

**MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND  
IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS  
IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN THE  
WESTERN BALKANS**

**REPORT**

**ALBANIA**



Tirana, January 2021

Title: MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – ALBANIA REPORT

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The report is based on comprehensive research, organized and overseen by the Open Society Foundation in Albania, and involving six researchers, one in each Western Balkans six economies between September 2020 - January 2021 with Blerjana Bino as Research Team Leader and Klodjan Seferaj, Programme Manager for European Integration and Good Governance at OSFA.

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Regional Cooperation Council and the European Union.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes the current situation of youth policies in Albania, identifying the existing support and gaps in the financing of youth actions and exploring youth participation in decision making processes by highlighting best practices and providing recommendations. In addition, the report outlines a mapping of donor programs in the area of youth and provides a brief overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The methodology for drafting and updating the report is based on desk and empirical research conducted during the period October – December 2020. The desk research consisted of analyzing laws, strategies, policy documents, and other reports related to youth policies. Statistics from various resources, but mostly from the Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT), and the most recent reports from public institutions and international organizations on Albania's youth agenda are incorporated. The empirical research was carried out through in-depth interviews (16)<sup>1</sup> with stakeholders in the policy sector, civil society, donor community, and youth organizations.

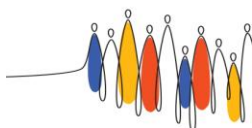
According to INSTAT, the youth population (ages 15-29) in Albania has decreased from 24.91% in 2016 to 23.4% in 2020,. There are no data available regarding the ethnicity of the young population. Official data shows a decline of 4.69% in the number of young people in education, particularly at the high school and university levels from 2018 to 2020. In 2019, young people aged 15-29 Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) made up to 28.9% of young people in total. The official youth unemployment rate is 20.7%. as of December 2020. There are no specific data on youth migration, but various sources consulted for this report note that young, highly educated, and skilled individuals are more likely to leave Albania.

Youth rights are guaranteed in the Albanian Constitution. Albania approved the Law on Youth at the end of 2019 following a broad consultation process. The law enables the creation of the National Youth Council (NYC), the Local Youth Council (LYC), and the National Youth Representative Organization (NYRO), and envisages a fund for youth grants from the public budget. Its approval is an essential positive step towards improved youth policymaking, as would be the finalizing and approval of all bylaws (3 out of 5 have been approved), and the full establishment of the relevant youth structures. Albania lacks a National Strategy on Youth (NSY) and the current National Action Plan on Youth (NAPY) terminated in 2020, with no monitoring or evaluation having been conducted yet. However, this report indicates that, considering the continued requests from youth organizations for the need to have a national strategy, the Government of Albania (GoA) will most probably move forward with a NSY 2022-2026. This presents a window of opportunity for youth Not Profit Organizations (NPOs),

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*Annex 3 – List of **interviewees*** presents full list of interviews conducted for the purposes of this report.



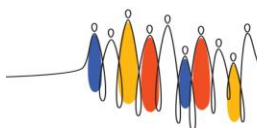
networks and other stakeholders to participate in the drafting process and to lobby the GoA to develop a suitable NYS that responds to the needs of youth through a participatory, inclusive, and transparent approach.

In terms of funding, prior to the approval of the Law on Youth, the main funding mechanisms for youth were through the grants for NPOs of the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS), other sources of funding in the areas of education, culture, and art; a few grants by municipalities based on donor-funded programs, and civil society and youth-specific grants from international and local donors. In addition, the GoA contributes financially to the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and the Erasmus+ Program. The GoA has in place certain instruments for supporting youth, such as the Excellence Fund for Education, Employment Promotion Programs, the National Program on Work Placement and Internships, the Youth Card, and other initiatives related to Vocational Education and Training (VET), entrepreneurship, and, recently, start-up development.

Considering that youth is a crosscutting issue, it can in principle benefit from funding from various policies and budget programs. Nonetheless, the sources consulted for this report confirm that the funding targeted specifically at youth has been limited. With the approval of the new Law on Youth, youth will receive funding from the public budget intended for youth. The National Agency for Youth (NAY) will be responsible for the management of youth grant funds, and the first call is expected to open in early 2021.

The Law on Youth envisages the establishment of institutions that will improve coordination and communication and provide a more sustainable solution to youth participation in decision making. A key actor will definitely be the NYC as an advisory body to function under the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth (MESY). Chaired by the minister responsible for youth, it consists of 16 members and its main function will be to present to MESY priorities of youth policy, budget, and activities. Of particular relevance is the establishment of NYRO as an independent youth representative organization. A call for expressions of interest for existing youth organisations and networks to establish NYRO will be launched once the CoM' decision is approved.

Albania currently does not have a National Youth Council. Considering the absence of such a council from 2013 to 2020, other networks and organisations have tried to fill in this gap. The two largest networks in this field are the National Youth Congress of Albania (NYCA) and the Albanian National Youth Network (ANYN). However, neither of them has enjoyed any special status by the MESY and are not recognized as official partners. The establishment of NYC, LYC and NYRO is essential for further enhancing the youth policy framework in Albania and ensuring meaningful participation. It is expected that these new structures will need support (resources, capacity development, infrastructure, operating procedures, communication and



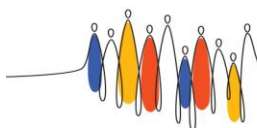
outreach) in the initial phase to ensure not only efficient and effective operations, but to build trust with youth organisations, NPOs, civil society, other stakeholders, and youth.

In terms of mapping donors' interventions in youth, they are focused on education, VET, employment, social inclusion, and participation in general. These remain priority areas, but, increasingly, attention is being paid to security issues (youth and radicalization and extremism, or youth and organized crime); digital skills, innovation, entrepreneurship; youth and arts, culture and sports; youth and science; youth active civic and political participation. With the COVID-19 pandemic, well-being, and the mental health of young people, and their access to social and health care services has also become a focal area of interest. Also, supporting youth NPOs or others who work with youth in disaster risk reduction is another potential focus area. Media and data literacy for youth are crucial in order to fight disinformation and fake news, and to support engaged citizens. Migration, and particularly the brain drain, of youth professionals is another priority area.

On an overall note, the report finds that, despite progress in youth policy and funding mechanisms, Albania still needs to further enhance its efforts to develop a fully functional system which responds to the needs of young people, ensures inclusivity, and creates an enabling environment for youth participation and empowerment.

Inter-institutional and cross-sectorial cooperation in the area of youth and related issues is essential. Amendments to the legal framework are necessary such as including the definition of 'youth workers' based on the European model, which defines standards for youth centers and safe youth space, and that contains a better definition of what an investment in youth is. It is essential to further consolidate structural policy dialogue with youth, and building more effective cooperation and trust by enhancing accountability and transparency from public institutions responsible for youth policy and its implementation.

The report is structured as follows: the first chapter presents youth population data and the second chapter analyses the youth policy framework and the other sectors impacting youth. The third chapter analyzes the funding framework, and the fourth chapter focuses on analyzing youth participation and what youth cooperation platforms exist on the national, regional, and local levels. Major interventions by key donors and development partners targeting the youth population are discussed in the fifth chapter, including an explanation of coordination and priority areas for youth. The concluding sixth chapter identifies good practices and gaps based on which main recommendations are structured according to the key actors presented, including a focus on the impact of COVID-19 on youth.

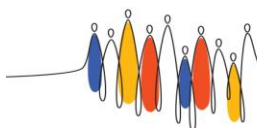


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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASCS	Agency for the Support of Civil Society
CRCA Albania/ANYN	Albanian National Youth Network (informal group)
CoM	Council of Ministers
EC	European Commission
GoA	Government of Albania
EAMIS	External Assistant Management Information System
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung office for Albania
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
IDM	Institute for Democracy and Mediation
ILO	International Labor Organization
INPO	International Non-Profit Organizations
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics in Albania
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung
LYC	Local Youth Councils
MoC	Ministry of Culture
MEFA	Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs
MESY	Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
MFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
MSWY	Ministry for Social Welfare and Youth
MTBP	Medium Term Budget Planning
NAPY	National Action Plan for Youth
NAS	National Alliance of Students
NAY	National Agency for Youth
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, Training
NESS	National Employment and Skills Strategy
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
NYCA	National Youth Congress of Albania
NYS/SHKR	National Youth Service, within the MESY
NYRO	National Youth Representative Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSFA	Open Society Foundation for Albania
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Presence in Albania
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	The United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
WB6	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia)
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy
WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework

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





## CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

This chapter presents statistics regarding youth age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment, and migration. The population of Albania on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020 was 2,845,955 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> This report primarily uses official data sources from INSTAT. In other cases, to support arguments, the report uses data published by international organizations' publications, including United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), International Labor Organization (ILO), World Bank (WB), and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Availability of youth-specific disaggregated data remains a challenge for Albania. In addition, this report finds a lack of consistency with the age category (15-24; 15-29; 15-30) used in data collection by different institutions, even though the legal definition of youth in Albania is 15-29 years old. Harmonizing categories of age groups for data collection and insuring consistency would be beneficial for youth research and evidence-based youth policy.

### 1.1. Age and gender

Albania's population is still comparatively young and its elderly population relatively small, but projections show that the population is aging fast.<sup>3</sup> Youth population (ages 15-29) has decreased from 24.91% in 2016 to 23.4% in 2020. In 2018, Albania's fertility rate of 1.37 was considered "the lowest rate in history compared to (the) 2.1 level in 2003, which represented the maximum after 1990."<sup>4</sup> In 1990, just as communism was collapsing, there were 82,125 births in the Albania and 18,193 deaths, while in 2018, there were only 28,934 births but 21,804 deaths, making the balance still positive. However, the trend is radically down, and the median age of Albanians rose from 32.6 in 2011 to 37 in 2020.<sup>5</sup> INSTAT expects that by 2031, the population will be 2.75 million, and a UN projection foresees it to shrink to 2.66 million by 2050 and to only 1.9 million in 2100, in a best-case scenario.<sup>6</sup>

*Table 1: Youth population by age and gender 2019 vs 2020*

	2019			2020		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
<b>15-19</b>	104,737	102,455	207,191	100,459	96,874	197,333
<b>20-24</b>	118,522	118,460	236,981	112,810	113,615	226,425
<b>25-29</b>	120,969	116,409	237,376	120,166	117,441	237,607

<sup>2</sup> "Social and demographic indicator", INSTAT, 2020, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/popullsia/#tab3> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> "The Clock Ticks for Albania's 'Demographic Dividend'", available at <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/14/the-clock-ticks-for-albanias-demographic-dividend/> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> "Social and demographic indicator", INSTAT, 2020, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/popullsia/#tab3> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> UN World Population Prospects 2019 available at [https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Files/1\\_Indicators%20\(Standard\)/EXCEL\\_FILES/1\\_Population/WPP2019\\_POP\\_F01\\_1\\_TOTAL\\_POPULATION\\_BOTH\\_SEXES.xlsx](https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Files/1_Indicators%20(Standard)/EXCEL_FILES/1_Population/WPP2019_POP_F01_1_TOTAL_POPULATION_BOTH_SEXES.xlsx) (Accessed October 4, 2020).



Source: Institute of Statistics, 2020, compiled by the author

INSTAT population data shows that there is a slight decline in the population of young men: from 344,228 in 2019, to 333,435 in 2020. The same decline is noticed for young women: from 337,324 in 2019, to 327,930 in 2020.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2. Education and employment

Education and employment for young people in Albania remains one of the crucial issues to be addressed. The GoA recognizes that young people face an added challenge in their transition to the labor market, and that youth unemployment, despite improvements, still remains high.<sup>8</sup> According to a recent survey of youth perceptions<sup>9</sup>, the level and quality of education, considered to be strongly related to employment, remains an issue of persisting concern among Albanian youth. Their concerns about education relates especially to the need to match educational programs to labor market demands. Despite an increase of those undergoing vocational education, completing university studies remains a fundamental objective in the conviction that a university degree provides for better employment opportunities.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.2.1. Education

The data shows an evident decline of 4.69% in the number of young people in education, particularly at the high school and university levels. In 2019-2020, the total number enrolled in education was 611,062, as compared to 641,161 in 2018-2019. In 2019, 34,982 pupils graduated from elementary education and 34,021 pupils graduated from upper secondary education. In upper secondary education, 47.9% men and 52.1% women were graduated. Pupils graduating from VET programs made up 11.2% of all graduates in upper secondary education.<sup>11</sup>

In 2019, 34,891 students graduated from tertiary education, or 1.6% more than in 2018. Among the graduates this year, 66.4% are women and 33.6% are men. Graduates in Bachelor programs consist of 53.6% of the total graduate students. The field in which more students are graduated in all programs is "Business, Administration and Law," at 27.8%.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Population of Albania", INSTAT, 2020, available at [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6850/population-on-1-january-2020\\_.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6850/population-on-1-january-2020_.pdf) (Accessed October 11, 2020). p.6.

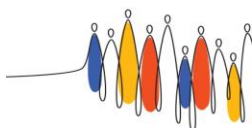
<sup>8</sup> Economic Reform Programme 2020-2022, Government of Albania, January 2020, available at <https://new.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Economic-Reform-Programme-2020-2022.pdf> (Accessed January 4, 2021). p. 115.

<sup>9</sup> "Youth Study Albania 2018-2019", FES, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15261.pdf> (Accessed September 30, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "Social and demographic indicator", INSTAT 2020, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/popullsia/#tab3> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> "Social and demographic indicator", INSTAT, 2020, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/popullsia/#tab3> (Accessed October 4, 2020).



### *1.2.2. Neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET)*

According to results of the Labor Force Survey 2019 conducted by INSTAT, in 2019, 28.9% of young people aged 15-29 were not employed and were not attending school, or any vocational training.

Within the NEET group of youth (aged 15-29 years old), 36.5% are classified as unemployed. The other part is outside the labor force because they are discouraged workers (12.7%), fulfilling domestic and family responsibilities (18.1%), or inactive for other reasons (32.7%).<sup>13</sup> Also, the quarterly data on the Labor Force Survey, published for each quarter separately during 2020 does not include the rate of youth in the NEET category. The latest data available is that during the third quarter of 2020, the labor force participation rate for young people aged 15-29 was 53.3%.<sup>14</sup>

### *1.2.3. Employment and unemployment rate*

The official youth (15-29) unemployment rate is 20.7%, as of December 2020.<sup>15</sup> In annual terms, the youth unemployment rate shows a downward trend. Compared to the third quarter of 2019, the youth unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2020 is 0.7% points lower.<sup>16</sup> However, INSTAT official data is not always the same as data presented by other organisations. For instance, in September 2020, the World Bank reported, based on ILO estimates, that youth (15-24 years old) unemployment in Albania is as high as 28.7%.<sup>17</sup> Another report from the European Commission (EC) states the unemployment rate for youth aged 15-29 at 21.5% for 2019.<sup>18</sup>

There is still a clear disparity in employment rates and labor force participation between young women and men. The INSTAT 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarterly Labor Force Survey for 2020 shows that the unemployment rate is 20.3% among young men and 21.4% among young women.<sup>19</sup> The official data shows a slight decline in the unemployment rate compared to the same period in 2019 when the unemployment rate was 20.6% among young men and 22.4% among young women.<sup>20</sup> The young women's labor force participation rate in the third quarter of 2020 was 45.6%, whereas for young men (15-29), the labor force participation for the same period is 61%. Total youth labor

<sup>13</sup> "Labor Force Survey 2019, INSTAT, 2019, available at [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6942/njoftim-per-media-lfs-vjetore-2019\\_shqip.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6942/njoftim-per-media-lfs-vjetore-2019_shqip.pdf) (Accessed December 29, 2020). p.2.

<sup>14</sup> "Quarterly Labor Force Survey: 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter", INSTAT, 2020, available at [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7815/atfp-t3-2020\\_.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7815/atfp-t3-2020_.pdf) (Accessed December 29, 2020). p.2.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.4

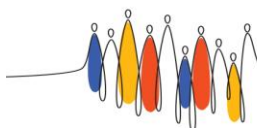
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.

<sup>17</sup> "Youth unemployment rate in Albania", World Bank, 2020, available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=AL> (Accessed December 29, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed December 29, 2020). p.58.

<sup>19</sup> "Quarterly Labor Force Survey: 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter", INSTAT, 2020, available at [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7815/atfp-t3-2020\\_.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7815/atfp-t3-2020_.pdf) (Accessed December 29, 2020). p.2.

<sup>20</sup> "Quarterly Labor Force Survey" 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter", INSTAT, 2019, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6551/lfs-q3-2019.pdf> (Accessed December 30, 2020). p.5



force participation for 2020 is 53.3%.<sup>21</sup> There is a slight increase in the overall youth participation rate in the labor force compared to 2019 when it was 52.5%. However, a slight decrease is noticed for young women, whose labor force participation in 2019 was 46%.<sup>22</sup>

Shortcomings in the educational and vocational education and training systems, coupled with the challenges to equip youth with knowledge and skills relevant to the labor market, partly contribute to the high youth unemployment rate.<sup>23</sup> A geographical division in youth labor market outcomes suggest that rural youth are more likely to be at a disadvantage in terms of employment compared to urban youth. However, currently urban/rural ratio disaggregation in all labor-related statistics and data is very limited.

### 1.3. Youth migration

Emigration is one of the reasons for Albania's declining population, and, in addition, Albania loses about EUR 559 million annually due to emigration.<sup>24</sup> According to the Trust in Governance Opinion Poll, a vast majority (65%) of respondents in the age group '18–25 years old' reported that they wanted to move abroad.<sup>25</sup> Young, highly educated and skilled individuals are more likely to leave and this emigration is not necessarily circular in the case of Albania as in other Western Balkan (WB) economies.<sup>26</sup> The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) reported, based on the World Bank estimation, that around 30% of Albanians live below the poverty line, and half of them live in extreme poverty, making poverty and unemployment the two main social problems in Albania. The youth states the lack of prospects and hope for a better future as the main reason for departing.<sup>27</sup> Another study from FES finds that there is a growing preference among young people, and especially young professionals, to emigrate to Western European economies, mainly Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK.<sup>28</sup> The challenging and ongoing transition of Albania over a long period of time, various political crises, polarization and deadlocks as well as corruption, are some of the reasons for a lack of enthusiasm among youth to excel at home.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Quarterly Labor Force Survey: 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter", INSAT, 2020, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7815/atfp-t3-2020.pdf> (Accessed December 29, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p.5

<sup>23</sup> "Youth Employment in Albania", available at <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/projects/youth-employment.html> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> WFD Cost of Youth Emigration 2019, available at [https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WFD-Web-Brochure-Albania\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WFD-Web-Brochure-Albania_FINAL.pdf) (Accessed October 4, 2020).

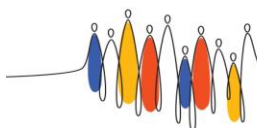
<sup>25</sup> Vrutgman, L., & Bino, B., (2020). Trust in Governance Opinion Poll 2019. Tirana: IDM, available at [UNDP Albania](https://www.undp.org/albania) (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> "Brain drain, human capital and the role of social infrastructure in the Western Balkans", Western Balkan Investment Framework, 2020, available at [https://www.wbif.eu/storage/app/media/Library/12.Meetings/2.%20Project%20Financiers%20Group/30thPFG/WBIF\\_30th\\_PFG\\_CEB\\_Brain%20and%20Skills%20Drain%20WB.pdf](https://www.wbif.eu/storage/app/media/Library/12.Meetings/2.%20Project%20Financiers%20Group/30thPFG/WBIF_30th_PFG_CEB_Brain%20and%20Skills%20Drain%20WB.pdf) (Accessed December 29 2020).

<sup>27</sup> WFD Cost of Youth Emigration 2019, available at [https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WFD-Web-Brochure-Albania\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WFD-Web-Brochure-Albania_FINAL.pdf) (Accessed October 4, 2020). p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> "Youth Study Albania 2018-2019", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15261.pdf> (Accessed September 30, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



While various organizations have conducted opinion polls on perceptions of young people on migration, very limited data is available regarding actual youth emigration. The Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the EU 2020 shows that asylum applicants in EU+ economies by Albanian citizens have increased by 4% points in 2019, ranking Albania in the top ten economies with the highest number of applicants.<sup>30</sup> However, the data is not disaggregated by group age. Regarding unaccompanied minors as asylum applicants in the EU+, 2019 saw a decline of 20 percentage points for Albania.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, there is a lack of data regarding youth brain drain, skilled and educated young people that leave for studies, or as highly skilled labor. In 2019 there were around 2.7% fewer of these unfounded asylum applications than in 2018, and almost 20% fewer than in 2017.<sup>32</sup> In 2020 the number of unfounded asylum applications lodged by Albanian nationals in the EU decreased, but remains high and requires continuous and sustained efforts, including an effort to address the phenomenon of unaccompanied minors.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> EASO Asylum Report 2020, Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union, <https://easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EASO-Asylum-Report-2020.pdf> (Accessed December 29, 2020). p. 250.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 254.

<sup>32</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf), (Accessed December 29, 2020). p.7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 7.



## CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY FRAMEWORK

This chapter analyzes the national youth policy, and its legal and institutional framework in Albania. In addition to outlining the relevant strategic documents, action plans, laws and bylaws, a critical assessment identifies achievements, challenges and remaining gaps.

### 2.1. The Constitution

Article 54 of the Albanian Constitution stipulates special protection for youth: “*Children, young people, pregnant women, and young mothers are entitled to special protection by the state.*” This article falls under the framework of fundamental liberties, social, economic, and political rights. There is no specific definition about youth in the Constitution and no other particular reference to youth. Youth rights are guaranteed within the framework of human rights and liberties envisaged in the Constitution.

### 2.2 Law on Youth

In the past five years, youth NPOs, civil society actors, international organizations, donors and stakeholders have advocated and lobbied the GoA to draft a Law on Youth. The drafting process included public consultations with stakeholders such as policymakers, experts, and representatives of interest groups including young people and youth organizations. In particular, the National Youth Congress of Albania (NYCA) and the Albanian National Youth Network (ANYN) voiced their concerns about the draft law during the consultation process. The main concern raised was regarding the alleged reduction of youth NPO independence, and the possibility of politicization of the entire field of youth work and youth activism. The Law on Youth was approved during the last session of Parliament in 2019.<sup>34</sup> The law specifies in Article 3 that the concept of youth refers to persons 15 to 29 years old.<sup>35</sup>

The law defines the activities, mechanisms, and authorities responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of young people and increases youth participation in policy-making and decision-making processes both at central and local level. The law introduces the concept of youth networks, including institutions and organizations, and young individuals, emphasizing cooperation based on active, systematic, transparent, continuous, and long-term interaction.

The law introduces the concept of safe youth spaces, but only as physical safe spaces for young people, including youth with disabilities. However, the law does not include civic spaces as empowerment platforms that enable young people to engage in governance issues. Digital safe

<sup>34</sup> Law on Youth No. 75, Date. 4.11.2019, available at <https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20191107152923ligji%20nr.%2075.%20dt.%204.11.2019.pdf> (Accessed September 25, 2020).

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*





spaces, that enable interaction virtually with other young people, has not been foreseen in the law either.

The law defines “youth work” as “*any activity of a social, cultural, educational, environmental nature by, with or for young people, in groups or individually, which aims to motivate and support young people, contributing to their personal and social development and the development of society in general.*”<sup>36</sup> However, the law does not define the criteria for “youth worker”. Interviews with stakeholders from the youth area highlight the essential need to further specify the notion of youth work and to include criteria for professionals who work with young people through the introduction of the definition of “youth worker”.

The law enables the establishment of a legal basis for two consultative youth structures: the NYC, and the LYC, which are expected to operate at the national and local level to ensure youth participation in policy and decision making. The establishment of the NYC is still in process and LYCs have been set up only in certain municipalities, mainly through ad hoc project funding rather than as a direct implementation of the law.

The law envisages the provision of sources of funding for youth policies, programs, and activities, emphasizing the contribution of local budgets in this regard, in addition to the public budget. At the same time, it provides for other legal sources of funding, such as income generated from the activities of youth organizations, donations, sponsorships, European programs, and so on. The MESY confirms that the respective bylaw for youth project funding was developed and approved in November 2020 with a forecast for the call for applications for youth grants to open in the first quarter of 2021.<sup>37</sup> However, the CoM’ decision for the definition of criteria and procedures for financing youth projects with grants from the public budget has neither been published nor made public yet.

The law envisages the establishment of the following vital structures:

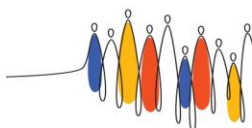
1. The institution responsible for youth is the National Agency for Youth (NAY), formerly the National Youth Service (NYS). The Council of Ministers’ (CoM) decision established NAY in September 2020.<sup>38</sup> The new director of the NAY was appointed in December 2020 and the full functioning of the re-organized NAY is expected to further progress in 2021.

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<sup>36</sup> Law on Youth No. 75, Date. 4.11.2019, available at <https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20191107152923ligj%20nr.%2075.%20dt.%204.11.2019.pdf> (Accessed September 25, 2020). Article 14.

<sup>37</sup> Based on consultation with Deputy Minister for Youth, Ms. Aspasjana Kongo, Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Tirana, January 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Prime Minister Newsroom Office, CoM’ Decision 2 September 2020, available at <https://kryeministria.al/newsroom/vendime-te-miratuara-ne-mbledhjen-e-keshillit-te-ministrave-date-2-shtator-2020/> (Accessed January 2, 2021).



2. The NYC, an advisory body which functions under the MESY, is responsible for youth. The CoM' decision of December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 sets out the criteria and procedures for the election of NYC members and its organization and functioning.<sup>39</sup>
3. LYC is an advisory body, which functions under the mayor in each municipality.
4. A National Youth Representative Organization (NYRO), will be set up as an NPO to represent youth, but the criteria for NYRO are yet to be specified by a CoM' decision.

The full implementation of the law on youth is still in process with two bylaws which have been approved and published, one that is yet to be published as mentioned above and two being in process:

1. The CoM' decision for the establishment, administration, and maintenance of the youth database and its interaction with other databases.
2. The CoM' decision for the establishment of the NYRO.

### 2.3 National Strategy on Youth

Albania adopted the NSY 2007-2013,<sup>40</sup> which presented the vision and strategic objectives on youth policies. In 2013, the new government firmly emphasized youth as a priority area. The ministry responsible at that time for youth – the Ministry for Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY) – argued that it would be better to proceed with a NAPY 2015-2020, in line with the governmental objectives, instead of developing a new NSY. Currently, Albania lacks a NSY, despite various stakeholders from youth organizations, civil society and donor community arguing for developing one. The NAPY terminated in 2020, presenting an appropriate window of opportunity for the GoA to prepare a NSY and for youth organizations and civil society to engage in the process. There is an indication that the GoA will prepare a new NSY for the period 2022-2026,<sup>41</sup> but no official announcement has been made yet.

### 2.4 National Action Plan on Youth

In 2015, the GoA adopted the NAPY 2015-2020.<sup>42</sup> NAPY's vision is aligned with the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2015-2020<sup>43</sup>, the Government's Program for Youth, the EU Youth Strategy and the National Action Plan to Implement SEE2020 Regional Strategy (2014-2020). NAPY includes six strategic objectives: i) Enhancement and participation of youth in democratic decision-making processes, ii) Enhancement of youth employment through effective labor market policies, iii) Health, sport, and environment, iv) Education of

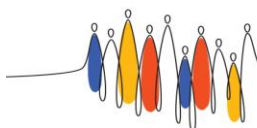
<sup>39</sup> Prime Minister Newsroom Office, CoM' Decision 2 December 2020, available at <https://kryeministria.al/newsroom/vendime-te-miratuar-ne-mbledhjen-e-keshillit-te-ministrave-date-2-dhjetor-2020/> (Accessed January 2, 2021).

<sup>40</sup> The author of this report could not find any monitoring and evaluation report for the NSY 2007-2013.

<sup>41</sup> Based on consultation with Deputy Minister for Youth, Ms. Aspasjana Kongo, Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Tirana, January 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Approved by the Council of Ministers with DCM No. 383, dated 6 May 2015 available at [https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/plani%20kombetar%20i%20veprimi%20per%20rinine%202015-2020\\_Shqip.pdf](https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/plani%20kombetar%20i%20veprimi%20per%20rinine%202015-2020_Shqip.pdf) (Accessed October 10, 2020).

<sup>43</sup> National Strategy for Development and Integration 2020 <http://www.mod.gov.al/index.php/politikate-sigurise-2/dokumente-strategjike/1816-strategjia-kombetare-per-zhvillim-dhe-integrim-2015-2020>, (Accessed October 10, 2020).





youth, v) Social protection, and vi) Culture and volunteerism. The overall objectives are divided into twenty-nine specific objectives and measurable indicators are set in place.

The implementation of the NAPY has been challenging for many interrelated reasons. First, the former MSWY had to focus more on issues of social inclusion, protection and welfare rather than youth. Second, the former MSWY, responsible for NAPY implementation, was dissolved with the new Government in September 2017. Third, the youth area passed under the responsibility of the MESY, which has had to deal primarily with the education sector rather than youth per se. This is also because of various events such as the student protests of December 2018 – January 2019, the consequences of the devastating earthquake of November 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Fourth, the focus on youth has been generally pushed forward by international donors such as is the case with the establishment of RYCO as a result of the Berlin Process.<sup>44</sup> Youth organizations argue that MESY has not published monitoring reports for NAPY<sup>45</sup> and in 2019 shifted its attention from NAPY to drafting, consulting, and approving the new law on youth.<sup>46</sup> However, the main challenge with the implementation of NAPY is the lack of dedicated funding for youth in the public budget. The lack of a funding scheme to support youth and youth NPOs, informal groups or networks hindered the engagement of youth in the implementation of NAPY, and thus its overall performance.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.5. Institutions dealing with Youth

Youth policy is cross-sectorial involving numerous actors for its implementation, as stated in article 3 of the Law on Youth., i.e.: The GoA; State administration bodies; Local self-government bodies; NPOs; Students/pupils parliaments and other legal entities for the purpose of improving the status of youth, their personal and social development, and their inclusion in social affairs.

### 2.5.1. Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth

Youth in general has not been considered as ministerial portfolio of the highest priority and during 2009-2013 has been an area under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports. During 2013-2017 the MSWY was responsible for youth policy. Since 2017, with the newly reshuffled ministries at the national level, the most important institution for youth policy is MESY. It is responsible for the overall youth policy and legal framework, monitoring implementation of youth policies', and representing GoA at the international level regarding

<sup>44</sup> More on RYCO will be analyzed in Chapter 5 and in the Comparative Report.

<sup>45</sup> Youth Report 2019-2020, CRCA, available at [https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020_0.pdf) (Accessed January 4, 2021).

<sup>46</sup> "Analysis of youth policy at central level", National Youth Congress, 2020, available at <https://krk.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Untitled-2.pdf> (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.37.

<sup>47</sup> Youth Report 2019-2020, CRCA, available at [https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020_0.pdf) (Accessed January 4, 2021), p. 37.



youth-related issues.<sup>48</sup> A dedicated Deputy-Minister for Youth is a vital part of the general policy framework on youth while the Directorate for Youth, within MESY is in charge of issues related

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<sup>48</sup> Detailed competences can be found in

Specific Objective 1: Enhancement and participation of Youth in democratic decision-making processes

1.1 Strengthening of youth NGO structures and capacities.

1.2 Increase of youth participation in decision making processes and local governance structures.

1.3 Youth awareness raising and education on the electoral process.

1.4 Enhancement of support for young people and youth organizations

**Specific Objective 2:** Enhancement of youth employment through effective labor market policies

2.1 Improvement of the regulatory framework to promote youth enterprises

2.2 Enhancement of youth professional and management qualifications

2.3 Promotion and strengthening of youth employment promotion programs

2.4 Enhancement of Employment Information Sources

2.5 Mobility

2.6 Youth Card

**Specific Objective 3:** Health, Sport and Environment

3.1 Improvement of legislation and policies for youth health and social life protection

3.2 Enhancement of health education in the education system chain

3.3 Youth awareness and education on healthy behavior

3.4 Youth Friendly Services

3.5 Strengthening and Spreading of Sport Culture

3.6 Social and health programs for youth serving time in penal institutions (penitentiary and remand system)

3.7 Environmental protection awareness activities

3.8 Youth programs/initiatives resulting in lower environmental pollution

**Specific Objective 4:** Education of Youth

4.1 Improvement of school subjects/ curriculum and teaching process

4.2 Promotion of Excellence and capacity enhancement

4.3 Support for young scientific researchers

4.4 Improvement of schools and teaching environment infrastructure

4.5 Strengthening of Vocational Education Schools

4.6 Education programs for youth out of the education system and those from minority/vulnerable groups

**Specific Objective 5:** Social protection



to youth policy. A positive development in this regard is the appointment of a new Deputy Minister for Youth in 2020 with extensive background in the youth and youth organisations.

### *2.5.2 Line ministries*

The Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE) is responsible for youth entrepreneurship, VET and innovation. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for juvenile delinquency. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) is responsible for youth health and social inclusion. The Ministry of Culture (MoC) is responsible for art and cultural policies that also target youth. The parliamentary committee dealing with youth issues is the Committee for Education and Public Information Tools.

### *2.5.3. Local self-government units*

Since 2014, Albania has undertaken a series of local government reforms under the umbrella of the broader Territorial and Administrative Reform, which have created a new and favorable framework for strengthening local government institutions and service delivery efficiency, but also re-dimensioned the challenges of advancing local democracy and citizen engagement in public affairs.<sup>49</sup>

Currently, Albania is divided into 61 municipalities and 12 administrative divisions, or districts. Municipalities, depending on their size, usually have a Directory or Unit on Social Services, where responsibilities for youth-related issues are included. The Municipality of Tirana had a dedicated Youth Directory which is subordinate to the General Department of City Promotion and consists of 5 units: Youth, Culture, Sports, Tourism and Environment. The Youth Directory has two units: projects and vocational education. The division into two units was done with transition to the new structure in June of 2020. In addition, the Municipality of Tirana has set up a Youth Agency which is responsible for the Student Card and the TEN Center which is a multifunctional space.

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## 5.1 Prevention of violence and trafficking against young people

## 5.2 Youth Community Services

### **Specific Objective 6: Culture and Volunteerism**

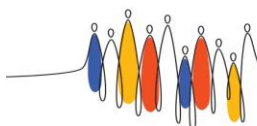
1.1 Creating facilities for young people and youth organizations to approach cultural and art institutions.

1.2 Enhancing culture and civilization

1.3 Development of the Law on Volunteerism

## **Annex 3 – .**

<sup>49</sup> Local Governance Mapping in Albania, 2018, available at [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/LG\\_Mapping\\_en.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/LG_Mapping_en.pdf) (Accessed on October 13, 2020).



At the local level, youth centers are an essential platform for youth empowerment. Regional youth centers have been already established in Tirana, Korça, Shkodra and Vlora. However, the establishment of youth centers at municipality level in 2019 have been done with donor funding such as the case with Elbasan and Lushnja. Youth centers to date function mainly as venues for the organization of project events by NPOs, rather than as platforms for their participation.<sup>50</sup> This is also confirmed by the National Survey "Youth in Albania 2019," which points out that young people perceive Youth Centers simply as physical spaces where very little or no services are provided.<sup>51</sup> Tirana has two youth centers, but a recent report highlights that the Tirana Youth Center does not function because of plans to construct its current building, whereas the Multifunctional Center TEN is operational.<sup>52</sup>

With the reform of the local government, its decentralization, the reform of social services and social protection, and the approval of the new law on youth, local government units are obliged to develop local social plans and local strategies for youth, and to set up local youth councils.

The new Law on Youth introduces the LYC, which functions as an advisory body to the mayor. The MESY confirms that all 61 municipalities have been notified and advised about the establishment of LYCs as envisioned in the new Law on Youth. The monitoring of the actual establishment of LYC in 61 municipalities will start in February of 2021.<sup>53</sup> Some municipalities have developed Local Youth Plans with the support of youth NPOs and international donors. For instance, the National Youth Congress, with the financial support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), have supported 12 municipalities to develop Local Youth Plans for 2020-2023, including a specific budget for each activity.<sup>54</sup> These local youth plans aim to support youth and foster structured dialogue by creating dedicated policies for youth at the local level. Together with representatives of local institutions, active youth organizations at the local level, experts in the field of employment and international partners, FES is also implementing 12 local Master Plans to promote youth employment in the 12 regions of Albania.<sup>55</sup> The Municipality of Tirana developed its Local Youth Action Plan 2017-2020 with the support of the Olof Palme Center, being thus the first municipality to develop such a plan. Following this, the Municipality of Tirana approved the Local Strategy for Youth 2020-2025 with the support of FES.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

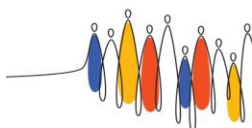
<sup>51</sup> Youth Report 2019-2020, CRCA, available at [https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERIE%202019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERIE%202019-2020_0.pdf) (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.39.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.38.

<sup>53</sup> Based on consultation with Deputy Minister for Youth, Ms. Aspasjana Kongo, Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Tirana, January 2021.

<sup>54</sup> The Youth Local Action Plans in 12 regions of Albania, available at <https://www.fes-tirana.org/e/the-youth-local-action-plans-in-12-regions-of-albania/> (Accessed January 4, 2021).

<sup>55</sup> The Youth Local Action Plans in 12 regions of Albania, available at <https://www.fes-tirana.org/e/the-youth-local-action-plans-in-12-regions-of-albania/> (Accessed January 4, 2021).



### 2.5.5. Non-profit organizations

Youth NPOs and other NPOs working with youth are crucial actors in the field and they often serve to fill the gap in youth-related issues not covered by public institutions. The new Law on Youth distinguishes between ‘youth organizations’ and ‘organizations for youth.’ The Law on Youth defines youth organizations as *“non-profit legal entities, created and registered in accordance with the legislation in force for NPOs, whose object of activity is the representation, protection and development of the interests of young people in a comprehensive manner”*.<sup>56</sup> Whereas organizations for youth are *“non-profit legal entities, established and registered in accordance with the legislation in force for NPOs, which in their field of activity also aim at protecting and developing the interests of young people and who have experience in implementing influential programs for young people.”*<sup>57</sup> This implies a broader definition of NPOs working with youth among other areas or priorities. This recognition in the law of organisations for youth as relevant stakeholders or eligible parties for implementation of youth policy is a positive development that broadens the spectrum of NPOs working in the field of youth.

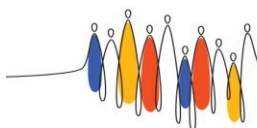
In the area of youth, one of the key NPOs in Albania is the NYCA, which is a network of 112 youth organisations and has acted as an umbrella organization for youth in Albania in light of the lack of a national youth council or an official umbrella organization recognized by the GoA. Another important NPO is the Center for the Rights of Children in Albania (CRCA), which focused primarily on children’s rights, and has also established another network of youth, the ANYN. Other key NPOs are: the Observatory for Children and Youth Rights, primarily focusing on children and young people up to 18 years old; Beyond Barriers which is the contact point for Erasmus+ Youth and European Solidarity Corps in Albania; Help for Children Foundation that primarily works on social service delivery for marginalized youth; the Liburnetik youth NPO that works with young people in high schools; the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania, a youth Roma NPO that works with Roma and Egyptian youth in Albania. Other networks include the Erasmus Student Network in Albania, the Young Professional Network, Youth Voices and others.

## 2.6 Other sectors impacting youth

Key GoA’ strategies and action plans affecting youth include: the Social Protection Strategy (2015-2020), the Social Inclusion Policy Document (2015-2020), the National Action Plan for Roma and Egyptians (2015-2020), the National Strategy for Social Housing (2015-2025), the National Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities (2016-2020), and the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2016-2020). Other legislation impacting youth include employment, education, entrepreneurship and innovation, culture, and sports.

<sup>56</sup> Law on Youth, No. 75, Date. 4.11.2019, Article 3. Available at <https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20191107152923ligj%20nr.%2075.%20dt.%204.11.2019.pdf> (Accessed on October 13, 2020).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



### ➔ Employment

The GoA has committed to continue the consolidation of the employment and skills development reform beyond 2020. To this purpose, the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2019–2022 builds upon achievements and lessons learnt in the period 2014–2018 and includes a set of measures based on four strategic priorities, which are considered to remain relevant for the upcoming period.<sup>58</sup>

### ➔ Education

Albania has had a new National Strategy for Science, Technology, and Innovation in place since late 2017, while it is currently developing a National Strategy on Pre-University Education. In terms of education, enrolments in pre-primary, secondary and tertiary education have declined slightly and education levels and public spending on education remain below OECD and EU averages.<sup>59</sup> An important recent development in the education sector was the “Pact for the University,” announced by the Prime Minister in December 2018, following protests by students. This included 11 CoM decisions and 4 Prime Ministerial Orders addressing part of the 8 requests formulated and solicited by the students during the protest.<sup>60</sup>

### ➔ Entrepreneurship and innovation

According to the Competitive Industrial Performance Index 2019, Albania ranks 105<sup>th</sup> out of 150 economies, declining five places compared to 2018.<sup>61</sup> According to the World Bank Report – Doing Business 2020, Albania lost 19 spots compared with 2019’s edition, thus ranking the second-worst performing economy in the region and Europe<sup>62</sup>. The start-up system is still nascent and mainly concentrated in Tirana. The capacity for research, development, and innovation remains very low, as public spending on research is negligible at 0.03% of GDP in 2019 and the proportion of companies investing in R&D is about 18%.<sup>63</sup>

## 2.7 Critical Assessment

The approval of the new Law on Youth is a positive step towards improved policymaking on youth in Albania. Notwithstanding, without the prompt approval of the remaining two bylaws, out of five, and the establishment of the relevant youth structures, the law’s timely and effective

<sup>58</sup> UNDP Albania, Report on Employment and VET Policy Reform in Albania, available at [https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis\\_prevention\\_and\\_recovery/employment-and-vet-policy-reform-in-albania--the-national-strate.html](https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/employment-and-vet-policy-reform-in-albania--the-national-strate.html) (Accessed October 1, 2020).

<sup>59</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on January 2, 2021). p.59.

<sup>60</sup> Monitoring of the Pact for the University, Civic Resistance (Qendresa Qytetare), 2020, Available at <https://qq.com.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Monitoring-of-the-Pact-for-the-University-January-November-2019.pdf> (Accessed January 3, 2021).

<sup>61</sup> Economy Profile, Albania, available at <https://stat.unido.org/country-profile/economics/ALB> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>62</sup> Report “Ease of doing business in Albania”, available at <https://invest-in-albania.org/ease-of-doing-business-2020-albania-drops-19-spots/> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>63</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on January 2, 2021). p.59.





implementation is challenging. The Law on youth is expected to enhance the role of youth organizations in decision-making and ensure the efficiency of public institutions working on issues affecting young people.<sup>64</sup> Youth organizations expressed concerns about the new law, especially the representability of the structures to be put in place.<sup>65</sup> Concerns have also been raised about the risks that the new law places on youth structures and funding under political control, as they will be dependent on the MESY and Mayors.<sup>66</sup> In terms of establishing youth structures, the EC notes that regional youth centers should provide young people with services and develop cultural, social and sporting activities in line with policies and programs approved by the MESY, but the Law on Youth makes no provisions for such structures.<sup>67</sup> The lack of a NSY is observed as a gap in the national policy framework on youth.

At the time of approval in 2015, the NAPY marked a significant turning point in how the GoA addressed youth-related issues. The NAPY served as a reference point in the past five years for youth organizations, NPOs, and other stakeholders working in youth-related issues.<sup>68</sup> However, the implementation of NAPY has been very challenging due to limited budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation processes, and minimal follow up mechanisms.<sup>69</sup> The NAPY expired in 2020, and the GoA will most probably start to move forward with a NSY 2022-2026. Although the Plan provided for the establishment of an inter-ministerial group to monitor its implementation, various reports indicate that this group was not formed.<sup>70</sup> What is more, this report finds that there are no updates and revisions conducted concerning the NAPY, or at least no public information is available.

Youth policy is a cross-sectorial policy area and various line ministries, and bodies deal with youth issues, which at times proves challenging in terms of building synergies, data collection and analysis, and overall coordination. Youth organizations argue that institutions in Albania, by transferring their competencies from one institution to another regarding youth, have caused a disorientation in institutional coordination for youth in Albania. The establishment and full functioning of key youth structures such as NAY, NYC, NYRO and LYC as foreseen in the new Law on Youth is still in process, leaving a considerable gap in the youth sector in Albania.

<sup>64</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on January 2, 2021). p. 103.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* pp. 103-104.

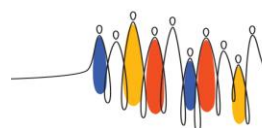
<sup>66</sup> Youth Report 2019-2020, CRCA, available at [https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020_0.pdf) (Accessed January 4, 2021) and “Analysis of youth policy at central level”, National Youth Congress, 2020, available at <https://krk.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Untitled-2.pdf> (Accessed January 4, 2021).

<sup>67</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on January 2, 2021). p. 104.

<sup>68</sup> Confirmed in interviews with stakeholders for the purpose of this report, October – November 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Youth Report 2019-2020, CRCA, available at [https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020_0.pdf) (Accessed January 4, 2021) and “Analysis of youth policy at central level”, National Youth Congress, 2020, available at <https://krk.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Untitled-2.pdf> (Accessed January 4, 2021).

<sup>70</sup> Youth Report 2019-2020, CRCA, available at [https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020_0.pdf) (Accessed January 4, 2021). p.38.



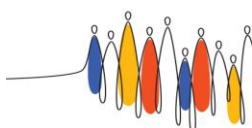
Interviews with youth stakeholders echo the need to promptly finalize the policy and legal framework on youth following the new law from 2019.

Institutional human resources and capacities also impact the institutional framework on youth. The MESY, responsible for youth policy, has limited staff working with and for young people. Budget for youth remains limited and included within the budgetary lines of education and sports. More accountability and transparency from public institutions responsible for youth policy and its implementation would have been beneficial for youth and the policy dialogue with youth. In terms of local government and youth, positive developments can be observed regarding the approval of Local Youth Plans, the functioning of youth centers and the cooperation between local government units and youth organizations in local policy making through the facilitation of donor-funded projects. However, limited local budgets dedicated to youth hinder youth empowerment and participation. Youth centers already established are not yet fully functioning as empowering platforms for youth.

In terms of employment, Albania has restructured its employment governance system in line with the laws on vocational education and training and employment promotion.<sup>71</sup> The national employment approach and employment promotion programs, albeit providing more opportunities for youth participation in the labor market, need further advancement and realignment with the recent developments in terms of digitalization and post-pandemic realities. Closing the gap in the mismatch between education and the labor market, and the relevance of vocational education and training for employment is another area for further improvement. In general, the progress of other areas impacting youth such as employment, education, entrepreneurship, and innovation have been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>71</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on January 2, 2021). p.88.





## CHAPTER 3: FUNDING FRAMEWORK: OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH PROGRAMS AND INSTRUMENTS

The chapter analyzes youth policy funding and presents some key interventions and government programs in the youth area, including a critical assessment of the above.

### 3.1. Youth Policy Funding

The Law on Youth stipulates that the sources of funding for the implementation of youth policies, programs, and projects are as follows: a) grant funds from the public budget dedicated to youth; b) local budgets; c) income generated by youth organizations; d) donations; e) sponsorships; f) other legal sources.<sup>72</sup>

The new Law on Youth envisages that youth organizations, other NPOs and informal groups and networks working in youth-related areas can benefit from central government' funding through a dedicated youth fund.<sup>73</sup> A specific CoM decision has been approved, defining the criteria and procedures for the selection of youth organizations, and/or youth who benefit from funding from the public budget grant funds intended for youth. The CoM decision specifies that the NAY will be responsible for the management of youth grant funds, which will be approved in the annual budget law and will finance projects in the area of youth. Projects must be proposed and implemented not only by youth organizations and youth but also by local self-government units. The application process will be done online through the e-government portal (e-Albania) or through the webpage of NAY. The call is expected to be open in the first quarter of 2021. The requirements for submission of applications include not only a project proposal, but also administrative and legal documents regarding the organisation.<sup>74</sup> Youth organisations and local government units will need capacity building for project proposal writing, partnership building, and project implementation, particularly so grassroots youth organisations, informal groups and NPOs outside of Tirana.

Albania does not have a dedicated budget program for youth. Although youth is a cross cutting issue, the competencies for the policy making as well as the budget program dedicated to youth is under MESY. Other line ministries are responsible for youth-related policy implementations

<sup>72</sup> Law on Youth No. 75, Date. 4.11.2019, available at <https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20191107152923ligje%20nr.%2075,%20dt.%204.11.2019.pdf> (Accessed September 25, 2020). Article 15.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Article 12.

<sup>74</sup> The list of supporting documents is quite demanding including: the application form; the act of registration in court; a copy of the statute; documentation proving experience in the development of youth activities; certification by the tax authorities that the NPO has duly fulfilled its obligations; confirmation from the court of the last 3 months that there is no bankruptcy and/or liquidation procedure; a bank certificate of the last 3 months from the date of closing the application; a certificate from the court of the last 3 months that they are not convicted by a final court decision, the organization and its legal representative; their annual balance sheet.



such as employment, VET, culture, and others, they too have budget programs for youth, but it is difficult and complex to analyze specific and detailed data on youth budgets.<sup>75</sup>

Given that youth is one part of the overall portfolio, and considering that its primary emphasis is on education, there is no data regarding a specific budget for youth.<sup>76</sup> Youth organizations have lobbied the GoA for some time now to allocate a dedicated public budgetary line for youth.<sup>77</sup> However, finance experts note that because youth is a cross-cutting issue, there cannot be a specific budget for youth, unless there is only one institution in charge of policy making and implementation of issues related to youth. In addition, a specific budget for youth is not possible because the GoA uses Program and Performance based Budgeting.<sup>78</sup>

Moreover, due to the lack of monitoring reports on NAPY, there is no data regarding the NAPY budget spent on youth programs and activities. Reports note a slight increase in the public budget regarding youth, but that is mainly because of the increase in education and social protection budget lines.<sup>79</sup>

The MESY publishes quarterly monitoring reports for its budgetary spending, but it provides information for a ‘sports and youth development’ budget with no specification on youth. For the first quarter of 2020, this expenditure was EUR 2,600 (330,000 ALL).<sup>80</sup> Funding every year for the National Youth Service<sup>81</sup> and the establishment of Regional Youth Centers as well as the implementation of youth activities provided in the NAPY is in the amount of EUR 607,888 (75 million ALL),<sup>82</sup> but there is no data available on what the budget has funded.

Another public budget that contributes to supporting youth initiatives is provided by ASCS to support NPO’s projects. In 2019, a total of EUR 173,451 (21,400,000 ALL) was explicitly allocated in support of youth projects and initiatives such as rural youth integration, raising awareness of youth regarding the justice system, and youth self-employment.<sup>83</sup> Yet, in 2020 the

<sup>75</sup> Youth in Albania, 2019, available at [http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth\\_Political\\_Participation\\_Albania\\_2018.pdf](http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth_Political_Participation_Albania_2018.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).

<sup>76</sup> The MESY publishes regular information about budget spending, but the data is very difficult to be accessed (all data is presented on the website as scanned pdf files) and there is no specific budget line for youth.

<sup>77</sup> Confirmed during the interviews with stakeholders from youth in Albania conducted for the purposes of this report, October – December 2020.

<sup>78</sup> Based on consultation with OSFA expert on budget and financing, Tirana, January 2021.

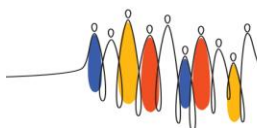
<sup>79</sup> Youth in Albania, 2019, available at [http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth\\_Political\\_Participation\\_Albania\\_2018.pdf](http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth_Political_Participation_Albania_2018.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).

<sup>80</sup> Monitoring Report for January – April 2020, MESY, available at [https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN\\_Final-30.5.2020.pdf](https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN_Final-30.5.2020.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).

<sup>81</sup> With the new Law on Youth this has been dissolved and the National Agency for Youth (NAY) has been established in September 2020, which is in fact a restructuring of former National Youth Service.

<sup>82</sup> Monitoring Report for January – April 2020, MESY, available at [https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN\\_Final-30.5.2020.pdf](https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN_Final-30.5.2020.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).

<sup>83</sup> Monitoring Report for January – April 2020, MESY, available at [https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN\\_Final-30.5.2020.pdf](https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN_Final-30.5.2020.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).



ASCS suspended the application deadline of the Open Calls for Proposals due to COVID-19 and no specific funding has been made available for youth organizations.<sup>84</sup>

The MoC provides grants supporting art and culture. Although not dedicated to youth per se, young artists and organizations working with young people in the creative fields have benefited, but no data are available. The Albanian Investment and Development Agency (AIDA) provides small grants for start-ups; however, no data are available regarding the actual funding and who has benefited from them.

### 3.2. Key Youth Programs/Instruments

In terms of education, one of the key programs of the GoA is the Excellence Fund, which is a grant awarded to excellent students to pursue their studies in the top 15 universities in the world. This grant is available for bachelor, master, and PhD students with a total fund of approximately 1 million Euros. The MESY publishes an annual call for the selection of candidates and the criterion for obtaining a scholarship is that students agree to return and work in public institutions in Albania, for at least two years, after completing their studies abroad. 29 grants were awarded for the academic year 2020-2021,<sup>85</sup> while since 2017, 103 grants have been awarded in total.<sup>86</sup>

Another program regarding education refers to scholarships that the MESY provides for special social categories such as Roma and Egyptians communities, or for specific areas of studies which are deemed as a priority but lack students' interest.

With the initiative of the Municipality of Tirana and in collaboration with the MEYS, the GoA started to distribute the Student Card in 2019, with reduced prices for 130 private services and 87 public services for students. 32,000 Student Cards have been distributed in the capital city as of March 2020.<sup>87</sup> However, the student card is implemented mostly in Tirana and includes only limited services. There is no available data on its implementation, allocated budget and user rate among students.

In terms of employment, the GoA has been implementing the National Programme on Work placement and Internships since 2017 with a dedicated webpage being set up to this purpose.<sup>88</sup> During 2019 there were 2,071 positions for paid internships, work placements and unpaid internships published by public institutions, public agencies, and private businesses. The number

<sup>84</sup> "The role of civil society and media in crises management in Albania", WFD, 2020, available at [https://www.wfd.org/2020/12/22/the-role-of-civil-society-and-media-in-crises-management-in-albania/?fbclid=IwAR0hinRBUDyy\\_YdPhqbSBbTazzR02n0yERi9YV7fdt4f-5uUjCrVKOlPP5I](https://www.wfd.org/2020/12/22/the-role-of-civil-society-and-media-in-crises-management-in-albania/?fbclid=IwAR0hinRBUDyy_YdPhqbSBbTazzR02n0yERi9YV7fdt4f-5uUjCrVKOlPP5I) (Accessed January 5, 2021).

<sup>85</sup> Full list of awarded grants available at <https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Shenim.pdf> (Accessed December 29, 2020).

<sup>86</sup> Full lists of awarded grants 2017-2021 available at <https://arsimi.gov.al/fondi-i-ekselences/> (Accessed December 29, 2020).

<sup>87</sup> "Analysis of youth policy at central level", National Youth Congress, 2020, available at <https://krk.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Untitled-2.pdf> (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.13.

<sup>88</sup> See more at <http://praktika.sociale.gov.al/> (Accessed October 5, 2020).



of young people who have applied for these positions in 2019 is about 3,401, of whom 2,445 have applied to the institutions of the central administration, 563 young people have applied at the municipalities and 393 applications have been received by the private sector. For 2019, 724 interns have been selected in the central administration institutions to develop the internship program. Regarding the local government units, the number of interns who completed the internship is 157, while for companies the number of interns is about 70, with 951 young people in total who completed the internship.<sup>89</sup> The last call was published in February of 2020, while there are no further updates on the National Programme on Work placement and Internships webpage.

Youth programs and initiatives are also part of the NESS 2019–2022, whose focus is to offer quality vocational education and training, as well as employment opportunities to young people (Objective B).<sup>90</sup> Key interventions foreseen to impact the youth are the modernization of the National Employment Services, the establishment of the Active Labour Market Programs, optimizing VET providers at the individual and network level to ensure a qualitative and diverse offer, strengthening connections between learning and work, and facilitating the transition to work.

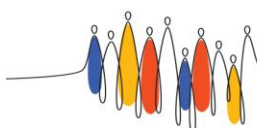
### 3.3. Critical assessment

The provisions of the Law on Youth regarding youth grants for youth organizations and young people from the public budget is a positive development not only in terms of the youth area in Albania. Youth organizations and NPOs working in the youth area, young people, and informal groups of youth and youth networks, would benefit from this funding mechanism. The call for applications for the youth grants is expected to start in the first quarter of 2021 and ensuring a transparent and fair process is paramount.

Considering that youth is a crosscutting issue, it can in principle benefit from funding from various policies and budget programs, including health and social protection, education, employment, VET, entrepreneurship, innovation, culture, arts, and sports. Nonetheless, opinions differ regarding a budget dedicated to youth. On one hand, the lack of a public budget dedicated to youth is considered as a gap by stakeholders across the youth area, who have been arguing for the necessity of its inclusion. On the other hand, other experts argue that there is no need to have a unique budget line for youth but rather youth should be mainstreamed in all budget programs linked with youth as a cross-cutting issue.

<sup>89</sup> Monitoring Report for January – April 2020, MESY, available at [https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN\\_Final-30.5.2020.pdf](https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Raporti-i-Monit-4-M-Janar-30-Prill-2020-FN_Final-30.5.2020.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).

<sup>90</sup> National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 – 2022, available at [http://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Publikim\\_EN\\_Strategjia-Komb%C3%ABtare-p%C3%ABr-Pun%C3%ABsim-dhe-Aft%C3%ABsi-2019-2022.pdf](http://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Publikim_EN_Strategjia-Komb%C3%ABtare-p%C3%ABr-Pun%C3%ABsim-dhe-Aft%C3%ABsi-2019-2022.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).



Other sources of funding from public institutions, such as funding for civil society, culture, art, and others have been limited and the youth area would benefit from a more transparent approach in the publication of relevant data as to funding allocations. Further strengthening of synergies and the coordination among institutions that provide funding for youth is essential.

GoA has in place some instruments for supporting youth such as the Excellence Fund for education, Employment Promotion Programs, the National Programme on Work Placement and Internships, the Youth Card, and other initiatives related to VET, entrepreneurship and, recently, start-up development. Donors and international organizations have proven valuable in the provision of such programs to youth. Further consolidation is necessary as well as increased transparency in terms of budget allocations.



## CHAPTER 4: YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL POLICY MAKING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL

This chapter analyzes the existing mechanisms of youth participation, both at the central and local levels, and presents the primary national youth organizations and networks.

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

The Law on Youth states the importance of youth participation in policy and decision-making processes. The law envisages the setting up of institutions that will improve coordination and communication and provide a more sustainable solution to youth participation in decision making. In addition, youth participation is one of the strategic objectives of the NAPY. The NAPY planned dedicated funding for youth participation through the national ASCS, but a recent report found that the funding has been provided to NPOs generally and not specifically to youth organisations.<sup>91</sup>

A specific area deriving from the NAPY relates to raising awareness on political processes and first-time voters. The Central Electoral Commission has developed a specific Strategy for Electoral Education of Citizens in which youth are mentioned and treated under the “first time voter” promotion and education initiatives. Educational and awareness-raising materials such as leaflets, posts, banners, TV and radio spots, information points, and onsite meetings with first time voters, in collaboration with Regional Education Directories and High School directors are foreseen in the strategy. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Presence in Albania has also worked with NPOs to raise awareness on the political process and elections for Roma and Egyptian communities. Some youth organizations have asked for decreasing the age of first-time voters from 18 to 16 years old.<sup>92</sup>

A low level of youth engagement in politics is also observed as a result of a widespread lack of trust in politics and the absence of merit-based models of advancement in politics, built on fair competition. Albanian youngsters do not consider political parties as the primary tool to change the society and to advance their political skills and convictions.<sup>93</sup> Other studies confirm that youth (aged 18 - 30 years) report the lowest level of knowledge and interest in politics in Albania.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Youth in Albania, 2019, available at [http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth\\_Political\\_Participation\\_Albania\\_2018.pdf](http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth_Political_Participation_Albania_2018.pdf) (Accessed October 5, 2020).

<sup>92</sup> Youth Report 2019-2020, CRCA, available at [https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERIE%202019-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERIE%202019-2020_0.pdf) (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.20.

<sup>93</sup> National Survey: Young People and Politics in Albania, available at [https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/National-Survey\\_Young-People-and-Politics-in-Albania-FINAL.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/National-Survey_Young-People-and-Politics-in-Albania-FINAL.pdf) (Accessed October 10, 2020).

<sup>94</sup> “Albania: NDI public opinion research reveals how to strengthen public engagement in politics.” available at, <https://www.ndi.org/publications/albania-ndi-public-opinion-research-reveals-how-strengthen-public-engagement-politics> (Accessed on January 2, 2021).





What is more, as a general note regarding civil society participation in policy and decision-making processes, studies find that the legal and policy frameworks for enabling cooperation between public institutions and civil society are largely in place. The challenges remain with the lack of feedback and follow-up mechanisms for consultation and participation, poor implementation of legal framework, and collaboration with NPOs with very limited substantial impact.<sup>95</sup> Lack of political will for conducting genuine consultation processes and improving cooperation between NPOs and institutions is evident.<sup>96</sup> In this light, the continuation of political polarization in 2019-2020 in Albania<sup>97</sup>, hindered youth participation in policy and decision-making process.

In preparation of the general election planned for April 25, 2021, political actors are focusing more on the youth in an attempt to attract voters. 2020 saw various protests and gatherings from citizens, civil society and particularly youth, despite the COVID-19 restrictions. Youth organizations and civil society actors also emphasized the necessity to uphold the freedom of expression and right to assembly.

#### *4.1.1 Participation at central level*

##### *National Youth Council*

The new Law on Youth envisages the establishment of the NYC as an advisory body, which functions under the MESY. The NYC is chaired by the minister responsible for youth and consists of 16 members: 4 are public officials, 4 are representatives of student councils and 8 members are representatives of youth and/or youth organizations. Student councils and youth representatives are to be appointed by order of the minister of MESY, after the selection procedure conducted by NAY. The criteria and procedures for the election of members, as well as the manner of organization and functioning of the NYC are defined in a decision of the CoM, approved in December 2020. The CoM' decision on the establishment of the NYC does not include any specific principle or standards for ensuring a safe space for youth participation in the NYC.

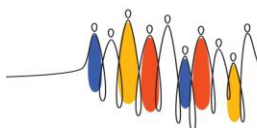
##### *National Youth Representative Organization*

The NYRO is in the process of being established as a NPO in line with the provisions of the Law on Youth. The NYRO can be established by youth organizations and/or youth. The criteria are to be approved of by a decision of the CoM. The draft CoM' decision has been consulted in the autumn of 2020 and it is expected to be approved in early 2021. A call for expressions of interest

<sup>95</sup> "Civil Society Participation in Decision Making in Albania", 2020, WFD and IDM, available at <https://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NPO-Participation-in-Decision-Making-in-Albania.pdf> (Accessed on January 2, 2021).

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> The EC Annual Report on Albania, 2020, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on January 2, 2021). p. 8.



for existing youth organisations and networks to establish NYRO will be launched once the CoM' decision is approved.

#### *4.1.2 Participation at the local level*

The new Law on Youth introduces LYC, which functions as an advisory body to the mayor, however only a few LCYs have been established. Youth centers in Tirana, Korça, Shkodra and Vlora, and in Laç, Lushnja, and Elbasan serve as a platform for empowering youth participation but need further resources and capacity development to ensure full functioning. A 2019 study by the National Youth Congress of Albania (NYCA) found that the majority of youth are not satisfied with participation at the local level.<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, some progress has been made, particularly in light of the approval of Local Youth Action Plans, set up of local youth councils. For instance, Tirana Municipality and the House of Human Rights/CRCA Albania, in cooperation with the Youth Leadership of Tirana, established a Youth Advisory Board at the Tirana Municipal Council in 2014. Tirana was awarded the title of the European Youth Capital 2022 by the European Youth Forum.<sup>99</sup> The application process followed an inclusive and participatory approach, working closely with the Youth Advisory Board and youth organizations.<sup>100</sup> As the European Youth Capital 2022, Tirana has developed with its youth an ambitious program seeking to address the needs of all its young people, championing non-formal education and striving to connect the city and its youth with European values. Tirana Municipality has pledged to organize a series of activities with and for youth, financed by its own budget.

#### **4.2 Evidence-based youth policy**

During the last five years, there has been a slight improvement in young people's participation in public institutions such as parliament and government.<sup>101</sup> The legal framework that enables citizen and youth participation in decision making has improved with the law on public consultations,<sup>102</sup> the law on right to information,<sup>103</sup> and local self-government laws.<sup>104</sup> The drafting of the Law on youth was done with a broad consultation process with various youth stakeholders, organisations and networks. Other youth-related policy areas are increasingly being informed by evidence and research such as employment, VET, innovation, and digital skills. However, the political agenda seems to be retained despite the evidence presented to

<sup>98</sup> "Representation and participation of youth in local election 2019", National Youth Congress in Albania and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, available at <https://portavendore.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Studimi-mbi-zgjedhjet-2019.pdf> (Accessed January 3, 2021), p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> "Winner of the European Youth Capital for 2022", available at <https://www.youthforum.org/congratulations-tirana-winner-european-youth-capital-2022> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

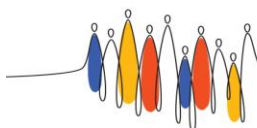
<sup>100</sup> Confirmed during interviews with stakeholders in the youth, conducted for the purposes of this report, October – December 2020.

<sup>101</sup> "Youth political participation in Albania", 2018, available at [http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth\\_Political\\_Participation\\_Albania\\_2018.pdf](http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth_Political_Participation_Albania_2018.pdf) (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>102</sup> Law No 146/2014 "For Notification and Public Consultations.

<sup>103</sup> Law No 119/2014 "Right to Information".

<sup>104</sup> Law No 68/2017 "For Self-Government Finance", Law No 107/2014 "On territorial Planning and Development" and Law No.139/2015 "For Self-Government."





policymakers. For instance, a recent study from WFD<sup>105</sup> finds that although the legal and policy frameworks for enabling cooperation between public institutions and civil society are mainly in place, challenges remain such as: a lack of feedback and follow-up mechanisms, poor implementation of the legal framework, and superficial collaboration with NPOs, with minimal impact. Institutions have limited capacities to prioritize public information, consultation, and comprehensive cooperation with NPOs, including with youth organizations.

Albania has only recently been building the systems and culture for evidence-informed policy-making, which requires good quality knowledge production, knowledge intermediaries, and a regulatory framework that creates incentives for doing (policy) research as well as using research results in policy decisions.<sup>106</sup> To this end, youth organisations and other related stakeholders such as networks, NPOs, research centers, and think-tanks focused on youth, need to be better equipped to conduct evidence-based research on youth and engage in policy dialogue. Supporting the public institutions responsible for dealing with youth in articulating the needs that evidence and demanding evidence for their policy making is also essential.

#### **4.3 Establishment and functioning of Youth Councils and umbrella organizations.**

The **Albanian Youth Council (AYC)** was established in 1994 as an NPO, to serve as a nationwide platform representing the interests of youth organizations. The AYC had 38 member organizations, and 2 organizations had observer status. However, this organization is no longer active since 2013.

Albania currently does not have a national youth council. However, the new Law on Youth has envisioned the establishment of the NYC, an advisory body which functions under the MESY. The CoM' decision setting out the criteria and procedures for the election of NYC members and its organization and functioning has been approved but the selection process has not started yet as of January 2021. Once it is set up, NYC's main function is to present to MESY (the ministry responsible for youth) priorities of youth policy, budget and activities in the field of youth. In addition, it will be responsible for suggesting key programs for supporting youth participation at all levels. NYC will also play a monitoring role regarding the NYS, if and when approved, and oversee and approve annual reports on the implementation of NYS.

Article 2 of the CoM' decision on NYC specifies that it will be composed of 16 members: The Minister responsible for youth who will be also chair the NYC; the Head of the NAY; 2 representatives from the Local Self-Government Support Agency; 8 representatives from youth

<sup>105</sup> "Civil Society Participation in Decision Making in Albania", 2020, WFD and IDM, available at <https://idmalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NPO-Participation-in-Decision-Making-in-Albania.pdf> (Accessed on January 2, 2021).

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Arnaldo Pellini, Overseas Development Institute, 2018, available at <https://www.odi.org/blogs/10639-building-state-capability-evidence-informed-policy-making-albania-conversation-abi-dodbiba> (Accessed January 4, 2021).



organisations and/or youth and 4 representatives from student councils. The NAY will be responsible for the selection process of the representatives of youth organisations and youth and students' councils. The NYC must meet at least twice per year and it will have a technical secretariat of three members to support its work. The establishment of NYC is essential for further enhancing youth policy framework in Albania and ensuring its proper implementation. It is expected that the NYC will be in need of support (resources, capacity development, infrastructure, operating procedures, communication and outreach) in the initial phase to ensure not only efficient and effective operations, but to build trust with youth organisations, NPOs, civil society, other stakeholders, and youth.

Also, Article 13 of the new Law on Youth foresees the establishment of NYRO, which is expected to be established as a NPO by youth. However, the details of its mission, function, and competences are not known yet as the CoM' decision for the criteria to be fulfilled by NYRO has not been approved yet.

LYCs are also envisioned in the new Law on Youth (Article 10) and are to be set up with a decision of the municipal council in each municipality (61). MESY will start monitoring the establishment of LYCs in each municipality in February 2021. However, interviews with stakeholders confirm that municipalities will still need support in terms of resources and capacity development to set up LYCs. Also, LYCs will further need support (resources, capacity development, infrastructure, operating procedures, communication and outreach) to ensure representation and participation of youth in local policy making.

Considering the lack of a national youth council from 2013 to 2020, other networks and organisations have tried to fill in this gap. The two largest networks in this field are the National Youth Congress of Albania, set up initially as an initiative of and with strong encouragement from international donors and the Albanian National Youth Network, supported and facilitated by the Center for the Rights of Children in Albania (CRCA).<sup>107</sup>

#### **4.4 Platforms of youth cooperation at the national level**

**The National Youth Congress of Albania (NYCA)**<sup>108</sup> is a union of youth organizations, informal groups, youth forums of political parties, with the aim of exchanging information, highlighting youth issues, lobbying, and advocating for solving these issues and the provision of capacity building for all entities involved in the network. NYC was established in March 2013 in Tirana, in the presence of over 30 organizations at the national level. Currently, a key strength of the NYCA is that it represents 112 youth entities, thus having a broad representative base. Also, another best practice of the NYCA is that it has established a consolidated model of internal

<sup>107</sup> For more, available at <https://www.crca.al/sq> (Accessed January 11, 2021). Established for more than 20 years and with a strong portfolio in program and project development in the area of youth, particularly children and a key partner of public institutions and donors in this regard.

<sup>108</sup> National Youth Congress of Albania, available at <https://krk.al/about-us/what-is-nyc/> (Accessed October 4, 2020).



democracy and youth participation. One of the strengths of the NYCA is that it works in all 12 regions of Albania and has a dedicated coordinator for youth in each region. The NYCA operates based on approved programming by its General Assembly and has ensured financial sustainability through key donor institutional support without depending on call for proposals.<sup>109</sup> Currently, the NYCA has three programs: Political Education and Capacity Building; Research Monitoring and Evaluation; and Institutional Dialogue and Cooperation. The work of NYCA is supported by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the Hans Seidel Foundation and the Swiss Embassy. The NYCA is active at the regional level, as well as being a member of the Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform. The NYCA has been engaged in local youth policy and actions of the Municipality of Tirana and contributed to the process for the title of Tirana European Youth Capital 2022. In addition, the NYCA has been active in the consultation process of the new Law on Youth. It also conducts monitoring and evaluation of youth policy at the central and local levels, as well as other applied research related to youth issues. The NYCA confirms that its network of youth organisations needs further support regarding research competences and the use of evidence for policy making in order to enhance their advocacy and lobbying.<sup>110</sup> Although the NYCA has a credible standing and has established a positive reputation, it does not have a special status, nor it is officially recognized as a MESY partner.

**The Albanian National Youth Network (ANYN)<sup>111</sup>** is a youth coalition, composed of representatives of political youth forums and youth groups and civil society organizations at the local and national level that was established in 2015. They come together under this group to undertake joint activities and initiatives of interest to all youth, regardless of political affiliation, economic and social status, sexual orientation, gender identity, skills, or clusters, in which they belong. Even though ANYN is not a legally registered entity, they are active in policy participation, advocacy, and networking also thanks to the support and facilitation of a consolidated NPO, such as CRCA. ANYN has been very vocal in the consultation process of the new Law on Youth, but it does not have a special status, nor it is officially recognized as a MESY partner. The specific feature of ANYN is that it works with youth from different political parties in Albania, thus engaging with youth in politics at an early stage. Given that it is not a formal entity, it relies primarily on the experience of CRCA, which, albeit a consolidated and reputable NPO in Albania, has traditionally been focused more on children than youth. ANYN works closely with local government units as well.

**US Embassy Youth Council Albania<sup>112</sup>** is an initiative of the US. Embassy in Tirana which brings together a cross-section of young, dynamic Albanians who give their input to society through activism, participation in the socio-political dialogue, community services and effective

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Ms Dafina Peçi, Secretary General of NYCA, 3 December 2020.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Ms Dafina Peçi, Secretary General of NYCA, 3 December 2020.

<sup>111</sup> More <https://www.anyn.al/en> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>112</sup> The US Embassy Youth Council Albania, available at <https://useycalbania.org/about/who-we-are-2/> (Accessed October 4, 2020).



advocacy. It aims to strengthen the sense of active citizenship among the youth of Albania through leadership, outreach, and civic engagement activities.

**The Young Professionals Network (YPN)**<sup>113</sup> was officially established in January 2020 by a group of young persons with professional experience in various fields such as economics, social media, IT, education, science, and civil society. The YPN aims to empower young professionals, through networking, protection of labor rights, and increasing the participation of young professionals in economic, political, and social life. The YPN is an emerging network with potential and is in need of further support.

**The Youth Advisory Group of the OSCE in Albania (YAG)**<sup>114</sup> is an advisory body to the OSCE Presence in Albania seeking to support the Presence's efforts to integrate a youth perspective (youth-specific considerations, concerns, needs, priorities, and vulnerabilities) into its planning and programmatic activities.

**Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (Observatory)**<sup>115</sup> in Albania is a non-governmental entity established in 2009 as a civil society network intended to monitor the situation of children. Observatory has a national coverage with offices in 12 districts of Albania and it offers a unique added value in data collection on children and youth rights. It has established a good track record of cooperation with local government and other local authorities in health, education, and social protection.

**Youth Voice Albania**,<sup>116</sup> is a network of organizations officially established in 2018, but has operated as a network since 2014. This network is composed of youth organizations and clubs specialized in various fields of sexual and reproductive health, education, social and health services, human rights, community work and work with marginalized and most vulnerable groups.

**World Vision Albania**,<sup>117</sup> has set up more than 100 local youth groups, thus establishing one of the largest youth participations and self-organisation programs in Albania. These youth groups are supported with capacity building, networking and advocacy skills and are consulted by World Vision on a regular basis to inform program development and other youth related interventions.

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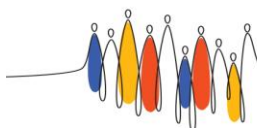
<sup>113</sup> The Young Professional Network, available at <https://ypn.al/rreth-nesh/> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>114</sup> More <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/437426.pdf> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>115</sup> More information available at <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Public-Annual-Report-2018-Observatory.pdf> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>116</sup> More <https://www.annalindhfoundation.org/members/youth-voice-network-organizations> (Accessed October 4, 2020) and <https://www.facebook.com/ZeriteRinjve/> (Accessed January 12, 2021).

<sup>117</sup> More <https://www.worldvision.al/programet-tona/rinia> (Accessed January 12, 2021).



#### 4.5 Regional platforms and networks

Regional platforms and networks<sup>118</sup> active in Albania are:

**The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)**<sup>119</sup> is an independently functioning institutional mechanism, founded by the WB6 and other donors, aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programs. Its headquarters are in Albania.

**The Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform (WBYCP)**<sup>120</sup> is a grassroots regional youth platform implemented by the Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI) in Albania, together with the umbrella youth organizations of the six WB6. The WBYCP is designed to function as a resource center for youth in the WBs.

**The Young European Ambassadors (YEA)**<sup>121</sup> platform is a creative network of future young game changers from across the WB and EU. Although YEA come from different backgrounds, all of them share an interest in learning about the EU's values, and to promote the opportunities that the EU offers. Most importantly, YEA are open to sharing ideas and developing their talents towards inspiring change within their communities, the WB region, and across the EU.

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<sup>118</sup> A detailed list is included in the comparative report and relevant Annex.

<sup>119</sup> More details on RYCO in Albania in *Key donors in the field of youth*

<sup>120</sup> Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform, available at <http://connecting-youth.org/about.php>, (Accessed October 15, 2020).

<sup>121</sup> The Young European Ambassadors, available at <https://www.webalkans.eu/>, (Accessed October 15, 2020).



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

This chapter presents programs and interventions of key donors in youth-related issues. It also outlines how donor coordination works in Albania and what are priority areas for the future in the field of youth.<sup>122</sup>

### 5.1 Key donors in the field of youth

In Albania, foreign embassies and international organizations have been active in implementing programs focused directly on youth and youth-related areas such as education and training (VET), employment, social inclusion (marginalized communities), and civic and political participation. The key donors<sup>123</sup> in the field of youth in Albania are: EU; German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ); Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); US Embassy / USAID; Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA); United Nations (UN); Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO);<sup>124</sup> The Italian Development Cooperation Agency (AICS); OSCE Presence in Albania (OSCE); Austria Development Agency (ADA); Council of Europe (CoE); Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); World Bank (WB).

**The EU**, the largest donor in Albania,<sup>125</sup> has supported youth programs, projects, and other initiatives in various manners through financial and technical support, capacity building, networking, and dialogue. The EU provides support through sector budget support for the policy reforms and priorities as set out by the GoA, direct support through granting to NPOs and other organizations managed by EUD or contracting authority in Albania (MFE), and through Union Programs. The Structural Dialogue with Youth is a crucial instrument of mutual communication and collaboration between young people and the EU and their participation in the integration process. The EU has financed various programs of youth self-organization, networking, promotion, and advocacy such as the Western Balkan Alumni Association, the Erasmus Student Network, Young European Ambassador, and the Exchange Programme of young Civil Servants. The essential EU programs focusing on youth are Erasmus + Mobility and Capacity Building in Higher Education, Erasmus + Youth, and Erasmus + Solidarity Corps. Although none of the IPA has been dedicated to youth per se, youth have been an exact target group of various projects financed under IPA. Through IPA 2019, the EU will be providing support to social policies, foreseeing specific programs with a focus on youth, and the EU will mainstream youth in all its

<sup>122</sup> Based the full donor mapping matrix conducted for the purpose of this study by Blerjana Bino and OSFA Report 2020 on donors in Albania conducted by Nevila Çomo.

<sup>123</sup> Ranking based on role and contributions in the field of youth and youth-related areas.

<sup>124</sup> RYCO is a regional office which is being supported by WB6 governments and several donors EU, UN, France, Germany, Sweden, and the OSCE.

<sup>125</sup> EU has contributed with 149,3 million USD in official donor assistance in Albania for 2017-2018, as per the OECD ODA Report [https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglanbyrecipient\\_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display\\_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no](https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglanbyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no) (Accessed October 17, 2020).





programming in Albania.<sup>126</sup> The EU provides financing for youth-related issues, youth organizations, or NPOs working with youth through its support to good governance and the rule of law sector, social inclusion program, IPA on civil society and media, policy dialogue initiatives, and Creative Europe and Erasmus+ Sports programs. The EU is also supporting youth by financing RYCO and the Regional Cooperation Council's Western Balkans Youth Lab project.

Under IPA 2014, actions that support civil society organizations in implementing capacity building actions to increase policy dialogue and awareness on the European Integration process in 2018 have amounted to EUR 757,949.14 for 12 grants that target youth, among other groups.<sup>127</sup> Under IPA 2016, the European Union Integration Facility supports civil society organizations in the implementation of capacity building actions to increase policy dialogue and awareness on the European Integration process, and in 2019 amounted to EUR 647,359.63 for 12 grants that include youth in their target group.<sup>128</sup> As per IPA 2017, the budget for the same action was planned at EUR 700,000, but it primarily focuses on environment. The call opened in February 2020. However, these are not dedicated programs and funds for youth, rather youth are one of the target groups.

IPA 2018 Programming, with a total indicative amount of EUR 94.1 million, is supporting the following Sectors: i) Democracy and Governance Sector – "Participation in the Union Programs," with the total amount of EUR 3 million; ii) Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Sector – "Fight against organized crime and drugs," with the total amount of EUR 19 million, and "EU for Justice Reform," with a total amount of EUR 42 million; iii) Environment Sector – "EU for a clean environment," with a total amount of EUR 24.1 million; iv) Competitiveness and Innovation Sector – "EU for Economic Development – Tourism – led local Economic Development," with a focus on Cultural Heritage, with a total amount of EUR 6 million.<sup>129</sup>

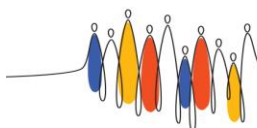
The programs supported under IPA 2019 are as follows: i) "EU for Social inclusion," with an indicative amount of EUR 50 million; ii) "EU for Circular Economy," with an indicative amount of EUR 20.65 million. The programs and action documents to be supported under IPA 2020 are as following: i) "EU for Good Governance," with an indicative amount of EUR 48.1 million; ii) "EU for Property rights," with an indicative amount of EUR 15.7 million; iii) "EU for Rule of

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Youth Task Manager, EU Delegation to Albania, Mrs. Xheni Sinakolli, September 2020.

<sup>127</sup> For instance, "Promoting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning among young people and women in Albania"; "Young towards EUROPE"; "Building the European future at home: youth engagement in the process", as detailed in IPA II Annual Implementation Report, 2020. Republic of Albania, p. 44.

<sup>128</sup> For instance, "Albanian youth for EU integration"; "Albanian youth action on the EU acquis"; "Europe for Albanian youth"; "YouThink enabling the proactive participation of youth in policy and legislative development of Albania and its implication in the process of European Integration", as detailed in the IPA II Annual Implementation Report, 2020. Republic of Albania, p.47.

<sup>129</sup> IPA II Annual Implementation Report, 2020. Republic of Albania, <http://integrimi-ne-be.punetejashtme.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/IPA-II-Annual-Implementation-Report-2019-ALBANIA.pdf> (Accessed January 11, 2021). p. 9



Law," with an indicative amount of EUR 10 million; and iv) "Participation in Union Programs," with an indicative amount of EUR 1.5 million.<sup>130</sup>

In its new programming (IPA 2019 and IPA 2020), the EU will continue to focus on the rule of law and justice reform, good governance and public administration reform, employment and vocational education, and human rights.<sup>131</sup> However, the EU's focus will also include relatively new areas such as social inclusion, innovation and digitalization, property rights, circular economy, and green growth. It aims to apply a more integrated approach, bring interrelated areas under one umbrella, and use a mix of implementation modalities.<sup>132</sup> The EU Delegation in Albania has managed grants for youth as well, such as the Youth Standing up for Human Rights in Albania, implemented by World Vision 2018-2020 in the amount of EUR 589,000.

Another instrument is the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)<sup>133</sup>, which supports socio-economic development and EU accession across the Western Balkans by providing finance and technical assistance for strategic investments. It is a joint initiative of the EU, financial institutions, bilateral donors, and the Western Balkans' governments. Youth is not the principal target of WBIF. Still, it can be a potential area given its focus on financing and technical assistance to strategic investments in the energy, environment, social, transport, and digital infrastructure sectors. In Albania, the only significant project related to youth are the infrastructural investments in university campuses and schools in Tirana through WBIF.<sup>134</sup>

**The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)**, active in Albania since 1988 and the second-largest donor in Albania,<sup>135</sup> has as its priority areas: rural development, sustainable infrastructure, governance and democracy, environment and climate change, and economic development and employment.<sup>136</sup> Currently, GIZ in Albania is addressing the problems regarding unemployment and is targeting youth. First, it is mainstreaming the youth perspective into its programs. Germany has a social initiative where youth can apply for grants. The EU/GIZ funded Project on Sustainable Economic and Regional Development, Employment Promotion and Vocational Education and Training – ProSEED – has adopted a comprehensive approach to improving the workforce's employment situation and encourages social participation and employability of marginalized youth.<sup>137</sup> They are also implementing the DIMAK project aimed at the returned migrants and their employment. GIZ is financing the project "Coaching for

<sup>130</sup> IPA II Annual Implementation Report, 2020. Republic of Albania, <http://integrimi-ne-be.puneteshastme.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/IPA-II-Annual-Implementation-Report-2019-ALBANIA.pdf> (Accessed January 11, 2021).p. 9.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Donor Coordination Expert Liaison between EU and Albanian Government, Mrs., Nevila Çomo, September 2020.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

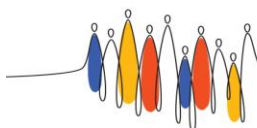
<sup>133</sup> About the Western Balkans Investment Framework, available at <https://wbif.eu/about/about-wbif> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>134</sup> WBIF Projects, available at <https://wbif.eu/wbif-projects> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>135</sup> GIZ has provided 6.4 million USD in official donor assistance to Albania for 2017-2019 as evidenced in the OECD ODA Data, available [https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglacebyrecipient\\_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display\\_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no](https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglacebyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no) (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>136</sup> GIZ in Albania, available at <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/294.html> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Donor Coordination Expert supporting the Government of Albania, Mrs, Nevila Çomo, September 2020.





Employment and Entrepreneurship (C4EE) for returned migrants",<sup>138</sup> implemented by SwissContact, targeting returned migrants from EU member states (including Germany) and marginalized groups in Albania.

The **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** is the third-largest donor in Albania, operating since 1977.<sup>139</sup> Its support focuses on local governance, economic development, healthcare, and urban infrastructure, and energy. The SDC is also a principal donor in the area of youth with these main projects:

- "RisiAlbania,"<sup>140</sup> implemented by Helvetas and Partners Albania with approximately 10 million CHF. The project works to provide more employment opportunities for young women and men in Albania, aged 15-29, socially inclusive and sustainable through interventions in main pillars like job demand, skills supply, career and guidance, and gender and social inclusion. The project focuses primarily on the tourism sector, agribusiness, and information and communication technologies. Recently, in cooperation with the Municipality of Tirana, RISI Albania inaugurated the establishment of the first Career Guidance Center for Youth, which will serve to inform and advise young people and adults in their decisions regarding the professions and education.
- "Skills for Jobs,"<sup>141</sup> implemented by SwissContact, an effective program in creating career prospects for young people enrolled in VET by strengthening VET institutions and building long-lasting collaborations with private sector companies.<sup>142</sup> The Second Phase of the project has been approved with 9.6 million CHF (April 2019 - June 2023). The project supports 5,571 students and 779 trainees: 32% of the students and 26% of the VET schools in Albania. "Skills for Jobs" works in coordination with two national agencies in the VET sector: the National Agency for Employment and Skills, and the National Agency for VET and Qualifications. Besides concrete results in improving employment prospects for young graduates from VET schools, this project has established successful cooperation between VET and the private sector in terms of apprenticeship, job placement and employment, curricula development, and overall VET school performance improvement.
- "Leave No One Behind,"<sup>143</sup> is jointly implemented by four UN partner agencies UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN WOMEN, under UNDP management with a total budget of 8 million CHF for the first Phase (2017-2021). In addition to supporting policy reform in

<sup>138</sup> More information available at <https://www.swisscontact.org/nc/en/country/albania/projects/projects-albania/project/-/show/c4ee-returning-migrants.html> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

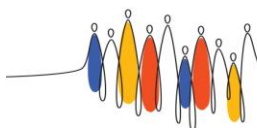
<sup>139</sup> SDC provided 22.3 million USD in official donor assistance for 2017-2018 as evidenced in the OECD ODA Data, available [https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglanbyrecipient\\_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display\\_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no&:showVizHome=no](https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglanbyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no&:showVizHome=no) (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>140</sup> More information available at <https://www.risialbania.al/partners/?lang=en> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>141</sup> More information available at <https://skillsforjobs.al/what-we-do/> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>142</sup> More information available at <https://skillsforjobs.al/18327-2/> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>143</sup> More information available at <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/projects/leave-no-one-behind.html> (Accessed October 17, 2020).



social protection, the project empowers vulnerable people, especially persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians, and vulnerable women, to demand social inclusion and better access to social services to improve their social situation and well-being. Youth is also a key target group of this project. For instance, establishing participatory and youth-responsive budgeting practices empowers youth to be active in policymaking processes at the local level, providing youth with integrated social services.

- LevizAlbania<sup>144</sup> project aiming to empower actors in the civic space (citizens, interest groups, NPOs, media, etc.) to be drivers of change and improve democracy at local level. It is a grant-giving project with a 7.05 million CHF budget for 2019-2023, implemented by OSFA in partnership with Partners for Change and Development Albania and the Co-PLAN Institute. During Phase I (2015-2019), LevizAlbania has managed a 6,450,000 CHF budget. In Phase I, 5 Calls for Applications were launched, attracting 1,383 project ideas, and 166 initiatives were supported (108 from NGOs and 58 from individuals) in 56 municipalities (92%). It is expected that in Phase II, 120 grantees will be supported (80 NGOs/informal groups & 40 individuals), aiming for national-territorial coverage. This project targeted youth indirectly during the Phase I, for instance, 22 projects (28%) addressed youth activism and participation in local decision-making and monitoring of local government, strengthened youth capacities in monitoring and holding local governments accountable, as well as establishing 10 youth structures to lobby and advocate for youth and community priorities in municipal councils.<sup>145</sup>
- With support from the Swiss Embassy, the National Youth Congress conducted the assessment "Understanding Youth Trends – Time for a New Narrative" with findings of what motivates Albania's youth to emigrate or stay in Albania.

SDC works primarily with the governmental institutions as partners in all its major projects and pays special attention to its projects' sustainability through policy dialogue and funding strategic policies by fostering local NPOs' capacities.

**The United States** is the fourth largest donor in Albania.<sup>146</sup> Support is provided through USAID and US Embassy Democracy Commission Small Grants and other direct support to NPOs.

**USAID** has entered a transition phase whereby USAID is planning to start a new program, the "Next Generation Programme," which will provide estimated support of about USD 5.5 million, focusing on public administration reform.<sup>147</sup> Also, the 5.5 million USD that the United States

<sup>144</sup> More information available at <https://www.levizalbania.al/sq/> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>145</sup> LevizAlbania, Phase I 2015-2019 Report, available at <https://www.levizalbania.al/sq/rreth-nesh> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>146</sup> The USA has provided 21.3 million USD in official donor assistance for 2017-2018, as evidenced in the OECD ODA Data, available at [https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglanbyrecipient\\_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display\\_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no](https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDODAidataglanbyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no) (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Donor Coordination Expert Liaison between EU and Albanian Government, Mrs. Nevila Çomo, September 2020.



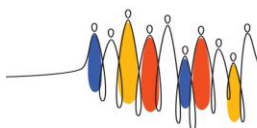
donated after the earthquake in Albania will set up the 'Transparency Academy' (USATA).<sup>148</sup> This institution will help the GoA manage reconstruction funds after the earthquake and other public funds. USAID has supported through its projects under the priority of democracy, human rights, and governance: Justice for All, Accelerated Civic Development and Cooperation (ANTTARC), and Economic Empowerment of People with Disabilities. ANTTARC has provided financial and technical assistance to NPOs working with youth, particularly marginalized youth, among other groups for 2017 – 2020. The program has had a budget of 2,078,919 USD.

**US Embassy Democracy Commission Small Grants** supports initiatives of local NPOs engaged throughout Albania in various fields, including anti-corruption, good governance, investigative journalism, human and minority rights, and empowerment of women and youth, combatting human trafficking, and reforms. It has also supported projects tackling youth radicalization and violent extremism.

The **Swedish Embassy/Sida** –Sweden has been engaged with Albania's years of transition, democratization, and EU-accession, thanks to development cooperation since 2001. The main priorities are economic development, democracy and human rights, and environment and climate change issues as well as a gender equality agenda. Sweden's development cooperation with Albania amounts to approximately EUR 15 million annually. An evaluation of Sida support to civil society in Albania shows that about 77% of subgrants provided to a variety of NPOs in Albania work with youth and youth-related issues.<sup>149</sup> The Olof Palme Center in Albania has an established track record in supporting youth and their activities for about 15 years. SIDA also addresses issues of juvenile justice reform through the "Strengthening Juvenile Justice in Albania", which supports the work to strengthen the whole judiciary chain and interinstitutional cooperation of law enforcement agencies (Police, Prosecution, Courts, Prison and Probations services) in the Juvenile Justice area. The program supports the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Reform and the Code of Juvenile Justice. The Community Policing Programme includes activities with the youth mainly through training and awareness-raising campaigns in schools against drugs, bullying, road traffic accidents, etc. More recently, Sida has focused on issues related to youth such as innovation and entrepreneurship. For example, to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, start-ups and organizations receive financial support and training through so-called 'challenge funds,' a funding method in which donors use competition to find solutions to local problems. The intervention is financed by the EU Delegation in Albania and implemented by SIDA in cooperation with the German organization, GIZ. In addition, Sida has recently signed a decision on regional funding to EBRD on Youth in Business Programme for the Western Balkans. The aim is to support the growth of Youth MSMEs by providing them with

<sup>148</sup> Article available at <https://exit.al/en/2020/06/05/us-earthquake-aid-to-be-spent-on-transparency-academy/> (Accessed October 17, 2020).

<sup>149</sup> "Evaluation of Swedish Civil Society Support in Albania", 2018, available at [https://publikationer.sida.se/contentassets/14bc0c9b1a5b45109110ef6adb2b3424/de2018\\_16\\_62156en.pdf](https://publikationer.sida.se/contentassets/14bc0c9b1a5b45109110ef6adb2b3424/de2018_16_62156en.pdf) (Accessed December 30, 2020). p.28.



dedicated finance and know-how. The funding provided by SIDA is EUR 3,542,500. The program will last for 5 years with a total program value of EUR 68,100,000.

**Italy** is committed to the Albanian sustainable socio-economic development and EU integration process. Italy provides support in three main areas: 1) Rule of Law and Good Government, 2) Environment and Nature, 3) Competitiveness and Innovation.<sup>150</sup> Italy is also working together with the UN. For Italy, youth is amongst the new priorities for its IADSA project (diaspora and SMEs).

**RYCO** – Currently, RYCO is supported by several donors, including the EU, the UN, France, Germany, Sweden, and the OSCE. Current or upcoming funding to RYCO and RYCO Strategic Plan 2019-2021 are being considered from multiple development partners. GoA contributes to RYCO with about EUR 173,000 annually. In the first call for applications of RYCO in 2017, out of 33 regional projects supported, 5 of them had the main applicant organizations from Albania. Meanwhile, there were 10 CSOs and 2 vocational schools which were partners. Four of the projects supported have worked under the objective of active participation and social inclusion of young people and one of them is focused on the field of learning and intercultural dialogue. The first call has been fully funded by RYCO's budget from WB6 economies.

In December 2018, RYCO announced the second call for project proposals, where it allocated a budget of 1 million euros. This call is funded by RYCO and the United Nations Peace Building Fund (UNPBF) from which RYCO has won a project, in partnership with the offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in Albania. In this call RYCO gathered about 300 applications, which translate into over 850 networked actors. Of these applications, 44 were Lead Applicants from Albania and 89 organizations / schools which applied as partners. Out of 44 supported projects, 7 of them are run by organizations from Albania and 14 CSOs/secondary schools which are partners. Projects supported with Albanian lead applicants in this call work in the following areas: Learning and Intercultural Dialogue (3 projects), Facing the Past (2 projects), Capacity Building (1 project), Youth Participation in Social, Economic and Life political (1 project).

At the end of August 2019, RYCO opened the third call for project proposals dedicated only to high schools in the region. This call is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a budget of EUR 350 thousand. The call closed in October and gathered 100 applications (among which the main applicants are high schools). Of these applications, 26 of them are from Albania. In this call RYCO has supported 20 projects, 3 of which are from Albania. Supported by CSOs, the high schools of this call are as follows: Jordan Misja High School Shkodra, Joint High School "Bardhyl Pojani", Korca and "Jani Minga" High School, Vlora.

<sup>150</sup> More information available at <https://tirana.aics.gov.it/en/home/field-office/head/> (Accessed October 17, 2020).



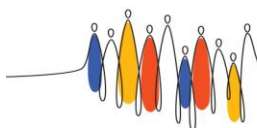
On 31 August 2020 RYCO opened the 4<sup>th</sup> Call for Project Proposals, supported by the European Commission. This call aimed to support and empower civil society in order to increase regional cooperation, especially in the time of a global pandemic, by implementing activities in the fields of intercultural learning, mobility and youth exchange, and advocacy and capacity building of Society Organizations. During this call, RYCO received 129 applications, which translates into 391 networked entities for the purpose of applying in this call. Of these applications, 30 were from Albania, and of those, 2 of them will be winners. The selection of projects is not over yet. EUR 330,000 have been allocated for this call through the support of the European Union.

In order to continuously increase the capacity of actors who implement or want to implement RYCO projects, RYCO has organized several trainings at the level of contracting parties and regionally. In October 2018, the local RYCO Office in Albania, with the support of the OSCE Presence in Tirana, organized a training for 20 teachers from 20 different schools throughout Albania to increase their capacity in the field of writing and management of projects as well as intercultural learning and dialogue. For all grant beneficiaries, RYCO has organized trainings in the areas of intercultural learning, youth participation, and use of digital tools, and so on.

Through cooperation with the Development Agency in France, RYCO will be able to support projects in the field of social entrepreneurship among BP youth. Starting in 2020, more than 130 young people from all over the Western Balkans are each taking part in one of 6 social entrepreneurship incubators. Of these, there are 10 winning teams from Albania, or 35 young people, taking part in the incubator facilitated by partner in Albania, Yunus Social Business Balkans.

**Western Balkan Fund** – Currently offers small grants at the regional level in education, research, and culture. It is about to launch a significant program on research at the regional level supported by SDC.

**The United Nations** – The UN is working with its partners to promote economic and social reforms and innovations that help bring services to those who need them most – unemployed youth, vulnerable women, Roma and Egyptian communities and persons with disabilities. The UN is also providing support to RYCO as the UN (UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA) has entered into a partnership with RYCO with \$2.1million of assistance to expand its reach, capacities, and its partners across the WB6. UNICEF, UNFPA, and the UDNP are also working on youth and youth related issues. The Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD) is financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The first phase was completed in 2020. In Albania, 12 municipalities were engaged, adopting and approving the Reinforcement of Local Democracy (LOD) methodology as a tool to allocate public funds to NPOs, including youth organisations.





During its implementation, 82 projects were selected with a total budget of EUR 1.13 million and 16,700 youth and children were impacted with 18 projects on youth participation.

The UN is preparing for its future in creating the Albania - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026. To contribute to Albania priorities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets, the cooperation aims to achieve a set of inter-connected and transformational changes to strengthen Albania's institutions and implement reforms for a more inclusive society and socio-economic conditions that will accelerate convergence with the EU in terms of incomes and quality of life, especially for people at risk of exclusion. Cooperation will emphasize investment in people with a two-fold approach to strengthen the quality and coverage of essential social services and to offer policy options for more effective and efficient social sector spending.

**OSCE** also has youth engagement as one of its priorities. It is approaching youth more strategically. Examples of youth involvement coming from the OSCE PiA include: OSCE has launched a Youth Advisory Group (YAG), aiming to integrate a youth perspective, including youth-specific considerations, concerns, needs, priorities, and vulnerabilities, into its planning and programmatic activities; Youth Talks, including one talk that has already happened with around 80 young people participating in it; The third edition of #YouthTrail2019, held from 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> of May, 2019 in Tirana, which was also supported by the German Government; and youth and security related matters.

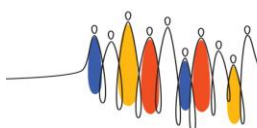
**Austria Development Agency (ADA)** priorities in Albania are governance and the rule of law, integrated water management, labor market-oriented VET, and employability.<sup>151</sup> Austria's interventions in VET support the reduction of youth unemployment.

The **EBRD**, although it does not have a particular focus on youth cooperation, supports youth through their support to the VET program and support for SMEs. The new EBRD strategy for Albania (2020-2025) emphasizes that they will support the economic inclusion of women, youth, and regions through dedicated financing, advisory activities, and the promotion of inclusive procurement with the EU, other IFIs, and donors.

The **Council of Europe** deals with youth in terms of education, human rights, discrimination, and media. The European Union/Council of Europe's 'Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey' (Phase I 2016-2019 and Phase II 2019-2022) is a cooperation initiative of the EU and the Council of Europe for Western Balkans and Turkey. The first phase of the program included various Beneficiary-specific and regional industries and ran from 2016 to

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<sup>151</sup> More information available at [https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/Landesstrategien/CS\\_Albania\\_2015-2021.pdf](https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/Landesstrategien/CS_Albania_2015-2021.pdf) (Accessed October 17, 2020).



2019. The second phase of the plan (worth EUR 41 million - 85% funded by the EU and 15% by the CoE - between 2019 and 2022) keeps building on phase I results. It broadens the thematic areas to new topics crucial for the Western Balkans region and Turkey to those of the freedom of expression and media. The Horizontal Facility II contains six actions in 4 pillars. Themes covered by the Horizontal Facility include ensuring justice, fighting economic crime, combating discrimination, and protecting vulnerable groups (including LGBTI, minorities, and Roma), and freedom of expression and freedom of the media. It contains a robust Anti-Corruption component that offers room for cooperation with OSCE and other interested partners. The Horizontal Facility actions also address cross-cutting issues, such as gender mainstreaming, protection of minorities and vulnerable groups, and foresees civil society organizations' engagement in implementing the Facility. The flexibility of the Facility, e.g., the possibility to slightly modify activities of ongoing actions and/or their schedule or duration, or to include new stakeholders, have strongly supported its effectiveness<sup>152</sup>.

**French Development Agency (AFD)** started to work in the Western Balkans in 2018, and Albania is the first of the six economies where AFD is authorized to operate. It will not focus directly on youth, but on climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable cities and the environment, and innovation and the digital economy. Youth support will be provided under innovation and digital economy projects.

**The United Kingdom** has not been a major donor in Albania since 2019, but in light of BREXIT they are intensifying regional donor support, including Albania. Traditionally they have supported youth through the British Council and education programs such as Chevening scholarships for exchange programs in the UK. They are currently targeting youth and security issues under the Serious and organized crime framework for the Western Balkans, and the Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund. They are also financing the British Council to conduct a science engagement project for youth, the only donor working in this area in Albania.

**OSFA** is the largest locally-based/staffed donor in Albania since the Albania's transition to democracy. Since 1994, it has disbursed and managed over 9,260 local grants to civil society and public institutions totaling some 55.4 million Euros. In addition to grant making, it engages in direct and indirect advocacy at national and local level. The foundation's early efforts addressed the need for the basic building blocks of democracy and governance, with special emphasis on education, media and civic dialogue. It also provides scholarships and support a large young cadre of professionals, journalists, artists, civic activists, Roma community that continue to play an important role in Albania's political, economic, and social development.

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<sup>152</sup> Blomeyer & Sanz (2019), pg.12. <https://rm.coe.int/evaluation-report-of-the-horizontal-facility/1680993bf6> (Accessed October 4, 2020).





## 5.2 Donor coordination

Sector level donor coordination structures till 2017 were organized within the Office of the Prime Minister with a dedicated Department to Donor Coordination and Harmonisation of Strategies. However, in 2017, the set-up was reorganized. In September 2017, the responsibility for donor coordination was transferred to the MFE, which takes a proactive role in organizing this function and aims to increase the comprehensiveness of resource allocations concerning the national budget and donors. The EU Delegation Chairs the Donor Technical Secretariat, which encompasses the key donors and development partners of Albania (Austrian Development Agency, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Embassy of Sweden, Embassy of Switzerland, European Union, Council of Europe, EBRD, OSCE, USAID, UN, and World Bank), and facilitates the government donor exchange. A high-level donor-government dialogue occurs once per year as a 'round table' to focus on aid harmonization, followed by regular operational meetings.<sup>153</sup>

In addition to the coordination by the GoA, the EU is regularly consulting with other donors, civil society, and others (e.g., judiciary), both at the time of preparing the overall strategic approach, as well as for the preparation of annual programs. IPA assistance for Albania is coordinated and complementary with the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Each major program funded by donors is requested to ensure donor coordination and synergies as part of its implementation. The overall coordination within the GoA includes a Strategic Planning Committee as an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Prime Minister that reviews and endorses the Government's policy and fiscal priorities.

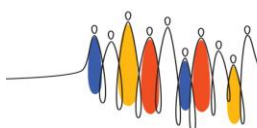
Donor activities relating to education are well-coordinated and implemented through meetings of the Conference of Ministers of Education under the EU and Berlin process' framework. However, when it comes to employment, labor market, vocational training, social inclusion, social dialogue, social protection, and other youth-related areas, donor coordination is conducted primarily within the framework of particular projects or programs and not in a systematic and coordinated way by the Government and line ministry.

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

Donors so far have focused on education, VET, employment, social inclusion, and participation. These remain priority areas, but increasingly, attention is being paid to security issues (youth and radicalization and extremism or youth and organized crime); digital skills, innovation, and entrepreneurship; youth and arts, culture, and sports; youth and science; and active civic and political participation of youth. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the well-being, and mental health of young people, and their access to social and health care services has also become a focal area

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<sup>153</sup> Donor Coordination in Albania, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180817-revised-indicative-strategy-paper-2014-2020-for-albania.pdf> (Accessed October 17, 2020).



of interest. Supporting youth NPOs or others who work with youth in disaster risk reduction is another potential focus area. Media and data literacy for youth are crucial to fight disinformation, and fake news, and to support engaged citizens. Migration remains a critical issue, particularly the brain drain of youth professionals as argued in 1.3. *Youth migration*.

#### 5.4 Critical assessment

In terms of donor coordination, two positive developments in 2020 are: i) the establishment of the EU projects database in Albania<sup>154</sup>. The platform on EU projects gathers information on past and ongoing projects funded by the EU. For each project, website provides information about the implementing partners, beneficiaries, objectives, actions and expected results, in a fully transparent manner. The database has a user-friendly interface and the search function allows the search of projects by sector or any keyword; ii) the External Assistant Management Information System (EAMIS) aiming to serve as a reliable and credible source of information on overall donor, public, private and local investments in Albania's development and economic growth,<sup>155</sup> which still need to be fully functional. Some good practices can be observed, such as consultation of programming with NPOs in addition to government bodies. Donors' consultation with NPOs in programming has improved. New ways for donors to reach out to less organized parts of civil society in communities are seen. The EU and other donors have also used online consultation. For example, the social inclusion program of EU 2019 was finalized with extensive consultations with NPOs working in the same area and with main development partners like the UN.<sup>156</sup>

Furthermore, sub-granting as a mean to support smaller NPOs has also been increased and has proven vital for the financial sustainability of NPOs, particularly grassroots ones. More funding has been accessible for a broader range of NPOs, particularly at the local level. The EU and then others work through intermediates, where national NPOs have been awarded EU funding, and then they provide sub-granting to others. This intermediate approach has made EU funding more accessible to the NPOs. Another good practice is that more donors are starting to work with a longer-term perspective. They consult and present their strategies to the stakeholders. On a positive note, almost all donors have linked their program to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in line with their commitment to delivering more effective development effectiveness and achieving the SDGs.<sup>157</sup> Another trend is that donors are more concerned not to duplicate and create parallel mechanisms. Some donors with similar objectives combine their interventions to avoid overlapping and encourage networking. Finding synergies and coordination has become mandatory for all interventions.<sup>158</sup>

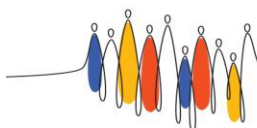
<sup>154</sup> The link to the database: <https://www.euprojects.al/>

<sup>155</sup> The link to EAMIS" <http://demo.synisys.com/ddfa-portal/ips/eamis/>

<sup>156</sup> OSFA Report 2020 on donors in Albania prepared by Nevila Çomo, expert on donor coordination.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER 6: GOOD PRACTICES AND GAP ANALYSIS

This chapter presents good practices in youth-related policy and programs as well as gaps in financing mechanisms following the same structure of the report itself. It analyzes the impact of COVID-19 on youth and outlines some key recommendations for each key actor.

### 6.1 Good practices

The policy framework on youth in Albania has progressed considerably with the approval of the new Law on Youth, which is expected to enhance youth empowerment and participation and provide funding opportunities for the youth sector. The consultation process for the law and its bylaws is another good practice in terms of youth policy making. The consultation process attracted diverse opinions from various youth NPOs, networks, activists, and civil society actors, as well as coverage in the media that led to a public debate on youth policy framework and funding.

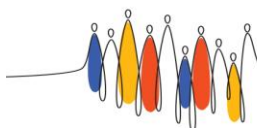
In principle, the approval of NAPY in 2015 marks another significant positive development in youth policy making in Albania with a vision for youth empowerment and comprehensive intervention to transform the reality of young Albanians.

As a cross-cutting area, youth is, in principle, in the attention of various public policies and Governmental programs such as education, VET, employment, culture, art, sports, entrepreneurship, innovation and others. This provides various opportunities for youth at least in policy development.

In terms of local government and youth, some good practices can be observed in the approval of Local Youth Plans and the establishment of youth centers. Some good practices are also noticed in youth participation in local policymaking through grassroots activism, advocacy and other youth-led initiatives supported by various donor-funded programs.

In terms of funding mechanisms, some good practices also relate to instruments for supporting youth such as the Excellence Fund for education, Employment Promotion Programs, the National Programme on Work Placement and Internship, the Youth Card and other initiatives related to VET, entrepreneurship and recently, start-up development. These instruments are mostly financed by development partners and donors and implemented by the GoA in cooperation with the civil society sector.

Self-organization of youth in NPOs, networks, informal groups and other platforms has also progressed in Albania, with increased capacity and resources over the years. Networks and umbrella organizations with strong internal democracy have managed to build trust with their youth members (organizations and individuals) and have become key actors in policy dialogue with the government, representing youth interests from various perspectives.



Regarding donor support for the youth sector, good practices have been established in sub-granting for grassroots, small and local NPOs, informal groups and individuals.<sup>159</sup> Also, donor programming consultation with youth organization and civil society at large has generally progressed. Synergies and coordination have also improved, and most interventions are long term programs, thus allowing for more sustainability.

Good practices have been established in funding mechanisms for youth, through support to the GoA and associated bodies on youth and youth-related policy areas, either as technical assistance, sectoral budget support, direct financing, or capacity building.

## 6.2 Gaps

Despite achievements and good practices, the report finds the following gaps in policy framework and funding mechanisms for youth in Albania. Administrative capacity for data collection and its usage for better policy planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring remains rather limited. The availability of youth-specific disaggregated (15-29 as defined by the law) data remains a challenge for Albania. Also, published data for budgeting and investments in the area of youth, for instance, are not according to open data standards, even though the GoA has committed to Open Government Partnership.<sup>160</sup>

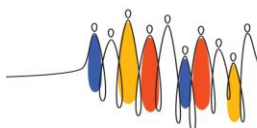
The approval of the remaining two bylaws (youth database and NYRO) supporting the new Law on Youth implementation is a gap that hinders the progress of youth policy framework. Also, the lack of a NSY is observed as a gap in the national policy framework on youth. Limited monitoring and evaluation processes for youth policies such as NAPY are also observed as a significant gap.

In terms of funding, limited specific budget on youth is a major gap as well as limited institutional human resources and capacities to work with and for youth. Youth policy is a cross-sectorial policy area with various line ministries and bodies that deal with youth issues, which at times proves challenging in terms of building synergies, data collection and analysis and overall coordination. Mainstreaming of youth still needs to be developed across different policy areas.

Other sources of funding from public institutions, such as funding for civil society, culture, art, and others have been limited and the youth would benefit from a more transparent approach in the publication of relevant data as to the fund allocations. More accountability and transparency

<sup>159</sup> OSFA and LevizAlbania have provided funding to informal groups and individuals and more recently EU will provide subgrants for informal groups and individuals within the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2018- 2019, Support to Active Citizenship EuropeAid/169379/DH/ACT/AL which will start in 2021.

<sup>160</sup> More on Albania commitments to Open Government Partnership, available here <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/policy-area/open-data/> (Accessed January 13, 2021).



from public institutions responsible for youth policy and its implementation would have been beneficial for the youth sector and the policy dialogue with youth.

In terms of local government and youth, youth centers are not yet fully established in all municipalities across Albania and are yet to be functioning as empowering platforms for youth. Limited capacities and financial resources at the local government level, limit the structured dialogue and cooperation with youth. What is more, the standards for the establishment of youth centers have not been developed, which is important to avoid youth centers becoming only physical spaces without programs and activities dedicated to youth participation, engagement and empowerment.

In terms of youth participation, NYC, NYRO and LYC, once set up, will be in need of support (resources, capacity development, infrastructure, procedures, communication and outreach) to ensure youth participation in policy making both at central and local levels. The youth NPOs, networks, informal groups and platforms also need further support in terms of organizational development, project management, fundraising and networking, advocacy and lobbying, digitalization, communication, and outreach.

In addition to current funding mechanisms for youth (support to GoA or direct funding to youth), the report finds that direct support for the youth sector (organizations, associations, groups, networks, and other forms) in particular among emerging priority areas is still limited. Another gap refers to institutional funding for youth to ensure sustainability of operations through supporting with financial means and skill development. Some funding is available for Structured Youth Policy Dialogue. Limited sources and funding mechanisms are available to support youth in the Quadruple Helix, i.e., cooperation with other sectors such as academia, civil society, business, media, and public institutions.

Education, VET, employment, social inclusion, and participation remain priority areas for youth in need of further consolidation. Other areas of interest are related to security issues (youth and radicalization and extremism or youth and organized crime); digital skills, innovation, entrepreneurship; youth and arts, culture and sports; youth and science; youth active civic and political participation. With the COVID-19 pandemic, well-being, and mental health of young people, access to social and health care services has also become a focal area of interest. Supporting youth NPOs or others who work with youth in disaster risk reduction is another potential focus area. Media and data literacy for youth are crucial to fighting disinformation, and fake news and to support engaged citizens. Migration remains a critical issue, particularly the brain drain of young professionals.



### 6.3 The impact of COVID-19 on youth

While still recovering from the devastating earthquake of November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Albania faced the COVID-19 outbreak, which as of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>161</sup>. The GoA responded quickly and on March 24, 2020 the Council of Ministers declared the 'State of Natural Disaster' via Decision No. 243 with a duration of 30 days.<sup>162</sup> With a majority of votes, the Parliament deferred until June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the 'State of Natural Disaster' (Decision 18/2020).<sup>163</sup> A technical committee of experts for the COVID-19 infection has been set up, reporting to the MHSP, chaired by Deputy Minister and composed of 11 other members, doctors, public health officials, and heads of relevant agencies.

The GoA has also instituted a range of support measures aimed at protecting the population and businesses during the pandemic, such as welfare benefits and other support to individuals, including sick pay, cash transfers, and housing relief; protection for vulnerable people in households at risk of abuse; financial support/guarantees for businesses; and home education support.<sup>164</sup> The GoA has enacted a package of fiscal stimuli in the form of two sets of economic policy measures (on 21 March 2020, and 13 April 2020) consisting of budget spending, sovereign guarantees and tax deferrals. The fiscal packages amounting to about 2.8% of GDP, also included a mixture of tax moratoriums, loan guarantees and wage subsidies for those businesses and individuals in dire economic distress.<sup>165</sup> However, to date there are no specific data or reports on the impact of GoA policy response and recovery measures on youth.<sup>166</sup> Development partners and donors have committed to support Albania in the fight against COVID-19.<sup>167</sup> In the autumn of 2020, the number of cases in Albania had been consistently growing following the summer tourist season and deconfinement measures leading to a re-introduction of restrictive measures.<sup>168</sup>

The school year started on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, following three scenarios: Pupils went back to school and have been i) following all classes physically, ii) alternating between one week of physical classes and one week of online classes or finally, if the situation worsens, iii) they

<sup>161</sup> "Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic", WHO, available at <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19#:~:text=WHO%20announced%20COVID%2D19,on%2011%20March%202020>. (Accessed on September 20, 2020).

<sup>162</sup> Decision 243, available at <https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/VKM-nr.-243-date-24.3.2020.docx..pdf> (Accessed on September 20, 2020).

<sup>163</sup> Decision 18/2020 available at <https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/VKM-nr.-243-date-24.3.2020.docx..pdf> Accessed on September 20, 2020).

<sup>164</sup> UN Albania Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan, 2020, available at <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/3101/file/UN%20ALBANIA%20COVID-19%20SOCIO-ECONOMIC%20RECOVERY%20&%20RESPONSE%20PLAN.pdf> (Accessed January 5, 2021).

<sup>165</sup> *ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>166</sup> Ministry of Finance and Economy has a dedicated COVID19 section on its webpage and publishes reports and data about budget spendings on the GoA response and recovery policy measures, but no specific data on youth. More available at <https://financa.gov.al/raporte-per-covid-19/>, accessed (January 14, 2021).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>168</sup> "The COVID-19 crisis in Albania", November 2020, OECD, available at <https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/COVID-19-Crisis-in-Albania.pdf> (Accessed January 5, 2021).





will have online classes only. MESY has developed a range of televised courses for primary and secondary students on national TV channels.

The COVID-19 outbreak poses a very real threat to youth education. About 572,000 students from preschools to higher education in Albania were disrupted from their learning since March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020. School closures have been linked with interrupted education and limited social interaction. For the most vulnerable children, it also limits their access to essential services like information on disease prevention, water and sanitation, measures against violence, psychological support, etc. At least 11,000 students have been identified as not having access to online learning, many of them living in remote and rural areas with no internet or devices at home. Roma children and children with learning difficulties and disabilities have also not accessed online learning.<sup>169</sup> Albania's education system was not built to deal with extended shutdowns or distance learning like those imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

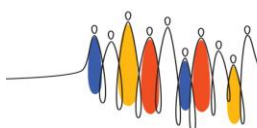
The COVID-19 pandemic has expanded the notion of vulnerability. So, besides Roma and Egyptian youth, youth with disabilities, and youth in conflict with law or victims of crime, due to COVID-19, other youth groups at risk have emerged such as youth living in remote and rural areas, youth affected by the earthquake, and youth with health conditions or chronic diseases, unemployed youth, or NEET. They have inadequate access to social services, limited capacities, and opportunities to cope and adapt, and limited or no access to technologies.<sup>170</sup> The expansion of vulnerability and groups of youth at risk pose additional pressure on social service provision by central and local government. It requires enhanced cooperation with service providers, NPOs, business, and local government and donors to support these youth groups.

Youth and other groups are exposed to an increasing number of online media that use social media to distort the media system, generating (dis)information and click-bait ecosystems. This risk is heightened in the COVID-19 crisis context when time spent in social isolation increases, including on digital platforms. On the other hand, a lack of access to technology and the digital divide leaves economically vulnerable persons isolated in the COVID-19 crisis, particularly affecting the children and the elderly.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>169</sup> UNDP Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan, available at <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/3101/file/UN%20ALBANIA%20COVID-19%20SOCIO-ECONOMIC%20RECOVERY%20&%20RESPONSE%20PLAN.pdf> (Accessed October 16, 2020).

<sup>170</sup> UNDP Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan, available at <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/3101/file/UN%20ALBANIA%20COVID-19%20SOCIO-ECONOMIC%20RECOVERY%20&%20RESPONSE%20PLAN.pdf> (Accessed October 16, 2020).

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*





The COVID-19 crisis posed severe challenges to youth organizations and other NPOs in terms of available funding, the continuation of operations, the implementation of their projects, and their working practices and human resource management.<sup>172</sup>

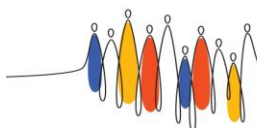
## 6.4 Recommendations

On an overall note, the report finds that despite progress in youth policy and funding mechanisms, Albania still needs to further enhance its efforts to develop a fully functional youth system which responds to the needs of young people, ensures inclusivity, and creates an enabling environment for youth participation and empowerment. Inter-institutional and cross-sectorial cooperation in the area of youth and related issues is essential. Youth should be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting policy area. Some key priorities for policy makers, the donor community and youth are outlined below:

### **Recommendations for policy makers at central and local levels:**

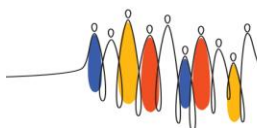
- It is essential to step up efforts to enhance the administrative capacities of central and local institutions on data collection and usage for better policy planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring. Availability of data, open access, reliability, and transparency need to be upgraded. The data published by public institutions both at the local and central levels regarding youth should be in line with the open data standards of the Open Government Partnership.
- Public institutions, NPOs, academia, research centers and other organisations should gather, analyze and publish youth-specific disaggregated (15-29 as defined by the law) data in a holistic and comprehensive way. This will help with consistency and comparability of data sets, thus contributing to research on youth and evidence-based youth policy.
- It is necessary to further improve current efforts for evidence-based youth policy making through the use of data, evidence, and research, and through structured and continuous dialogue and cooperation with youth, civil society, and academia.
- Amendments to the legal framework are necessary, such as including the definition of ‘youth workers’ based on a European model of ‘youth workers’ as is the provision and criteria for the certification of youth workers. Also, it is necessary to define standards for youth centers and safe youth spaces not only physically, but also in terms of spaces for programs and activities dedicated to youth development, both physical and digital. More so, further definition and clarification are needed in the legal framework regarding what constitutes an investment or funding in the area of youth. For instance, investment in a new gym in schools is counted as investment for youth and education at the same time. Therefore, it is necessary to have a better definition of what is an investment in youth,

<sup>172</sup> “The role of civil society and media in crises management in Albania”, WFD, 2020, available at [https://www.wfd.org/2020/12/22/the-role-of-civil-society-and-media-in-crises-management-in-albania/?fbclid=IwAR0hinRBUDyy\\_YdPhqbSBbTazzR02n0yERI9YV7fdt4f-5uUjCrVKOIPP5I](https://www.wfd.org/2020/12/22/the-role-of-civil-society-and-media-in-crises-management-in-albania/?fbclid=IwAR0hinRBUDyy_YdPhqbSBbTazzR02n0yERI9YV7fdt4f-5uUjCrVKOIPP5I) (Accessed January 5, 2021).



including not only infrastructure, but also other dimensions such as non-formal education, capacity development, participation and empowerment.

- It is paramount to ensure the prompt approval of necessary bylaws for the implementation of the Law on Youth (there are 2 remaining bylaws for a youth database and NYRO). It is also necessary to develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure regular feedback from the youth and necessary changes in response to youth needs and context, particularly in light of COVID-19.
- The youth would benefit significantly from the development of a NSY, accompanied with a new NAPY with relevant budget, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. It should be developed with a broad consultation process and by using research and evidence.
- The Parliament should consider the possibility of establishing a sub-committee on Youth and to increase its effort to hold the government accountable in terms of the implementation of youth policy framework. In this light, further improvement of cross-sectoral cooperation is needed to better address youth issues.
- The youth would benefit significantly from the youth fund allocations envisaged in the new Law on Youth. The prompt implementation of the approved bylaw for youth grants is essential. NAY should open the call and disseminate it broadly online, but also it should organize Info Days or Sessions across 12 regions in Albania. Grassroots youth organisations, youth groups and youth NPOs in the periphery should be further supported with capacity building for project proposal writing and implementation so as to benefit from the youth fund.
- Human resources and capacity building should be provided to NAY to develop standard operating procedures regarding grant giving (call for applications, selection of projects, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation as well as publication of information and relevant data based on open data standards).
- A dedicated program budget for youth is necessary to be set up, in addition to current provisions across different ministries as a cross-cutting policy issue. It would be an added value to the development of a youth if other sources of funding from public institutions such as funding for civil society, culture, art, sports, employment, entrepreneurship, innovation, research, and science would also be dedicated to youth. Youth Guarantee programme should be implemented in Albania as well, ensuring youth participation.
- Accountability and transparency mechanisms in youth policy and funding should be reinforced. It is essential to ensure a transparent, fair and competitive grant giving process through youth funding to finance youth programs, initiatives, activities and youth NPOs, or NPOs which have a special focus in youth development.
- It is essential to further consolidate structural policy dialogue with youth, building more effective cooperation and trust by enhancing accountability and transparency from public institutions responsible for youth policy and its implementation. In this light, it is necessary to envisage capacity development and other relevant support to the new youth structures to be established: NYC, NYRO and LYC. It would be beneficial for NYC to meet regularly

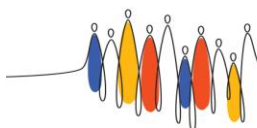


and also organize open meetings or publish meeting minutes and other outputs to increase transparency and strengthen trust with youth and youth organisations. In a similar way, the establishment and functioning of LYCs needs to be further supported. NYRO is of particular relevance as an independent body representing youth. The MESY should ensure a transparent and inclusive process in the establishment of NYRO, which will need support (financial and institutional support, human resources, lobby and advocacy, project management, communication and outreach). NYRO needs to establish a very credible profile and build close relations with youth communities, organisations, networks and youth in general to actually serve as their voice.

- Further support will be needed with capacity development, infrastructure, technology upgrading and other resources in youth centers so as they can fully function as empowering platforms for youth. It is also necessary to continue to support local government in developing Local Youth Plans in line with their Local Social Care Plans, and to further build their capacities and support their financial resources to better address youth issues at the local level.
- The youth NPOs, networks, informal groups, and platforms should also be further supported in terms of organizational development, project management, fundraising, and networking, advocacy, and lobbying, digitalization, communication, and outreach.
- It should be ensured that the Youth Card is fully functional, with the necessary opportunities available for youth to access different services. The youth card shall be inclusive, offering services for youth from rural areas, disabled youth, and all vulnerability groups. Transparency on budget allocations, usage of youth cards and satisfaction should be enhanced.
- It is necessary to further improve the employment and education programs, including VET, to better match education with the needs of the labor market. It is also necessary to mainstream and prioritize digital skills for youth as well as upskilling and reskilling in light of post COVID-19 labor market changes.
- Better coordination between formal (central and local government, donors, the business sector, NPOs, the media, academia) and non-formal actors (families, youth groups, community leaders) should be ensured.

#### **Recommendations for youth (NPOs, networks, informal groups, platforms):**

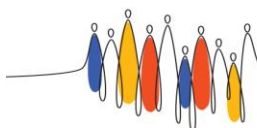
- Youth organizations should focus on strengthening sustainable and trusting relations with diverse groups of youth and channel their interests, needs, and demands into decision making.
- Youth organizations should enhance efforts for networking, cooperation and partnership-building with one another and other civil society actors.
- Well-established youth organizations and networks should provide peer-to-peer support, guidance, and mentorship for smaller, grassroots organizations and youth initiatives from rural and remote areas.



- Youth organizations should further develop their capacities, both in terms of human and organizational capacities, and particularly regarding organizational development, project management, fundraising and networking, advocacy and lobbying, digitalization, communication and outreach. Youth organizations and networks working in policy advocacy need to further develop their research expertise.
- Youth organizations should identify new streams of financial resources to become financially sustainable and break the cycle of donor-dependency.

**Recommendations for donors:**

- Continued support to the GoA and associated bodies on youth and youth-related policy areas, but with particular attention to provision of support in following dimensions:
  - Structured Youth Policy Dialogue: Policy makers at the central and local level youth organizations and civil society organizations in the field of youth.
  - Implementation of new Law on Youth and establishment of NYC, NYRO, LYC.
  - Emerging priority areas: Impact of COVID-19, including the impact of the GoA's response and recovery policy measures on youth, and the way forward in a post-pandemic reality; Rural Youth; Media, data, and digital literacy; Health and social protection; Youth and Science; Youth and Diaspora; Youth Migration/Brain Drain/Brain Circulation.
  - Evidence-based youth policy, making use of data and digital technologies.
  - Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning, capitalization of knowledge and promotion of good models at central and local levels.
- Continue direct support to youth by evaluating progress, identifying best practices, and customizing support based on assessed needs and demands from the youth sector.
- Intensify direct support for the youth sector (organizations, associations, groups, networks and other forms) in priority and emerging areas: Employment, income generation, start-ups; VET; Digital Skills; Impact of COVID-19 and the way forward in a post-pandemic reality; Rural Youth; Media, data and digital literacy; Health and social protection; Youth and science; Youth and Diaspora; Youth Migration/Brain Drain/Brain Circulation.
- Provide institutional funding for youth sector (organizations, associations, groups, networks, and other forms) to ensure sustainability of operations through supporting with financial means and skills development.
- Provide support (financial and capacity, skills, networks, advocacy, mobility, exchange, mentoring) for Youth in the Quadruple Helix: Youth engagement with academia and research, civil society, the policy sector, media, and the private sector.



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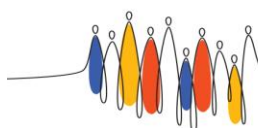
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## ANNEXES

### Annex 1 – Competences of institutions dealing with youth

#### ➤ *Policy Level – Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports*

The Ministry responsible for youth is MESY having the following competencies:

- a) drafts and proposes the legal basis, policies, programs, strategies, and activities for youth,
- b) plans the budget for financing activities in the field of youth,
- c) drafts and publishes evaluation reports on the situation of youth,
- d) monitors the implementation of policies, as well as youth activities,
- e) monitors the standards for the construction of safe and accessible youth spaces for young people,
- f) represents Albania at international levels and in organizations for youth issues,
- g) fulfills the obligations of membership, and coordinates participation in international programs and projects in the field of youth,
- h) cooperates with local self-government units for policies, projects, and programs in the field of youth,
- i) ensures the provision of activities for young people in cooperation with institutions of other central government, local self-government units, and other authorities, setting standards in the provision of youth activities and youth work,
- j) ensures the development of consultations with young people regarding youth policies and programs in the Albania, as well as international youth exchange programs.

There is a dedicated Deputy Minister for Youth.

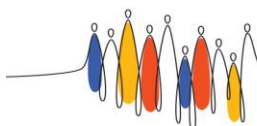
#### ➤ *Line ministries*

The Ministry of Finance and Economy is responsible for youth entrepreneurship, Ministry of Justice (juvenile delinquency), the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (youth health and social inclusion), the MoC and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEFA). The main parliamentary committee dealing with youth issues is the Committee for Education and Public Information Tools.

#### ➤ *Implementation of policy – National Agency for Youth*

The institution responsible for youth is a public budgetary legal entity, depending on the minister responsible for youth, which is financed from the public budget and other legal sources and operates throughout the territory of Albania. The institution responsible for youth performs the following functions:

- a) implements policies and programs for youth,
- b) organizes, administers, finances, coordinates, monitors, and supervises youth programs and projects,



- c) cooperates with organizations, institutions, donors, and other entities, local and foreign, for the presentation and implementation of youth policies, programs, and activities; supports the capacity building of units and structures at central and local level,
- d) creates and maintains an accessible database for youth,
- e) provides funding through application in national and international projects, which are transferred on an annual basis in cases where a multi-year project is approved,
- f) collects, administers, and analyzes data on the situation of young people in cooperation with other institutions and local self-government units,
- g) reports periodically to the ministry responsible for youth on the situation of young people and the implementation of obligations arising from this law,
- h) supervises the youth activity and work with young people from youth organizations and youth organizations which receive support according to the provisions of this law.

The manner of establishment, organization and functioning of the institution responsible for youth is approved by a decision of the Council of Ministers and is still to be approved.

#### ➤ *Advisory – National Youth Council*

The NYC is an advisory body, which functions under the minister responsible for youth. The NYC exercises the following competencies:

- a) submits to the minister responsible for youth the priority policies, budget and activities in the field of youth,
- b) proposes the main directions and programs for the support and strengthening of youth participation,
- c) gives an opinion on the drafting of the National Strategy for Youth and monitors its implementation,
- d) approves the annual report on the implementation of the National Strategy for Youth and their situation.

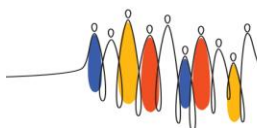
The NYC is chaired by the minister responsible for youth and consists of 14 to 16 members, with at least half of the members representing youth and / or youth organizations. The members of the NYC are appointed by order of the minister responsible for youth.

The criteria and procedures for the election of members, as well as the manner of organization and functioning of the NYC are approved by a decision of the Council of Ministers and is still to be approved.

#### ➤ *Local level – Local Youth Councils*

The LYC is an advisory body, which functions as advisory to the mayor. The LYC exercises the following competencies:

- a) advises the local self-government units for directing local youth policies and plans,
- b) evaluates the situation of young people and the implementation of youth plans and policies at the local level,



- c) proposes improvements in local youth policies, as well as initiatives that adapt to the needs of young people in the territory where they operate,
- d) cooperates and exchanges information with the NYC.

The LYC is chaired by the mayor and consists of at least 4 to 6 members, where at least half of the members represent youth organizations and/or youth. The members of the LYC are appointed by order of the mayor.

The criteria, the procedures for the selection of the members of the local youth council, as well as the manner of organization and functioning of the LYC are approved by a decision of the municipal council, referring, as far as possible, to the approved criteria and procedures by the DCM.

### ➤ *National Representative Youth Organization*

The National Representative Youth Organization is an organization that is established, organized and functions in implementation of the Civil Code of Albania and the legislation in force for NPOs and operates in accordance with its statute. The right to establish a National Youth Representative Organization belongs to youth organizations and/or youth, which accept the purpose, field of activity and other definitions of this organization, regulated in its statute. The criteria that must be met by the National Youth Representative Organization, to be recognized as such by the institution responsible for youth, are approved by a decision of the Council of Ministers.



## **Annex 2: Detailed specific objectives of the NYAP**

**Specific Objective 1:** Enhancement and participation of Youth in democratic decision-making processes

- 1.1 Strengthening of youth NGO structures and capacities.
- 1.2 Increase of youth participation in decision making processes and local governance structures.
- 1.3 Youth awareness raising and education on the electoral process.
- 1.4 Enhancement of support for young people and youth organizations

**Specific Objective 2:** Enhancement of youth employment through effective labor market policies

- 2.1 Improvement of the regulatory framework to promote youth enterprises
- 2.2 Enhancement of youth professional and management qualifications
- 2.3 Promotion and strengthening of youth employment promotion programs
- 2.4 Enhancement of Employment Information Sources
- 2.5 Mobility
- 2.6 Youth Card

**Specific Objective 3:** Health, Sport and Environment

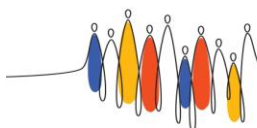
- 3.1 Improvement of legislation and policies for youth health and social life protection
- 3.2 Enhancement of health education in the education system chain
- 3.3 Youth awareness and education on healthy behavior
- 3.4 Youth Friendly Services
- 3.5 Strengthening and Spreading of Sport Culture
- 3.6 Social and health programs for youth serving time in penal institutions (penitentiary and remand system)
- 3.7 Environmental protection awareness activities
- 3.8 Youth programs/initiatives resulting in lower environmental pollution

**Specific Objective 4:** Education of Youth

- 4.1 Improvement of school subjects/ curriculum and teaching process
- 4.2 Promotion of Excellence and capacity enhancement
- 4.3 Support for young scientific researchers
- 4.4 Improvement of schools and teaching environment infrastructure
- 4.5 Strengthening of Vocational Education Schools
- 4.6 Education programs for youth out of the education system and those from minority/vulnerable groups

**Specific Objective 5:** Social protection

- 5.1 Prevention of violence and trafficking against young people

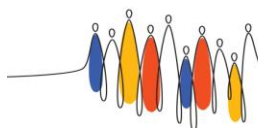




## 5.2 Youth Community Services

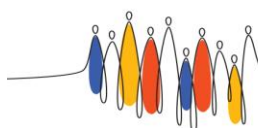
### **Specific Objective 6:** Culture and Volunteerism

- 1.1 Creating facilities for young people and youth organizations to approach cultural and art institutions.
- 1.2 Enhancing culture and civilization
- 1.3 Development of the Law on Volunteerism



### Annex 3 – List of interviewees

	Institution	Sector	Contact Person	Position	Email
1	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	Public institution	Aspasjana Kongo	Deputy Minister for Youth	<a href="mailto:Aspasjana.kongo@arsimi.gov.al">Aspasjana.kongo@arsimi.gov.al</a>
2	Office of the Prime Minister	Public institution	Nevila Çomo	Expert Support to Policy Dialogue & Coordination in Albania	<a href="mailto:nevila.como@aidharmonisation.org.al">nevila.como@aidharmonisation.org.al</a>
3	Office of the Prime Minister	Public institution	Florensa Haxhi	Director for Development Programs & Program Manager for Regional Economic Area	<a href="mailto:Florensa.haxhi@kryeministria.al">Florensa.haxhi@kryeministria.al</a>
4	EU Delegation to Albania	International	Xheni Sinakolli	EU Delegation in Albania	<a href="mailto:Xheni.SINAKOLI@eeas.europa.eu">Xheni.SINAKOLI@eeas.europa.eu</a>
5	Erasmus+ Office	International	Erida Curraj	National Erasmus+ Office in Albania	<a href="mailto:erida.curraj@erasmusplus.al">erida.curraj@erasmusplus.al</a>
6	Beyond Barriers	NPO	Ana Dervishi	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:anadervishi@yahoo.com">anadervishi@yahoo.com</a>
7	RYCO	International	Fatos Mustafa	Deputy Secretary General	<a href="mailto:fatos.mustafa@rycowb.org">fatos.mustafa@rycowb.org</a>
8	Albanian Youth Council/ National Youth Congress	NPO/ youth umbrella organization	Dafina Peci	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:dafina.peci@krk.al">dafina.peci@krk.al</a>
9	European Endowment for Democracy	International	Alba Brojka	Expert YEA Young European Ambassador UN Youth Association	<a href="mailto:a.brojka@hotmail.com">a.brojka@hotmail.com</a>
10	Cooperation and Development Institute/ WBYCP	NPO	Krisela Hackaj	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:krisela.hackaj@cdinstitute.eu">krisela.hackaj@cdinstitute.eu</a>
11	ESN Albania	Network, education	Lutjona Lula	Head of ESN Albania	<a href="mailto:albania@esn.org">albania@esn.org</a>
12	Youth	Network,	Françeska	Secretary General	<a href="mailto:mucofranceska@gmail.com">mucofranceska@gmail.com</a>



	professional Network	informal	Muço		
13	Western Balkan Fund	Regional INPO	Dafina Beqiri	Programme Manager	<a href="mailto:dafinabeqiri@gmail.com">dafinabeqiri@gmail.com</a>
14	SIDA / Swedish Embassy	International	Rezarta Katuçi  Linda Gjermani	Programme Manager  Programme Manager	<a href="mailto:rezarta.katuci@gov.se">rezarta.katuci@gov.se</a>  <a href="mailto:linda.gjermani@gov.se">linda.gjermani@gov.se</a>
15	Council of Europe	International	Suela Kusi	Programme Manager	<a href="mailto:Suela.KUSI@coe.int">Suela.KUSI@coe.int</a>
16	Swiss Development Cooperation	International	Erisa Lame	Programme Manager	<a href="mailto:erisa.lame@eda.admin.ch">erisa.lame@eda.admin.ch</a>

