as

¹²⁰ Interview with RYCO representative for Kosovo* (2023), Interviewed by Egzona Bokshi, 20 October Pristina

¹²¹ Regional Cooperation Council, 2022, *Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs*, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://www.rcc.int/pages/158/western-balkans-youth-policy-labs>



the Labour Market Information System. This practice ensures policies are grounded in credible data and insights.

Regional platforms and networks, including RYCO and Young European Ambassadors, play a crucial role in promoting youth connectivity, cooperation, and EU-endorsed values. By fostering collaboration and understanding among young people in the region, these initiatives significantly contribute to building a more cohesive and inclusive society in Kosovo* and the broader Western Balkans.

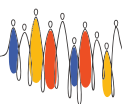
However, amidst acknowledging successes and commitments to youth involvement, it is essential to recognise challenges and limitations, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and internal issues. The reduction in the budget allocated to MCYS in 2021 highlights potential constraints in sustaining and expanding youth-centric initiatives. While acknowledging various successes and commitments to youth involvement, we also need to recognise the challenges and limitations faced, particularly in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and internal issues, for instance, reduced budget allocation to MCYS observed in 2021.¹²²

122 *Law No.08/L-066 on Budget Appropriations for the budget of Kosovo* for the year 2022, 2021*, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://mf.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/1F14DA73-6925-49B6-883E-014550C6E3C8.pdf>



4.7 Key developments over the years

Title of comparative unit	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report)	2022	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
Level of youth participation in policy and decision-making processes in Kosovo*	Covid-19, internal problems such as the absence of new leadership elections, insufficient funds and workspace, and not receiving an invitation by MCYS.	The situation remains unchanged regarding youth participation in policy and decision-making processes in Kosovo*. Consequently, the level of involvement remains low, and youth organisations are presently unable to realise their potential.		Decision-makers should shift their approach from viewing young people merely as recipients and begin recognising them as capable participants. Strategies should not be created for them but in collaboration with them. In a groundbreaking move for Kosovo*, young people were consulted for the new Development Strategy. Yet, these consultations must be regularised and involve young individuals not only in the strategy's formulation but also in its active implementation.
Presence of regional platforms for youth participation in policy and decision-making processes in Kosovo*	The most important regional platforms are CYP, RYCO, WBYL, YEA Initiative.	There were no changes when it comes to representation	There were no changes when it comes to representation	While many institutions and organisations in Kosovo* are involved in youth cooperation platforms for regional and global partnerships, there are potential issues regarding the effectiveness of these efforts. Just being part of these platforms does not guarantee that young people are actively influencing policies and decisions. There is a need to question the real influence young individuals have. It should look closely at whether their involvement is only on the surface or if it makes a substantial impact. Also, the extent to which these regional platforms actually affect policies should be assessed, including whether global partnerships bring real benefits for local youth. To shape meaningful policies for Kosovo*'s youth, there is a need to thoroughly analyse how young people participate and the actual results of these efforts.



CHAPTER 5: MAPPING OF DONOR INTERVENTIONS IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH IN KOSOVO*

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of youth-related programmes and interventions by key donors in Kosovo*. The focus is on elucidating the strategies and initiatives undertaken by these donors in addressing youth-related issues. Additionally, the chapter delves into the mechanisms of donor coordination in Kosovo*, shedding light on the collaborative efforts among various donor organisations. By examining the coordination methods, the chapter provides insights into the synergistic approach adopted by donors to maximise their impact and effectiveness in youth-related initiatives. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the priority areas identified for the future, offering a strategic vision for youth development in Kosovo*.

5.1. Key donors in the field of youth

The major donors in Kosovo* that are working in the field of youth are:

- **European Union** has been a significant supporter of Kosovo*'s youth initiatives, especially post-2008. Utilising instruments like IPA, the EU's focus has been on enhancing youth employment, facilitating access to active labour market programmes, and enhancing vocational skills. The EU Office prioritises education, academic staff capacity building, and increased research grants. Additionally, EU is actively working to integrate youth-related issues into mainstream agendas and plans to establish a dedicated IPA for youth sector in the upcoming period. IPA funds build the capacities of economies throughout the accession process, resulting in progressive, positive developments in the region. The IPA Programming for Kosovo* is focused on a) Democracy and Governance, b) Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights, c) Energy, d) Competitiveness and Innovation, e) Education, Employment, and Social Policies, f) Agriculture, and i) Regional Cooperation. Youth and women provide an essential part of the 2014-2020 IPA. Kosovo* is a partner economy of the Erasmus+ Programme in the Western Balkans section. The Erasmus+ Office in Kosovo* has been established to assist the European Commission, Executive Agency, and local authorities in implementing Erasmus+ Programme. The programme aims to boost skills and employability and modernise Education, Training, and Youth work. Through its Key Actions, Erasmus + Programme supports (i) mobility in the education, training, and youth sectors, (ii) transfer of best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training, and youth, and capacity building in the field of youth and higher education, and (iii) grants for a wide variety of actions in the areas of education, training, and youth.



- **United States Embassy and USAID** have been actively supporting Kosovo*’s institutions since 1999. USAID’s projects in Kosovo* are oriented towards economic growth, democracy, and governance. The organisation has recently initiated its new 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy, with individual projects having varying budgets, including diverse funding for student exchange programmes and economic initiatives.¹²³ The primary objective of this new strategy is to help Kosovo* harness its democratic and demographic potential through locally-driven solutions. To achieve this objective, USAID aims to enhance government accountability and explore new democratic and economic prospects. The strategy revolves around two core development goals: improving citizens’ access to responsive and efficient governance institutions and expanding opportunities for broad democratic and economic participation. Additionally, USAID in Kosovo* is actively involving young people and emerging leaders in an ongoing process of civic education, engagement, and leadership development. Through this new strategy, USAID seeks to create and sustain opportunities that harness the potential of youth, enabling them to contribute their voices and skills to Kosovo*’s development. Additionally, USAID has worked with other programmes and initiatives in Kosovo*. Based on the infographic presented by the organisation, USAID has been engaged on.¹²⁴

 - USAID Assistance in addressing COVID-19 in Kosovo*: For more than a half century, the United States has been the largest contributor to global health security and humanitarian assistance.
 - USAID Commercial Justice Activity is working on reforms that promote investment, economic growth, and job creation.
 - USAID Compete Activity aims to improve the export competitiveness of private sector in the wood processing, food processing and ICT.
 - USAID Economic Governance Activity is a five-year initiative to improve self-reliant, inclusive governance and strengthen public financial management to facilitate economic growth, reducing the public perception of and opportunities for economic corruption, thereby encouraging investment in Kosovo*’s economy.
 - USAID Justice Activity strengthens Kosovo*’s justice system by applying a people-centred approach to justice.
 - Kosovo* Youth Dialogue is a 30-month project with the main goal of empowering young people to actively participate in dealing with the past and reconciliation process in Kosovo* by encouraging inter-ethnic communication, interaction, and cooperation, addressing common interests, building confidence and promoting mutual understanding and positive attitudes.

123 USAID, 2022, *Country Development Cooperation Strategy-Kosovo* 2020-2025*, accessed 10 November 2023, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/CDCS-Kosovo-May-2025_External.pdfh

124 USAID in Kosovo*, 2022, *Infographics*, accessed 16 October 2023, <https://www.usaid.gov/kosovo/infographics>



- **Swiss Embassy and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation** have been actively supporting Kosovo* since 1999. Their initiatives primarily focus on reforms geared towards European and regional integration, emphasizing democracy, economic development, and infrastructure enhancements. Specifically targeting individuals aged 15-34 transitioning from education to work, including those from minority communities and with limited educational backgrounds, the project tackles the issue of skills mismatch in the labour market. With a total budget of EUR 6,800,000, the project focuses on improving labour market information, enhancing career guidance systems, upgrading education, creating new job opportunities, and providing high-quality training. Additionally, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation funded the Promoting Private Sector Employment, Phase II project from 2017 to 2021. This project aimed to foster sustainable employment for young men and women through small and medium enterprises, with a particular focus on the food processing and tourism sectors. The initiative has facilitated the creation of over 2,000 full-time jobs and has enabled more than 100 SMEs to introduce new services and products, enhancing food production, sales channels, and overall economic growth in the region. The budget for Phase II (2017-2021) of this project was CHF 7.3 million (EUR 7,727,280).
- **German Embassy and German Development Agency (GIZ)** have been actively involved in Kosovo* since 1999, focusing on areas such as economic development, employment, rule of law, education, culture, youth, sports, and the European agenda. In 2021, GIZ executed a three-year initiative called Youth Employment and Skills in Kosovo* (YES). This project, with a budget of EUR 12,000,000, aimed to enhance the employability of young people from Kosovo* aged 15 to 35. The funds were allocated for various purposes, including training programmes, employment opportunities, market analysis, support for startups, and strengthening of youth centres and civil society. Notably, 40% of the beneficiaries were females, over 25% were returnees, and 10% came from ethnic minority groups.
- **Austrian Embassy and Austrian Development Agency** have been active in Kosovo* since 2003, focusing their support on higher education, economic development, and governance. Presently, they are executing the Aligning Education and Training with Labour Market Needs - ALLED Phase II project (project duration 2019-2024) with a total budget of EUR 3,800,000. The primary goal of this initiative, which is co-funded by the European Union, is to alleviate poverty by enhancing labour market participation and improving employability.
- **UNICEF:** UNICEF Innovations Lab – Kosovo* project started in 2010 and is still ongoing. The main goal is to invest in human capital, especially in youth, to the social and economic prosperity of a Kosovo*. The programme has three main components: Social entrepreneurship (Upshift Initiative), Active citizenship (Podium initiative), and Media critical thinking (Ponder initiative). The Lab works with teenagers and youth (14-24 years), emphasizing marginalised, vulnerable, and socially excluded groups (non-majority communities; rural communities; communities living in poverty; and teenagers with disabilities). The annual budget for this project is EUR 1,000,000.



- **OSCE:** OSCE office in Pristina focuses on youth engagement as one of its priorities. Advancing Societal Confidence Building Measures, Phase II project (2019-220) sought to increase youth participation and advocacy efforts in the dialogue and public participation. Programme activities brought together groups of young people from 40 to 500 persons. The programme had a total budget of EUR 200,000. The project started in January 2020 and was completed in December 2020.
- **UNDP:** is also active in Kosovo* since 1999 and is focused on building and supporting Kosovo* in three areas: sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, environment, climate, and disaster resilience. UNDP Office in Pristina implemented Active Labour Market Programmes 2 project (2024-2022). The project was focused on supporting vulnerable young men and women in finding a job or establishing a new venture through supporting Kosovo*'s institutions in designing strategic, evidence-based policies and programmes and providing skills development and employment opportunities. To date, the project has supported Kosovo* Employment Agency and MLSW. At the same time, over 2,500 unemployed young women and men were offered skills development and employment opportunities. Moreover, over 500 new small businesses have been established through the support provided by the programme. The programme started in 2014 and ended in December 2022. As part of UN support, the Peacebuilding Fund has allocated \$98,670 (EUR 9,500) to address pressing challenges in the region through collaborative youth platforms and empowering youth journalists and activists. These initiatives aim to foster dialogue, mutual understanding, and gender equality while countering divisive rhetoric, cyber-bullying, inter-ethnic tensions, and discrimination. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the existing issues, intensifying traditional gender norms and hindering economic prospects for young individuals. Mentioned projects aligns with EU strategies, focusing on unity and positive narratives to counteract social divisions.
- **Council of Europe:** interventions impacting youth are mostly in education, human rights, and discrimination. Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE project aims to foster quality education in Kosovo* and improve access to education for children from disadvantaged groups, including Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children and children with special education needs. The project will support implementing the existing beneficiary's legislation and Council of Europe policy and standards relating to education and anti-discrimination measures. The project covers the period of January 2020 to December 2023. Kosovo* is involved in the Erasmus+ Programme within the Western Balkans section, allowing participation in specific programme actions. The establishment of an Erasmus+ Office in Kosovo* aids the European Commission, Executive Agency, and local authorities in programme implementation.¹²⁵
- **Government of Japan** generously provided a grant of US\$ 2,790,000 (EUR 2,532,483.00) for M4Y project through the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) which is administered by the World Bank. The project was focused on increasing socioeconomic opportunities for marginalised youth (15-24) in Kosovo*. The project was designed in response to the growing youth disenfranchisement that has been an important driver of outmigration,

125 Stankovski, B 2021, *Contribution of partner countries to EU youth wiki chapter i: Kosovo* 1 youth policy governance*, Council of Europe, accessed 2 November 2023, https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/114007071/Kosovo_YouthWiki_Chapter1.pdf/4fbc5d6c-20b7-43eb-df53-9267a07837d9



political dissatisfaction, and radicalisation. It aimed at enabling selected municipalities to address youth socioeconomic needs through targeted initiatives and services and thereby improve cooperation between youth and local governments.¹²⁶

The Project Development Objective (PDO) was to improve socioeconomic inclusion of at least 3,000 marginalised youth in vulnerable communities in Kosovo* through youth-driven civic engagement and skills building activities. The project was supposed to end this year but it is still continuing and will now increase the impact with a total of 15 municipalities in Kosovo*.¹²⁷

Another very important initiative where relevant municipal departments are the key counterparts is the Up to Youth project with a total funding of \$8,937,090 (2019-2024) and has so far produced the following results.¹²⁸

- Approximately 3,000 youth and parents participated in Up to Youth's community outreach activities.
- Over 900 youth throughout the nine partner municipalities were mobilised to improve their capacities and skill to contribute to and benefit from better communities and livelihoods.
- 147 youth completed training in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, accessing financing, and establishing mentorships to enhance their skills and enable them to actively participate in Kosovo*'s economic development.
- Partnered with the private sector to implement an internship programme with the aim of increasing employability prospects of youth participants.
- Built the capacities of its Youth Advisory Board (YAB) with a diverse group of 30 youth that provide support across the economy to other youth participating in the programme.
- 54 youth-led initiatives were implemented, and another 27 new initiatives will address community challenges.

5.2. Donor coordination

The major donors involved in youth development in Kosovo* exhibit a diverse range of focus areas, goals, and approaches, reflecting both individuality and collaboration in their efforts. The European Union (EU) has been a significant supporter since 2008, with a focus on enhancing youth employment, vocational skills, and educational programmes. The EU places a high priority on education and research grants and seeks to integrate youth-related issues into mainstream agendas. Their approach involves the use of IPA funds to build economic capacities while focusing on several key sectors.

The United States Embassy and USAID, having a history of support since 1999, centre their efforts on economic growth, democracy, governance, and civic education. They aim to enhance government

126 Institute for Development Impact, 2023, *M4Y Municipalities for Youth*, accessed 15 November 2023,

<http://i4di.org/publications-view/municipalities-for-youth-in-kosovo-project/>

127 Advocacy Centre for Democracy Culture, 2023, *M4Y Municipalities for Youth – Empowering Youth for Change*, accessed 5 November 2023, <https://acdc-kosovo.org/projekti/m4y-municipalities-for-youth-empowering-youth-for-change>

128 USAID, 2023, *Up to Youth project*, accessed 10 November 2023, <https://www.usaid.gov/kosovo/fact-sheets/sep-15-2022-youth>



accountability and expand opportunities for democratic and economic participation, emphasizing local solutions.

The Swiss Embassy and Swiss Agency for Development, active since 1999, concentrate on youth employability through skills enhancement and market-oriented training, addressing the skills mismatch. Their approach is project-based, targeting specific sectors such as food processing and tourism. The German Embassy and GIZ, involved since 1999, focus on youth employment and skills development, particularly among females, returnees, and ethnic minorities. They allocate funds for training programmes, startups, and youth centres.

The Austrian Embassy, active since 2003, aims to improve labour market participation and employability through higher education and economic development support. UNICEF's Innovation Lab targets marginalised youth with programmes on social entrepreneurship, active citizenship, and media critical thinking. OSCE emphasizes youth engagement, involving groups of young people in societal confidence-building measures.

UNDP focuses on active labour market programmes, supporting Kosovo*'s institutions and facilitating establishment of small businesses. The Council of Europe concentrates on education, human rights, and anti-discrimination. The Royal Norwegian Embassy supports youth development by partnering with local NGOs, emphasizing political skills development.

While these donors have diverse objectives and approaches, they share a common commitment to empowering Kosovo*'s youth through education, employment, and democratic participation. They contribute to the holistic development of the youth, recognising their potential in shaping Kosovo*'s future and fostering social inclusion and economic growth. Each donor plays a distinct role, creating a collective framework that addresses various aspects of youth development. The differences in their goals and approaches complement each other, resulting in a comprehensive strategy that aligns with Kosovo*'s evolving needs and challenges, ultimately working towards a more prosperous and inclusive future for the youth of Kosovo*.

All strategic objectives, measures, activities and costs are outlined in more detail in the Youth Action Plan matrix, which includes specific activities and identifying responsible sectors within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, in particular Youth Department, as the institution tasked with coordinating youth-related activities while different other stakeholders are involved in coordinating interventions implemented by the above-mentioned donors, including government bodies, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations.

Donor coordination in Kosovo* is typically managed at both the economy and international levels. The coordination involves collaboration between the government of Kosovo*, represented by relevant ministries and agencies, and international donors and organisations.

At the economy level, Kosovo* has established mechanisms to coordinate donor activities. The government often leads these efforts, with specific ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance or Ministry of European Integration, playing key roles. The aim is to align donor assistance with government's development priorities and ensure effective utilisation of resources.



5.3. Priority areas for the future in the field of youth

The current governmental strategies, specifically the Youth Strategy and its Action Plan, outline the government's primary objectives in youth development. The objectives encompass formal and informal education, employment opportunities, and encouraging active involvement of young people in different aspects of public life.¹²⁹

On the other hand, donors' priorities revolve around promoting good governance, democracy, upholding the rule of law, fostering economic development, addressing energy concerns, and focusing on environmental initiatives, and as well as social cohesion and gender empowerment. The report identifies several crucial concerns that will shape the future institutional priorities in youth development.

Empowering Youth Organisations: Currently, youth participation and activism in decision-making processes and public engagement are still limited. Public funds allocated to youth organisations have proven insufficient, so far leading to their inactivity. Moreover, these organisations have often been manipulated by different interest groups for political gains. It is imperative to enhance and empower these youth organisations, enabling them to access and manage funds from diverse sources beyond public funds. Donors should concentrate on building the capacity of youth organisations and empowering youth structures. Strengthening youth organisations' ability to secure funds serves a dual purpose: increasing youth participation and preventing politicisation of these organisations.

Linking Education and Industry: High youth unemployment rates persist in Kosovo*, while specific sectors struggle to find qualified employees. Establishing a strong connection between the education sector and the industry can address both challenges. By bridging this gap, youth unemployment can be reduced, and the education system can adapt its curriculum and methods to align with current trends and labour market demands. In response to this, one of the objectives of the new Education Strategy 2022-2026 (objective 3) is to harmonise vocational education and training with dynamic developments in technology and the labour market, in function of lifelong learning.

Rural Youth Empowerment: A significant portion of Kosovo*'s young population resides in rural areas, where they encounter additional challenges in accessing education and employment compared to their urban counterparts. The existing barriers often lead to the social marginalisation and exclusion of rural youth, limiting their opportunities for education and employment. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach, involving both Kosovo*'s institutions and the donor community. New strategies must be devised to incentivise the engagement of rural youth, such as subsidising vocational education and altering societal perceptions towards it. These initiatives have the potential to engage rural youth, reshape the economy, and enhance the overall position of young people in society.

129 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2021, *Education Strategy 2022-2026*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/03-Strategija-e-Arsimit-2022-2026-Eng-Web.pdf>



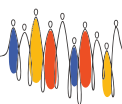
5.4. Critical assessment

Various donors in Kosovo* contribute to diverse youth development goals, showcasing a blend of individuality and collaboration. The analysis of major donors' involvement in youth development in Kosovo* reveals a nuanced and multifaceted landscape. The donors, including the European Union (EU), United States Embassy, Swiss Embassy, German Embassy, Austrian Embassy, UNICEF, OSCE, UNDP, Council of Europe, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, exhibit a commendable diversity in their focus areas, goals, and approaches. This diversity reflects an understanding of the varied challenges faced by Kosovo*'s youth, showcasing both individuality and collaborative efforts. Each donor plays a distinct role, creating a collective framework that addresses various aspects of youth development. The differences in their goals and approaches complement each other, resulting in a comprehensive strategy that aligns with Kosovo*'s evolving needs and challenges, ultimately working towards a more prosperous and inclusive future for the youth. In addition to the donor efforts, the government of Kosovo* also emphasizes youth development through the Youth Strategy and its Action Plan. Their focus areas include formal and non-formal education, employment, and youth participation in public life. This aligns with the donors' goals, but the report highlights certain gaps and areas that require further attention. One key area is the need to empower youth organisations, as their current state is marked by insufficient funding and potential politicisation. Donors should concentrate on strengthening these organisations by enhancing their access to funds from diverse sources, which can increase youth participation and prevent manipulation for political purposes. The report also stresses the importance of linking education and industry to address high youth unemployment rates and the skills gap. Bridging this gap can not only reduce unemployment but also adapt the education system to align with labour market demands. Another priority is the empowerment of rural youth, who face additional barriers to education and employment. Strategies like subsidising vocational education and changing societal perceptions can engage rural youth and contribute to their social inclusion and economic opportunities. Finally, addressing interethnic tensions and enhancing youth activism in a multi-ethnic context is crucial. Collaborative efforts between the government and donors can promote inclusive youth participation, bring together youth from diverse backgrounds, and contribute to social cohesion. In summary, donors' diverse efforts, combined with government's focus on youth development, create a comprehensive strategy for Kosovo*'s youth. However, the report highlights critical areas where further attention is needed, especially in empowering youth organisations, linking education and industry, supporting rural youth, and promoting interethnic youth activism. Addressing these areas will contribute to a more prosperous and inclusive future for Kosovo*'s young population.

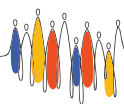


5.5. Key developments over the years

Name of the donor	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report) List of support programmes	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
European Union + European Programmes	Erasmus+ COSME Europe for Citizens Creative Europe Fiscals Customs and IPA III Horizon Europe. European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)		The EU Delegation, UN agencies, OSCE, and other international donors are prominent contributors, coordinating closely amongst themselves and with other donors. However, especially concerning youth initiatives, there is a notable absence of a specific mechanism for coordinating donors' activities. This gap in donor coordination within the realm of youth policy stands as a significant challenge, hindering the support for youth projects and programmes and affecting the impacts and outcomes of initiatives in Kosovo*
UNMIK UN Agencies in Kosovo*	Youth, Peace and Security at UNMIK Active Labour Market Programmes Project ReLOaD Western Balkans Kosovo* Safety & Security project (KSSP) Youth for Inclusion, Equality and Trust		
RYCO	Enhancing Youth Cooperation and Youth Exchange in the WB Supporting the Western Balkan's Collective Leadership on Reconciliation: Building Capacity and Momentum for RYCO	RYCO Superschools Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme RISE (Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs) EU – Western Balkan – Student Integration (EU-WB-SI)	
OSCE Mission to Kosovo*	Dialogue Academy for Young Women programme Programmes Against Intolerance and Violent Extremism Programme Support to RYCO Programme, etc. Programme for capacity-building of administrators in youth services		



Name of the donor	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report) List of support programmes	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
Council of Europe	Council of Europe Project against Economic Crime in Kosovo* (PECK II) Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye ROMACTED "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level" Building capacity for inclusion in education – INCLUDE Enhancing Anti-Trafficking Actions Kosovo*: Improvement of the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty Support to the Constitutional Court in applying and disseminating European Human Rights Standards Aligning laws and policies with the Istanbul Convention Roma Integration - Phase III Promoting Human Rights and Anti-discrimination principles at the local level - phase II		
GIZ	Spatial Planning and Land Management II	Greening Power Grids in the Western Balkans. Promoting social inclusion of disadvantaged groups in the Western Balkans Achieving more together with Sport for Development Reforming Kosovo*'s legal system moving towards EU integration	The EU Delegation, UN agencies, OSCE, and other international donors are prominent contributors, coordinating closely amongst themselves and with other donors. However, especially concerning youth initiatives, there is a notable absence of a specific mechanism for coordinating donors' activities. This gap in donor coordination within the realm of youth policy stands as a significant challenge, hindering the support for youth projects and programmes and affecting the impacts and outcomes of initiatives in Kosovo*



CHAPTER 6: GOOD PRACTICES AND GAP ANALYSIS

In this chapter the focus is on highlighting effective approaches within youth-related policies and programmes, while also shedding light on the existing gaps in financing mechanisms. The structure of the chapter mirrors that of the overall report, ensuring consistency and a comprehensive analysis. The chapter delves into the far-reaching consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, a demographic particularly vulnerable to its social, economic, and educational impacts. By examining these effects, the chapter provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by youth during this crisis. One of the key aspects of this chapter is the identification and analysis of good practices in youth-related policies and programmes. These practices serve as exemplars of effective strategies that have yielded positive outcomes for young people. By studying these successful initiatives, policymakers and stakeholders can gain valuable knowledge about what works in supporting and empowering the youth population. Importantly, the chapter does not stop at highlighting challenges and gaps; it also provides key recommendations for each key stakeholder involved. These stakeholders could include government bodies, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, and community leaders. These recommendations serve as a practical guide, offering actionable steps that each actor can take to support young people effectively. These suggestions are grounded in the analysis of good practices and the identified gaps, ensuring their relevance and applicability in real-world scenarios. In summary, this chapter serves as a vital component of the report, offering a detailed and insightful exploration of youth-related policies and programmes. By examining both successful strategies and existing challenges, the chapter equips readers with a nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. Furthermore, the provision of actionable recommendations empowers stakeholders to implement meaningful changes, fostering a more supportive environment for young people.

6.1. Good practices

In fostering a dynamic environment for its youth population, Kosovo* has implemented a range of initiatives that signify a dedicated commitment to their holistic development. These efforts encompass:

Comprehensive Youth Inclusion - Kosovo* has demonstrated a commitment to comprehensive youth inclusion by actively involving young people in the policy-making process. Youth councils, forums, and platforms provide spaces for their voices to be heard, fostering a sense of civic responsibility and social cohesion. The existing legal framework is robust, incorporating both central and local structures, as well as involving youth organisations that actively contribute to the development and implementation of policies.¹³⁰

130 Interview, Civil Society Representatives, (2023), Interviewed by Dardane Nuka, on 30 November 2023, Pristina



Entrepreneurship Support - Initiatives like the Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Support Programme reflect a positive practice by providing training, mentorship, and financial resources to young entrepreneurs. This not only stimulates economic growth but also encourages innovation and resilience within the youth-driven business sector. Up to Youth works to support young people in Kosovo* aged 15-24 years who are vulnerable to social exclusion by mobilising and engaging them in meaningful ways to create positive change. Participants are given opportunities to identify key challenges in their communities, design solutions and lead implementation of activities that address youth priorities while developing business and life skills that increase their own employability.¹³¹

Regional Collaboration – Kosovo*'s participation in regional initiatives, such as the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), exemplifies effective international collaboration. This fosters regional cooperation and youth exchanges, promoting tolerance and respect for human rights. The projects supported by RYCO and the EU within the 4th RYCO Open Call across the Western Balkans fostered reconciliation and regional youth cooperation, as well as strengthened the capacities of civil society to adapt to the COVID-19 environment.

Support from International Organisations - The active support from international organisations like the EU, OSCE, UNDP, UNICEF, and UN Women is a positive aspect. Their involvement in youth-related programmes and policy-making processes contributes to the enrichment of opportunities for Kosovo*'s youth.

The high level of political engagement among young individuals in Kosovo* not only challenges the stereotype of political indifference often associated with their age group but also highlights their active role in shaping Kosovo*'s political landscape. Such a high level of participation underscores the importance placed on education as a fundamental right and a catalyst for social and economic development in Kosovo*.

Additionally, in the evolution of the previous education strategy of 2017-2021, it was highlighted that the Municipality of Pristina has introduced an innovative approach to enhance children's participation in preschool education.¹³² In contrast, for upper secondary levels, specifically grades 10-12 (which include high schools and vocational schools), the responsibility for organising remote learning was delegated to municipalities.

MESTI has embedded Shkollat.org within the Kosovo* Education Strategy (2022–2026). This provides a unique window to support its use by all teachers and students as a tool for digital learning, whether the classroom is remote or in-person.¹³³

131 United States Agency for International Development (2021). *Formative Evaluation of USAID/Kosovo*'s Up to Youth Activity*. Accessed on 6 November 2023. <https://www.usaid.gov/kosovo/fact-sheets/sep-15-2022-youth>

132 Ministria e Arsimit, Shkencës, Teknologjisë dhe Inovacionit, 2023, *Platforma Arsimi Gjithpërfshirëse*, accessed 2 November 2023, <https://arsimigjithepershires.rks-gov.net>

133 Ibid



6.2. Gaps

Recognition of progress in youth-related projects and initiatives is a positive step forward. It signifies that efforts have been made, achievements have been noted, and there has been a collective drive to address issues relevant to youth. However, it is equally crucial to acknowledge that there is still plenty room for improvement. The challenges faced by young people, whether they pertain to education, employment, mental health or social inclusion, are complex and multifaceted. These challenges require ongoing attention, innovative solutions, and collaborative efforts from all parties involved. The need for improvement suggests that while there have been positive improvements, there are gaps or areas that still require attention and enhancement.

COVID-19 effect. Initially, the economy in Kosovo* suffered a significant impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, and it also affected the education sector. The measures taken by the decision-making institutions to organise distance learning through the public broadcaster during the last year are considered as fast and in accordance with the situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic to enable the continuation of the school year and access to education for all children in Kosovo*.¹³⁴

As per the new Education Strategy 2022-2026, distance education, which proved to be very necessary, especially with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, created opportunities for professionals and parents to be constantly informed, thus such platforms enable access to services, and, over the years, their regular maintenance should be organised in all languages.¹³⁵

Education system. Kosovo*'s education system lacked a sense of responsibility and accountability, resulting in the non-compliance with legislation, strategies, policies, and established standards. Accountability and responsibility mechanisms were absent in several levels and institutions responsible for education. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MESTI) failed to establish a sustainable education system. Instead of focusing solely on policymaking, support, and supervision/evaluation, MESTI did not ensure a robust education system. Consequently, municipalities were often not held accountable for the state of education within their communities, despite their legal and strategic responsibilities in pre-university education. According to the evaluation process of KESP, the stagnation in implementing defined education policies, including the Kosovo* Education Strategic Plan, was not solely due to financial constraints but was also significantly linked to the lack of commitment, insufficient human capacity, and organisational issues.¹³⁶ Special dedication and effective coordination between central and local institutions are necessary to implement the strategic measures outlined by MESTI. In recent years, there has been a decline in the number of students pursuing higher education, particularly in public institutions in Kosovo*. The gross enrolment rate in higher education stands at 56.7%, with 5,295 students per 100,000 inhabitants. Timely graduation rates are unsatisfactory, and there is an insufficient number of qualified academic staff in higher education institutions. The ratio of academic staff to students in

134 Bajrami, K 2021, *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Kosovo* Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 Insufficient achievement*, accessed 1 November 2023, kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Evaluation-of-the-Implementation-of-KESP-2017-2021.pdf

135 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2021, *Education Strategy 2022-2026*, accessed 1 November 2023, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/03-Strategjja-e-Arsimit-2022-2026-Eng-Web.pdf>

136 Bajrami, K 2021, *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Kosovo* Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 Insufficient achievement*, accessed 1 November 2023, kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Evaluation-of-the-Implementation-of-KESP-2017-2021.pdf



public institutions is 1:45 nationwide.¹³⁷ One significant issue in higher education is the development of study programmes that do not align with the actual needs of the job market. These programmes lack interdisciplinary elements, practical training, and connections with scientific research.¹³⁸ This mismatch between what students learn and what the job market demands is a major obstacle to employment growth and economic development, especially in fields like education, arts, humanities, social sciences, and services, which make up about 60% of the study programmes.¹³⁹ Public higher education institutions face challenges in quality assurance due to limited staff capacities and lack functional quality assurance offices. Political influences still affect the selection of rectors, academic staff, and governing structures within these institutions. The accreditation process is focused on meeting minimum quality criteria, lacking a quality enhancement approach seen in developed European economies. Internal quality assurance systems are weak, affecting teaching quality. The necessity of establishing an education system that aligns with the demands of the job market is of paramount importance in today's rapid changes. Therefore, it is essential for the education system to adapt and cater to these changing needs. When education is geared towards developing skills and knowledge that are in demand by employers, it enhances the employability of graduates. This, in turn, reduces unemployment rates and ensures a more skilled and productive workforce. Moreover, aligning education with the needs of the market promotes innovation and entrepreneurship. Students equipped with relevant, practical skills are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial ventures, creating new businesses and contributing to economic growth. Additionally, a market-oriented education system fosters a culture of lifelong learning, encouraging individuals to continuously update their skills to match the evolving demands of the job market.

Secondary vocational education is designed to equip students with skills in various professions and trades to facilitate their entry into the job market upon completion. However, in Kosovo*, vocational secondary schools are falling short of meeting this objective, as indicated by various estimates.¹⁴⁰ Despite a recent increase in young people's interest in vocational education (with approximately 52.4% of high school students in Kosovo* attending vocational schools), the overall quality and conditions in these schools do not meet the desired standards. Numerous challenges, such as insufficient cooperation with businesses, inadequate adaptation to the job market, lack of proper infrastructure, equipment, laboratories, workshops, professional internships, and teaching materials, persist. Vocational schools often remain a secondary choice, especially for students who could not enrol in high schools. The most preferred profiles among students are related to engineering, manufacturing, construction, business, administration, and justice. Approximately 59% of students in vocational education and 47.1% of female students attending vocational schools focus on these areas.¹⁴¹ Conversely, enrolment in agriculture, forestry, fishery, veterinary medicine, and services programmes is extremely low. Discrepancies exist between regional economic potential and the orientation of students in vocational schools at the regional and municipal levels. Municipalities face challenges in adapting vocational school profiles due to concerns about technological redundancies among teaching staff. Although developing a comprehensive core curriculum for vocational education has been a long-standing objective, there is still a lack of a standardised VET curriculum. While efforts have been made to revise and design curricula for some profiles, internal

137 Ibid

138 Ibid

139 Ibid

140 Ibid

141 Ibid



quality assurance mechanisms in vocational schools are not robust. Internal evaluations are often conducted as obligatory tasks without a significant impact on improving quality. For highly demanded profiles, collaboration is better, whereas, for less popular ones, cooperation is weak or non-existent. Furthermore, the vocational education and training sector lacks financial support from the government and predominantly relies on donor funding. Current financing methods are generalised based on the student's orientation, lacking differentiation according to the specific requirements of the profiles.¹⁴²

Long-term financial support and youth projects' continuity. The dependence on external funding from donors is a significant challenge faced by educational institutions and the youth sector in Kosovo*. While this financial support is essential for their functioning, it is not sustainable in the long run.¹⁴³ To address this issue in pre-university education, it is crucial to prioritise capital investment in internal infrastructure and school resources. This investment should target areas that directly benefit students, such as establishing reading rooms, providing textbooks, enhancing library resources, incorporating technology in classrooms, and improving outdoor environments. These resources are instrumental in transforming traditional schooling into a dynamic learning experience. Additionally, there is a pressing need to develop a funding formula for pre-university education that considers the specific needs of each school. Tailoring financial allocations based on the programme requirements of schools should be a top priority. By addressing these fundamental aspects, the education system can provide a more enriching and conducive environment for learning, fostering the intellectual and personal growth of students. In the scope of youth engagement, Kosovo* faces challenges due to the absence of a dedicated youth agency. Currently, the Department of Youth operates under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. This organisational structure lacks specialised mechanisms for enforcing youth-related legislation and initiatives.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, a significant portion of youth population remains disengaged from civil society activities. Political parties play a central role in mobilising young individuals, primarily driven by financial incentives. Moreover, the sustainability of youth civil society sector is compromised by its heavy dependence on external funding sources.¹⁴⁵ Relying extensively on external support hampers the sector's ability to plan and implement long-term programmes independently. To foster a more engaged and active youth population, it is essential to establish a dedicated and empowered youth agency. Such an agency would not only enforce youth-related legislation effectively but also create opportunities for meaningful youth participation in various spheres of society. Strengthening internal capacities and reducing dependence on external funding sources are crucial steps towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of both the education system and the youth sector in Kosovo*.

142 Ibid

143 Interview, Civil Society Representatives, (2023), Interviewed by Egzona Bokshi on 17 October, Pristina

144 Bajrami, K 2021, *Evaluation of the Implementation of the Kosovo* Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 Insufficient achievement*, accessed 1 November 2023, kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Evaluation-of-the-Implementation-of-KESP-2017-2021.pdf

145 Ibid



6.3. Recommendations

In response to the multifaceted challenges facing youth development and empowerment, a set of recommendations has been thoroughly drafted. These recommendations are strategically tailored for various stakeholders, encompassing policymakers operating at central and local levels, as well as youth organisations and the donor community. They are intended to guide and inform initiatives, programmes, and policies aimed at fostering positive change in the lives of young people and addressing the broader socio-economic and developmental issues they face.

Recommendations for policymakers

- Public institutions and media should actively engage young people to bridge the divide between politics, public sentiment, and civil society. A more inclusive and representative society should integrate youth into decision-making processes and provide platforms for them to voice their opinions.
- Legal and policy changes should be implemented to proactively address gender inequality and the unfair treatment of marginalised communities. This involves revising laws to meet international standards and defining suitable penalties for gender-based and other forms of violence or discrimination. It is crucial to emphasize that the focus should not only be on the quality of laws but also on their effective enforcement. Mechanisms to enforce these rights should be established, along with offering specialised training to legal experts and conducting long-term awareness campaigns.
- Researchers at the economy level who specialise in youth-related matters should be encouraged to cooperate, aiming to strengthen development and implementation of youth policies based on solid evidence.
- The continuous monitoring of youth policies should be prioritised, along with a commitment to ongoing improvements in policy coordination, adequate funding, and comprehensive reporting.
- To improve human capital, relevant Kosovo* institutions should focus on evaluating skill gaps in sought-after professions. This should involve investing in vocational and technical training, introducing career guidance programmes tailored to the demands of the job market, and broadening avenues for lifelong learning to provide the expanding workforce with essential skills. Additionally, there should be an emphasis on prioritising the generation of new jobs within expanding economic sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing, ensuring that these opportunities align with the workforce's skill set.



Recommendations for donor community

- The donor community should ensure consistent and sustainable funding for youth policy. It should emphasize investments in human resources and long-term projects designed for and by youth and should increase funding for civil society organisations involved in non-formal education, volunteering, and youth participation, aligning with youth development needs.
- The donor community should prioritise and enhance donor coordination in the funding of development projects across various sectors. By aligning activities, funding, and strategies donors should maximise their impact and eliminate duplication of efforts. This coordination would ensure efficient resource utilisation, prevent redundancies, and minimise confusion among beneficiaries. By embracing this collaborative approach, donors would monitor progress collectively, evaluate interventions, and adjust strategies based on shared learning. Ultimately, effective donor coordination should promote sustainable and holistic development, making it imperative for future initiatives.

Recommendations for youth sector (NGOs, informal groups, platforms)

- The youth sector should establish partnerships with non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, and schools to cooperate on community engagement endeavours. Youth sector should utilise their resources and specialised knowledge to amplify the effectiveness of activism initiatives.
- The youth sector should promote and endorse activism and community engagement, especially in smaller communities where these issues may be more common. This encouragement should aim to nurture grassroots movements that address the underlying causes of prejudice, and discrimination.
- The youth sector should offer easily accessible and trustworthy information regarding local politics, public initiatives, and community events. It should create online platforms, community newsletters, or local radio programmes to distribute this information broadly.



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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 – List of Interviews

No.	Interviewee	Sector	Contact Person	Position
1	Kosovo* Youth Council – KYC	Non-Governmental Organisation	Ditjon Fetahu	Executive Director
2	Regional Youth Cooperation Office	Intergovernmental organisation	Krenare Gashi – Krasniqi	Head of Local Branch Office, Pristina
3	Civil Society from Non-Majority Communities	Non-Governmental Organisation	Lorenta Kadriu	Representative of Civil Society from Non-Majority Communities
4	Roma Veritas Kosovo*	Non-Governmental Organisation	Genc Broqi	Representative of Civil Society from Non-Majority Communities
5	SIT - Centre for Counselling Social Services and Research	Non-Governmental Organisation	Kadri Gashi	Founder/CEO

ANNEX 2 – Tables

Table 1. Budget allocated for the three strategic objectives for youth.

Table 2. Strategic objectives of the Youth Strategy 2019-2023



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