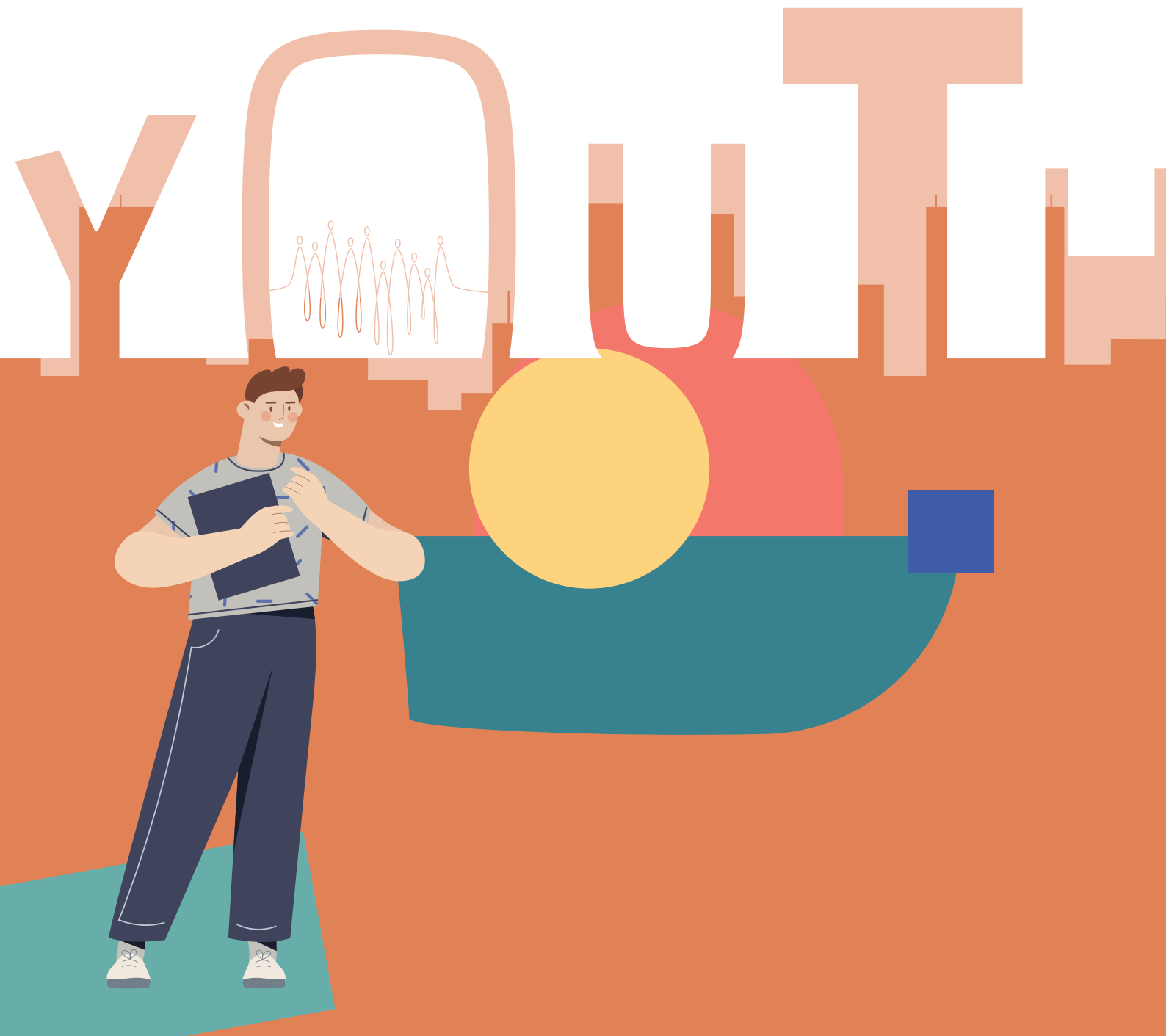


MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN **MONTENEGRO**



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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 - MONTENEGRO REPORT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CC4WBs	Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans Project
CDI	Cooperation and Development Institute (Tirana, Albania)
CEDEM	Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (Podgorica, Montenegro)
CIPS	Centre for Information and Professional Counselling
CfY	Council for Youth
EA	Employment Agency of Montenegro
EC	European Commission
ESC	European Solidarity Corps
EYCA	European Youth Card Association
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HFII	Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye II
HFIII	Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye III
IDF	Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
LAPY	Local Action Plan on Youth
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LoY	Law on Youth
LCfY	Local Council for Youth
MAPPS	Association for Political Science Students of Montenegro
MONSTAT	Statistical Office of Montenegro
MSY	Ministry of Sports and Youth
APY	Action Plan on Youth
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
ReLOaD2	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
SALTO-YOUTH	Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth
SBC	Student Business Centre of the University of Donja Gorica
UDG	University of Donja Gorica
UM	University of Montenegro

UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSECO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCG	High School Students Union of Montenegro
YEA	Young European Ambassadors
YG	Youth Guarantee
YNM	Youth Network of Montenegro
YS	Youth Strategy
WBYCP	Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform
WBYL	Western Balkans Youth Lab

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This comprehensive analysis serves as the report for Montenegro within the broader context of mapping youth policies and identifying support and financing gaps in the Western Balkans. As a vital and dynamic segment Montenegro's youth population plays a crucial role in shaping its social, economic, and cultural landscape. To address the challenges and opportunities faced by Montenegro's youth, this report explores key aspects of youth policies, funding mechanisms, participation, and donor interventions.

Before delving into the core topics, it is essential to understand the demographic characteristics, trends and challenges of Montenegro's youth. This foundational knowledge provides context for examining the current social and economic status of young people and informing evidence-based decision-making. Therefore, at the very beginning of the report, the key demographic aspects on youth will be explored, including age distribution, educational attainment, employment status and regional variations.

Montenegro's youth policy framework is a complex landscape consisting of strategic documents, action plans, laws, and bylaws. This report offers a critical evaluation of this framework, tracing its evolution over time and its impact on youth. The interplay between policy objectives, institutional frameworks, and the lived experiences of young Montenegrins is being explored within the report. Additionally, the main bodies responsible for youth policy as mandated by law are being discussed.

Financial resources are the lifeblood of effective youth policies. Therefore, this report also delves into Montenegro's funding framework for youth programmes and instruments. It explores programmes and financial instruments that support youth initiatives, shedding light on their impact on youth empowerment, development, and well-being. The allocation and utilisation of funds are examined to provide a holistic understanding of Montenegro's policymaking commitment towards its youth.

Furthermore, youth participation in policy formulation and decision-making processes is essential for ensuring that young people's voices are heard, and their perspectives are considered. In that sense, this report scrutinises existing mechanisms of youth engagement at both central and local governance levels. It introduces youth organisations of Montenegro and networks that influence the youth discourse and advocate for youth interests. By examining these facets, the report highlights the opportunities and challenges that shape Montenegro's approach to youth participation in policy and decision-making.

Additionally, donor organisations, both domestic and international, have a significant impact on Montenegro's youth policies and opportunities, which is why this report identifies major donor stakeholders, their motivations, and priorities related to youth. Thematic areas of focus, such as education, employment, social inclusion, and civic participation, are explored. The report evaluates the impact of donor interventions through case studies, data analysis, and beneficiary testimonials. The final chapter of the report presents good practices in youth-related policies and programmes, providing valuable insights into successful approaches. Concurrently, it identifies gaps in financing mechanisms, offering a comprehensive overview of areas that require attention and improvement.



This segment mirrors the structure of the report itself, making it a practical guide for policymakers, stakeholders, and organisations interested in youth development.

To sum up, this report contributes to a deeper understanding of youth demographic and youth policies in the Western Balkans region. By addressing demographic characteristics, policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, participation, and donor interventions, it provides a holistic perspective on Montenegro's efforts to support and empower its young population. Building on the report published in 2020, this updated document provides not only a comprehensive analysis of youth related issues in Montenegro, but also a comparison of the latter in the timeframe of 2020-2023.

It firstly reveals that one of the fundamental issues facing Montenegro's youth policy framework is the limited implementation of established policies and programmes. Moreover, Montenegro's youth policy has been significantly impacted by the political instability and frequent changes within government.

When it comes to financing youth policy in Montenegro, the report indicates that the budget allocations for youth policy over the three-year period from 2021 to 2023 raise significant concerns and highlight a notable shortcoming in the approach to youth development and engagement. Additionally, overreliance on international partners for youth-related funding introduces a level of vulnerability to the economy's youth policies. Finally, effective coordination between donors is necessary, and it requires a common reference point for understanding the youth development priorities. Without it, there can be overlaps in funding or gaps in addressing crucial issues.

Lastly, speaking of youth engagement in decision-making, it presents a mixed picture with several shortcomings and challenges that need urgent attention. While there have been efforts to involve young people in shaping policies and laws affecting their lives, numerous obstacles persist, hindering the effectiveness of these initiatives.

The report was drafted based on desk and empirical research. Desk research consisted of an analysis of laws, regulations, strategies, and programmes. Statistics from various sources, as well as the most recent reports, were analysed as important sources of information on the youth sector in Montenegro. The empirical research was carried out through 11 interviews with representatives of institutions, youth-led and youth-oriented organisations and their associations, as well as donor community.



CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

Before delving into the essential topics of this analysis, it is of essential to understand the demographic characteristics, trends, and challenges faced by Montenegro's youth. Therefore, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of Montenegro's youth population,¹ drawing from various sources of data, including official statistics, surveys, and research studies. It aims to paint a detailed portrait of Montenegro's young population, covering key aspects such as age distribution, educational attainment, employment status, and regional variations.

Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of Montenegro's youth, emphasizing the importance of data-driven insights to shape policies and initiatives that empower and support the economy's young generation.

1.1. Age and gender

According to the 2011 census data issued by the Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT),² the total population of Montenegro was 620,029, while 132,702 individuals were between the age 15 and 29. This age group represented 21.4% of the overall population, i.e. its one fifth. To break it down by gender, there were 68,198 young males (51.39%) and 64,504 young females (48.61%) residing in Montenegro in 2011.

Besides the census data collected each ten years, Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT) also provides population estimations for each year.³ The data shows that, while there has been an increasing number of people living in Montenegro, at the same time the number of young people has been decreasing. For example, a ten-year period between 2010 and 2019, the number of young people decreased by 14,500, or 10.73%. Also, the ratio of young people in the total population in 2011 was 21.46%, while in 2019 it was 19.07%, which indicates a decline of almost 2.5% of the share of youth in total population in almost 10 years. In addition, there is a slightly higher number of young males than females among the youth of Montenegro.

However, the new population census in Montenegro has not been conducted yet. Although it was initially scheduled for 2021 (10 years after the last one in 2011), it was postponed due to the health and political crisis that affected Montenegro. After a delay of 2 years, it has finally been announced. Firstly, it was scheduled to take place between 1st and 15th November 2023. However, on 31 October 2023, the newly-appointed Government of Montenegro postponed it again for 30 November 2023.

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- 1 In line with Article 2 of the Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/19 from 30 April 2019), a young person in Montenegro is aged 15 to 30 years. The text of the Law is available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e1ac770f-706f-4ba9-99e3-790b64ba464f>. (Accessed on 19 August 2023).
 - 2 All data are available at the website of MONSTAT, and can be accessed using the following link: <http://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=533&pageid=533>. (Accessed on 19 August 2023).
 - 3 The legal basis for conducting population estimates is regulated by the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System of Montenegro (Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 18/12 from 30 March 2012) and the Annual Official Statistics Plan (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 5/23 from 16 January 2023) which is published in Official Gazette of Montenegro for the current year. The text of the Law is available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/>, while the text of the Annual Official Statistics Plan is available at: <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=9&pageid=9>. (Accessed on 19 August 2023).



1.2. Education and Employment

1.2.1. Education

According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) data⁴ for Montenegro, in the third quarter of 2022, there were around 90,000 individuals aged 15-24 who had completed a certain level of education. This number is higher when compared to the third quarter of 2020, where 60,100 people aged 15-24 completed a certain educational level. Divided by the level of education, the statistical data of 2022 shows that:

- a. 29,800 had completed primary education;
- b. 5,900 had completed vocational education after primary school;
- c. 11,600 had achieved secondary general education;
- d. 33,600 had obtained secondary vocational education;
- e. 5,900 young individuals had completed tertiary education.

Below is the table where a comparison with the year of 2020 is provided:

Table 1: Educational Attainment by Year (2020 and 2022)

	2020	2022
completed primary education	30,700	29,800
completed vocational education after primary school	1,800	5,900
achieved secondary general education	12,800	11,600
obtained secondary vocational education	12,800	33,600
completed tertiary education	1,500	5,900

When it comes to the dropout rate from education and training, in 2019 MONSTAT reported it at the level of 5%,⁵ representing the percentage of population aged 18-24 with a lower secondary education or those not included in further education or training. At that time, this rate was slightly higher for young males (5.2%) than for young females (4.9%). However, in 2020 MONSTAT did not present the data on the ratio of early dropouts from education and training within their quarterly reports. Unfortunately, the aforementioned data covering the entire age group of young people from 15 to 30 years old does not exist. LFS provides data population for age cohorts [15-24], [24-49], [50-64] and [65+]. Thus, for the purposes of this report, age cohort [15-24] was used to conduct the analysis. However, it may be possible to obtain exact age cohort data [15-30] from the results of the upcoming population census.

4 Labour Force Survey, MONSTAT, 2022. Available at: <http://monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=2088&pageid=22>. (Accessed on 19 August 2023).

5 Labour Force Survey, MONSTAT, 2019. Available at: <https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ars/2019/2019.xls>. (Accessed on 19 August 2020).



1.2.2. Neither in employment nor education or training [NEET]

In 2019, the percentage of young individuals in NEET category, meaning those not engaged in either employment or education/training, stood at 21.3% for the age group 15-29.⁶ This marked a 1.3% increase compared to 2018 when it was 21.0%. Additionally, in 2019, the NEET rate was slightly higher for young women (21.5%) compared to young men (21.0%).⁷

Over the past decade, Montenegro has seen a declining trend in this indicator. However, when compared to the EU average of 11.7%,⁸ Montenegro's NEET rate is nearly twice as high.

It is important to mention that in 2020, MONSTAT ceased including data on early dropout rate from education and training in their quarterly reports.

1.2.3. Unemployment

Over the past couple of decades, the participation of young individuals (*aged 15-24*) in the total unemployment rate has varied between approximately 23% and 46% (in 2000, it was 46%, in 2017 - 27%, in 2018 - 25%, in 2019 - 23%, in 2020 - 25%, and in 2021 - 24%).⁹

Based on the official data published by MONSTAT, the youth unemployment rate was 22.3% in 2019 (21.9% for young females and 22.5% for young males), which is 3.7% lower than in 2018. According to this data, the unemployment rate has had a continuous downward trend compared to the previous decade. In the third quarter of 2020, the youth unemployment rate has increased again, to the level of 32.8%,¹⁰ while the EU's youth unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2020 was 17.7%. In comparison to the EU's youth unemployment rate in 2019 (11.4%),¹¹ the youth unemployment rate in Montenegro was almost twice as high (22.3%). Additionally, the youth unemployment rate for the 15-24 age group in the fourth quarter of 2021 was 37.4%, in the fourth quarter of 2022 it was 31%, and in the second quarter of 2023 it stood at 17%.¹² In August 2023, the youth unemployment rate was 14.0 % in the EU,¹³ still lower than in Montenegro.

In the EC Montenegro Report 2022,¹⁴ it is highlighted that youth and long-term unemployment continue to pose significant challenges in Montenegro. The data reveals substantial regional disparities, with a low unemployment rate of 5% in the coastal areas, in stark contrast to much higher rates in the central (11.9%) and northern (36.7%) regions. Moreover, the provision of active labour market policies is deemed ineffective in activating people within the labour market, and the economy

6 Labour Force Survey, MONSTAT, 2019.

7 *Ibidem*.

8 NEET Rate, EUROSTAT, 2022. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training. (Accessed on 19 August 2023).

9 Research on Youth Unemployment, Employment Agency, 2022. Available at: <https://www.zzzcg.me/biblioteka/>. (Accessed on 19 August 2023).

10 LFS, MONSTAT, 2020. Available at: <https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/ARS/2020/3/III%20quarter%202020%20.xls>. (Accessed on 19 August 2023).

11 Youth Unemployment, EUROSTAT, 2020, available at: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_empl_100&lang=en. (Accessed on 20 August 2023).

12 LFS for 2021, 2022 and 2023. All available at: <http://monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=1671&pageid=1671>.

13 Youth Unemployment, EUROSTAT, 2023, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Unemployment_statistics.

14 Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Montenegro%20Report%202022.pdf>.



lacks a continuous monitoring mechanism for these policies. Vulnerable groups in the labour market include women, youth, Roma, persons with disabilities, and low-skilled workers.

1.3. Youth Migration

In recent decades, Montenegro has been grappling with a rapidly aging population and a noticeable increase in youth emigration. The reasons behind this emigration trend are multifaceted and include economic instability, social exclusion, poverty, the impacts of globalisation, economic crises, political instability, corruption, and nepotism. Political affiliations have significant influence on one's chances of securing a job in public sector institutions. Additionally, it is important to note that constant and often exaggerated criticism of Montenegro's situation can negatively influence the perceptions of the youth, making them more inclined to emigrate and worsening the brain-drain problem.

According to World Bank data,¹⁵ nearly a quarter of Montenegrins live abroad, while available but incomplete data from the Directorate for Diaspora of Montenegro reveals that around 500,000 people of Montenegrin origin are living outside of Montenegro. Moreover, the UN estimates a decline of 150,000 working-age Montenegrins by 2050.¹⁶

The average number of working-age migrants leaving Montenegro is around 3,320 persons per year. The losses that Montenegro faces annually due to emigration amount to EUR 70 million, meaning that every work-capable person who leaves Montenegro takes out approximately EUR 21,561 of some potential future annual GDP.¹⁷

However, accurate records of emigration are lacking, making it challenging to analyse the full extent of the phenomenon, including the age, gender, and educational characteristics of emigrants. Rough estimates suggest that approximately 173,000 young people have left Montenegro since 1991.¹⁸ Based on data from the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM), more than a third of young people in Montenegro express the desire to permanently move to another economy, while about 29.2% are open to the possibility, depending on the economic opportunities.¹⁹ Moreover, there is a growing interest in emigration across the region, as reported by the Balkan Barometer commissioned by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).²⁰ In addition, based on the data from Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) study,²¹ more than 70% of youth of Montenegro stated that economic reasons are a greater motivation to move abroad than education (less than 20%), experiencing cultural diversity and other reasons (less than 10%).

15 Montenegro Growth and Jobs, the World Bank, IBRD, IDA, 2018, pg. 7. Available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/787451545030793133/pdf/Montenegro-Growth-and-Jobs.pdf>. Accessed on 20 August 2023).

16 *Ibidem*.

17 Smallest nation shrinking - Montenegro, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019. Available at: <https://www.wfd.org/2019/10/24/youthemigration-is-damaging-for-western-balkan-economies/>. (Accessed on 20 August 2023).

18 Evropski puls, Centre for Civic Education, 2019, pg. 5. Available at: <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2019/06/evropski-puls-134.pdf>. (Accessed on 20 August 2020).

19 Civic and Political Participation of Youth in Montenegro, CEDEM, 2020, pg. 48. Available at: <http://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanja/politicko-javno-mnjenje/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1962politicka-i-gradanska-participacija-mladih-u-crnoj-gori>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).

20 Balkan Barometer 2020, Regional Cooperation Council, 2020, pg. 11. Available at: https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/2020-06-Balkan-Barometer-PublicOpinion_final.pdf/bf27f9fc10de8a02df9db2b60596f0cd.pdf. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).

21 Youth Study SEE 2018/2019, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2019, pg. 76. Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15274-20190408.pdf>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).



Conversely, internal migration in Montenegro is driven primarily by better jobs and living conditions. This internal migration trend is characterised by movement from rural to urban areas, where young people often face challenges related to longer travel distances for services and limited opportunities for a high quality of life. As a result, all northern municipalities have experienced negative migration balances. In the last two decades there has been noticeable internal migration to the capital and the coastal region, and around 62% of the population lives in urban communities.²²

However, it is imperative to underscore once again that official statistics regarding the number of (young) individuals who have left Montenegro are unavailable, creating a notable obstacle in shaping necessary policies. Nevertheless, there is optimism that the forthcoming census will shed light on this crucial data.

22 Employment Policy Review Montenegro, International Labour Organisation, Council of Europe, 2007, pg. 3. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialrights/source/EmploymentPolicyReviewMontenegro.pdf>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).



CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE YOUTH POLICY FRAMEWORK

This chapter embarks on a comprehensive exploration of Montenegro's youth policy, delving deep into its multifaceted landscape. Beyond merely presenting the array of strategic documents, action plans, laws, and bylaws that form the foundation of this policy, it conducts an incisive evaluation aimed at uncovering both its accomplishments and shortcomings. Through a discerning lens, the report assesses the legislative and institutional youth policy framework's evolution over time, tracing its inception, implementation, and transformative impact it has had on the nation's youth.

2.1. Legislative Framework on Youth Policies

This chapter focuses on the foundations of Montenegro's youth policy, providing a comprehensive overview of the legal framework that underpins the nation's approach to youth affairs.

2.1.1. The Constitution

The Constitution of Montenegro²³ does not directly address the rights of young citizens as a separate group *per se*, however it lays the foundation for further development of youth policies. Under Article 6, the Constitution stipulates that Montenegro guarantees and protects the rights and freedoms of all its citizens, stating that rights and freedoms are inviolable, and everyone is obliged to respect the rights and freedoms of others. Furthermore, Article 17 stipulates that all individuals are equal before the law, regardless of any particular characteristic or personal quality (including age), meaning that young people must not be discriminated against in the exercise of their rights as prescribed by law.

The sole article that directly mentions young people in the Constitution of Montenegro is Article 64, which specifies that youth, women, and persons with disabilities enjoy special protection in employment. This implies that these three categories are vulnerable social groups concerning the protection of labour rights and related aspects of employment.

2.1.2. The Law on Youth (LoY)

In June 2016, the Parliament of Montenegro passed the Law on Youth (LoY), marking the first regulation of youth policy and activities in Montenegro. The law defined the age cohort of young people between 15 and 30. It stipulated activities related to youth policy, youth work, institutional care for young people, forms of financing for youth organisations, and youth engagement at local and central levels, among other pertinent issues.

23 The Constitution of Montenegro (Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 1/2007 from 22 October 2007, and 38/2013 - Amendments I-XVI). Available at: <https://www.skupstina.me/me/ustav-crne-gore>. (Accessed on 22 August 2023).



The first LoY established fundamental principles for youth policy, emphasizing equality, voluntarism, solidarity, partnership, capacity-building, and the use of scientific knowledge to facilitate voluntary youth participation in all aspects of social life according to their preferences. LoY guaranteed equal rights for young people regardless of various personal characteristics, such as nationality, race, gender, language, religion, ethnic origin, property status, political, trade union, or other organisational affiliations, disability, health status, physical appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other personal attributes.

To implement youth policy, LoY mandated development of a Youth Strategy of Montenegro and municipalities' youth strategies, outlining priority actions at both levels. Additionally, LoY stipulated establishment of a Youth Council within the Government's education administration, serving as an expert advisory body on a four-year mandate.

After 3 years, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted the new LoY on 4 April 2019.²⁴ At that time, the Ministry of Sports and Youth (hereinafter: MSY) oversaw the overall coordination of the implementation of LoY until a new government of Montenegro was elected in December 2020. The 2020 Government decided that the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (hereinafter: MESCS) would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of LoY and other regulations stemming from LoY, while monitoring was performed by the competent inspectorate. The Government of Montenegro changed again in 2022, defining once again MSY as the competent and responsible body for youth policies, including monitoring the implementation of LoY.

The current LoY (2019) is the main legal instrument regulating the status of youth and the way youth policy is determined and implemented. Also, measures and activities which improve the social status and conditions of young people are well-addressed by LoY.

The implementation of LoY is further regulated by three bylaws: 1) Rulebook on Criteria and Conditions for Choosing a Space for Youth Service,²⁵ 2) Rulebook on the Method of Operating Youth Services and the Performance of Administrative and Technical Jobs Needed for their Functioning,²⁶ and 3) Rulebook on Conditions, Manner, and Procedure for the Election of the Members of the Youth Council.²⁷

At the very beginning, Article 3 of LoY defines youth policy as a set of measures and activities undertaken by state bodies, state administration bodies, local self-government bodies, non-governmental organisations, student and pupil parliaments, and other legal entities to improve the position of young people, their personal and social development, and their involvement in societal processes. Furthermore, Article 4 defines youth work as a set of activities carried out in collaboration with young people and for young people with the aim of promoting their independence and

24 Law on Youth, (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/19 from 30 April 2019). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-%20/?id=C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).

25 The Rulebook on Criteria and Conditions for Choosing a Space for Youth Service, Ministry of Sports and Youth, 2020. Available at: <https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=395448&rType=2&file=Pravilnik%20o%20kriterijumima%20i%20uslovima%20za%20izbor%20prostora%20za%20omladinski%20servis.pdf>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).

26 Rulebook on the Method of Operating Youth Services and the Performance of Administrative and Technical Jobs Needed for their Functioning, Ministry of Sports and Youth, 2020. Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id=%7bB87FEF77-B787-482E-89E5-FAC0712FFF8E%7d>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).

27 The Rulebook on Conditions, Manner and Procedure for the Election of the Members of the Youth Council, Ministry of Sports and Youth, 2020. Available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={3E02A809-1E95-4AC4-9EF8-C714F284723F>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).



transition into adulthood, learning, personal and social development, in accordance with their needs and abilities, and based on methods of non-formal education. LoY also emphasizes that “youth policy is based on the principles of equality, voluntarism, solidarity, active participation, and youth information”.²⁸ This segment of the law is crucial for development of this field as it directly promotes the positive values of equality and solidarity among young people and those working with youth.²⁹

LoY (2019) introduced a new instrument for development and implementation of youth policy: the Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy.³⁰ This programme prescribes measures and activities aimed at improving the status of young people and ensures intersectoral cooperation among all institutions involved in youth policy.³¹ The Government, upon the proposal of the ministry in charge of youth policy matters (hereinafter: the Ministry), adopts the Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy at least once every two years.³² To define priority areas of public interest for development of the Programme, the Ministry prepares a Youth Needs Analysis.³³ In this regard, the Ministry of Sports and Youth prepared the first analysis in 2020,³⁴ however two years have elapsed without subsequent analyses.

Another noteworthy point to mention here (while the remaining provisions of LoY will be subject to analysis later in this document) is that LoY obliges every local self-government to adopt regular local youth action plans (every two years or even more frequently) that must be in line with the youth strategy and follow the priorities developed at the economy level.³⁵ The local youth action plan encompasses measures and activities of youth policy at the local level, aiming to address the interests and needs of young people. Monitoring the implementation of these local youth policies is ensured through regular communication and meetings with local self-governments, including the organisation of special annual training conducted by the Ministry to enhance the capacity of decision-makers in local self-governments responsible for local youth policy. Furthermore, municipalities are obliged to submit their annual reports on the implementation of local youth action plans to the Ministry no later than 15th February of each subsequent year.³⁶

Finally, in March 2022, MESCO, incorporating the Directorate for Sports and Youth, published a public call to civil society organisations to propose representatives for the working group responsible for drafting amendments to LoY. However, the Report on the Work and State Affairs in the Administrative Areas of the Ministry of Sports and Youth for the Year 2022 stressed that: “In late August 2022, the Ministry of Sports and Youth formed a Working Group to develop a Draft Law amending and supplementing the Law on Youth, aimed at enhancing the institutional framework for the operation of youth services and strengthening solutions in the field of youth work and youth participation. Following several meetings of the working group, a draft legislative document was prepared. During August and September 2022, communication, exchange of information and working materials

28 Article 7 of LoY.

29 Youth Policy in Montenegro: The Situation in 2020, CSO PRIMA, 2020, pg. 5. Available in Montenegrin language at: <https://nvoprma.org/assets/files/Omladinska-politikauCrnojGori2020..pdf>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023). (Accessed on 16 September 2023).

30 Article 15 of LoY.

31 Research and Assessment Pertaining to Youth and Youth Perceptions/Needs in 15 Local Self-governments, UNDP, 2022, pg. 25. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/cnr/montenegro/publications/istrazivanje-potreba-mladih-i-procjena-lokalnih-omladinskih-politika-u-15-crnogorskih-opstina>. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).

32 Article 15, paragraph 1 of LoY.

33 Article 15, paragraph 2 of LoY.

34 The analysis is available at the website of the Government of Montenegro: https://www.gov.me/biblioteka?page=1&sort=published_at&q=analiza%20potreba%20mladih. (Accessed on 21 August 2023).

35 Article 14 of LoY.

36 Youth Policy in Montenegro: The Situation in 2020, CSO PRIMA, 2020, pg. 7.



with the members of this working group were significantly hampered due to a cyber-attack on the information system of the Government of Montenegro. As expected, this led to a slower and more challenging process of document preparation and work³⁷.

Here it is important to acknowledge that the RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab (WBYL) supported the process of preparing the amendments to LoY in September 2022, through the Youth Lab on Unemployment. The main objective was to assist MESCS in creating a comprehensive analysis of LoY. The analysis was completed in September 2022 and was subsequently discussed with young people during a one-day workshop to gather their feedback and additional insights.

The document was developed by considering monitoring results, insights from various consultations, and assessments of LoY, as well as related regulations in relation to recommendations from the EU and the Council of Europe. This document served as the foundation for producing materials for the official Working Group. This Working Group was composed of representatives of relevant ministries, municipalities, CSOs, researchers, and youth experts. The Ministry submitted a report on proposed amendments to LoY to the Government based on this work.

However, considering the political situation in Montenegro and the fact that two subsequent governments were dismissed due to a vote of no confidence (the last government has been functioning in a technical mandate since then), the process of amending LoY has not been completed.

2.1.3. The Youth Strategy of Montenegro

Directions for development and improvement of youth policy are determined by the Youth Strategy (YS). YS is adopted by the Government, on the proposal of the Ministry, for a period of at least four years. To implement YS, the Ministry develops an Action Plan for a maximum period of two years. The Ministry prepares an annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan in the first quarter of the current year for the previous year, which is submitted to the Government. The Ministry submits the report on the implementation of YS to the Government within three months from the expiration date of the period for which YS was adopted.³⁸

The first YS 2017-2021 was adopted by the Government on 29 September 2016. It defined six key priorities concerning young people in Montenegro, as follows:

- a. Youth achieve economic and social security through facilitated access to the labour market and employment opportunities;
- b. Youth have access to quality education;
- c. Youth actively, motivated, and proactively participate in decision-making processes, community development, and policy creation and implementation;
- d. Youth are in good health, safe, have access to an adequate support system for transitioning into adulthood and self-realisation;

37 The report is available at the website of the Government of Montenegro:
<https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/fa65145d-5566-4e0f-b95c-195a1f901395>. (Accessed on 22 August 2023).

38 Article 13 of LoY.



- e. Youth have access to quality cultural content as creators and consumers;
- f. An effective regulatory and institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy has been established.

These key outcomes for young people defined by YS were the result of an extensive participatory process through which this document was developed, with an active involvement of young people from across Montenegro, in addition to key stakeholders and interested parties.³⁹

The Strategy also included an Implementation Action Plan, which consists of general measures and sub-measures, as well as a Framework for Monitoring and Evaluating the Implementation of the Strategy. The strategic and legislative framework at the economy level concerning youth is also defined by other sectoral strategies and laws related to labour, education, health, rights, and more.⁴⁰

In June 2017, a Coordination Body was established to oversee the implementation of YS 2017-2021. This body comprised various representatives of public administration bodies and was responsible for monitoring the progress of YS key outcomes and activities. It also evaluated the adoption of annual action plans for implementation and offered support for their execution. Despite the Annual Action Plan for 2019 originally stipulating a minimum of two meetings per year, the Coordination Body for monitoring the Strategy convened only once a year. Additionally, reports on the activities of the Coordination Body are not accessible to the public, and the Strategy evaluation results upon its expiration have not been publicly disclosed.

The process of developing the new YS 2023-2027 formally commenced in 2022, with support from UNICEF and UNDP. In June 2022, a working group, composed of representatives of various government departments, public institutions and youth and civil society organisations working with young people, was established. These representatives were selected through a public competition conducted by then Youth Directorate within the Ministry of Sports and Youth. The working group for development of YS 2023-2027 comprised 22 members, including representatives of various ministries, Union of Municipalities, representative network of civil society organisations involved in youth policy - CSO Youth Network of Montenegro, Youth Service Podgorica, Youth Service Bar, Youth Service Šavnik, CSOs Prima and ADP ZID, as well as UNICEF Office in Montenegro and Parliament of Montenegro as observers. The working group engaged in work on the new YS through a series of one-day and multi-day meetings and consultations.

In accordance with Article 12 of the Regulation on the Selection of Representatives of Civil Society Organisations in the Working Bodies of State Administration and the Conduct of Public Consultations in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 41/18),⁴¹ MSY conducted public consultations open to all interested citizens and stakeholders. The results of these consultations were also analysed by the working group.

³⁹ In addition to identifying key outcomes for the period 2017-2021, this YS defines measures, sub-measures, and activities to be implemented to achieve the defined outcomes, as well as the stakeholders responsible for their implementation. The whole text of YS is available at its designed website: <https://www.strategijazamlade.me/>. (Accessed on 25 August 2023).

⁴⁰ All available at: <https://www.strategijazamlade.me/>. (Accessed on 25 August 2023).

⁴¹ Regulation on the Selection of Representatives of Civil Society Organisations in the Working Bodies of State Administration and the Conduct of Public Consultations in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 41/18). Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/1f353a31-1729-4db3-a378-e8c4610a5b04>. (Accessed on 25 August 2023).



For the purpose of developing this YS, UNICEF supported a survey on young people needs, influencing the priorities and measures included in this YS. Furthermore, in November 2022, direct consultations were organised between members of the working group and stakeholders in the field of youth policy. During these consultations, 14 CSOs, 7 municipalities, 8 international organisations, and 10 institutions, actively participated in proposing and shaping the solutions.

The new YS 2023-2027 was for a long time in the draft stage,⁴² and the Government of Montenegro adopted it at its session on 19 October 2023, along with the proposed Action Plan for 2023-2024. However, it is important to note that Montenegro has been without a comprehensive economy-wide document shaping youth policy in the economy for nearly two years. The absence of such document can have negative consequences, including a lack of clear direction in addressing youth-related issues, inconsistent implementation of youth initiatives, missed opportunities for targeted investment, reduced accountability in youth development efforts, potential inadequacies in legal frameworks protecting youth rights, and limited engagement of young people in decision-making processes.

The new YS 2023-2027 outlines four strategic directions: (1) development of youth services to support the transition to adulthood, (2) enhancing youth activism and participation in decision-making, (3) fostering efficient inter-sectorial contributions to improving the youth status, and (4) improving the normative and institutional framework. Simultaneously, gender equality and digitalisation are designated as cross-cutting themes considered in all areas when defining measures and activities. The overall strategic goal of YS is to establish a sustainable inter-sectorial support system for young people in Montenegro by 2027, contributing to the youth's satisfaction with their societal position, continuous capacity development, opportunities for independence and personal growth, engagement in development, and the respect of their rights and freedoms.

2.1.4. The Action Plan on Youth

The relevant ministry (currently MSY) prepares and adopts the Action Plan on Youth (hereinafter: APY) for the purpose of implementing YS,⁴³ for a period of at least two years, in collaboration with public institutions, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders in youth policy, and in line with the key strategic priorities. In other words, APY specifies priority measures to be implemented and describes the key activities which will be implemented to contribute to fulfilling all the objectives defined in YS.

This is regulated by Article 13 of LoY, and as stated earlier, the Ministry prepares an annual report on the implementation of APY in the first quarter of the subsequent, which is then submitted to the Government. The Ministry is required to present a report regarding the execution of YS within three months following the conclusion of the period for which YS was initially approved. For example, the last report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the Implementation of YS (2017-2021) was published in April 2020 for the year 2019,⁴⁴ after which no further reports were made available to the public.

42 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/44a0874f-5e59-406b-8551-b06cd305646e>. (Accessed on 25 August 2023).

43 For example, it has been previously said that on 19 October 2023, together with the new YS, the Government of Montenegro adopted the proposed Action Plan for 2023-2024 as well.

44 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/63e7e1fe-cfbb-48bd-b4c9-a515128bdbfd>. (Accessed on 26 August 2023).



These APYs are funded from regular budgetary funds, as well as from appropriate resources provided by international organisations, aimed at improving the youth's status and implementing youth policy. Financing of youth policies is primarily carried out through Action Plans as outlined in the annual budgets of the responsible ministry.⁴⁵

2.1.5. Local action plans on youth

As briefly mentioned earlier, LoY stipulates that the local self-government is obligated to adopt a Local Action Plan on Youth (LAPY) for the period of APY's validity, no later than 31st December of the current year. LAPY includes measures and activities related to youth policy at the local level, aiming to meet the interests and needs of young people. The municipality is required to submit to the Ministry a draft on the compliance of LAPY with YS no later than 31st October of the current year. The municipality is also obligated to provide an annual report on the implementation of LAPY to the Ministry no later than 15th February of the current year.⁴⁶

2.2. Institutional youth policy framework

The following sub-chapter will delve into the institutional framework responsible for development and implementation of youth policy. It will present the main institutions which operate in the field of youth policy in Montenegro.

2.2.1. The Ministry of Sports and Youth of Montenegro

The most important institution in the field of youth policy is currently MSY and its Directorate for Youth. However, since the adoption of the first LoY in 2016, the structure of the Government of Montenegro has changed four times, which has also affected the institutional framework for development and implementation of youth policies.

First, in late 2016, with the 41st Government of Montenegro, a new ministry was established - the Ministry of Sports⁴⁷ responsible for implementation of youth policy in Montenegro. It consisted of two directorates: Directorate for Sports and Directorate for Youth. Thanks to public advocacy by various stakeholders involved in youth activities and policies in Montenegro, the Ministry changed its name to the *Ministry of Sports and Youth* in 2019. By doing so, the Government of Montenegro elevated the importance of youth policies to a new, higher level and made government structures responsible for youth policies more visible.

However, after four years of this Government's tenure and following the change in leadership in Montenegro in August 2020, MSY was abolished in November 2020,⁴⁸ and youth policy matters were transferred to MESCO, where the Directorate for Sports and Youth was functioning. This represented

45 Research and Assessment Pertaining to Youth and Youth Perceptions/Needs in 15 Local Self-governments, UNDP, 2022, pg. 12. Available at: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-06/Istra%C5%BEivanje%20i%20procjena%20omladinskih%20politika%20i%20potreba%20mladih%20u%2015%20LSU_0_1.pdf. (Accessed on 26 August 2023).

46 Article 14 of LoY.

47 See the Decree on Amendments and Supplements to the Decree on the Organisation and Operation of the State Administration (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 73/2016 from 25 November 2016). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={6905AADD-EA9D-4C37-91F9-F86DD15C1CE6}>. (Accessed on 26 August 2023).

48 See the Decree on Amendments and Supplements to the Decree on the Organisation and Operation of the State Administration (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 18/2020 from 18 March 2020). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={546276A3-09F4-4870-A77B-D6D1D02A6597}>. (Accessed on 26 August 2023)



a significant setback for the state's youth policy, and the 42nd Government of Montenegro showed that it deemed suitable for a ministry responsible for overseeing four sectors (education, science, culture, and sports) to address, in a secondary and non-priority manner, the enhancement of youth policies in Montenegro. Afterwards, the current caretaker government - the 43rd Government of Montenegro, reinstated MSY, along with the Directorate for Youth,⁴⁹ which is directly responsible for youth and youth policies.

In the next Decree on the Organisation and Operation of the State Administration of the 43rd Government of Montenegro, it is stipulated that MSY is responsible for the following administrative tasks in the field of youth affairs: preparing draft laws, other regulations, and general acts related to youth implementing bilateral and multilateral agreements on youth cooperation; promoting, developing, and improving youth policy at the central and local levels; cooperating with civil society organisations, companies, media, trade unions, and other entities in planning, implementing, evaluating, and enhancing youth policy; promoting informal education for young people; formulating strategies, action plans, and programmes for youth; collaborating with youth organisations and associations in organising international events and conferences in Montenegro; assisting and cooperating with youth organisations and associations in their work and promoting their policies; creating conditions for youth organisations and associations from Montenegro to participate in events and activities abroad; encouraging international cooperation policies related to youth; promoting youth policy and cooperation, as well as supporting the work of youth services at the central and local levels.⁵⁰

Even in the 44th Government of Montenegro, appointed in October 2023, MSY stands as the primary institution in the field of youth policies. Its responsibilities encompass a wide spectrum of tasks, ranging from drafting legislative proposals and regulations related to youth affairs, implementing international cooperation agreements in the realm of youth, to fostering and enhancing youth policy both at the central and local levels. In essence, MSY serves as the linchpin in the realm of youth policies, orchestrating efforts to empower and advance the interests of young people in Montenegro and beyond.

2.2.2. Local self-governments

According to the provisions outlined in the Law on Local Self-Government, local self-government entities, such as secretariats, administrations, and directorates, are established to fulfil the responsibilities of local self-governance.⁵¹ Within the spectrum of these secretariats, specific units are designated to address youth-related matters and youth policy within each municipality. These specialised units, among others, include the Secretariat for Social Affairs, Secretariat for Culture and Sports, Youth, and Social Care.

For instance, the municipality of Kotor has a Secretariat for Culture, Sports and Social Affairs, the capital city Podgorica takes care of youth and youth policies through its Secretariat for Labour, Youth,

49 See the current Decree on the Organisation and Operation of the State Administration (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 49/2022 from 6 May 2022). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={2C64E4A3-8967-4ABE-898C-BA37BAED4A82}>. (Accessed on 26 August 2023).

50 Article 20 of the Decree.

51 Article 69, paragraph 1 of the Law on Local Self-Government (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 2/2018 from 10 January 2018). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={F5DEFD47-80FE-4D0D-92C0-34BF92D28CE7}>. (Accessed on 26 August 2023).



and Social Welfare, while the northern municipality of Pljevlja does the same through its Secretariat for Social Affairs.

The main instrument for creating and implementing local youth policies is LAPY (see above: sub-chapter 2.1.5).

2.2.3. Youth services

Youth services play a crucial role in implementing youth activities and youth work. They are categorised into two types: youth clubs and youth centres. According to LoY, a youth club is a space tailored to the needs of young people for the purpose of conducting youth activities,⁵² while a youth centre is a fully equipped, multifunctional space designed for the same purpose.⁵³

Youth clubs and centres are recognised at economy level and in local youth strategies as one of the mechanisms that implement youth policies and youth work and contribute to enhancing personal, social, and professional capacities of young people. The establishment and operation of youth clubs in Montenegro are contingent on local circumstances, support of local/municipal/community institutions, local self-governance, local community, interests of young people, as well as the availability of human and material resources.⁵⁴

According to LoY, the Ministry or municipality, within their respective jurisdictions and capabilities, ensures the necessary conditions for the functioning of youth services. The premises for a youth service are provided by the relevant administrative body responsible for property affairs or the municipality upon the request of the Ministry. In exceptional cases, the Ministry can also secure premises for a youth service, through a public call.⁵⁵

When it comes to the financial support of youth services, the Ministry may financially support or co-finance the construction, reconstruction, renovation, or equipping a youth service up to a value of €30,000. With prior approval from the Government, the Ministry can finance or co-finance the construction, reconstruction, renovation, or equipping a youth service exceeding €30,000.⁵⁶

Finally, the administrative and technical tasks required for regular functioning of youth services, as well as the temporary transfer of services to other entities, are managed by the Ministry or municipality. The Ministry or municipality can delegate the performance of administrative and technical tasks necessary for the regular functioning of youth services to other entities (civil society organisations, student and pupil parliaments, and other legal entities undertaking to improve the status of young people, their personal and social development, and their integration into social processes) through a public call. The Ministry or municipality establishes regulations governing the operation of youth services, outlines the prerequisites and processes for temporary transfer of youth services, defines the terms and procedures for initiating public solicitations for outsourcing of administrative and technical responsibilities, and also sets out explicit criteria for organisations

52 Article 22 of LoY.

53 Article 23 of LoY.

54 Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Youth Clubs and Youth Centres, UN System in Montenegro and the Government of Montenegro, 2017, pg. 6. Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/dc93fdd3-2fee-4155-9487-40ca5c1eb134>. (Accessed on 24 August 2023).

55 Article 24 of LoY.

56 Article 25 of LoY.



tasked with implementing youth policies to which the delegation of administrative and technical functions essential for the smooth operation of youth services is assigned.⁵⁷

Currently, according to the information provided at the website of MSY,⁵⁸ youth services are present in the following 11 self-governments: Capital City Podgorica, Royal Capital City Cetinje, as well as the municipalities of Danilovgrad, Nikšić, Šavnik, Plav, Pljevlja, Mojkovac, Petnjica, Bar and Kotor. This means that youth services are not established in all municipalities, indicating clear disparities at the local level when it comes to development of institutional framework related to youth policy.⁵⁹

On-site, youth services are operated by administrators, who are individuals that merely perform administrative and technical tasks. They are hired through a public call and must fulfil certain criteria to be eligible for the position: They must 1) be citizens of Montenegro with a residence in Montenegro, 2) obtain at least IV level of education, and 3) not be older than 30 years of age.⁶⁰ However, it has often been speculated in the public domain that, despite the fact that these individuals are engaged through public calls, they are frequently politically appointed, which ultimately questions the whole process of their selection, as well as their expertise, impartiality, and professionalism in working for the benefit of young people in Montenegro.

Unfortunately, in the draft version of the new YS 2023-2027 it is stressed that “the current position of youth services and support for their work is not at a satisfactory level, as the current legal framework is centralised to an extent that hinders the work of these services”. It is also noted that: 1) the services do not operate continuously due to the expiration of employment contracts for youth service administrators (out of 11 youth services that have been established, at one point, in the interim period between the two governments, almost none of them were operational); 2) the term “youth service administrator” for engaged personnel coordinating a youth service is also limiting; and 3) the current legal solution has created a kind of dichotomy between youth services established by MSY and those established by municipalities, public institutions, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders. Having stated this, it is necessary to address these three issues for the benefit of youth population in Montenegro.

2.2.4. Representative Alliance of Youth Organisations

According to LoY, civil society organisations implementing youth policy may establish an alliance of these civil society organisations in accordance with the law governing the establishment of civil society organisations. A representative alliance (in other words, an umbrella youth organisation), within the meaning of LoY, is an alliance that includes at least 30 civil society organisations implementing youth policy, from at least six municipalities, two of which are from the coastal, central, and northern regions each. MSY determines the representativeness of the alliance of civil society organisations for a period of one year by issuing a certificate of representativeness.⁶¹

57 Article 26 of LoY.

58 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/omladinski-servisi>.

59 Research and Assessment Pertaining to Youth and Youth Perceptions/Needs in 15 Local Self-governments, UNDP, 2022, pg. 13. <https://www.undp.org/montenegro/publications/research-and-assessment-pertaining-youth-and-youth-perceptions/needs-15-local-self-governments> (Accessed on 26 August 2023).

60 Information available at: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/omladinski-servisi>.

61 Article 20 of LoY.



The **CSO Youth Network of Montenegro (YNM)** received the Certificate of Representativeness on 18 November 2020, officially obtaining the status of umbrella youth organisation. The certificate has been renewed, and this organisation has continued to serve as the Representative Alliance of Youth Organisations even today.

The RCC's WBYL provided assistance in creating a Strategic Plan for YNM covering the years 2022-2025. This initiative aimed to facilitate an inclusive consultation process that involved the organisation's member groups and important stakeholders in youth policy at the central and local levels. The outcome was a well-defined strategic development path for the organisation that aligns with the needs of youth of Montenegro.

YNM was founded by 35 youth organisations, organisations working with and for young people, as well as youth alliances and unions. Its mission is to advocate for the rights and interests of young people, create and advocate for solutions to systemic challenges, connect stakeholders in youth policy, and strengthen the capacities of its members. Additionally, it strives towards society in which young people are active and responsible in decision-making and implementation, community development, and policy creation and implementation. Currently, YNM has 43 member youth organisations.

2.2.5. Council for Youth

LoY prescribes that, in order to promote development of youth policy, MSY establishes a Council for Youth (hereinafter: CfY) as an expert and advisory body. CfY consists of a president and eight members. MSY proposes the president and three members, while the bodies of state administration responsible for labour and education propose one member each. They are elected for a four-year term.

One member of CfY represents legal entities managing youth services and is elected for a one-year term through a public call issued by MSY. The representative alliance of civil society organisations implementing youth policy proposes two members of CfY, at least one of whom is a young person, and they are elected for a one-year term. If the representative of the alliance of civil society organisations implementing youth policy is not chosen, two members of CfY, at least one of whom is a young person, are proposed by civil society organisations implementing youth policy and are elected for a one-year term. In that case, the members of CfY proposed by civil society organisations implementing youth policy are individuals with the support of the largest number of these civil society organisations and are elected through a public call issued by MSY.⁶² All other rules with regard to the process of electing CfY members are stipulated in the previously mentioned Rulebook on Conditions, Manner and Procedure for the Election of the Members of the Council for Youth, adopted by MSY.



CfY is in charge of:

- a. providing proposals for the improvement of youth policy;
- b. offering suggestions in the process of preparing YS;
- c. appointing its members to participate in the preparation of laws in areas that regulate matters of importance to youth;
- d. monitoring the status of young people and suggesting measures for their improvement; and
- e. providing opinions on other matters of importance to youth upon the request of MSY.⁶³

Certainly, CfY serves as a noteworthy model of effective co-management, demonstrating how government entities can work in collaboration with civil society organisations and young individuals to shape youth policies. On the other side, it is important to highlight that despite the potential benefits and demonstrated success of such councils, CfY establishment in Montenegro was not a priority for almost four years, since the adoption of LoY in 2019. That raised concerns about the commitment and willingness of political authorities to engage in meaningful partnerships with civil society and youth in the development of youth-focused policies.

However, in May 2023, MSY published a public call for the selection of representatives of youth services to CfY.⁶⁴ The call stated that, for the purpose of promoting development of youth policy in Montenegro, MSY would establish CfY as an expert and advisory body. Further information regarding the formation of CfY is not available to the public.

2.2.6. Local Council for Youth

In order to promote and enhance development of youth policy, strengthen collaboration, and improve the status of young people at the local level, a Local Council for Youth (LCfY) can be established within the municipality as an expert advisory body. LCfY consists of representatives of the municipal authority responsible for youth policy and at least one member that represents civil society organisations involved in youth policy implementation. He/she is an individual who has the support of the majority of these civil society organisations and is selected through a public call for applications. The formation and operation of LCfY, including its composition, selection process, and other relevant matters are regulated by an official decision or document outlining its establishment.⁶⁵

LoY does not obligate local self-governments to establish LCfYs. However, an increasing number of local self-governments are recognising the significance of this structure, especially for the direct involvement of young people in structured dialogues during the creation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth-related policies at the local level.

63 Article 17 of LoY.

64 The public call is available at:

<https://www.gov.me/clanak/javni-poziv-za-izbor-predstavnik-ce-omladinskih-servisa-u-savjet-za-mlade>.

(Accessed on 25 August 2023).

65 Article 18 of LoY.



2.2.7. Civil society organisations

As stipulated by LoY, a civil society organisation can implement youth policy in accordance with YS, APY and LAPYs, if its statute includes engagement in youth policy as one of its objectives or areas of activity.⁶⁶

There is no official data on the number of youth organisations/youth led organisations or organisations implementing programmes for youth, so the approximate number of civil society organisations dealing with youth cannot be provided. Several of these organisations have been dedicated to youth-related issues for extended periods, spanning from 15 to 20 years or even longer. They actively participate in government policy development, monitoring working groups, and participating in international networks influencing economy-wide and regional youth policies. Their projects receive funding from various local, regional and international donors.

Some of the notable CSOs dealing with youth affairs are: *Forum MNE*, *High School Students Union of Montenegro*, *Union of Young Entrepreneurs*, *ADP - Zid*, *Juventas*, *Association of Youth with Disabilities*, *Prima*, *CAZAS*, *SOS Podgorica*, *Centre for Civic Education*, *Centre for Youth Education*, *Network for Youth Activism of Montenegro*, etc. Certain organisations are specialised in addressing specific vulnerable youth populations, such as the Roma youth organisation *Phiren Amenca*. Others concentrate on advocating for distinct human rights concerns, exemplified by their dedicated efforts in advancing LGBTIQ+ rights, as seen with CSO *Spectra* and CSO *Queer Montenegro*.

2.2.8. Other sectors impacting youth

Certainly, the concept of youth policy, being a multisectoral issue, goes beyond the sole responsibility of the specific government department or ministry tasked with creating, implementing, and monitoring policies related to young people. While this department plays a crucial role, the well-being and development of youth population are influenced by a wide range of sectors and stakeholders across society.

For example, education institutions impact the quality of education and skills development available to young people. The labour market and employment sector affect youth employment opportunities and career prospects. Healthcare services influence the physical and mental health of young individuals. Cultural and recreational sectors provide spaces and activities for leisure and personal growth. Housing and urban planning affect living conditions and access to affordable housing. Moreover, issues like social inclusion, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and human rights all intersect with youth policy. Policies and practices in these areas can either create supportive environments for young people or pose challenges to their well-being and development.

For instance, the Resource Centre for Children and Youth, which currently exists only in the capital city Podgorica, has a mission of continuous education (in preschool, primary, and secondary vocational school), vocational training and rehabilitation of children, youth, and adults with:

66 Article 19 of LoY.



- a. Physical impairments;
- b. Sensory impairments (children, youth, and adults with visual impairments, including those with visual perception impairments, narrowed field of vision, reduced visual acuity, and remaining vision, as well as children, youth, and adults without residual vision with minimal residual vision or without residual vision depending on the degree of visual acuity, presence of light perception, quality of visual field, and use of other senses), and
- c. combined impairments.

Moreover, centres for social welfare which, among other responsibilities, focus on social welfare of youth population, are established in each municipality in Montenegro. However, numerous shortcomings have been identified in their work. Research conducted by the UNICEF Representation in Montenegro, titled *Analysis of the Work of Social Welfare Centres in Montenegro*, has shown that:

- a. Overall, in social welfare centres, employees who are not engaged in direct work with beneficiaries prevail (51.5%);
- b. 58.3% of local units do not meet the prescribed standards for professional workers, which calls into question the quality of services they provide;
- c. 46% of employees think that they cannot provide adequate conditions for private conversations with beneficiaries when privacy is needed.⁶⁷

The Day Care Centres are tasked with the protection of children and youth with disabilities. Currently, these services are available in 17 day-centres, out of 25 municipalities in Montenegro. The network of these institutions provides a wide range of social services for children and youth with disabilities, such as: socialisation and care services, social and medical rehabilitation, training for independence in day-to-day activities, leisure activities, and support for parents.

Offices for Risky Behaviour and Drug Prevention have been established in each municipality to organise a range of recreational activities for children and young people. These activities aim to enhance their life skills, provide valuable information, stimulate creativity, and bolster their resilience against risky behaviour. The primary objective of these offices is to deter tobacco, alcohol, and drug use among young individuals.

Finally, Youth Counselling Centres have been set up in all municipalities at Primary Health Care centres. Their primary purpose is to educate young individuals about the significant aspects of their transition into adulthood. They address the challenges and issues that young people might encounter during this phase of life, offering guidance on how to navigate and overcome these obstacles. It is important to note that Youth Counselling Centres do not have full-time staff, dedicated exclusively to their operation. Instead, employees from the Primary Health Care Centres also collaborate with the Youth Counselling Centres to provide these services.

67 Analysis of the Work of Social Welfare Centres in Montenegro, UNICEF, 2022. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/9551/file/MNE-media-MNEpublication506.pdf>. (Accessed on 28 August 2023).



In the field of employment, among other programmes and services targeting young people, EA started developing the Centres for Information and Professional Counselling (CIPS) in 2007. The primary purpose of such centres is to provide information that can be valuable for career planning of their users free of charge. CIPS also offers advisory services and, in collaboration with schools, conducts workshops for students and parents. Currently, there are only eight CIPS centres available to citizens, located in Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Berane, Mojkovac, Nikšić, Herceg Novi, and Bar.

Additionally, the Annual Report of the Employment Agency for the year 2022⁶⁸ highlighted the following, which indicates the importance of this entity for development of youth policies in Montenegro:

- a. Out of the total participants in education and training programmes of EA, young people account for 27% (86 individuals);
- b. During the reporting period, two measures under the *Youth Employment Support Programme* were implemented for 90 unemployed individuals with higher education. These measures were carried out through the *Support for Training and Employment of Young People in Inspection Supervision Jobs Programme*, in collaboration with the Inspection Administration, involving 60 participants, and the *Youth Support for Agriculture Development Programme*, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management, involving 30 participants. All participants in these programmes successfully completed the planned two-month training, conducted in a workplace setting under mentorship and secured employment contracts lasting nine months;
- c. The implementation process of the Youth Guarantee (YG) service delivery system is still ongoing in Montenegro, and EA coordinates it.

Besides, EA and the University of Montenegro established the Office for Career Development and Lifelong Learning at the University of Montenegro (UM). The Office provides a range of services primarily for UM students but also for academic staff, employers, and prospective students. The Office serves as a support service aimed at enhancing students' competencies, particularly in developing practical skills to better prepare them for the job market and fostering entrepreneurial awareness. It also assists high school students in choosing their future careers and preparing for academic life.

Simultaneously, the Student Business Centre (SBC) of the University of Donja Gorica (UDG) has a primary mission to promote an entrepreneurial lifestyle among younger generations and raise awareness about it.

Recognising youth policy as a multisectoral matter means that various government departments, civil society organisations, businesses, and communities must work collaboratively to address the diverse needs and aspirations of young people comprehensively. This approach acknowledges that youth issues are interconnected with broader societal challenges, and effective youth policy should consider these interdependencies to create a holistic framework for youth development.

68 Available at: <https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/lzvje%C5%A1taj-o-radu-ZZZ-CG-za-2022.-godinu-final.pdf>. (Accessed on 28 August 2023).



2.3. Critical assessment

One of the fundamental issues facing Montenegro's youth policy framework is the limited implementation of established policies and programmes. While the legal framework, including LoY, provides a solid foundation for youth development, translating these policies into practical actions on the ground has proven to be a significant challenge.

A critical aspect of this challenge is the inadequacy of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of youth policies, which has also been emphasized by many interview participants. Effective monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure that policies are being carried out as intended, that they are achieving their objectives, and that resources are being used efficiently. Unfortunately, in Montenegro, these mechanisms have shown to be insufficiently robust.

This deficiency results in a lack of accountability and transparency in youth-related initiatives. Without proper monitoring and evaluation, it becomes challenging to assess the impact of youth programmes, identify areas of improvement, and hold responsible parties accountable for achieving desired outcomes. As a result, youth policy initiatives may not deliver the intended benefits, and resources may be misallocated.

Moreover, Montenegro's youth policy has been significantly impacted by the political instability and the frequent changes in government. These political shifts have introduced a level of uncertainty and inconsistency in the development and implementation of youth programmes and strategies, ultimately hindering their long-term effectiveness.

Additionally, changes in government leadership have resulted in shifts in the decision-making process, leading to actual delays in approving and implementing crucial youth-related documents. These delays have had a tangible impact on the timely provision of services and support to young people. Also, there have been tangible inconsistencies in the allocation of resources and funding for youth programmes because of these political changes. Different governments have indeed allocated varying levels of resources to youth initiatives, posing challenges in sustaining long-term programmes and effectively addressing the needs of Montenegro's young population. This is a matter of concern for many interview participants as well.

To mitigate these challenges, efforts should be made to depoliticise youth policy to some extent, ensuring that it remains a consistent and bipartisan priority, regardless of changes in the governmental system. Establishing mechanisms for cross-party collaboration and involving youth representatives in the decision-making process can contribute to more stable and effective youth policy implementation, ultimately benefiting Montenegro's young population.

Even though LoY indeed emphasizes the importance of inter-sectorial cooperation in youth policy, aiming to bring together various government bodies, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders, there is room for improvement in terms of enhancing coordination among these entities. A more cohesive and streamlined approach to collaboration could significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of youth-related initiatives.



Furthermore, the process of amending and adopting critical youth legislation, such as YS, has experienced significant delays. These delays have had a tangible impact on timely development and implementation of youth programmes. The protracted process of legislative change has hindered the ability to adapt to evolving youth needs and challenges promptly.

When it comes to the institutional youth policy framework in Montenegro, there are several significant challenges that need to be addressed timely and properly:

Firstly, while local self-governments are responsible for implementing youth policies at the municipal level, disparities exist in their capacity and commitment to addressing youth issues. Some municipalities lack dedicated units for youth affairs, leading to uneven access to youth services and opportunities. Additionally, the effectiveness of LAPYs varies, and there are inconsistencies in their compliance with the relevant legislation.

Secondly, the establishment and operation of youth clubs and centres are vital components of Montenegro's youth policy. However, there are concerns regarding the selection and engagement of youth service administrators, with suspicions of political appointments compromising qualifications and impartiality. The legal framework governing youth services has been described as centralised, hindering their effectiveness. Additionally, it is necessary to expand the scope of tasks performed by youth service administrators and prescribe that they do not only carry out mere administrative and technical tasks but are fundamentally involved in youth work and possess the professional capacity to work with young people and organise activities for them. Moreover, it is crucial to address the issue of dichotomy between youth services established by MSY and those established by municipalities, public institutions, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders, as these result in inconsistency in how young people are approached, and the lack of consistency and stability in the implementation of youth policies in the long run most adversely affects young people and their development.

Thirdly, the delayed establishment of CfY, as an expert advisory body, raises questions about the commitment of political authorities to engage with civil society and youth. The delay indicates a missed opportunity for inclusive decision-making processes that consider the diverse needs and perspectives of young people.

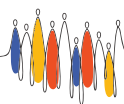
In conclusion, Montenegro has established a solid legal framework for youth policy. However, addressing challenges related to inclusivity, YC establishment, local youth engagement disparities, institutional stability, intersectoral collaboration, and youth service quality is crucial. A concerted effort from government authorities, civil society, and other stakeholders is needed to create a more effective and responsive youth policy framework that truly serves the diverse needs of young Montenegrins.



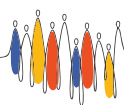
2.4. Tabular comparison

Table 2: Legislative and Institutional Youth Policy Framework of Montenegro by Year (2020-2023)

Institution/Legal instrument	2020 - 2021	2022	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
Law on Youth	LoY did not change.	LoY did not change.	LoY did not change.	While the legal framework, including LoY, provides a solid foundation for youth development, translating these policies into practical actions on the ground has proven to be a significant challenge.
Youth Strategy 2017-2021	YS 2017-2021 was still in force.	The new YS was neither drafted nor adopted.	The new YS was drafted and adopted in October.	These delays have had a tangible impact on the timely development and implementation of youth programmes. The protracted process of legislative change has hindered the ability to adapt to evolving youth needs and challenges promptly.
Ministry of Sports and Youth of Montenegro	At the end of 2020, the youth policy matters were transferred to the Directorate for Sports and Youth within the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.	In 2022, the current 43rd Government of Montenegro reinstated MSY, along with the Directorate for Youth, which is directly responsible for youth and youth policies.	Currently, MSY is still responsible for youth policy in Montenegro.	Montenegro's youth policy has been significantly impacted by the political instability and frequent changes in government. These political shifts have introduced a level of uncertainty and inconsistency in the development and implementation of youth programmes and strategies, ultimately hindering their long-term effectiveness.
Representative Alliance of Youth Organisations - Youth Network of Montenegro	YNM received the Certificate of Representativeness at the end of 2020 and then again in 2021, officially obtaining the status of umbrella youth organisation.	YNM received the Certificate of Representativeness at the end of 2022, officially obtaining the status of umbrella youth organisation.	YNM is still the official umbrella youth organisation.	N/A



Institution/Legal instrument	2020 - 2021	2022	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
Council for Youth	Not established.	Not established.	Not established.	The delayed establishment of CfY, as an expert advisory body, raises questions about the commitment of political authorities to engage with civil society and youth. The delay indicates a missed opportunity for inclusive decision-making processes that consider the diverse needs and perspectives of young people.
Local Council for Youth	Not established in all municipalities.	Not established in all municipalities.	Not established in all municipalities.	LCfYs, although not mandatory under LoY, can facilitate local youth involvement in policy discussions. However, their formation depends on local self-governments' discretion, potentially leading to disparities in youth engagement across municipalities.
Civil society organisations	Official data on the number of youth organisations/ youth led organisations or organisations implementing programmes for youth not available.	Official data on the number of youth organisations/ youth led organisations or organisations implementing programmes for youth not available.	Official data on the number of youth organisations/ youth led organisations or organisations implementing programmes for youth not available.	There is no official data on the number of youth organisations/youth led organisations or organisations implementing programmes for youth, so the approximate number of civil society organisations dealing with youth cannot be provided.



CHAPTER 3: YOUTH FUNDING FRAMEWORK - YOUTH PROGRAMMES AND INSTRUMENTS

In this chapter, the report explores the critical aspects of Montenegro's funding framework for youth programmes and instruments. Financial resources are the lifeblood of any effective youth policy, and understanding how Montenegro allocates, manages, and utilises these funds is essential for comprehending the practical implementation of its youth policies.

3.1. Youth policy funding

It has been previously explained that with the new LoY a new instrument for development and implementation of youth policy has been introduced: the Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy. This Programme prescribes measures and activities aimed at improving the status of young people and ensures intersectoral cooperation among all institutions involved in youth policy. The Government, upon the proposal of the Ministry, adopts the Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy at least once every two years. To define priority areas of public interest for development of the Programme, the Ministry prepares a Youth Needs Analysis.

LoY stipulates that the funds for the implementation of the Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy are provided from the budget of Montenegro. This includes funds for the premises, adaptation, and equipping youth services carried out by the Ministry, funds for the functioning of youth services established by the Ministry and funds for activities carried out by the Ministry, in accordance with YS and APY. The budget of Montenegro also allocates funds for activities conducted by civil society organisations that implement youth policies in accordance with YS and APY.⁶⁹

Additionally, budgetary resources from municipal budgets are provided for the establishment and operation of youth services established by municipalities. Funds from municipal budgets are also allocated for activities conducted by civil society organisations in accordance with LAPYs.⁷⁰

These legal provisions highlight that the funding for youth policy implementation in Montenegro comes from both the central and municipal budgets, as well as that the primary executor of LoY and youth policy is MSY. However, besides MSY, various other ministries and public institutions also indirectly address youth-related issues, even though youth matters are not their primary focus. In this indirect role, they provide funding for activities, projects, and programmes related to youth.

When it comes to the funding necessary for implementing YS, the budget for YS 2017-2021 was allocated as part of MSY's annual budget, which was included in the Law on Budget for each year of

69 Article 27, paragraph 1 and 2 of LoY.

70 Article 27, paragraph 3 and 4 of LoY.



its implementation. This allocation was publicly announced in the Official Gazette of Montenegro and is also available on MSY's website.⁷¹

In terms of youth policy funding, it is noted that the implementation of youth policy is marked by inconsistency and some uncertainty due to unstable sources and mechanisms of funding youth initiatives, including programmes supporting young people and youth organisations. Additionally, a relatively small portion of the budget is allocated for youth, and even the designated funds are not used adequately, in part due to the overlap of areas and jurisdictions of different ministries and reliance on funding and support from international partners.⁷²

Below is an overview of the funds allocated through the annual budgets of Montenegro for development and implementation of youth policy for the period from 2021 to 2023:

- a. In year 2021, only EUR 692,831.13 was allocated for the implementation of youth policy, which represented approx. 0.03% of the overall annual state budget for 2021;⁷³
- b. In year 2022, only EUR 484,899.39 was allocated for the implementation of youth policy, which represented approx. 0.02% of the overall annual state budget for 2022;⁷⁴
- c. In year 2023, only EUR 419,899.39 was allocated for the implementation of youth policy, which represented approx. 0.01% of the overall annual state budget for 2023.⁷⁵

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 state budget. In 2021, the allocation of approximately 0.03% of the total budget for youth policy is inadequate considering the importance of addressing the needs and aspirations of the economy's young population, which represent one fifth of the entire population in Montenegro. The youth constitute a significant demographic in Montenegro, and therefore investing in their development and well-being should be a priority.

The situation worsened in 2022 when the allocation for youth policy dropped even further to about 0.02% of the total budget. This decrease is particularly alarming, as it indicates a declining commitment to addressing youth-related issues and supporting youth programmes and initiatives. By 2023, the allocation for youth policy has fallen to a mere 0.01% of the total budget. Such a minimal budgetary commitment for youth policy is unlikely to effectively address the diverse challenges and opportunities that young people face. It also suggests that youth policy is not a priority within the overall government agenda.

In summary, the minimal budget allocations for youth policy in Montenegro for the specified years reflect a lack of prioritisation of youth issues within the budget. To effectively address the needs and aspirations of young Montenegrins and ensure their active participation in society, it is crucial for the government to consider a more substantial and sustained commitment to youth policy and allocate sufficient resources accordingly.

71 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/cyr/ms/slobodan-pristup-informacijama/budzetski-izdaci>.

72 Draft version of the new YS 2023-2027. Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/44a0874f-5e59-406b-8551-b06cd305646e>.

73 Law on Budget of Montenegro for 2021 is available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/f575125f-358c-4d91-9fdd-df8726df6b31>.

74 Law on Budget of Montenegro for 2022 is available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/2f8db36e-479b-42aa-88c9-ec1ee86245b2>.

75 Law on Budget of Montenegro for 2023 is available at: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/zakon-o-budzetu-crne-gore-za-2023-godinu>.



3.2. Youth projects funding

As stated, MSY is the main responsible body for executing youth policy. Since the establishment of former MSY in November 2016, its budget allocated for funding youth-oriented projects implemented by CSOs has experienced significant fluctuations. Notably, there was a threefold increase in funding in 2018 compared to 2017, followed by a subsequent decrease of six times until 2020.

Between 2017 and 2020, the former MSY and its Directorate for Youth diligently executed planned activities as per YS 2017-2021. Additionally, in adherence to LoY, it annually issued calls for proposals for CSOs, providing financial support to projects that aligned with YS 2017-2021 and APY for the respective year. This approach played a pivotal role in elevating the status of young people by actively involving them in the implementation of youth policy.

Through public calls for funding CSO projects, consistent with LoY and the Law on CSOs, MSY allocated nearly EUR 800,000.00 for approximately 150 CSO projects aimed at executing youth policy measures and activities within the six key priorities outlined in YS for the period from 2017 to 2021. In 2020, an allocation of EUR 94,545.36 was disbursed to support the projects of 12 CSOs dedicated to implementing youth policy in accordance with YS and APY for 2019.

The discontinuation of regular public calls for financing CSO projects starting at 2020, by the Ministry of Sports and Youth (MSY), raises concerns about the state of youth programmes and initiatives in Montenegro. Such calls for project proposals serve as a vital channel for CSOs, enabling them to secure funding and support for their work aimed at youth development and engagement. The absence of these funding opportunities could have far-reaching consequences.

On a positive note, based on Articles 31-37 of the Law on NGOs,⁷⁶ which pertain to the obligation and method of providing state financial assistance to NGOs, other ministries publish public calls to finance CSO projects. If they align with the specific competition's theme, CSOs dealing with youth policy issues can apply for these tenders.

This practice of allowing CSOs focused on youth policy to apply for public calls in alignment with the competition's theme is a positive step towards ensuring that youth-related initiatives continue to receive public support and funding, and providing them an environment in which they still can financially lean on allocations of state funds to a certain extent.

However, there may still be challenges in this approach. Firstly, the availability of funds for youth-specific projects might vary depending on the themes of public calls announced by other ministries. Secondly, CSOs may need to adapt their proposals to fit the specific criteria and priorities of each public call, which could be time-consuming and resource intensive. Lastly, coordination and communication between different ministries and CSOs must be efficient to ensure that youth policy initiatives are adequately supported and do not face unnecessary hurdles.

76 Law on NGOs (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 39/2011 from 4 August 2011). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={6DBD472A-7736-4212-86C8-F06D5DDF5F7F}>. (Accessed on 28 August 2023).



3.3. Key youth programmes and instruments

The Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy, based on the Youth Needs Analysis carried out by the Ministry, is the new mechanism for development and implementation of youth policy in Montenegro. Accordingly, in 2020 MSY prepared a Youth Needs Analysis,⁷⁷ covering 9 key areas, as follows:

- a. Developing and enhancing youth policy;
- b. Establishing an institutional framework for implementing youth policy;
- c. Creating and improving conditions for the operation of youth services;
- d. Encouraging proactive youth participation in the development and implementation of youth policy at the central and local levels;
- e. Educating young people about mechanisms for their involvement in active employment measures;
- f. Promoting youth involvement in the creation of cultural content;
- g. Encouraging youth mobility;
- h. Promoting youth involvement in non-formal education; and
- i. Promoting healthy lifestyles and volunteerism among young people.

The initial Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy, approved by the Government on 16 January 2020,⁷⁸ received a budget allocation of approximately EUR 700,000.00 for its execution in 2020. This Programme encompassed a range of measures and activities aimed at empowering Montenegro's youth, addressing various aspects of public concern, and fostering collaboration across different sectors involving all relevant stakeholders in youth policy. As part of this Programme, for instance, the former MSY set up youth services across Montenegro. However, despite the legal obligation, since then no new Youth Needs Analyses have been conducted, nor have new Programmes for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy been adopted.

Youth policy in Montenegro involves various ministries and institutional bodies, spanning areas such as employment, education, social welfare, social inclusion, and more. In the current composition of the Government of Montenegro, apart from MSY, many other ministries are relevant for strengthening youth and youth policies in the economy, such as: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism, Ministry of Culture and Media, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Science and Technological Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of European Affairs, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism.

Certainly, it is a common practice within the Government of Montenegro for numerous ministries to execute priority measures as delineated in the prevailing youth strategies or annual action plans.

77 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/13dc5dee-d689-400a-a793-0cb0c53c80c2>.

78 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3171abd0-3cfa-4a5e-a852-5b66107b8a51>.



However, they typically do not allocate dedicated budgetary lines for youth policy but rather fund these initiatives through their standard budgets or within the framework of related programmes, often in alignment with their coordinating strategies. Although there is a limited number of enduring economy level youth programmes or instruments, several ministries and institutional bodies participate in the implementation of selected programmes:

- a. The Ministry of Culture provides support to organisations engaged in youth cultural projects through public calls for financing initiatives led by civil society organisations;⁷⁹
- b. The Ministry of Science and Technological Development actively nurtures a culture of scientific productivity and elevates the calibre of scientific research. It achieves this by administering a series of public calls aimed at bolstering researchers and young scientists. These calls encompass competitions for research projects, grants fostering innovation, solicitations for PhD research fellowships, and contests facilitating the co-financing of scientific research and innovation, etc.⁸⁰ Through these initiatives, the Ministry of Science and Technological Development both supports and catalyses the development of a vibrant research ecosystem, which promises substantial benefits for the economy's youth.
- c. The Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism consistently endeavours the implementation of programmes aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, it extends support to young entrepreneurs through its regular Programme for Improving Competitiveness of the Economy for the year 2023.⁸¹
- d. The Ministry of Education inherently influences youth and youth policies due to its pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape for young individuals. Education is a fundamental aspect of youth development, as it equips young people with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to navigate their future and contribute to the society. Policies and initiatives established by the Ministry of Education directly impact the quality of formal education, access to educational resources, and opportunities for skill development among young learners. Furthermore, the Ministry's strategies and programmes indirectly affect various aspects of youth policy, such as youth employability, social inclusion, and overall well-being. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Montenegro plays a crucial role in fostering an environment where young people can thrive, learn, and actively participate in the society, making its influence on youth and youth policies significant. However, due to political inconsistency and instability in Montenegro, certain programmes of the Ministry of Education are no longer in place. For example, the Fund for Quality and Talent, which used to reward the best students and teachers, is no longer active, and the last call for candidates was announced in 2020.

79 All public calls for CSOs of the Ministry are available in Montenegrin language at the website of the Ministry: <https://www.gov.me/mku/saradnja-sa-nvo>.

80 All public calls of the Ministry are available in Montenegrin language at the website of the Ministry: <https://www.gov.me/mntr/konkursi-i-pozivi-u-oblasti-nauke-2>.

81 The public call for the year 2023 is available in Montenegrin language at the website of the Ministry: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/javni-poziv-za-ucisce-u-postupku-dodjele-sredstava-za-program-za-unapredenje-konkurentnosti-privrede-za-2023-godinu>. (Accessed on 29 August 2023).



- e. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, actively works to combat youth migration from rural areas. Their approach involves providing support for the initiation of new endeavours in rural regions, with a primary focus on agricultural activities.
- f. The Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro (IDF) was created with the aim of promoting and facilitating Montenegro's economic development, with a particular focus on initiatives relevant to young people. This includes supporting startups and providing opportunities for entrepreneurs to initiate new investment cycles. Additionally, IDF places a strong emphasis on enhancing entrepreneurial skills and bolstering the workforce, particularly among the youth. Through its various programmes, IDF offers enhanced support schemes tailored to the needs of young individuals, contributing to their economic empowerment and growth.
- g. It has been discussed earlier how EA supports young people and contributes to the enhancement of youth policies in Montenegro. In addition, it offers several programmes specifically designed for youth, such as the Youth Seasonal Employment Support Programme.⁸²

The listed programmes are just a few examples of available initiatives for youth and development of youth policies. However, it is important to emphasize that frequent changes in government, the fact that the current government has been in a technical mandate for over a year, and other political challenges that have shaken the society of Montenegro in recent years, have also impacted the availability of youth programmes. Some of these programmes have been discontinued, while others are not being implemented as efficiently as they were in the past. Despite these challenges, and given the multifaceted nature of youth issues, numerous entities continue to actively contribute to improving the status of young people in Montenegro.

One shining example, whose fate remains certain despite the socio-political conflicts witnessed in the society of Montenegro, is the European Youth Card (EYCA) Programme. EYCA is the only official and free benefit card, supported by MSY, which allows all citizens of Montenegro aged 13-29 to access over 270 discounts within the economy and over 70,000 discounts across Europe. The significance of this programme and its positive impact on the quality of life for young people have been recognised through various strategic documents such as the Mid-term Government Work Programme of Montenegro (2022-2024)⁸³ and the Empowerment Programme of the European Youth Card (2022-2024),⁸⁴ as well as local action plans and strategies.

Strong partnerships and collaboration with government institutions, academic and scientific community, business and civil sectors, local authorities, and domestic and international organisations have enabled the creation of a wide range of benefits and advantages. These factors have positioned EYCA as the most utilised and popular youth programme in Montenegro.

82 The public call for the year 2023 is available at the website of EA: <https://www.zzzcg.me/podrska-sezonskom-zaposljavanju-mladih/>. (Accessed on 29 August 2023).

83 Available at: https://www.gov.me/biblioteka?page=1&sort=published_at&q=program%20rada%20vlade.

84 Available at: <https://omladinskakartica.me/vijesti/usvojen-program-razvoja-evropske-omladinske-kartice-eyca-za-period-2022-2024-godine>.



Since 2018, the European Youth Card project (EYCA) in Montenegro has been implemented by CSO *Centre for Youth Education*, with the support and patronage of MSY on behalf of the Government of Montenegro.

3.4. Critical assessment

The chapter exposes several shortcomings and challenges in Montenegro's funding framework for youth programmes and instruments. One of the most pressing issues is the discontinuation of regular public calls which used to finance CSO projects before 2020. This development raises significant concerns about the state of youth programmes and initiatives in Montenegro. These public calls for project proposals have been a lifeline for CSOs and youth-focused organisations, allowing them to secure funding and support for their vital work aimed at youth development and engagement.

Firstly, the reduction in funding opportunities has the potential to hinder the capacity of CSOs and youth-focused organisations to carry out their crucial work effectively. These organisations play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs and aspirations of young people, covering areas from education and employment to social inclusion and civic engagement. Without adequate financial support, the scope and impact of their initiatives may be severely limited, ultimately affecting the well-being and opportunities of Montenegro's youth. This is a matter of concern for many interview participants as well.

Secondly, the discontinuation of these calls may signify a shift in the government's priorities or strategies regarding youth policy. While the exact reasons for this change are unclear, it suggests that youth-related issues may no longer be receiving the same level of attention and financial backing from the government.

In addition to the discontinuation of regular public calls for CSO projects financed by MSY, it is essential to acknowledge that Montenegro's youth programmes have been further strained by other significant challenges. Frequent changes in government, coupled with the fact that the current government has been in a technical mandate for over a year, have created an environment of political instability and uncertainty. These political challenges have had far-reaching implications for the society of Montenegro, including its youth programmes.

Despite these formidable challenges, it is commendable that numerous entities, recognising the multifaceted nature of youth issues, continue to actively contribute to improving the status of young people in Montenegro. Their dedication and efforts are essential in mitigating the adverse effects of political instability and ensuring that the welfare and development of Montenegro's youth remains a priority.

Finally, the budget allocations for youth policy in Montenegro over the three-year period from 2021 to 2023 raise significant concerns and highlight a notable shortcoming in the economy's approach to youth development and engagement. Young people have the potential to contribute significantly to economic growth, social development, and innovation. However, insufficient funding may result in missed opportunities to harness this potential. A robust investment in youth programmes and initiatives can yield long-term benefits for both young individuals and the broader society.



Lastly, overreliance on international partners for youth-related funding opportunities introduces a level of vulnerability to the economy's youth policies. Relying heavily on external sources of funding can lead to a lack of autonomy and flexibility in shaping youth programmes according to economy priorities. Changes in the agendas or priorities of international partners can disrupt the continuity of funding, potentially leaving youth initiatives at risk.

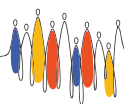
Montenegro's youth programmes face a complex set of challenges, including political instability, discontinued programmes, and reduced programme efficiency and financing. Nonetheless, the resilience and commitment of various entities involved in youth policy offer hope for the future. It is crucial for all stakeholders to work together to overcome these challenges and ensure that the well-being and prospects of Montenegro's youth are safeguarded and enhanced.



3.5. Tabular comparison

Table 3: Allocation of Funds for Development and Implementation of Youth Policy in Montenegro by Year (2020-2023)

Source of funding	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report)	2022	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
Allocation of funds through the annual budgets of Montenegro for development and implementation of youth policy	In year 2021, only EUR 692,831.13 was allocated for the implementation of youth policy, which represented approx. 0.03% of the overall annual state budget for 2021	In year 2022, only EUR 484,899.39 was allocated for the implementation of youth policy, which represented approx. 0.02% of the overall annual state budget for 2022	In year 2023, only EUR 419,899.39 was allocated for the implementation of youth policy, which represented approx. 0.01% of the overall annual state budget for 2023	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 state budget. The reduction in funding opportunities has the potential to hinder the capacity of CSOs and youth-focused organisations to carry out their crucial work effectively.
MSY's public calls for financing CSO projects	In 2020, an allocation of EUR 94,545.36 was disbursed to support the projects of 12 CSOs dedicated to implementing youth policy in accordance with YS.	Since 2020, MSY has not published these regular public calls for financing CSO projects.	Since 2020, MSY has not published these regular public calls for financing CSO projects.	Such calls for project proposals serve as a vital channel for CSOs to secure funding and support for their work aimed at youth development and engagement. Therefore, the absence of these funding opportunities could have far-reaching consequences.
Allocation of funds through Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy	The initial Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy, approved by the Government on 16 January 2020, received a budget allocation of approximately EUR 700,000.00 for its execution in 2020.	Despite the legal obligation, since 2020, no new Youth Needs Analyses has been conducted, nor have new Programmes for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy been adopted.	Despite the legal obligation, since 2020, no new Youth Needs Analyses has been conducted, nor have new Programmes for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy been adopted.	Montenegro's youth policy has been significantly impacted by the economy's political instability and the frequent changes in government. These political shifts have introduced a level of uncertainty and inconsistency in the development and implementation of youth programmes and strategies, ultimately hindering their long-term effectiveness.



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

This chapter delves into the intricate landscape of youth participation in policy formulation and decision-making processes in Montenegro. It scrutinises the existing mechanisms of youth engagement, exploring avenues both at the central and local levels of governance. Additionally, it introduces the youth organisations of Montenegro and networks that play pivotal roles in shaping the youth discourse and advocating for the interests and aspirations of Montenegro's young population. Only through an in-depth examination of these facets it is possible to gain valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between youth, government institutions, and civil society, shedding light on the opportunities and challenges that define Montenegro's approach to youth participation in policy and decision-making.

4.1. Youth engagement and participation in shaping policies: Key mechanisms and processes

Youth engagement and participation, especially their participation in decision-making process, is governed by LoY, but also by other laws which define, in general terms, citizens' participation in the decision-making processes and community development, which are therefore applicable to young citizens as well. Legal provisions specifying this area are prescribed in the Law on Local Self-Government, General Law on Education and Upbringing,⁸⁵ and Law on Higher Education.⁸⁶

First, in Article 11, LoY prescribes active youth participation, stipulating that young people should actively engage in the process of shaping and implementing youth policies through coordination and development of cross-sector partnerships, collaboration with young individuals, and entities involved in planning and implementing youth policies. Second, Article 6 of the Law on Local Self-Government stipulates that citizens participate in decision-making regarding their needs and interests both directly and through freely elected representatives in local self-government bodies. Third, Article 96 of the General Law on Education and Upbringing stipulates that students in one class of a school form a class community, while representatives of students from all classes of the school form a student parliament. Article 97 further provides that representatives of student parliament have the right to participate in the work of school's professional bodies when discussing matters of interest to students (student standards, extracurricular activities, etc.). Last, Article 112 of the Law on Higher Education stipulates that the Student Parliament is an institutional form of student

85 General Law on Education and Upbringing (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 45/11 from 28 November 2002). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={F4CE2562-0D05-4AFD-B0A8-8278A6F4EB76}>. (Accessed on 31 August 2023).

86 Law on Higher Education (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 44/2014 from 21 October 2014). Available at: <http://sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={B0C785DF-1B63-4423-903A-2EAE5D9DB53E}>. (Accessed on 31 August 2023).



organisation, which operates autonomously and is authorised to represent and protect the rights and interests of students. The Student Parliament is established within UM and consists of student representatives.

4.1.1. Youth participation at the central level

According to YS 2017-2021, youth participation can be categorised into two types: “prescribed” participation, which involves government-provided opportunities, and “self-initiated” participation, where young citizens take the initiative themselves. However, recent data obtained through the research conducted by CEDEM on civic and political youth participation shows that in general young people in Montenegro are not actively engaged in decision-making at the economy level. Surprisingly, over 80% of them believe that youth should have a more significant role and be invited to participate in decision-making processes at all levels.⁸⁷

A common method for engaging young people in the decision-making processes is through public debates. These debates are typically used to gather input from various stakeholders when shaping laws and strategies. However, youth participation in these debates remains low, with only 5.7% of young individuals taking part.⁸⁸ One significant reason for this limited participation is the belief among young people that their voices will not make a difference. Several key legal acts and strategic document directly related to youth have undergone public debates in the past. These include LoY, YS 2017-2021, as well as LAPYs.

The draft LoY generated significant public interest. During the public debate concerning LoY, a series of three round-table discussions were held in various locations in 2018, namely in Podgorica, Kolašin, and Tivat. What is particularly noteworthy is that the former MSY displayed a proactive approach in acknowledging the input provided by young individuals and civil society organisations (CSOs). They integrated about two-thirds of the feedback they received, resulting in significant revisions to LoY when compared to its initial draft. This reflects a genuine effort to actively engage young voices in the process of shaping policies and laws pertaining to youth.

Furthermore, as per the Regulation on the Selection of Representatives from Civil Society Organisations in the Working Bodies of State Administration Bodies and the Conduct of Public Hearings in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies,⁸⁹ CSOs’ representatives could participate in working groups tasked with preparing or drafting normative acts or programmes within specific intervention areas. These working groups facilitate collaborative efforts between the public and civil society sectors in shaping public policies to achieve common interests. Consequently, CSOs, including those focused on youth matters, possess the right to engage in the working bodies established by public administration entities. In this capacity, they serve as a form of (youth) involvement in the economy-level decision-making processes, advocating for the rights and interests of young people. To illustrate, LoY was

87 Civic and Political Participation of Youth in Montenegro, CEDEM, 2020, pg. 47. Available at: <http://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanje/politicko-javno-mnjenje/send/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1962politicka-i-gradanska-participacija-mladih-u-crnoj-gori>. (Accessed on 10 September 2023).

88 *Ibid*, pg. 48.

89 Regulation on the Selection of Representatives from Civil Society Organisations in the Working Bodies of State Administration Bodies and the Conduct of Public Hearings in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 41/2018 from 28 June 2018). Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/bd8e60de-985b-46b6-8cdf-60550c3a1bd1>. (Accessed on 10 September 2023).



formulated by a Working Group that included three CSO representatives, collectively representing the voices of 29 CSOs which endorsed their roles in this Working Group.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, student parliaments in various education institutions serve as representative bodies established to safeguard students' rights and interests, as well as to enable them to participate in decision-making processes affecting different aspects of their living conditions. However, their effectiveness in promoting and enhancing student activism is often hindered by limited communication, both among themselves and with external partners.

On the flip side, student organisations like the Association for Political Science Students of Montenegro (MAPPS), AIESEC, and ELSA play a vital role in fulfilling students' social, cultural, academic and recreational needs, as mandated by the Law on Higher Education. These organisations actively engage their members in various participation mechanisms, fostering participation and networking opportunities that contribute significantly to the development of their members.

Furthermore, young people have the opportunity to engage directly in the decision-making process by becoming members, founders, or participants in the activities of CSOs dedicated to youth policy implementation. These CSOs explicitly state their focus on youth policy in their governing documents. One notable example of youth participation at both central and local levels is the High School Students Union of Montenegro (UNSCG), which serves as an umbrella organisation for student parliaments across high schools in the economy. Its impact is further explored within the pages below.

Finally, youth branches of political parties are rarely independent organisations, which have young people as the basic target group, and whose main goal is the political activism of young people. Membership in this kind of political parties is limited to the age of 30. However, the representatives of youth branches of political parties do not have actual political power and participation in decision-making processes but are considered to be mainly serving political marketing purposes. All political parties in Montenegro have youth branches.

4.1.2. Youth participation at the local level

Local Councils for Youth (LCfYs) serve as important mechanisms for involving young people in decision-making processes at the local level. These councils are designed to provide a platform where youth can express their views, concerns, and ideas on matters that directly affect their lives within their respective municipalities. However, despite their significance, the establishment and operation of LYCs across municipalities in Montenegro have been inconsistent.

In addition to LYCs, there are various other avenues through which young people can actively participate in decision-making processes at the local level. One prominent avenue is through CSOs that focus on youth-related issues. These CSOs often work closely with local communities, organising events, campaigns, and initiatives that encourage youth participation in civic and social activities. They create opportunities for young individuals to voice their opinions, propose solutions to local challenges, and contribute to community development.



Youth services also play a vital role in facilitating youth engagement at the local level. These services provide a range of programmes and resources tailored to the needs and interests of young people. They offer spaces for recreational activities, skill development, and educational support. Moreover, youth services can serve as hubs for youth-led projects and initiatives, allowing young individuals to take an active role in shaping their communities.

Finally, schools are another crucial arena for youth participation. Many schools have established various clubs and sections that cater to specific interests, such as debate clubs, environmental clubs, and cultural groups. These extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities to collaborate, express their creativity, and engage in projects that address local issues.

4.2. Evidence-based youth policy

YS 2017-2021 was developed through a meticulously coordinated and participative process of consultations. This approach aimed to ensure that YS was rooted in tangible evidence and reflective of the real needs and aspirations of Montenegro's youth. Namely, the consultation process went beyond government agencies and involved a wide array of stakeholders, including youth representatives, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders. These consultations acted as vital channels for gathering data and insights directly from young people and those working closely with them. In essence, development of YS 2017-2021 was a prime example of how evidence-based policy-making can be applied to youth policy development.

At the local level, development of LAPYs, formerly known as Local Strategies for Youth under the previous LoY, followed a similar evidence-based approach. These plans were shaped by research into the position and needs of youth implemented by local self-governments, often in collaboration with active youth-focused CSOs. This practice continued when preparing LAPYs after entering into force of the new LoY, even though it does not explicitly mandate an evidence-based approach in youth policy creation and execution.

However, the Regulation on the Selection of Representatives of Civil Society Organisations in the Working Bodies of State Administration and the Conduct of Public Consultations in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies⁹⁰ clearly lays out the necessity of evidence-based approach for development of laws, strategies, and programmes to benefit the public interests.⁹¹

Additionally, Article 15 of LoY, which delves into the Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy, outlines the MSY's obligation to carry out research on youth needs prior to development of this Programme. It stipulates: *In order to define priority areas of public interest for the development of the Programme, MSY prepares the Analysis of Youth Needs.* This provision encourages policymakers to base their decisions on a thorough understanding of the realities and challenges faced by young

90 Regulation on the Selection of Representatives of Civil Society Organisations in the Working Bodies of State Administration Bodies and the Conduct of Public Consultations in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies (Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 041/18 from 28 June 2018). Available at:

<https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/1f353a31-1729-4db3-a378-e8c4610a5b04>. (Accessed on 11 September 2023).

91 For example, this regulation stipulates that a state administration body may select a representative of a specific CSO as a member of a working group or another working body it establishes, based on a public call published on its website and the e-government internet portal, only if that CSO, within the previous three years, has conducted research, produced a document, organised an event, or implemented a project related to the issue that the working body assesses or normatively regulates, aimed at improving the situation in a specific area.



people, thus facilitating development of policies that are more likely to be effective and responsive to their needs. It represents a positive step towards ensuring that youth policy in Montenegro is rooted in empirical evidence and the actual experiences of young individuals.

However, while various ministries and public institutions at the economy level, including MONSTAT, gather data on youth in specific domains such as education, health, and security, the overall information about youth remains fragmented. Multiple CSOs and researchers in Montenegro collect data about young people, but there is no single comprehensive resource that consolidates all crucial youth-related data.

In summary, while efforts have been made to introduce evidence-based elements into youth policy at both local and central levels, there is still a need for a centralised platform to compile essential youth data, ensuring more effective and informed youth policymaking.

4.3. The establishment and functioning of youth councils and an umbrella youth organisation

As mentioned, LoY stipulates that, in order to promote development of youth policy, MSY establishes a CfY as an expert and advisory body. CfY consists of a president and eight members, functioning based on the principle of co-management.

Even though it is supposed that CfY serves as a noteworthy model of effective co-management, demonstrating how government entities can work in collaboration with civil society organisations and young individuals to shape youth policies, its establishment in Montenegro has yet to be implemented. Four years have passed since the adoption of LoY in 2019, and this situation raises concerns about the commitment and willingness of political authorities to engage in meaningful partnerships with civil society and youth in the development of youth-focused policies. It underscores a missed opportunity for inclusive decision-making processes that consider the diverse needs and perspectives of young people, potentially hindering the overall effectiveness of youth policies.

To promote and enhance development of youth policy, strengthen collaboration, and improve the status of young people at the local level, LCfY can be established within the municipality as an expert advisory body. LoY does not obligate local self-governments to establish LCfYs. However, an increasing number of local self-governments are recognising the significance of this structure, especially for direct involvement of young people in structured dialogues during the creation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth-related policies at the local level.

Finally, according to LoY, civil society organisations implementing youth policy may establish an alliance. A representative alliance (in other words, an umbrella youth organisation), within the meaning of LoY, is an alliance that includes at least 30 civil society organisations implementing youth policy, from at least six municipalities, two of which are from the coastal, central, and northern regions each. MSY determines the representativeness of the alliance of civil society organisations for a period of one year by issuing a certificate of representativeness.



CSO YNM received the Certificate of Representativeness on 18 November 2020, officially obtaining the status of the umbrella youth organisation. The certificate has been renewed, and this organisation has continued to serve as the Representative Alliance of Youth Organisations even today.

Here it is important to mention that LoY does not foresee the financing of this alliance by the public budget, which highlights an interesting aspect of Montenegro's youth policy landscape. While the law acknowledges the existence of such alliances and sets criteria for their representativeness, it does not impose a financial support from the public budget.

This absence of mandatory financing can be seen from two perspectives. On one hand, it allows for flexibility and independence in the operation of these alliances. The representative alliance may have the freedom to seek funding from various sources, including international grants, private donors, or other means. This autonomy can potentially foster creativity, unbiased approach and innovation in addressing youth-related issues.

On the other hand, the lack of guaranteed public funding may pose challenges to the sustainability and effectiveness of these umbrella youth organisations. Without a stable source of financial support, they may struggle to carry out their roles effectively, such as advocating for youth interests and coordinating youth-related initiatives.

4.4. Platforms of youth cooperation at the economy level

There are not many platforms of youth cooperation at the economy level.

The High School Students Union of Montenegro (UNSCG) is the overarching organisation that encompasses all high school student parliaments in Montenegro. It was founded with the objective of advocating for the significance of high school students' involvement in decision-making processes concerning all facets of their education.

UNSCG employs various strategies to advocate for the rights and interests of high school students. This includes lobbying for policy changes that benefit high school students, raising awareness about student-related issues, and engaging in constructive dialogue with educational authorities. Furthermore, these best practices encompass initiatives focused on youth empowerment. UNSCG has programmes and activities aimed at empowering young individuals, such as leadership training, workshops, and educational programmes. These activities help students develop the skills and knowledge needed to actively participate in decision-making processes related to their education and well-being.

Apart from UNSCG, another important platform of youth cooperation at the economy level is the **Student Parliament** functioning within the framework of the University of Montenegro. The Student Parliament of the University of Montenegro is an institutional representative body for students at the University of Montenegro, mandated to advocate for the interests of over 20,000 students. Since its establishment on 31 May 2004, it has been responsible for improving the conditions of student life and strengthening student population in Montenegro. With representatives in the University's Administrative Board, Senate, Ethics Committee, Committee for Quality Management of the University of Montenegro, and Council for Higher Education, the Student Parliament participates in



the decision-making process on behalf of students, with a minimum 20% representation in each of these decision-making bodies within the University.

4.5. Regional platforms and networks

Various institutions of Montenegro and organisations actively participate in several youth cooperation platforms, fostering regional and international collaboration. These platforms include the Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform (WBYCP), Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), SALTO-YOUTH network, South East Europe Youth Network (SEEYN), Young European Ambassadors (YEA) initiative and RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab project.

WBYCP is a grassroots regional youth platform implemented by the Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), together with the umbrella youth organisations of all Western Balkans economies.

The Platform is established with the aim to promote youth connectivity in the Western Balkans, offering a unique and tailor-made space to youngsters from the region to meet, plan, organise, implement and voice their actions. Through the Platform youngsters can find partners for joint activities, exchange ideas, consult a youth library, and outreach and lobby action.

RYCO is an independently functioning institutional mechanism, founded by the Western Balkans economies, aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programmes. The Agreement on the Establishment of RYCO was signed by the WB Prime Ministers at the WB Summit held in Paris, on 4 July 2016.

SALTO-YOUTH is a network consisting of seven Resource Centres focused on European youth field priorities. This network provides non-formal learning resources for youth workers and leaders, conducts training sessions, and organises contact-making activities to support organisations. SALTO-YOUTH contributes to youth of Montenegro by facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills, enhancing the capacities of youth organisations, and improving the quality of youth work in the region. Furthermore, it serves as a platform for sharing best practices and exchanging valuable experiences.

YEA initiative brings together aspiring young leaders from the Western Balkans and the European Union. This creative network promotes youth activism and engagement in decision-making processes among youth of Montenegro. YEA encourages young individuals to actively participate in community life by fostering structured dialogues and collaboration with authorities and communities. It also emphasizes the importance of volunteerism, values, diversity, and constructive dialogues within society. YEA's mission includes promoting human rights, tolerance, respect, democracy, and good governance among youth of Montenegro, contributing to their personal growth and the overall development of society.

Western Balkans Youth Lab is project funded by the EU and executed by the RCC, which was initiated in January 2020. Its overarching objective is to empower the youth of the Western Balkans, encompassing Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia, and North Macedonia, where youth

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



make up approximately 21.27% of the population. The central goal of the project is to reinforce both formal and informal mechanisms for youth engagement in decision-making processes.

Anticipated outcomes so far included an increased level of involvement of youth in policymaking and greater collaboration in development of policies that are pertinent to their concerns. The project's beneficiaries encompassed youth in the Western Balkans region, local administrations, and youth councils of Montenegro.

The initiative is directed towards establishing a structured regional dialogue between youth organisations and economy-wide administrations, with a particular focus on co-creating policies that enhance youth participation in decision-making and ameliorate the socio-economic conditions and opportunities available to young people across the Western Balkans. This collaborative effort encompassed a range of activities and was structured into four interconnected components, aligning with the EU's commitment to providing more opportunities for youth in the region.

4.6. Critical assessment

Youth participation in decision-making in Montenegro presents a mixed picture with several shortcomings and challenges that need urgent attention. While there have been efforts to involve young people in shaping policies and laws affecting their lives, numerous obstacles persist, hindering the effectiveness of these initiatives.

One significant issue is the stark disparity between young people's desire for increased participation and the limited opportunities available to them. Recent data reveals that over 80% of Montenegro's youth believe they should have a more substantial role in decision-making processes. However, the reality is that youth participation, especially at the economy level, remains disappointingly low. This discrepancy is primarily due to young people's perception that their voices will not make a difference. This disillusionment stems from a genuine lack of engagement and meaningful outcomes of their involvement, raising questions about the authenticity of their inclusion.

While there are mechanisms in place, such as public debates and youth councils, aimed at fostering youth participation, these structures often face challenges of implementation, consistency, and accessibility. For instance, the establishment and operation of LCfYs across municipalities have been inconsistent, undermining their role as platforms for youth expression and engagement. Similarly, the delayed establishment of CfY at the economy level raises concerns about the commitment of political authorities to collaborate effectively with civil society and youth in policymaking.

Furthermore, the presence of youth branches within political parties appears more symbolic than substantive, with these branches often serving political marketing purposes rather than providing young people with meaningful influence in decision-making processes. The limited financial support for umbrella youth organisations, despite their representativeness, jeopardizes their sustainability and effectiveness in advocating for youth interests.

Evidence-based youth policy, although emphasized in some legal documents, still lacks a centralised platform for compiling essential youth data. This fragmentation hinders the ability to make informed,



data-driven decisions, which is crucial for addressing the multifaceted needs of Montenegro's youth effectively.

In summary, youth participation in decision-making in Montenegro faces challenges related to authenticity, accessibility, consistency, and genuine impact.



4.7. Tabular comparison

Table 4: Youth Participation in Policy and Decision-making Processes by Year (2020-2023)

Title of comparative unit	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report)	2022	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
The level of youth participation in policy and decision-making processes in Montenegro	Low	Low	Low	There is a stark disparity between young people's desire for increased participation and the limited opportunities available to them. Recent data reveals that over 80% of Montenegro's youth believe they should have a more substantial role in decision-making processes. However, the reality is that youth participation, especially at the economy level, remains disappointingly low. This discrepancy is primarily due to young people's perception that their voices will not make a difference.
The presence of platforms for youth participation in policy and decision-making processes in Montenegro	The only platform mentioned was UNSCG..	Apart from UNSCG, the Student Parliament of the University of Montenegro is worth mentioning.	UNSCG and Student Parliament mentioned and elaborated on.	There are not many platforms of youth cooperation at the economy level.
The presence of regional platforms for youth participation in policy and decision-making processes in Montenegro	The most important regional platforms are WBCYP, RYCO, SALTO-YOUTH, YEA Initiative and RCC's WBYL project.	Without noteworthy changes.	Without noteworthy changes.	Various institutions of Montenegro and organisations actively participate in several youth cooperation platforms, fostering regional and international collaboration.



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

Donor organisations, both domestic and international, play a crucial role in shaping the opportunities and policies for youth of Montenegro. Therefore, the key objectives of this chapter include identifying major donor stakeholders and understanding their motivations and priorities related to youth. In this chapter, we also delve into the thematic areas that donors focus on, such as education, employment, social inclusion, and civic participation.

The impact of donor interventions is evaluated through case studies, data analysis, and beneficiary testimonials, shedding light on tangible outcomes and challenges. We also explore the partnerships and collaborations between donors, government institutions, civil society organisations, and youth-led initiatives. Furthermore, we assess the influence of donors on youth-related policies and strategies in Montenegro.

5.1. Key donors

In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in the number of donors actively involved in funding projects related to Montenegro's youth population. However, it is important to note that while donor landscape is expanding, it still remains relatively limited. In this sub-chapter, the report highlights some of the key donors that hold particular relevance in the realm of youth policy in Montenegro.

5.1.1. The European Commission

Certainly, European Commission programmes and projects in the youth sector in Montenegro are funded through various EU programmes and key actions, reflecting the EU's commitment to supporting youth development and engagement in the economy. An elaboration of some of these programmes is provided below.

- A. European Exchange Programme for Entrepreneurs:** This programme fosters entrepreneurship among young people by providing them with opportunities to work in a different European economy. It enables entrepreneurs to gain practical experience, develop their skills, and establish valuable networks. In the public call for applications in 2023,⁹² it is stated that so far 13 young entrepreneurs have completed their stays in Sweden, Spain, Germany, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia.
- B. European Solidarity Corps (ESC):** ESC is an EU programme for young individuals who want to engage in solidarity activities in various fields, ranging from assisting vulnerable populations to contributing to actions related to health and environment, across the EU and beyond. This

92 Available at: <https://www.ucg.ac.me/objava/blog/1025/objava/164398-evropski-program-razmjene-za-mlade-buduce-preduzetnike>. (Accessed on 17 September 2023).



call also introduces the opportunity for participants to take part in humanitarian aid operations worldwide to foster solidarity between EU organisations and volunteers and people and communities outside the EU. This new set of international projects is referred to as the European Voluntary Humanitarian Corps.

The budget for ESC for 2021-2027 amounts to 1 billion euro. During its seven-year lifespan, this EU programme will enable at least 270,000 young people to participate in solidarity actions.⁹³

The programme offers young people the opportunity to make significant contribution to society, gain invaluable experience, and develop new skills. It is open to young individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 for solidarity activities addressing social challenges and between 18 and 35 years for international humanitarian aid activities.

- C. ERASMUS+ Programme:** ERASMUS+ is a flagship EU programme that supports education, training, youth, and sports. It offers various opportunities for young people, including study exchanges, traineeships, and youth mobility projects. The programme promotes cultural understanding and skill development, and is coordinated by the Erasmus+ Office in Montenegro.

The programme has an indicative budget of over 26 billion EUR for seven years (2021-2027) provided from the EU budget. In Montenegro, eligible actions include international credit mobility, virtual exchanges in higher education and youth, capacity-building in higher education, vocational education and training, youth, and sports, as well as Erasmus Mundus joint master programmes and Jean Monnet activities. These initiatives aim to foster international collaboration, educational mobility, and development of policies to enhance the quality of education and youth engagement in Montenegro.⁹⁴

In addition to youth-specific programmes, there are broader EU programmes with components that benefit young people:

- A. Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Programmes:** These programmes encompass various sectors, including civil society development. Through the Civil Society Facility and regional CSF, support is extended to regional networks and initiatives, some of which may target youth-related issues.
- B. Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy:** Based on the key principles of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), this programme is a significant tool within the EU. Its main goal is to advance and safeguard human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law on a global scale.

The multi-year plan for this thematic programme aligns with the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024,⁹⁵ which centres on five primary priorities: 1) protecting

93 More information relevant for Montenegro available at:

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/107570_en?s=225. (Accessed on 17 September 2023).

94 A detailed information is available at the website of the Erasmus+ Office in Montenegro:

<https://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/opportunities-for-the-participation-of-montenegro/?lang=en>. (Accessed on 18 September 2023).

95 Available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-action-plan-human-rights-and-democracy-0_en. (Accessed on 18 September 2023).



and empowering individuals; 2) establishing strong, inclusive, and democratic societies; 3) promoting a global framework for human rights and democracy; 4) addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by new technologies; and 5) achieving results through collaborative efforts.

This programme will receive a total budget of EUR 1,511,852,228 for the period 2021-2027. Within this budget, approximately EUR 752,787,000, roughly 50% of the total, has been allocated for economy-specific initiatives. For the Western Balkans and Turkey region, an indicative amount of EUR 52,706,000 has been allocated, accounting for approximately 7-8% of the total budget for this programme.⁹⁶

While not exclusively youth-focused, Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy may support projects that address human rights and democracy-related concerns affecting young people, such as youth participation and freedom of expression.

- C. Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans Project (CC4WBs):** CC4WBs, a four-year project, with a budget of 8 million euro, aims to strengthen the cultural and creative sectors in the Western Balkans, and promote culture for social cohesion, sustainable development, and reconciliation. It seeks to enhance cultural policies, boost regional cultural collaboration, facilitate artist and cultural operator mobility, support the circulation of creative products and services, and provide financial and technical assistance to cultural and creative industries. The project also focuses on protecting, managing, and promoting cultural heritage, fostering partnerships, and networking to empower the creative industries in the region. It is estimated that more than 800 cultural and creative industries, 9,000 cultural professionals, 30 institutions, and 150 individual public officers will directly benefit from this initiative, ultimately reaching around 1.5% of the Western Balkans' population through increased cultural participation and access to cultural events and content.⁹⁷

The EU has launched this new initiative to be implemented by UNESCO, British Council and Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

These EU programmes, among others, collectively contribute to youth development, empowerment, and engagement in Montenegro by offering a wide range of opportunities and support across various domains, from education and entrepreneurship to civic participation and cultural activities.

5.1.2. The UN System in Montenegro

The diversity and extent of support for young people by different UN agencies in Montenegro are reflected through a wide range of initiatives and activities. These agencies bring their unique perspectives and expertise to address the issues and needs of youth. Therefore, we will explore how various UN agencies contribute to youth empowerment and enhancement of their life prospects through their programmes and projects.

⁹⁶ More information about the Programme available at: https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9620-human-rights-democracy-annex_en.pdf. (Accessed on 20 September 2023).

⁹⁷ More information about the Project available at: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-supports-culture-in-western-balkans-with-eu8-million-initiative>. (Accessed on 20 September 2023).



Through a series of initiatives and collaborations with local partners, UN agencies implement programmes focused on education, employment, active participation in society, health, culture, and many other aspects of young people's lives. These efforts collectively shape the landscape of youth support in Montenegro, enabling young individuals to reap their full potential and contribute to a brighter future for their communities.

For instance, the UN system played a vital role in **development of YS for the period 2017-2021**. This involvement occurred under the UN Joint Programme on Youth Empowerment and focused on aligning the strategy with global youth policy standards. It also ensured active participation of young individuals and various stakeholders in YS formulation.

Additionally, the UN System in Montenegro has actively supported the process of **developing the new YS for the period 2024-2027**. UNICEF played a pivotal role in this endeavour by facilitating research on the needs and status of young people, as well as evaluating the previous YS for 2017-2021.

With UNICEF's assistance, a comprehensive quantitative study was conducted to understand the needs and aspirations of young people, based on a representative sample. The findings from this research significantly influenced the priorities and measures outlined in the draft YS. Using the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) method, a total of 1005 young individuals between the ages of 15 and 30, chosen from all three regions, were surveyed. The data and insights from this research provided valuable inputs in several areas covered by the draft YS, including informal education, youth competence development, and volunteering; youth work and youth services; youth participation and democratic values; information access; data protection and media literacy; leisure activities; youth mobility; societal polarisation; and health and well-being. Moreover, in November 2022, a qualitative research study was conducted involving six focus groups consisting of politically engaged young people, student and youth organisation members, and marginalised youth. This allowed for a more direct involvement of diverse youth groups in shaping the strategy.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided support by facilitating consultations with stakeholders in youth policy during 2021, preparing reports on the implementation of 2017-2021 YS, and offering technical assistance in preparing 2023-2027 YS.

Opportunities Programme aims to provide support to teenagers in understanding the world of work and developing their future careers. It focuses on informing them about various professions and jobs, acquainting them with business processes, fostering teamwork, and, through their experiences, gaining insights into their own educational needs and expectations related to the job market. This initiative also presents an opportunity for companies and civil society organisations to actively contribute to development of teenagers' environment.

Teenagers aged 17 to 19 years old participate in this Programme, which offers them a chance to gain practical training tailored to their interests. They learn more about their own capabilities, interests, and skills, as well as about potential employers and the job market, all through their first professional training experience.



During the pilot implementation of the Opportunities Programme in 2016, 55 companies in Montenegro hosted 700 adolescents, providing them with the opportunity to engage in practical training in both the business and civil sectors in Montenegro.

In late 2022, UNICEF announced that the Opportunities Programme would continue until 2026. In the upcoming cycle, additional efforts will be made to ensure continued collaboration not only with the private sector but also with schools, as well as to further strengthen partnerships with local authorities.

Moreover, **Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2)** is being implemented across all WB economies: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The primary objective is to strengthen participatory democracies and EU integration in the region by empowering CSOs and young people, encouraging active participation in decision-making, and improving the legal and financial environment for CSOs.

ReLOaD2 aims to enhance transparent CSO financing based on specific development projects that focus on citizens' needs. A significant emphasis will be placed on engaging young people in decision-making, offering professional training, and supporting youth empowerment initiatives. This builds on the transparent project financing model for CSOs from the budgets of local self-governments, successfully tested in the previous phase of ReLOaD.

ReLOaD2 is funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP. The project's budget is €12.6 million, with the EU contributing €11.3 million and €1.3 million coming from local governments and UNDP. In Montenegro, the budget is approximately €1.8 million, including €850,000 allocated for CSO projects. The project commenced on 1 January 2021, and will run for 48 months.

ReLOaD2 operates in Western Balkans economies, and targets 54 partner local self-governments, including 15 in Montenegro. Partnerships involve institutions responsible for CSOs and associations of cities and municipalities. In total, ReLOaD2 aims to implement over 300 projects, benefitting more than 40,000 beneficiaries across the Western Balkans.

5.1.3. The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe's Programme Office in Podgorica plays a significant role in fostering development of youth and youth policies in Montenegro. One of its notable initiatives was the joint European Union and Council of Europe programme *Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye 2019-2022 (HFII)*, which aimed to align Montenegro's legal framework with EU standards to protect the rights of suspects, accused individuals, and victims in criminal proceedings effectively. This project contributed to the transposition of EU directives into law and the implementation of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments at the economy level.

The Programme, lasting 36 months from 24 May 2019 to 23 May 2022, was implemented in Montenegro with a budget of 900,000 EUR, funded jointly by the European Union and the Council. As part of this Programme, a legal clinic on human rights was conducted from 2020 to 2022. It brought together students from three law faculties in Montenegro to enhance their practical knowledge and skills in



the field of human rights, with a particular focus on topics such as domestic violence, women's and children's rights, and protection of gender minorities, especially LGBTIQ population.

Furthermore, the programme is continuing as the joint European Union and Council of Europe programme *Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye 2023-2026* (HFIII). Covering several economies, including Montenegro, this Programme supports these nations in their reform agendas related to human rights, rule of law, and democracy. The Programme aligns them with European standards, which is vital for their EU enlargement process. With a budget of €41 million (85% EU-funded, 15% Council of Europe-funded), it represents a substantial effort to promote positive reforms in these areas across the region.

In summary, these initiatives led by the Council of Europe Programme Office in Podgorica and the broader Horizontal Facility Programme underline a commitment to legal and procedural improvements, human rights, and the overall development of Montenegro and the Western Balkans.

5.1.4. RYCO

Ever since its official inauguration on 7 July 2017, RYCO Local Branch Office in Montenegro has been engaged in a series of activities, substantially strengthening administrative and organisational capacities, advancing regional programmes, catalysing grassroots initiatives, and fostering strategic partnerships. This effort has significantly contributed to the creation of new opportunities for the youth and those working with youth in Montenegro, and beyond.

As a donor organisation, RYCO has launched four Open Calls for project proposals, each tailored to different stakeholders. These calls collectively garnered over 1,060 applications or project proposals for regional youth exchange programmes. A fundamental criterion for project support was the involvement of at least one partner from another RYCO Contracting Party. Remarkably, these calls fostered over 3,200 partnerships between various CSOs and secondary schools across the region.

From the perspective of Montenegro, the first four Calls for Proposals saw engagement from over 60 CSOs and secondary schools in Montenegro. Of these, 8 received grants, while 33 were involved as partners in regional cooperation projects supported by RYCO.

Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme

Superschools is part of the larger Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme, co-financed by the European Union and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It is executed in collaboration with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). This project boasts a budget of €5.5 million and aligns with the broader aim of enhancing education systems and regional cooperation to empower the youth in the Western Balkans. It empowers secondary schools, students, and teachers to engage in school-to-school exchanges across the region, participate in capacity-building activities, and establish networks.

During the first Superschools Open Call, RYCO received 127 exchange proposals. Overall, 30 supported projects were aimed at supporting the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes and intercultural learning and dialogue among schools, students, and their communities. Secondary schools from Montenegro, supported within the Superschools Programme, were: Secondary Mixed School Ivan



Goran Kovačić Herceg Novi, Secondary Vocational School Bar, Secondary Vocational School Bijelo Polje, and Grammar School Panto Mališić Berane.

In the second cycle of Superschools Programme, 50 projects were awarded, involving 100 secondary schools from the region, all of which will contribute to the implementation of RYCO's mission in the Western Balkans. Seven secondary schools from Montenegro are part of the second cycle of Superschools Programme implementation: Secondary Vocational School Bar, Secondary Vocational School Bijelo Polje, Secondary Vocational School Ivan Uskoković Podgorica, Secondary Mixed School Fraternity and Unity Ulcinj, Economic and Catering School Nikšić, Secondary Mixed School 25 May Tuzi, and Educational Centre Plužine.

From its establishment, the Local Branch Office in Montenegro has dedicated remarkable efforts to establishing and nurturing partnerships with key stakeholders in Montenegro. MSY has been a crucial partner, offering support to RYCO's work in Montenegro.

In addition to these positive aspects of RYCO's work at the local level, it is crucial to highlight certain aspects that are subject to criticism and require attention. Specifically, RYCO Governing Board, as the highest decision-making body, is formally designed as a co-management model, composed of 6 representatives of governments and 6 representatives of youth from all economies of the Western Balkans, with each of them having an equal say.

However, in practice, there are certain challenges. Youth representatives often come into their positions through indirect political appointments, which raises questions about their impartiality and independence. Furthermore, the consensus-based voting principle is sometimes used in a manner that undermines the essential processes within the organisation, as government representatives occasionally abuse this technique to safeguard the political interests of their specific economies at the expense of the organisation's broader goals.

This challenge could be overcome by establishing clear and democratic procedures for the selection of youth representatives that are entirely free from political influence, as well as unique for all Western Balkan economies. Additionally, it is necessary to consider restructuring the decision-making process within the Governing Board to ensure greater transparency and efficiency, while reducing the risk of political instrumentalisation.

5.1.5. OSCE Mission to Montenegro

The engagement of youth is a top priority for the OSCE Mission in Montenegro. It actively supports youth participation, regional networking, and the adoption and implementation of youth policies. For instance, OSCE Mission to Montenegro supported drafting action plans for implementing YS 2017-2021.

The Mission also provides support to the RYCO Local Branch Office in Montenegro, with a particular focus on developing skills in intercultural learning and reconciliation.



At the local level, in collaboration with MSY, the Mission enhances the capacities of local youth administrators in youth services through organising capacity-building trainings,⁹⁸ as well as encourages youth participation in decision-making processes.

Finally, the Mission extends its support to EYCA Programme in Montenegro, and has, for instance, financed the creation of its website.⁹⁹

This demonstrates the OSCE Mission's commitment to empowering youth, fostering intercultural understanding, and promoting active engagement in development of youth policies and initiatives, both at the local and regional levels.

5.1.6. GIZ

GIZ initiated its operations in the former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro back in 2000. Following Montenegro's declaration of independence in 2006, GIZ established its presence in Podgorica in 2007.

In the context of Montenegro's political aspirations, the highest priority of GIZ remains its path to EU accession. Therefore, GIZ is actively engaged in Montenegro on behalf of the German Government, focusing on the following key areas:

- a. Strengthening Good Governance: GIZ is committed to enhancing governance practices in Montenegro;
- b. Environment, Energy, and Climate: GIZ endeavours to promote sustainability in environmental, energy, and climate-related initiatives;
- c. Sustainable Economic Development: GIZ supports Montenegro's economic development through various projects.

Of course, young people are also directly or indirectly a target group of GIZ. Among other activities aimed at supporting and fostering youth and youth policies in Montenegro, it is worth highlighting GIZ's commitment to supporting the Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme and *Superschools* initiative developed within its framework.

Superschools initiative is part of a multi donor project co-financed by the European Union and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, implemented by GIZ and RYCO. This initiative empowers secondary schools, students, and teachers to engage in school-to-school exchanges across the region, participate in capacity-building activities, and establish networks.

During the first *Superschools* Open Call, RYCO received 127 exchange proposals, while more than 412 schools from the Western Balkans used the online platform for networking with other schools. Overall, 30 supported projects were aimed at supporting the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes and intercultural learning and dialogue among schools, students, and their communities. Within this call, 4 schools from Montenegro were supported.

98 Information on this for 2021 available at: <https://www.osce.org/mission-to-montenegro/505723>; Information on this for 2022 available at: <https://www.osce.org/me/mission-to-montenegro/514258>.

99 The website is available at: <https://omladinskakartica.me/>.



In the second cycle of *Superschools* programme, 50 projects were awarded, involving 100 secondary schools from the region, all of which will contribute to the implementation of RYCO's mission in the Western Balkans. Seven secondary schools from Montenegro are part of the second cycle of *Superschools* implementation.

5.1.7. Embassies in Montenegro

Among the mentioned donors, foreign embassies in Montenegro play a significant role in development of youth policies, as many of them issue calls for funding civil society organisations dealing with topics directly or indirectly related to youth.

For example, in March 2023, the U.S. Embassy in Podgorica and its Department of Media, Culture, and Education announced a call for projects within the annual Small Grants Programme of the Democracy Commission. Through this programme, the Embassy supported initiatives that contributed to open and competitive political processes and the protection of human rights. For this call for projects, the Embassy was expecting project proposals that promote tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity in the society of Montenegro. One of the thematic areas was human rights protection and promotion of tolerance, especially among young people.¹⁰⁰

Another example is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Italy, which in August 2023 published a public call *Bando Balcani 2023* aimed at financially supporting projects facilitating Italian participation in international peace and humanitarian initiatives and initiatives for the protection of human rights, through the Embassy of the Republic of Italy in Podgorica. One of the thematic areas was the inclusion and empowerment of young generations, women, and minorities in the processes of regional reconciliation and European integration. The total available funding amounted to 300,000 euros.¹⁰¹

5.2. Donors' coordination

Despite numerous analyses and recommendations provided to institutions regarding donor coordination, there is minimal formal or structured donor coordination at either the sector or sub-sector level managed by authorities. Initial efforts to institutionalise donor coordination began in 2008, facilitated by UN, OSCE, and EU Delegation to Montenegro.

In Montenegro, overall donor coordination is centralised and overseen by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Directorate General for Economic and Cultural Diplomacy (DGECD) was established with the primary responsibility of implementing and coordinating development and humanitarian aid policies. DGECD's mandate includes establishing a legal framework, collecting data on provided aid, and preparing the methodology for calculating its value. In 2016, DGECD was expected to develop a database to track incoming donor assistance and Montenegro's allocations for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Although

100 The call is available at: <https://me.usembassy.gov/me/poziv-za-projekte-program-malih-grantova-demokratske-komisije-za-2023-godinu/>. (Accessed on 24 September 2023).

101 The public call is available at https://ambpodgorica.esteri.it/ambasciata_podgorica/it/ambasciata/news/dall_ambasciata/2023/08/pubblicato-il-bando-balcani-2023.html. (Accessed on 24 September 2023).



an advanced version of the database was anticipated to be ready by November 2016, it has not been created yet due to the absence of suitable software tools.

In this context, it is essential to highlight that a project supported by UNDP was launched in 2019 with the aim of strengthening capacities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in international development cooperation and international aid.¹⁰²

However, EC's Montenegro Report 2022¹⁰³ states the following:

On development policy and humanitarian aid, amendments to the Law on international development cooperation and international humanitarian assistance are being prepared, with the aim to improve the [economy's] legal and institutional framework in these areas. A database on donor support projects that would use the OECD Development Assistance Committee methodology remains to be developed.

Montenegro should continue working on this chapter in accordance with its overall action plan on external relations.

The EU Delegation, UN agencies, and OSCE are, as previously stressed, prominent donors and coordinate closely amongst themselves and other donors. However, there is no specific mechanism for coordination of donor activities, particularly in the field of youth. Having said that, donor coordination in the field of youth policy represents one of the biggest challenges in supporting youth projects and programmes, and project impacts and results.

By adopting a more inclusive approach to donor coordination, which involves multiple stakeholders, encourages knowledge sharing, and utilises technology-driven solutions, Montenegro can further enhance the effectiveness of its development efforts. Such holistic coordination efforts will contribute to achieving development goals and promoting sustainable growth in the economy in every aspect, including the one regarding youth and youth policies.

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

Despite numerous assessments designed to capture the needs of Montenegro's youth, donors have typically implemented programmes based on their own priorities. These efforts have primarily focused on enhancing the capacities of institutions and organisations through capacity-building initiatives. However, there has been a noticeable gap in addressing the specific needs of youth or involving them more extensively. While there are expectations for institutions and organisations to engage in various youth-related activities, the actual approach of involving young people has proven to be insufficiently effective and engaging.

Thus, to better engage central and local organisations working with youth, it is imperative to adopt a new approach. This approach should prioritise the identification of key youth-related issues, allowing for the implementation of meaningful and sustainable projects and programmes. Such initiatives should be designed to address the fundamental needs of young individuals, including economic

102 More information available at:

<https://www.undp.org/montenegro/projects/official-development-assistance-and-humanitarian-aid-sending>.

103 Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2022_en. (Accessed on 24 September 2023).



and social security. Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize the importance of both formal and non-formal education opportunities and promote a vibrant cultural environment. These actions are crucial for achieving the desired outcomes effectively and ensuring long-term impact in the youth sector.

Unfortunately, the absence of new YS in Montenegro since 2021 signifies a critical gap in addressing the unique and evolving needs of the economy's youth population. Youth is a dynamic and diverse demographic group that experiences shifting challenges and aspirations over time. Without a comprehensive and updated YS, Montenegro risks falling behind in addressing these evolving needs, which could lead to missed opportunities for youth development, social progress, and sustainable growth.

The challenges faced by youth in Montenegro have likely evolved since the last YS was adopted. Factors such as changes in the labour market, advancements in technology, shifts in social and political landscapes, and global events like COVID-19 pandemic, can significantly impact the lives of young people. These shifts may require new policy approaches, innovative programmes, and targeted interventions to support youth in overcoming emerging obstacles and seizing opportunities.

Additionally, it has been already explained that the initial Programme for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy was approved by the Government on 16 January 2020, and received a budget allocation of approximately EUR 700,000.00 for its execution in 2020. This Programme leaned on the previously conducted Youth Needs Analysis and encompassed a range of measures and activities aimed at empowering Montenegro's youth, addressing various aspects of public concern, and fostering collaboration across different sectors involving all relevant stakeholders in youth policy. As part of this Programme, for instance, the former MSY set up youth services across the economy. However, despite the legal obligation, since then no new Youth Needs Analyses have been conducted, nor have new Programmes for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy been adopted.

The fact that no new Youth Needs Analyses have been conducted, and no new Programmes for Achieving Public Interest in Youth Policy have been adopted since the initial Programme in 2020, points to a significant policy gap. Conducting regular Needs Analyses is essential for understanding the evolving challenges, aspirations, and needs of Montenegro's youth population. It provides a data-driven foundation for policymaking and programme development, ensuring that youth policies remain relevant and effective.

However, the available analyses, mostly deriving from the civil society sector, clearly indicate that youth unemployment should be a priority topic addressed by all relevant stakeholders. Due to the long-term challenges faced by youth in Montenegro, caused mainly by the lack of employment opportunities and lack of knowledge and skills, the area donors should prioritise in the field of youth and youth policies is employment.

The persistent issue of unemployment, particularly when compared to the EU average, demands focused attention and resources. It is imperative that funding for programmes and initiatives addresses this challenge, while equipping young individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in both employment and entrepreneurship. The existing programmes and initiatives have yielded limited long-term results in addressing critical youth issues. Therefore, it is crucial that



future endeavours prioritise areas such as the labour market, labour mobility, youth employment, and active inclusion. Key components should include technical and vocational training, life skills development, work readiness programmes, job placement services, entrepreneurship support, and financial inclusion.

Additionally, fostering constructive relations between stakeholders, including donors, local self-governments, and institutions, is essential to establish sustainable and enduring mechanisms for youth employment. Collaboration with educational institutions and the labour market is particularly critical. While other entities involved in youth policies, such as schools, may also be engaged, it is imperative to re-evaluate monitoring mechanisms to ensure the achievement of long-term outcomes. In essence, concerted efforts from all relevant stakeholders are required to address youth employment effectively.

5.4. Critical assessment

Examining the role of donor organisations in shaping youth policies and opportunities in Montenegro, one reveals a landscape marked by both notable achievements and critical shortcomings. In this assessment, the report will closely scrutinise the existing donor involvement, highlighting areas where improvements and strategic adjustments are essential to ensure effective youth development in the economy.

One of the most glaring shortcomings in Montenegro's youth policies is the absence of a comprehensive and updated YS since 2021. This deficiency poses significant challenges for the donor community. Donors rely on policies and strategies to guide their funding and initiatives, ensuring alignment with the host economy's priorities. Without a current YS, there is a lack of a clear policy framework, making it difficult for donors to prioritise their investments effectively.

Furthermore, data is a crucial aspect affected by the lack of an updated YS. The aforementioned Needs Analyses and youth-related data should inform policy development. But, the absence of the latest data and insights into the evolving challenges and aspirations of Montenegro's youth hampers donors' ability to make evidence-based decisions. Consequently, donor-funded programmes may not effectively address the most current and pressing issues facing Montenegro's youth, potentially leading to a disconnect between donor initiatives and the reality on the ground. This is a matter of concern for many interview participants as well.

In addition to the absence of an updated YS, the coordination among donors involved in youth-related projects in Montenegro remains limited. Donor coordination at both the sector and sub-sector levels is insufficiently structured. To enhance the effectiveness of youth development efforts, donors should adopt a more inclusive approach to coordination that involves multiple stakeholders, encourages knowledge sharing, and utilises technology-driven solutions. Improved coordination will ensure that resources are optimally deployed to benefit Montenegro's youth.

Effective coordination among donors is also hindered by the absence of an updated YS. Effective coordination requires a common reference point for understanding the economy's youth development priorities. Without it, there can be overlaps in funding or gaps in addressing crucial



issues. Moreover, donors often seek to influence policy development and implementation in the economies where they operate. An updated YS serves as a valuable tool for shaping youth policies and strategies. Without it, donors may have limited leverage in advocating for policy changes that benefit youth.

While donor initiatives often focus on policy development, it is equally crucial to strengthen policy implementation mechanisms. Donors should consider supporting efforts to ensure that policies are effectively translated into actionable programmes and that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are in place to measure the impact of these policies on youth.

Efforts should also be made to bridge the gap between education and employment opportunities. Donors can support initiatives that promote technical and vocational training, life skills development, work readiness programmes, job placement services, entrepreneurship support, and financial inclusion. These programmes should align with the evolving demands of the labour market.

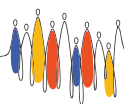
Finally, donors should prioritise transparency in their funding processes and reporting. This includes clear communication about funding opportunities, application procedures, and evaluation criteria. Transparent reporting of the outcomes and impacts of donor-funded projects is also essential for accountability and learning.



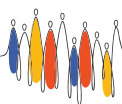
5.5. Tabular comparison

Table 5: Donors Activity by Year (2020-2023)

Name of the donor	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report)	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
European Commission	European Exchange Programme for Entrepreneurs European Solidarity Corps (ESC) ERASMUS+ Programme Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Programmes European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Europe for Citizens Creative Europe, etc.	European Exchange Programme for Entrepreneurs European Solidarity Corps (ESC) ERASMUS+ Programme Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) Programmes Thematic Programme on Human Rights and Democracy Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans Project (CC4WBs), etc.	Despite numerous analyses and recommendations provided to institutions regarding donor coordination, there is minimal formal or structured donor coordination at either the sector or sub-sector level managed by authorities of Montenegro. The EU Delegation, UN agencies, OSCE and other international donors are, as previously stressed, prominent donors and coordinate closely amongst themselves and with the other donors. However, there is no specific mechanism for coordination of donor activities, particularly in the field of youth. Having said that, donor coordination in the field of youth policy represents one of the biggest challenges in supporting youth projects and programmes, and project impacts and results in Montenegro.
UN System in Montenegro	Youth Innovation Laboratory Opportunities Programme Joint Programme Activate! Integrated Social Protection and Employment to Accelerate Progress for Young People in Montenegro Dialogue for the Future Regional Programme, etc.	Support to development of YS for the period 2023-2027 Opportunities Programme Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2), etc.	
RYCO	First Open Call 2017 Second Open Call 2018 Third Open Call 2019 Fourth Open Call 2020, etc.	First Open Call 2017 Second Open Call 2018 Third Open Call 2019 Fourth Open Call 2020 Open Call entitled RYCOnecting Youth 2023 Western Balkans School Exchange Scheme, etc.	



Name of the donor	2020 - 2021 (based on the previous report)	2023 (current status)	Critical Assessment
OSCE Mission to Montenegro	CSOs Capacity Building Programme Leaders Against Intolerance and Violent Extremism Programme Support to RYCO Programme, etc.	Programme for capacity-building of administrators in youth services EYCA Support Programme RYCO Support Programme, etc.	
The Council of Europe	Support to EYCA Programme in Montenegro Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye (HF II) 2019-2022 ROMACTED Project, etc.	Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye 2023-2026 (HFIII), etc.	
GIZ	Internship Programme of German Business, etc.	Superschools Programme in cooperation with RYCO, etc.	
Embassies	U.S. Embassy: Democracy Commission Small Grants Programme Public Affairs Section Grants Programme Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation Media Professionalisation Assistance Programme, etc.	U.S. Embassy: Small Grants Programme of the Democracy Commission, etc. Italian Embassy: Bando Balcani 2023 Grants Programme, etc.	



CHAPTER 6: GOOD PRACTICE AND GAPS ANALYSIS

Building on the structure established in earlier sections of this report, this chapter will uncover the best approaches and initiatives that are making a positive impact on the lives of young people. Moreover, this chapter critically examines areas where challenges persist, and resource allocation falls short, all with the overarching goal of gaining deeper insights into how Montenegro can better support its youth population.

6. 1. Good practice

Montenegro's youth policy framework exhibits several exemplary practices that highlight the nation's commitment to youth development and empowerment. These practices, rooted in inclusivity, advocacy, collaboration, and innovative programmes, contribute to fostering a conducive environment for Montenegro's young population. In this sub-chapter, key good practices that have shaped Montenegro's youth policy landscape are explored as follows:

- A. Inclusive Policy Development:** The process of developing and implementing youth policy in Montenegro has consistently prioritised inclusivity. This approach spans from the adoption of LoY. Montenegro actively engages a diverse array of institutions and civil society organisations dedicated to youth causes. Consultations and public debates involving young people are integral components, ensuring that youth perspectives are central to policy decisions. The involvement of youth policy professionals, along with international collaboration, enriches the knowledge base underpinning youth policy development. This approach was applied even during the development of YS 2017-2021, as well as YS 2023-2027 which is yet to be adopted.
- B. Elevated Government Commitment:** This relates to the year 2019 when, thanks to public advocacy of various stakeholders, the Government of Montenegro established the Ministry of Sports and Youth. This strategic move elevated the importance of youth policies, providing a dedicated governmental structure responsible for youth affairs. This decision enhanced the visibility and significance of youth-related initiatives within the Government's agenda.
- C. Representative Youth Umbrella Organisation:** Montenegro now boasts a representative youth umbrella organisation, YNM. It was officially recognised as the umbrella youth organisation in 2020, and is the result of collaboration among 35 youth organisations, entities working with young people, and youth alliances and unions. YNM's mission is to advocate for young people's rights and interests, propose solutions to systemic challenges, facilitate stakeholder connections in youth policy, and bolster the capacities of its member organisations.
- D. European Youth Card Programme:** EYCA Programme stands as a shining example of youth-oriented initiatives in Montenegro. Supported by MSY, EYCA provides citizens of Montenegro



aged 13-29 with access to over 270 discounts within the economy and more than 70,000 discounts across Europe. This programme significantly improves the quality of life for young people and has garnered recognition through strategic documents such as the Mid-term Government Work Programme of Montenegro (2022-2024) and Empowerment Programme of the European Youth Card (2022-2024). Strong partnerships with government institutions, academia, business sector, civil society, local authorities, and domestic and international organisations have contributed to EYCA's position as the most utilised and popular youth programme in Montenegro.

These good practices collectively exemplify Montenegro's dedication to nurturing its youth population, fostering inclusivity, advocacy, collaboration, and innovation in youth policy, and creating a brighter future for its young citizens.

6.2. Gaps analysis

Within Montenegro's youth policy framework, a series of critical assessments shed light to various shortcomings and challenges that demand immediate attention. These evaluations offer valuable insights into the existing gaps and issues, ultimately impacting the efficacy of youth policies in Montenegro.

One of the primary challenges lies in the limited implementation of established youth policies and programmes. Despite having a robust legal foundation, including LoY, the translation of these policies into practical actions on the ground has proven to be a significant hurdle. The inadequacy of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of youth policies further compounds this issue. Effective monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure that policies are executed as intended, achieve their objectives, and utilise resources efficiently. In Montenegro, these mechanisms have demonstrated inadequacies, resulting in the lack of accountability and transparency in youth-related initiatives. The absence of proper monitoring and evaluation makes it challenging to assess the impact of youth programmes, identify areas for improvement, and hold responsible parties accountable for achieving desired outcomes. Consequently, youth policy initiatives may fall short to deliver their intended benefits, and resources may be misallocated.

Montenegro's youth policy has also been significantly affected by the political instability and frequent changes in government. These political shifts introduce an element of uncertainty and inconsistency in the development and implementation of youth programmes and strategies. One of the key challenges arising from political instability is the disruption of continuity in youth policy planning and execution. When new governments assume power, they often bring different priorities and approaches to youth-related issues. This can lead to the suspension or redirection of ongoing programmes and initiatives, resulting in a lack of consistency in addressing the evolving needs of young people.

Efforts should be made to depoliticise youth policy to some extent, ensuring that it remains a consistent and bipartisan priority regardless of changes in government. Establishing mechanisms for cross-party collaboration and involving youth representatives in the decision-making process can contribute to more stable and effective youth policy implementation, ultimately benefiting Montenegro's young population.



Furthermore, coordination among various entities involved in youth policy can be enhanced. While local self-governments are responsible for implementing youth policies at the municipal level, disparities exist in their capacity and commitment to addressing youth issues. Some municipalities lack dedicated units for youth affairs, leading to uneven access to youth services and opportunities. Additionally, the effectiveness of LAPYs varies, and there are inconsistencies in their compliance with relevant legislation at economy level.

The establishment and operation of youth services are crucial components of Montenegro's youth policy. However, the legal framework governing youth services has been described as centralised, hindering their effectiveness. Challenges also include limited roles for administrators and a clear dichotomy between youth services established by MSY and other stakeholders, resulting in inconsistencies in youth work approaches.

Additionally, the delayed establishment of YC, as an expert advisory body, raises questions about the commitment of political authorities to engage with civil society and youth. This delay indicates a missed opportunity for inclusive decision-making processes that consider the diverse needs and perspectives of young people. Moreover, the formation of Local Youth Councils, although not mandatory under LoY, can facilitate local youth involvement in policy discussions. However, their formation depends on local self-governments' discretion, potentially leading to disparities in youth engagement across municipalities.

In conclusion, Montenegro has established a solid legal framework for youth policy. However, addressing challenges related to inclusivity, YC establishment, local youth engagement disparities, institutional stability, intersectoral collaboration, and youth services' quality is crucial. A concerted effort from government authorities, civil society, and other stakeholders is needed to create a more effective and responsive youth policy framework that truly serves the diverse needs of young Montenegrins.

6.3. Recommendations for the future

As Montenegro's youth policy framework faces critical gaps and challenges, it is imperative to outline concrete recommendations for moving forward. These recommendations build on the previous assessments and aim to address the identified shortcomings while fostering a more supportive environment for the economy's youth.

A. Policy Stakeholders:

- 1. Depoliticise Youth Policy:** Work towards further depoliticising youth policy by establishing cross-party collaboration mechanisms. Involve youth representatives in the decision-making process to maintain stability and continuity in youth policy, regardless of changes in government;
- 2. Enhance Trust and Youth Participation:** Invest in development of youth-friendly mechanisms that foster trust in institutions and processes, ensuring consistent youth



participation and structured dialogue between decision-makers, young people, and youth organisations at both local and central levels;

- 3. Establish Coordination Mechanisms:** Create a coordination mechanism, potentially under the Prime Minister's Office, responsible for synchronising efforts related to youth policy across public institutions and organisations. This coordination should enhance intersectoral cooperation, thereby achieving better alignment among ministries crucial to youth issues;
- 4. Develop Centralised Information Hub:** Develop a user-friendly application that consolidates information on various youth-related topics such as employment, culture, entrepreneurship, education, and more. This platform should serve as a one-stop source of information for youth, promoting accessibility and awareness of available resources and opportunities;
- 5. Enhance Monitoring and Reporting:** Build institutional and individual capacities for monitoring youth policy implementation at both central and local levels. Promote indicator-based reporting by all stakeholders involved in youth policy, facilitating evidence-based decision-making;
- 6. Facilitate Research Cooperation:** Foster stronger collaboration between economy-level researchers focused on youth-related issues to support evidence-based youth policy creation and implementation. This can be achieved by creating dedicated research consortia or networks that bring together experts from various institutions and backgrounds. Additionally, funding opportunities for collaborative research initiatives and the establishment of a centralised repository for shared resources and data can also further this objective;
- 7. Sustainable Funding:** Ensure sustainable and continuous funding for youth policy, emphasizing investments in human resources and long-term projects and programmes implemented for and by youth. Increase funding for civil society organisations engaged in non-formal education, volunteering, and youth participation, aligning with YS and youth development needs;
- 8. Strengthen Local Structures:** Provide decent administrative grants and capacity-building support to local youth-focused CSOs, particularly those engaged in project-based activities. This should primarily be done through allocating a significant percentage of the annual budget of Montenegro to create and develop youth policy at both central and local level. Strengthening local structures is vital for achieving long-term youth policy goals;
- 9. Policy Framework Improvement:** Continuously monitor the implementation of youth policies, striving for ongoing improvements in policy coordination, adequate funding, and comprehensive reporting;
- 10. Enhance Youth Clubs and Centres:** Improve the selection process for youth service administrators to ensure qualifications and impartiality. Explore options for a more decentralised approach to youth services, allowing for greater local adaptability while maintaining quality standards;



- 11. Establish Inclusive Advisory Bodies:** Expedite the establishment of YC at the central level to facilitate inclusive decision-making processes. Encourage the formation of LYCs across municipalities to ensure local youth involvement in policy discussions.

B. CSOs Focused on Youth Policy Issues:

- 1. Empower Collaboration:** CSOs should strengthen collaborations with public stakeholders, youth structures, and companies to encourage proactive youth participation in the youth policy implementation process. These partnerships can be formalised through memorandums of understanding or collaboration agreements, allowing for coordinated efforts in encouraging youth participation in the implementation of youth policies. Furthermore, platforms for knowledge sharing should be established to disseminate best practices and research findings. Lastly, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place to assess the effectiveness of collaboration efforts, ensuring that youth's voices are genuinely heard in the youth policy implementation process.
- 2. Diverse Representation:** In managing CSOs and implementing youth programmes, it is important to prioritise inclusion of a more diverse range of young individuals (youth with disabilities, youth from rural areas, etc.), going beyond the stereotypical focus on high-achievers or youth from urban areas.
- 3. Revised Engagement Approaches:** Embrace innovative and youth-friendly consultation processes and platforms (such as RCC's WBYL) to involve young people in decision-making effectively. Develop structured dialogues with youth to ensure their meaningful participation in shaping policies.

C. Donors:

- 1. Long-Term Focus:** Align programmes with the long-term needs of youth and improve procedures to ensure sustained engagement. Prioritise investments in areas such as employment and education;
- 2. Horizontal Youth Component:** Recognise youth issues and needs as essential components of donors' strategic priorities. Shift from "mainstream" or "integrated" approaches to incorporating specific horizontal youth components into strategies;
- 3. Transparency and Information Sharing:** Enhance transparency by providing detailed information on donor policies, strategies, and funding allocation for youth-related projects. Establish mechanisms for sharing information about supported projects or programmes among donors;
- 4. Coordination Database:** Support the creation of a donor coordination database focused on youth-related initiatives. This could be done following the example and the methodology of RCC's WBYL regional donor coordination mechanism: [Youth Actions Donor Assistance Platform](#);



5. **Support Key Dimensions:** Continue supporting public institutions and CSOs, with a specific focus on dimensions critical to youth, including employment, education, media, data and digital literacy, health, and social protection;
6. **Institutional Funding:** Provide institutional funding for the youth sector, including organisations, associations, networks, and other youth-related entities. This support should ensure the sustainability of operations and promote skills development.

These recommendations offer a comprehensive roadmap for improving Montenegro's youth policy framework, emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts among policy stakeholders, CSOs, and donors to empower and enhance the lives of the economy's youth.



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ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of interviews

No.	NAME OF STAKEHOLDER	SECTOR	CONTACT PERSON	POSITION
1.	Youth Network of Montenegro	NYC	Mr. Miloš Marković	President of the Governing Board
2.	Network for Youth Activism of Montenegro	CSO	Mr. David Vukičević	President
3.	Centre for Youth Education (establisher of European Youth Card in Montenegro)	CSO	Mr. Jugoslav Radović	Executive Director
4.	High School Students Union of Montenegro	CSO	Ms. Anja Vojvodić	President of the Governing Board
6.	Forum MNE	CSO	Ms. Jelena Fuštić	Executive Director
7.	Student Parliament (University of Montenegro)	Student Organisation	Mr. Andrej Vukčević	President
8.	RYCO	Donor	Ms. Jelena Fuštić	Member of the Governing Board
10.	RYCO	Donor	Ms. Bojana Lalatović	Program
11.	European Youth Card Association	Donor	Mr. Jugoslav Radović	Vice-President of the Governing Board



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