

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

**REPORT  
KOSOVO\***

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\* 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.



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

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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 explores the current situation of youth policies in Kosovo\*, identifying existing support and gaps in the financing of youth actions. Also, it analyses youth participation in decision making and mapping of youth donor programs as well as a brief overview of the impact of COVID-19 on youth. The report was drafted based on desk and empirical research. On one hand, desk research consisted of consulting and analyzing the legal framework in place: laws, bylaws, and strategies, alongside domestic and international reports on youth in Kosovo\*. On the other hand, empirical research was carried out through 11 interviews conducted with central and local public officials, civil society representatives, and international donor community representatives.<sup>1</sup>

According to Census 2011 data, 18.2% of the total population belong to the age group 15-24 years old in Kosovo\*. Official population projections indicate a slight decrease in the population of young people. Various reports consulted, as well as interviews with stakeholders, indicate that with the youngest population among the economies in the region, and with the highest unemployment and inactive rate and a strong tendency to migrate, the situation of youth remains a challenge in Kosovo\*. While the gap among women and men attending all levels of education has narrowed, the education and training of youth does not always meet the labor market requirements. The ratio of youth (age 15-24) who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET) according to the Labor Force Survey was 37.7 % as of the third quarter in 2020. Also, youth unemployment remains very high in Kosovo\* as reported by the Labor Force Survey in the third quarter of 2020 - 46.9 % of youth aged 15-24 in the labor force are unemployed. Although reports highlight the phenomena of migration flows in Kosovo\*, there is a lack of data focusing specifically on youth migration.

Kosovo\* institutions have created a sound legal framework and well-designed structures for dealing with youth. The Law No.03/L-145 on Youth Empowerment and Participation (LEPY) was approved in 2009, and in November 2020 a new draft-law on youth was published for consultation. Also, Kosovo\* has in place a National Youth Strategy and Action Plan (NYSAP) 2019-2023, developed through a broad consultation process. The outbreak of the global pandemic COVID-19 and the political instability in Kosovo\* have hindered to a certain extent youth policy implementation. The advancement of the legal framework mostly results from being a requirement to implementing the European agenda and has been heavily supported by the

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Annex 2, List of Interviews.



donor community. Despite the achievements in youth policy framework, responsible institutions for youth policy and related areas such as education, employment, health, inclusion, culture, art and sports are yet to bear a cross-sector approach.

Within the 2020 Law on Budget, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) as the ministry responsible for youth policy has a separate budget program dedicated to youth, which is further divided into three sub-program budget codes: (a) Youth Protection and Integration, (b) Youth Development and Support, and (c) Development of Youth Integration Policies. Public funds allocated for youth have increased each year, but the budget of around 3 million Euros per year remains short of meeting youth needs, particularly in employment and in the reduction of youth inactivity rate, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic consequences. The limited budget for youth is more visible at the local level with the overall financial constraints of municipalities. Additional funds have come from development partners who provide around 7 million Euros annually in support of various youth programs and projects. In terms of youth funding mechanisms and programs, the most relevant one is the financial support provided to youth initiatives through subsidies and transfers by the Department of Youth of the MCYS, and improving working conditions of the 38 Local Youth Councils and over 30 Youth Centers through capital investments. The funds are disbursed through public calls that address respective strategic measures of the Strategy for Youth 2019-2023. Another relevant youth funding mechanism is the Active Labor Market Measures (ALMM) Program with a particular focus on increasing youth employment in Kosovo\*.

Youth engagement and participation is ensured through the functioning of : The Central Youth Action Council (CYAC), and the 38 Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) in all municipalities, and Youth Centers (YC) that operate at the local level as envisaged by law. Apart from those, the Assembly of Kosovo\* Youth is an entity that operates both at the central and local level and actively represents youth in respective levels and cross-sectorial working groups. Although respective structures are in place at both levels of governance, this report finds that active youth participation in the decision-making is still limited. The COVID-19 pandemic and numerous internal problems; non-election of the new chairman and board, lack of funds and lack of working space, together with other internal matters within board members of the CYAC, during 2020 limited CYAC engagement. Similarly, to date, even though LYACs are formally established in all municipalities, their role and activity in engaging in municipal level to perform their duties is limited. Youth councils and youth organizations face challenges in creating financial and organizational sustainability and depend on project funding, mostly from MCYS. There is ample space for central and local public institutions to further support youth councils and organizations to ensure sustainability of their activities and empower youth communities.

The major donors in Kosovo\* that are working in the field of youth are: The European Union, United States Embassy/United States Agency for International Development, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the German Development Agency, the Austrian Development



Agency, United Nations Agencies, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Key priority areas supported so far related to youth are: employment and vocational and education training, inclusive education, democratic citizenship and participation, intercultural dialogue, peacebuilding and reconciliation. Despite achievements and considerable contribution on the side of donors in youth, the lack of systematic donor coordination and interconnection of donor interventions with Government strategic objectives has been observed. Suggested key priority areas for funding in addition to existing ones are: empowerment of youth organizations, linkage of education and industry, rural youth, youth activism in multiethnic context, and youth coping with the aftereffects of COVID-19.

The report highlights recommendations for policy makers, the donor community and youth, with particular attention to the need for an inclusive and participatory consultation process of the new draft law on youth, ensuring its swift approval and full implementation. Also, improvement of inter-institutional cooperation in youth policy and related areas such as education, employment, health, inclusion, culture, art and sports are essential. Youth would benefit from a harmonized inter-institutional and cross-sector approach on youth policy and funding. Consistency in data collection and the establishment of a database of youth data based on open data standards is encouraged. Finally, youth organizations should further strengthen their status through networking and peer-to-peer support, finding alternative sources of funding, and establishing closer linkages with youth groups, communities, and grassroots initiatives.

The report consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, general data are presented on the youth population regarding youth employment, education, and NEET data. In the second chapter, an analysis of the entire legal and strategic youth policy framework is provided. Moreover, all responsible institutions for youth policy implementation are described. The third chapter provides an analysis of the funding framework and its mechanisms. Chapter 4 focuses on studying mechanisms and channels for the participation of youth and the inclusion of youth into decision-making. A mapping of donor financing of projects on youth is widely described in chapter 5. Chapter 6 concludes the report by offering an overall analysis of best practices and gaps regarding youth policy financing and implementation. The current impact of COVID-19 on youth policy is provided in chapter 6. Chapter concludes with recommendations, proposed for all actors involved in youth policymaking processes.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>APIYE</b>	Action Plan for Increasing Youth Employment
<b>CYAC</b>	Central Youth Action Council
<b>CSI</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>DoY</b>	Department of Youth
<b>ERA</b>	European Reform Agenda
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>GIZ</b>	German Agency for International Cooperation
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>KAS</b>	Kosovo* Agency of Statistics
<b>EAK</b>	Employment Agency of Kosovo*
<b>LYAC</b>	Local Youth Action Council
<b>LEPY</b>	The Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation
<b>LMS</b>	Labor Market Survey
<b>LMIS</b>	Labor Market Information System
<b>MCYS</b>	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
<b>MESTI</b>	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
<b>MF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>MLSW</b>	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
<b>MTEF</b>	Mid-Term Expenditure Framework
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NYSAP</b>	National Youth Strategy and Action Plan
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>RYCO</b>	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
<b>RAE</b>	Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USAID</b>	U.S. Agency for International Development
<b>WB</b>	Western Balkan
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>YC</b>	Youth Centre



## CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

This chapter outlines general data on the youth population referring to official resources as per their availability. While the Law No.03/L-145 on Youth Empowerment and Participation (LEPY) defines the age group 15 – 24 years as young people different local and international institutions use different age groups (mostly 15 - 29), thus, the age group 15 - 24 is not used consistently.

### 1.1. Age and gender

Kosovo\* has a population of approximately 1.8 million according to the last Census held in 2011.<sup>2</sup> More than half of the population (53%) is under the age of 25, of which 19.1 % are younger than 15 years of age.<sup>3</sup> According to the 2011 census, 325,302 belong to the age group 15-24 years old which represents 18.2% of the total population.<sup>4</sup> In terms of gender perspectives among youth, 49.79% are young women and 50.21% are young men.<sup>5</sup>

According to population projections of the Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics (KAS), since the last popular census of 2011 the number of Kosovar young people has marked a slow decline of about 1% and that the total number of the youth age 15-24 will further decline by around 2.4% by 2031 due to the decreasing birth-rate. This decline is in contrast with the slight projected increase in the total of population of Kosovo\* to 1,818,674, indicating an overall trend towards an aging population in Kosovo\*.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, KAS in 2017 published the second report on Population Projections for a 44-year period from 2017 to 2061. Divided in age cohorts, the KAS report on Population Projections in 2020 shows the following data:<sup>7</sup>

- Youth in the age group 15-19 represent 166,100 (*85,142 men and 79,904 women*)
- Youth in the age group 20-24 represent 156,295 (*77,966 men and 75,684 women*)
- Youth in the age group 25-29 represent 143,377 (*66,764 men and 70,801 women*)

Analyzing the numbers, although there is clearly a minor decrease of young people in the total population, Kosovo\* will continue to have the youngest population in the Western Balkans and

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<sup>2</sup>. The 2011 census did not occur in four (4) north Kosovo\* municipalities and was widely boycotted by Kosovo-Serbs living in southern Kosovo\* too.

<sup>3</sup> "Estimation Kosovo Population in 2018" Kosovo\* Statistics Agency, available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5022/estimation-population-2018.pdf> (Accessed on December 25,2020).

<sup>4</sup> "Estimation of Kosovo Population 2011", Kosovo\* Statistics Agency. The Government of Kosovo\* on 21.09.2020 approved the concept document for the 2021 census. Based on this document over 2 million € are allocated for the 2021 census.

<sup>5</sup> "Kosovo\* Population Projection 2017-2061, December 2017" Kosovo\* Statistics Agency, available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/3741/kosovo-population-projection-2017-2061.pdf> (Accessed on November 15, 2020).

<sup>6</sup>All calculations on population trends and projections were done using the KAS data for the 2019 report initially. The author has performed the calculation [http://askdata.rks-gov.net/Population\\_Projection](http://askdata.rks-gov.net/Population_Projection) (Accessed on December 25,2020).

<sup>7</sup> "Kosovo\* Population Projection 2017-2061, December 2017" Kosovo\* Statistics Agency, available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/3741/kosovo-population-projection-2017-2061.pdf> (Accessed on November 15, 2020).





much greater numbers of youth than in the European Union (EU) member states which was 17% in 2019.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2. Education and employment

Education in Kosovo\* is carried out in public and private institutions from preschool education up to the university level and Vocation Education Training (VET).<sup>9</sup> The donor community has supported the reform of the education system in Kosovo\*.<sup>10</sup> The Law No. 04/L-032 on Pre-University Education guarantees equal education. Reforms made in recent years have raised the integration of various groups of the socially excluded from Kosovo\*'s education system. However, the children and youth from vulnerable and marginalized groups continue to face challenges in accessing and or completing education.<sup>11</sup> Kosovo-Serb community operates outside the Kosovar education system.

### 1.2.1 Education

According to KAS in 2018/19, 466,436 children and students attend education in Kosovo\*, of which 234,998 or 50.4 % are female, and 231,438 or 49.6 % are male. Enrolment in both primary and secondary education is above 90%, close to the OECD average.<sup>12</sup> In 2019, Kosovo\* spent 4.7% of GDP on education, including higher education.<sup>13</sup> According to a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung study, 92% of young Kosovars intend to attain higher education.<sup>14</sup> However, the number of students is decreasing. In 2018/2019 Kosovo\* counted over 104,000 students while this number in the academic year 2019/2020 was 74,604. Females are underrepresented at every level of education but university. Out of 50,593 students enrolled at the bachelor's level in public universities in the academic year 2019/2020, 29,659 are female.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, according to the European Commission (EC), 53% of all upper secondary students choose VET programs, but 97.4% of vocational education graduates continue to enroll

<sup>8</sup> Eurostat data shows that in EU member states youth represent 17% of total population. see at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today\\_-\\_demographic\\_trends](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_demographic_trends) (Accessed on December 25,2020).

<sup>9</sup> Vocational Education and Training in Kosovo\* is regulated with the Law No.04/L-138 for Vocational Education and Training . VET aims to equip students/candidates with knowledge, practical ability, skills and required competencies in specific occupations or wider in the labour market.

<sup>10</sup> Education in Kosovo\* is carried out in public and private institutions. Since after the Conflict in 1999, education in Kosovo\* was subject to reforms at all levels: from preschool education up to university level. These reforms aimed at adjusting the education in Kosovo\* according to European standards. Establishment of the Ministry of Education in 2002, followed with the creation of legal and professional infrastructure, as well as implementation of Bologna agreement for high education and the adoption of the Kosovo\* Curriculum Framework in 2011 are just a few among the main reform changes that took place.

<sup>11</sup> The Law No.04/L-032 on Pre-University Education in Kosovo\* was promulgated by Decree No.DL-035-2011, on 31.08.2011 by the 4<sup>th</sup> President of Kosovo\* HE Atifete Jahjaga.

<sup>12</sup> "Kosovo\* 2020 Report", European Commission, p.84 available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on December 26,2020).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Youth Study Kosovo\* 2018/2019" Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, p.39, Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15264.pdf> (Accessed on: November 20, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> "Education Statistics, 2019/2020" Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics, available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/en/kosovo-agency-of-statistics/add-news/education-statistics-in-kosovo-20192020> (Accessed on November 15, 2020).



in higher education.<sup>16</sup> According to a donor community representative, youth are hesitant to attend vocational education mostly due to social norms and the fact that youth believe that having a university degree provides better chances for employment.<sup>17</sup> In the academic year 2019/20, only 578 students belonging to Roma, Ashkali and the Egyptian (RAE) minority and 11 belonging to the Goran minority groups attended secondary school. Out of 79,264 students in the upper-secondary level 49.1 % are female, compared to 50.9% who are male.<sup>18</sup> Kosovo\* faces a low rate of early school leavers. Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) in 2016 has developed a national plan for preventing school drops-outs. While the enrollment rate in both primary and upper secondary is above 90 %, the rate of early school leavers has decreased to 8% in 2018 among females, slightly higher than young males.<sup>19</sup>

### *1.2.2 Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training*

The ratio of youth (age 15-24) who are neither in employment nor in education or training according to the Labor Force Survey Q3 2020 is 37.7%. Among them, 38.1% are young women compared to young men who are 37.4 %.<sup>20</sup>

### *1.2.3 Unemployment rate*

Unemployment rate in Kosovo\* is high with a 25% overall unemployment rate, among women with 30.6 % and men 23 %.<sup>21</sup> Equally, youth unemployment remains very high in Kosovo\* as well. Among youth aged 15-24 in the labor force 46.9 % are unemployed.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that labor force participation rate for women has increased by 15% overall, among youth the unemployment is higher among young women with 53.6%, compared to young men at 42.9%.<sup>23</sup> Despite the fact that the Kosovo\* GDP growth has remained positive over the last couple of years, Kosovo\* represents the highest inactive youth in the Western Balkans.<sup>24</sup> Undoubtedly, widespread unemployment and inactivity among youth and women leaves ample human potential unused that hinders development. The European Commission's (EC) Annual Report 2020 for Kosovo\* also notes that youth unemployment suggests undeclared work and

<sup>16</sup> "European Commission, Annual Report Kosovo\*, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf) (accessed January 11, 2021). p. 85.

<sup>17</sup> Interview, Donor Community Representative, Prishtina, October 21, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> "Education Statistics, 2019/2020" Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics, available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/en/kosovo-agency-of-statistics/add-news/education-statistics-in-kosovo-20192020> (Accessed on November 15, 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Labor Force Survey, Q3 2020" Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics, p.32, available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5826/anketa-e-fuqis%C3%AB-pun%C3%ABtore-afp-tm3-2020.pdf> (Accessed on December 30, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> The 25 percent unemployment rate is record low since December 2001 when the data reached an all-time high of 57.10 percent. Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics, Statistical Yearbook of Kosovo\* 2020, p.26.

<sup>22</sup> "Labor Force Survey, Q3 2020" Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics, available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/5826/anketa-e-fuqis%C3%AB-pun%C3%ABtore-afp-tm3-2020.pdf> (Accessed on December 30, 2020)

<sup>23</sup> "Correlation Between Labour Market in Kosovo\* and out Migration", June 2020, UNDP Kosovo\* available at: [https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/public-pulse-analysis--correlation-between-labour-market-in-koso.html](https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/library/democratic_governance/public-pulse-analysis--correlation-between-labour-market-in-koso.html) (Accessed on November, 5, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> "Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2019" World Bank Group and the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/351461552915471917/pdf/135370-Western-Balkans-Labor-Market-Trends-2019.pdf> (Accessed on December 5, 2020).



misalignment between education outcomes and labor market needs.<sup>25</sup> The report also notes that “demographic pressures, a pattern of joblessness growth, a propensity towards emigration and poor education outcomes are key factors in the precarious position of young people in Kosovo”.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.3 Youth Migration

Migration in the European Union (EU) member states from the Western Balkans economies has been a prominent occurrence over the last decade.<sup>27</sup> In particular, migration has historically been a feature of Kosovo\* society. 141,330 Kosovo\* citizens were found to be illegally living in the EU member states in the period 2008-2018,<sup>28</sup> while during the same period, a total of 203,330 Kosovo\* citizens filed an asylum application in the EU member states, mainly in Germany, Hungary, France, Belgium and Sweden.<sup>29</sup> However, since then, Kosovo\* saw a decline in the total number of asylum applicants, from 72,480 in 2015 to 4,970 in 2018.<sup>30</sup> To this note, according to the OECD International Migration Outlook 2020, in 2015 Kosovo\* was among the top 10 worldwide economies of asylum origin applicants in OECD economies, accounting 62,530 applicants.<sup>31</sup> According to a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung study, 95% of people who left in early 2015 went for economic reasons. At the same time, youth in the age group 15-29 accounted for the biggest number of migrants.<sup>32</sup> However, progress in managing both regular migration and mixed migration flows was noted from the EU in 2020 as numbers dropped significantly compared to 2015.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> European Commission, Annual Report Kosovo\*, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf) (accessed January 11, 2021). p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> “Balkan Barometer 2020; Public Opinion Survey” Regional Cooperation Office, available at: <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/95/report-on-the-preparation-of-post-2020-strategy-in-the-western-balkans> (Accessed on December 30, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> “The Great Escape” European Policy Institute of Kosovo\* p.6, available at: <https://cdn.website-editor.net/8a3b242c12494d76b2b60ea75852e5f4/files/uploaded/THE%2520GREAT%2520ESCAPE.pdf> (accessed on December 30, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> “International Migration Outlook 2020” OECD, 44<sup>th</sup> Edition, Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/> (Accessed on, December 26, 2021).

<sup>32</sup> According to Kosovo\* Agency of Statistics 2014 report on Kosovan Migration 27% of migrant population belongs to the age group 15-29 years. Among the main reasons for migration appeared to be employment and better economic conditions together with family reasons.

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, Annual Report Kosovo\*, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf) (accessed January 11, 2021). p. 39.



## CHAPTER 2: YOUTH LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

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

### 2.1 Constitution

In 2008, Kosovo\* adopted a new Constitution which entered into force on June 15, 2008. The Kosovo\* Constitution stipulates human rights in chapter II. The Constitution does not provide explicit provisions regarding youth. However, the Article 3 stipulates that public authorities shall ensure equality of all individuals before the law and fully respect internationally recognized fundamental human rights and freedoms.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.2 Law on Youth

Years after the first draft was prepared by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports (MCYS), in 2009 the Kosovo\* Assembly approved the Law No.03/L-145 on Youth Empowerment and Participation (LEPY).<sup>35</sup> Approval of the law was preceded by the first National Youth Strategy and at the time was considered a great push forward on the long path to improving the situation of the Kosovo\* youth.<sup>36</sup> However, eleven years after its approval, the law needs to be amended, to better reflect youth needs,<sup>37</sup> as will be elaborated below.

The LEPY has a total of 19 articles that in large part aim to strengthen the participation of youth in the decision-making process and incorporate responsibilities for central and local institutions to ensure wide youth participation in public life. In addition, it provides instruction for the formal association and organization of youth in youth councils, while also defining voluntary work and

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<sup>34</sup> The Kosovo\* Constitution stipulates that the United Nations and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, are directly applicable instruments that supersede Kosovo\*'s legislation, thus providing additional legal sources that protect and promote human rights in Kosovo\*. In addition, chapter II sets forth specific provisions protecting civil and political rights. However, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is not listed among the international human rights instruments directly applicable in Kosovo.\*, available at: <http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Constitution1Kosovo.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> The first draft of the law on youth was prepared during 2003-2004 by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports with the support of UNICEF, the German Corporation for International Cooperation, the International Council for National Youth Policies and a group of local experts.

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, September 29, 2020

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



informal education. The LEPY also envisions mechanisms through which young people can articulate their concerns. In this regard, it regulates and assigns responsibilities to the central authorities (Article 6), local authorities (Article 7), the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) (Articles 8 and 9 - youth advisory mechanism operating at central government institutions), Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) (Article 10 - advisory formation operating at local level) and Youth Centers (Article 11 - space for youth activities, resources and development opportunities).<sup>38</sup>

The MCYS in May 2019 established a working group to amend the current LEPY. Hindered by the interruption of work as a result of restrictive measures taken by the Government against COVID-19 and the changes in Government, the working group only concluded the work in mid-November 2020, when the draft-law was released for public consultation.<sup>39</sup> The draft-law seeks changes in three areas; (a) the age group of young people will be extended to twenty-nine (29) from twenty-four (24), (b) the CYAC and LYAC will be called National Youth Council and Local Youth Council. While the first one will be organized as a non-profit organization of youth representatives, composed of elected representatives of non-profit organizations at the local level, the second one is a body of youth representation under a youth non-profit organization at the level of a certain municipality, and (c) the draft-law recognizes the voluntary work as work experience.<sup>40</sup> However, the approval of the amendments is expected to take some time as Kosovo\* will organize early elections in 2021.<sup>41</sup>

### 2.3 National Strategy on Youth

In June 2019, the MCYS approved the new Kosovo\* National Youth Strategy and Action Plan (NYSAP) 2019-2023.<sup>42</sup> The sectorial strategy on youth is the main document regarding the implementation of youth policy in Kosovo\*. Furthermore, as a strategic document, it aims to tackle the vital interests of youth. The NYSAP seeks to advance the role of youth in all directions and consists of two parts: the policy document itself, and the action plan. The latter is a plan of activities foreseen to implement set strategic objectives.

The NYSAP in place is different in a few aspects to the 2013-2017 National Strategy for Youth in that: (i) it has only three, more consolidated strategic objectives compared to six main

<sup>38</sup> As a derivative to the law, the MCYS in 2010 issued four administrative instructions to further determining the implementation of the law; 1. Administrative instruction for youth participating in the decision-making process, 2. Administrative instruction on licensing youth centers, 3. Administrative instruction for voluntary work and 4. Administrative instruction for non-formal education of youth. In 2015 and 2016 both; the administrative instruction for voluntary work and non-formal education of youth were amend.

<sup>39</sup> The draft-law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth is on public consultation from 17.11.2020 to 7.12.2020, available at: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=40989> (Accessed on November 29, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> The draft law in Article 12 stipulates duties and responsibilities of both National Youth Council and Local Youth Council will be regulated through a sub-legal act. In addition, Article 13 foresees the funding of the Councils through public sources, respectively central and local budget.

<sup>41</sup> For more details available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kosovo-election-date-idUSKBN29B2UZ?edition-redirect=uk> (Accessed on November 29, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> The first National Youth Strategy and Action Plan approved was in force from 2010 to 2012, while the second National Youth Strategy and Action Plan was approved in February and included the period 2013-2017. The 2019-2023 National Youth Strategy and Action Plan was signed from Minister of MCYS on June 17, 2020 (Retrieved from: [https://mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,6,2076#.X\\_wZj9hKg2x](https://mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,6,2076#.X_wZj9hKg2x)) (Accessed on November 29, 2020).



objectives in the old strategy; (ii) the NYSAP contains a plan of action and a detailed description of the implementation measures and (iii) there is a summary of the budget and a brief analysis of the budgetary implications.

The NYSAP has been informed by a solid process of data collection and information acquired through data gathering, sector studies and consultation events. The context and information when the new strategy was drafted were much more favorable compared to the previous strategies.<sup>43</sup> The stakeholders had a better understanding of the needs and evidence of previous obstacles. The MCYS was the primary coordinating body but shared responsibilities for specific areas of implementation and oversight with local level. In the introduction and the methodology section, Strategy refers to linkages and cross-referencing to other sector strategies, such as education, health, and employment and to the Mid-term Expenditure Framework of the Government. The Strategy also refers to the 11 youth policy indicators of the EC, the EU, and the European Youth Forum.<sup>44</sup>

The NYSAP foresees three main intervention areas: (1) Active youth participation, representation and citizenship; (2) Labor market skills and entrepreneurship; and (3) A healthy and safe environment for youth. One strategic objective was formulated for each of the priority areas of intervention: (i) Mobilize youth for active participation, representation and citizenship; (ii) Endow youth with labor market skills and competencies; and (iii) Provide a healthy and safe environment for youth. The three strategic objectives are broken down into 41 measures outlining the strategies for the accomplishment of the stated objectives.

## 2.4 National Action Plan on Youth

Unlike for the previous planning period (2013-2017) when the MCYS drafted a Youth Action Plan as a separate document, the NYSAP 2019-2023 incorporates a five-year Action Plan into the main document, outlining measures, activities, responsible persons, indicators and a projection of the costs spread over five years. In this regard, the total costs for the implementation of the Strategy have been projected at about EUR 11,600,000 spread over a period of five years, which will be “financed by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and development agencies.”<sup>45</sup>

The corresponding five-year Action Plan contains clear indicators to measure implementation of the foreseen activities, but it lacks a formal methodological approach, targets, milestones, baseline data and other elements that would serve to design a solid performance assessment and monitoring framework. To date the implementation is slow and recent developments caused by

<sup>43</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, September 29, 2020

<sup>44</sup> “Strategy for Youth 2019-2023” Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports available at: <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,44> (Accessed on December 25, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic and political instability has impacted the implementation process.<sup>46</sup>

## 2.5 Institutions dealing with Youth

Article 6 of the LEPY stipulates the responsibilities of the central government bodies for development, approval and implementation of documents and programs relevant to the youth sector, together with integration and participation of youth in public life. The MCYS is the Governmental body responsible for youth policy.

Furthermore, the Department of Youth within the MCYS' role is to: (a) implement the strategy and work plan for the youth sector; (b) carry a comprehensive analysis of the situation in the youth sector; including relevant legislation, institutions, programs and activities (c) identify and support the underrepresented and groups of youth in need; (d) coordinate efforts of all stakeholders, relevant authorities and across sectors to implement youth policies, (e) encourage the formation of youth clubs and associations and (f) encourage financial support to youth initiatives and provide youth with information and assist them.<sup>47</sup>

The LEPY in Article 7 defines responsibilities of the municipal authorities in regard to youth, in providing financial and human resources for the implementation of youth programs, to support informal education for youth and provide space for youth activities. In this regard, Youth Divisions operating in 38 Kosovo\* municipalities play an important role in the implementation of the legal framework and policies in place.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) represents the interests of youth organizations at the central government institution, while the Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) operating in all 38 municipalities are engaging with public authorities and youth organizations in supporting youth initiatives, also foreseen under the law, and many registered youth organizations and international donors.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.6. Other sectors impacting youth

In December 2017, the Government of Kosovo\* approved the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare's (MLSW) Action Plan for Increasing Youth Employment (APIYE) 2018-2020. Besides the five-year (2019-2023) NYSAP, this document represents the second most important

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<sup>46</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, October 27, 2020

<sup>47</sup> More details available at: <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1.39> (Accessed October 2, 2020)

<sup>48</sup> At the local level, municipal bodies responsible for youth in every municipality in Kosovo\* are organized as *Divisions*, or sections of the Municipal Department for Culture, Youth and Sport. Youth organizations operate as Non-Governmental Organizations in line with the Law No.06/L-043 on Freedom of Association in Non-Governmental Originations.

<sup>49</sup> In 2018, a USAID funded project and implemented by Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture facilitated the proper functioning of the Local Youth Action Councils meaning governing bodies, obtained registration documents, including stamps and a bank account. Local Youth Action Councils in 4-North Municipalities were established in 2017 based on the provisions of the 2010 LEPY. An overview of the project can be found at: [http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php?proj=establishment\\_of\\_local\\_youth\\_action\\_councils\\_in\\_northern\\_municipalities](http://acdc-kosovo.org/eng/index.php?proj=establishment_of_local_youth_action_councils_in_northern_municipalities) (Accessed on, December 26, 2020).



document for youth. APIYE is a result of the Kosovo\* - EU High Level Dialogue. The APIYE aims to increase the access of young people to the labor market, increasing employment through entrepreneurship development, harmonizing vocational education and training with labor market requirements and providing career guidance and counselling services and the enhancement of the quality of practical teaching in schools and vocational practice outside the school.<sup>50</sup>

The APIYE was developed with the idea to further strengthen the interaction with other public policy sectors and their respective strategies. In this regard, the measures envisaged in the APIYE plan can be considered in line with other sectorial strategies related to employment, such as Kosovo\* Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021, Strategy on Education and Career Orientation 2015-2019, and NYSAP 2019-2023. The APIYE has a cross-sectorial character and it is narrowed down to three main pillars; (a) employment (b) education and (c) training, and four main objectives: 1. Increasing the access of young people in the labor market through the provision of quality employment services and active employment measures, 2. Increasing employment through entrepreneurship development, 3. Harmonization of vocational education and training with labor market requirements and provision of career guidance and counselling services, and 4. Increasing the quality of practical learning at school and professional practice outside the school. The two-year APIYE has a total implementation cost of EUR 17,440,104 and the funding sources are divided between Kosovo's\* Public Budget and the Donor Community. In addition, the APIYE includes all relevant data such as activities, indicators, institutions responsible for implementation, and the budget needed for implementation.<sup>51</sup>

Two years after the APIYE was approved, youth unemployment remains high and the implementation of APIYE is low.<sup>52</sup> The political instability and the outbreak of COVID-19 in early March 2020 have hindered the successful implementation of the plan.

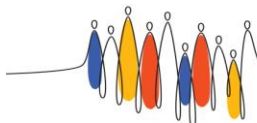
## 2.7. Critical assessment

A legal framework regulating the youth sector is in place and progress is evident, yet policy and practical implementation needs to be improved. There is a general consensus that youth policy is aligned with EU practices on youth; however the actual implementation of the policy and legal framework faces several challenges such as limited efficient organization and management structures, few resources, and a limited budget. As a result, institutional structures in place for supporting youth are yet to be fully operational and achieve their mandate as envisioned in the law. Lack of experience, limited capacities impact the overall implementation of the policy framework on youth. Moreover, recent political instability has placed further constraints in the

<sup>50</sup> "Action Plan: Increasing Youth Employment 2018-2020", Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, available at: [https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Plani-i-Vepimit\\_Punesimi-i-te-Rinjeve\\_ENG-1.pdf](https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Plani-i-Vepimit_Punesimi-i-te-Rinjeve_ENG-1.pdf) (Accessed on November 29, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> "Action Plan: Increasing Youth Employment 2018-2020", Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, available at: [https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Plani-i-Vepimit\\_Punesimi-i-te-Rinjeve\\_ENG-1.pdf](https://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Plani-i-Vepimit_Punesimi-i-te-Rinjeve_ENG-1.pdf) (Accessed on November 29, 2020).

<sup>52</sup> "Kosovo\* 2020 Report", European Commission, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on December 26, 2020). p.79.





youth policy implementation. In less than a year, Kosovo\* had three different governments, and youth was not a strategic priority for either of them.

The current LEPY is in force since 2009, while NYSAP 2019-2023, is one-year-and-a-half-old. Other strategies with focus mainly on formal and non-formal education and employability of youth are adopted by line ministries.<sup>53</sup> The 2018-2022 Sectoral Strategy (MLSW) and the 2018-2020 APIYE remain key documents. Although the targets were modest, a first assessment shows a low implementation rate. Capacities for implementing, monitoring and evaluating of such strategies are still under-developed and heavily dependent on external support.<sup>54</sup>

The legal framework in force has provided a set of instructions for development of youth organizations and functioning, but lacks to address improvements needed within policy and decision-making bodies, including the MCYS and municipalities. The draft-amendments to LEPY do not foresee changes, nor monitoring and evaluation bodies, performance assessment framework and enhancement of managerial capacities of youth organizations especially in the local level have been addressed. Financing of youth organizations will continue to face challenges, despite the fact that MCYS will continue to disburse small grants to youth organizations and youth individuals.<sup>55</sup> Funds distributed from MCYS are relatively small in size and short in duration, thus hindering the sustainability and impact of youth projects. The current practice of overseeing the implementation by MCYS through the review of narrative reports and financial reports does not ensure whether the set objectives of the projects funded are achieved.

Other challenges refer to the need to further improve the inter-institutional cooperation in the field of youth and enhance a wider sectorial approach regarding youth as a cross cutting issue. The current planning capacities in the sector of youth are not based on needs assessments, and the coordination within the central institution and between the central and local level needs to be enhanced.<sup>56</sup> In addition, financing remains an issue considering that the Strategy does not include detailed financial planning but an overall budget of EUR 11.6 million for five years. This might hinder the actual implementation of the Strategy. Equally, its corresponding action plan does not include a formal methodological approach, targets, milestones, baseline data, and other elements that would serve to design a solid performance assessment and monitoring framework for the Strategy.

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<sup>53</sup> Explained in more detail in the Chapter 3 Youth funding framework: National youth programs and instruments.

<sup>54</sup> "Kosovo\* 2020 Report", European Commission, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/kosovo_report_2020.pdf) (Accessed on December 26, 2020). p.79.

<sup>55</sup> Interview, MYCS Representative, Prishtina, December 3, 2020.

<sup>56</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, September 29, 2020.



## CHAPTER 3: YOUTH FUNDING FRAMEWORK: 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

Within the 2020 Law on Budget, the MCYS as a budget entity has a separate budget line dedicated for youth. This program code is further divided into three sub-program budget codes: (a) Youth Protection and Integration, (b) Youth Development and Support, and (c) Development of Youth Integration Policies. These budget codes are structured according to the respective three divisions of the Department of Youth of the MCYS. For budget year 2020, a total of EUR 2,128,132 has been allocated to the program code for youth.<sup>57</sup>

Apart from the MCYS budget, there are two other sources from the Kosovo\* central budget that are allocated to fund activities in the youth sector. These are additional funds disbursed through the Employment Agency for the implementation of the National Youth Program and vocation training services. The 2020 budget for employment services in total is EUR 7,462,920, while for vocation training services it is EUR 816,955<sup>58</sup>. These programs serve to improve the situation of youth in Kosovo\*, but are not directly tied to the implementation of the measures of the NYSAP 2019-2023.

The Kosovo\* budget for municipalities for 2020, does not show separate budget items dedicated specifically for the youth agenda. Funds at the municipal level are very modest for any sector, and youth does not prove to be an exception. For budget year 2020 The Municipality of Prishtina, as the capital city, has a total EUR 200,000 of its budget dedicated for youth activities and subventions for youth organizations. However, this is still not sufficient.

Additional funds are coming from development partners, such as the GIZ, the SDC, UNICEF, UNDP, the EU Office, the OSCE, Swiss Contact, etc. , who provide around EUR 7,000,000 a year in support of various youth programs and projects.<sup>59</sup> The public funds are mainly disbursed to youth non-governmental organizations through subsidies and transfers (grants for youth initiatives), whereas donor funds are implemented in the form of specific capacity building and employment programs or projects in the youth sector.

In addition, in early August 2020 the Government allocated EUR 365 million to implement the Economic Recovery Program. Funds will support businesses, create jobs, and stimulate aggregate demand. The plan allocates EUR 2.5 million to support, among others, youth

<sup>57</sup> The budget for youth in 2020 compared to 2019 is 7,3 % less.

<sup>58</sup> Law No.07/L-001 on the Budget Appropriations of Kosovo\* for Year 2020, Available at: <https://mf.rks-gov.net/> (Accessed December 5, 2020).

<sup>59</sup> A more accurate amount could not be calculated due to lack of data. The most recent data provided by the Ministry of European Integration, which was responsible for donor coordination, are those for year 2015. The current data are calculated from the main donors GIZ, SDC, Unicef, USAID and EU – EC.



employment.<sup>60</sup> Until December 2020, the MCYS disbursed over EUR1.5 million for sport and culture.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, the Kosovo\* Parliament approved the Law on Economic Recovery in early December 2020. The Law aims at helping the economy face the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the economy. However, the law does not foresee support for youth in particular, or youth organizations.<sup>62</sup>

### 3.2 Youth projects funding

The MCYS budget for 2020 does not show a separate budget line or code for the implementation of the NYSAP 2019-2023. Rather, the funds are disbursed through transfers and subsidies for activities of the Department of Youth within the MCYS.

Article 8 of the MCYS Directive 09-2015 on Subsidies for Culture, Youth and Sport Activities, explicitly states that the Ministry disburses subsidies to support youth initiatives in alignment with the NYSAP.<sup>63</sup> In concrete terms, this means that around EUR 1,680,000 has been earmarked within Kosovo\* budget, to be disbursed in 2020 as transfers and subsidies through the three divisions of the Department of Youth (MCYS) to facilitate implementation of the measures foreseen in the 2019-2023 Strategy for Youth.<sup>64</sup>

Table 1: MCYS youth budget by spending category and division/program in EUR

Spending category	Salaries and Allowances	Goods and services	Subsidies and transfers	Capital investment	Total by program
Programs					
Youth protection and integration	76,538	2,200	275,000	/	353,738
Youth development and support	28,217	/	1,050,000	302,917	1,381,133
Development of integration policies	36,261	2,000	355,000	/	393,261
Total by spending category	141,015	4,200	1,680,000	302,917	2,128,132

As can be seen from Table 1,<sup>65</sup> the amount of EUR 1,680,000 is placed in the spending category of subsidies and transfers (youth grants) for the three programs during 2020. When referring to

<sup>60</sup> Government of Kosovo\*, Decision of Meeting No. 01/23, date 13.08.2020.

<sup>61</sup> Interview, MCYS Representative, Prishtina, December 3, 2020.

<sup>62</sup> The Law on Economic Recovery will enable taxpayers to withdraw 10 % of their pension savings, support businesses of all sectors in Kosovo\* and individuals who lost their jobs due to pandemic.

<sup>63</sup> Subsidies are regulated by two regulations: (i) MCYS directive on Subsidies in the field of Culture, Youth and Sports (No. 09-2015) that provides for initiatives coming from individuals and businesses, and (ii) the Regulation (MF-No. 04/2017) of the Ministry of Finance, which provides for subsidies targeting NGO-s. The MCYS regulation provides for the disbursement of Subsidies for various youth and business initiatives. Article 8 of this directive states that the Youth Department of the MCYS disburses funds for youth organizations, youth action councils, youth centers, and other persons involved in the field of youth.

<sup>64</sup> Law No.07/L-001 on the Budget Appropriations of Kosovo\* for Year 2020, Available at: <https://mf.rks-gov.net/> (Accessed December 5, 2020).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



programs, most funds are allocated for the youth development and support program (*mainly small grants to youth organizations*); EUR 355,000 is for the development of integration policies (*planning and capacity building of youth organizations*) and EUR 275,000 is for capacity development of local youth councils and youth centers. At the same time, about EUR 302,917 are allocated for capital investment, namely for building and/or equipping the facilities of Youth Centers.

### 3.3 Key youth programs and instruments

#### Programs of the MCYS, Department of Youth

According to the Kosovo\* Budget, the Department of Youth of the MCYS manages a budget that is dedicated to supporting youth initiatives (through subsidies and transfers) and improving working conditions of the 38 Local Youth Councils and over 30 Youth Centers (through capital investments).

The funds are disbursed through public calls that address respective strategic measures of the Strategy for Youth 2019-2023. These calls are thematic rather than program based. The MCYS in early July 2020 opened the call for NGOs for the first strategic objective, Mobilization of Youth for Participation, Representation, and Active Citizenship.<sup>66</sup> The call supported projects up to EUR 250,000, limiting the amount for each proposal to EUR 1,500, to a maximum of EUR 7,000. In addition, the MCYS in late October 2020, supported 167 young people with start-up grants aiming to increase the employability of Kosovar youth.<sup>67</sup>

However, the National Audit Office has identified weaknesses in management and controls, along with weaknesses in subsidies and transfers within MCYS.<sup>68</sup> Along with this, the MCYS has no proper tools to measure the impact of each project granted, along with dealing with a lack of staff. Only three staff are monitoring the overall activities of the Department of Youth,<sup>69</sup> while on the other hand COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges. Due to the fact that many NGOs in Kosovo\* work for a very short period of time, commercial banks are refusing to open bank accounts to NGOs. A civil society representative in Prishtina stated: “Banks are refusing to open bank accounts to youth organizations, as most of them disappear after 1 or 2 months”.<sup>70</sup>

#### The National Youth Program

In November 2018, the Government of Kosovo\* approved the National Youth Program,<sup>71</sup> a program not foreseen in any of the strategic documents of the Government of Kosovo\*. The

<sup>66</sup> More details available at: <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,114&offset=10> (Accessed on November 5, 2020).

<sup>67</sup> More details available at: <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/?page=1,6,2394#.X8v5HNhKg2w> (Accessed on November 5, 2020).

<sup>68</sup> “Audit Report, Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports for Financial Year ended on December 31, 2018”, National Audit Office, p.5. Available at: <http://www.zka-rks.org/Raporti-final-i-MKRS-2018-Shq.pdf> (Accessed on November 5, 2020).

<sup>69</sup> Interview, MCYS Representative, Prishtina, December 3, 2020

<sup>70</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, December 4, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> The National Youth Program can be found here: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=40430> (Accessed on November 5, 2020).



program was developed by the National Coordinator for Culture, Youth and Sports, a newly constituted office in May 2018 through a political decision of the Government of Kosovo\*, which had under its agenda the areas of culture, youth and sports.<sup>72</sup> The National Youth Program did not reflect youth needs nor priorities foreseen under policy framework.<sup>73</sup> The National Youth Program was focused on education, namely organizing knowledge, sports and debating competitions in all levels of formal education, with a respective budget of around EUR 2.6 million for the two year duration of the program. Opposition parties heavily criticized the program. The elected Government of February 3, 2020 decided not to pursue the National Youth Program and, the National Coordinator for Culture, Youth and Sport was released from duties.<sup>74</sup> No data are available about the implementation of the project during 2019.

### *The Active Labor Market Measures (ALMM) Program*

Overall objective of this program implemented by the Employment Agency of Kosovo\*<sup>75</sup> (EAK) is to support employment and vocational training of the Kosovo\* population. Its main activities are: employment and vocational training services (salary subsidies, on the job training, vocational training, internships, self-employment and promotion of entrepreneurship, public works, and other measures), procedures for monitoring and evaluation of measures and the impact of ALMM, and setting up of a labor market information system (LMIS) by the EAK.<sup>76</sup> The LMIS collects data on employment, unemployment and training grouped by age, gender, ethnicity, level of qualification, region, and professional field. It also provides comparison of data with the previous years to assess employment and unemployment trends in Kosovo\*. The total annual budget of ALMM is EUR 6,600,000, of which 40% of funds are disbursed to youth employment initiatives, making this program one of the key sources for funding of youth policies in Kosovo\*. ALMM serve to implement the Action Plan for Increasing Youth Employment in Kosovo\*.

## **3.4 Critical assessment**

Kosovo\* has a specific budget code pertaining to the youth sector. While Kosovo\* faces budget constraints, the budget on youth has experienced a yearly increase, reflecting overall economic growth. Still, public funds allocated for youth remain limited and do not meet the needs of youth entirely. The 2020 budget for youth makes neither exception, nor the projected budget for 2021, despite a slight increase.<sup>77</sup> The MCSY remains the only institution that receives funds from the public budget to implement NYSAP measures. Other programs under the MLSW and MESTI are

<sup>72</sup> The 2017-2019 Government established similar offices for different sectors including: National Coordinator for Public Reform, National Coordinator for Environment and National Coordinator for NATO Membership and Integration.

<sup>73</sup> The MCYS representative and the Civil Society representative interviewed, are in alignment regarding the National Youth Program which is not well consulted with the relevant stakeholders and was enacted to serve the politics as opposed to serving youth. Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, October 27, 2020.

<sup>74</sup> Government of Kosovo\*, Decision of Meeting Nr.02/02, date 12.02.2020

<sup>75</sup> For more information refer to <https://aprk.rks-gov.net/en-US/Home/Index> (Accessed on November 5, 2020).

<sup>76</sup> For more information refer to <https://aprk.rks-gov.net/en-US/Home/Index> (Accessed on November 5, 2020).

<sup>77</sup> The estimated budget for youth in 2021 compared to the 2020 budget, will have a slight increase in all three categories, Protection and Integration of Youth: EUR 378,889, Development and Support of Youth: EUR 1,412,432; and Development of Integration Policies: EUR 438,225.



mainly focused on implementation of specific aspects related to employability and the education of youth.

On the other hand, having as the first door for youth organizations the municipal level is at even more difficult position, because besides being underfunded, the law on budget has no specific budget code allocated solely for the youth sector.<sup>78</sup> Municipal funding to support youth organizations is allocated from the category of subventions, and thus fully at municipality discretion.

Current youth funding mechanisms are fragmented and lack sustainability. Regardless of the continuous funding that MCYS provided for youth organizations, the interviews have revealed that most are inactive due to budget constraints. To this note, disbursement of funds by the MCYS continues to pose a challenge, and mechanisms in place do not ensure adequate monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the awarded projects. No specific regulation for funding of youth projects exist which would frame the process from the application phase up to implementation and impact assessment of the project funded. The interviews conducted for the purpose of this report indicate trends of politicization of disbursement of youth funds, but there are no comprehensive reports or data to support this claim.

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<sup>78</sup> In 2017 the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Science, Technology, Culture, Youth and Sports recommended the creation of a specific budget code for youth at the local level.



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

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

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

For the purpose of ensuring active youth participation in the decision-making, the LEPY and the respective bylaws provide for the establishment of youth entities at all levels. These entities include the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC), and the 38 Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) in all Municipalities, and Youth Centers (YC) that operate at the local level.<sup>79</sup> Apart from those, the Assembly of Kosovo\* Youth is an entity that operates at both central and local levels and actively represents youth in respective levels and cross-sectorial working groups.<sup>80</sup>

The LEPY stipulates an obligation to each public institution to ensure youth participation and influence in the decision-making in the field of education, employment, civic education and democracy, urban planning and rural development. Accordingly, the Youth Department is the key body responsible to design policies, set up of clubs and youth organizations, and allocate budget and funds for youth activities in the form of grants, coordinate efforts of stakeholders and donors, and ensure procedures that will facilitate youth participation in Kosovo\*.

According to the LEPY Article 7, the Division of Youth, placed within municipal departments of Culture, Youth and Sport, is responsible to facilitate youth participation, ideas and initiatives. Kosovo\* municipalities allocate funds to support youth organizations and youth activities aiming to increase youth participation. Most commonly, these funds are distributed in the form of grants within a competitive process, whereby youth organizations compete for funds with their ideas and initiatives.

#### 4.1.1 Participation at the central level

The CYAC is the primary body to represent youth organizations at the central level and internationally. The CYAC participates in the development and implementation of youth policies, in the development of the Annual Youth Action Plan, in the drafting of the annual youth budget, as well as in planning voluntary and other youth activities. The COVID-19 pandemic and numerous internal problems; non-election of the new chairman and board, lack of funds and lack of working space, together with other internal matters within board members of the CYAC, made CYAC engagement very limited during 2020. *The* CYAC has not participated in the drafting of the budget for youth or in the working group to amend the LEPY.<sup>81</sup> A CYAC representative

<sup>79</sup> According to Article 6, paragraph 1.8 of the LEPY, the MCYS is responsible to: “set-up structures and procedures that will guarantee participation of youth and to ensure relations of partnership between youth organizations and Government”.

<sup>80</sup> The Assembly of Kosovo\* Youth is an independent NGO.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.



reports: “The MCYS has postponed the elections, justifying that the amendments of the law will impact structures. COVID-19 also impacted our engagement. Most of CYAC representatives are engage in other jobs and have lost interest to continue the voluntary work. Internal problems also are making our engagement difficult. Therefore, we have not fulfilled our responsibilities fully. The MCYS has not formally invited us into the working group to amend the LEPY”.<sup>82</sup>

The MCYS as a responsible body to organize elections and ensure well-functioning of the CYAC has neither organized the election nor ensured the functioning of the CYAC. The inactivity of the CYAC has impacted participation of youth in public life and decision making, despite the fact that other youth organizations, including the Kosovo\* Assembly of Youth are engaged in various initiatives by the MCYS, among others, one being the working group to amend the LEPY.<sup>83</sup>

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

In accordance with Administrative Instruction 09/2010 for the Responsibilities and Procedures of the establishment and Functioning of the Youth Action Council in Kosovo\*, municipalities are obliged to develop the local youth action plans for participation of youth in decision making.<sup>84</sup> To date a number of municipalities have developed such a plan.<sup>85</sup> In addition, LYACs should promote the youth perspective by contributing in the work of the municipal level, through participation in various important local level documents such as the municipal budget, meeting sessions of Municipal Assemblies and so on.<sup>86</sup> To date, even though LYACs are formally established in all municipalities, their role and activity in engaging at the municipal level to perform their duties is limited.<sup>87</sup> One of the reasons is the challenge that Municipalities face to support youth organizations and finance basic functions.<sup>88</sup>

The Municipality of Prishtina as the largest municipality in Kosovo\* in two separate phases during 2020 has supported over 50 NGOs with small grants from EUR 500.0 to EUR 7,000.0 in various projects and incentives, ranging from raising awareness for sexually transmitted diseases and drugs, enhance skills of youth about entrepreneurship and innovation, increase engagement

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<sup>82</sup> Interview, CYAC Representative, Prishtina October 27, 2020.

<sup>83</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, December 4, 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Administrative Instruction 09/2010 for the Responsibilities and Procedures of the Establishment and Functioning of LYACs in Kosovo\* approved by Minister of MCYS on August 12, 2010, available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=7899> (Accessed on December 10, 2020).

<sup>85</sup> Municipality of Lipjan, Drenas, South Mitrovica, Vushtrri, Gjakova, Viti and Kamenica are among municipalities that have developed the Local Youth Action Plan.

<sup>86</sup> Every Kosovo\* citizen belonging to age-group 15-24 can be a member of the LYAC. LYAC are established and organized as non-governmental organizations in line with the material provision of the Law No.05/L-043 on Freedom of Association in Non-Governmental Organizations. Each LYAC operates in line the Status, whereby detailed regulation of organization and functioning is provided, including election of their representatives.

<sup>87</sup> This conclusion is reached by the 2019 report. From desk research and interviews most of LYACs are passive. Almost no LYAC has website, some are active in social media.

<sup>88</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, December 4, 2020.





of youth in sports, increase youth participation in decision making and encouraging inter-municipality communication.<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.2 Evidence-based youth policy

The MCYS has some record of using evidence for policymaking. For instance, the recent NYSAP 2019-2023 was based on a number of sources of information used for its preparation, such as review of documents developed by relevant ministries, local governments, youth organizations and development agencies working in the field of youth. Moreover, broad consultation has taken place with the main stakeholders including youth offices, representatives of youth organizations, and donors active in the field of youth. Additionally, the MCYS has commissioned a particular study on youth (Youth Study Kosovo\* 2018-2019) as another source of information for the strategic planning process.

There are also other studies that serve to inform the authorities and stakeholders on the situation of youth in Kosovo\*. In 2016, the MCYS used services of another local agency (UBO Consulting) for a mid-term assessment of the implementation of the previous Strategy for Youth 2013-2017. However, impacted by COVID-19, the MCYS has not produced any report concerning the implementation of the current NYSAP up to 2020. More data are made available by studies commissioned by donors, such as USAID economy strategies, Human Development Reports of UNDP in Kosovo\* and Kosovo\* institutions, as is the case with the Labor Market Surveys of the KAS.

A positive development in regarding evidence-based policy making is the Labor Market Information System (LMIS) developed by KEA.<sup>90</sup> The LMIS includes real time data collected by the regional and municipal employment offices, but also integrated data provided by other agencies and institutions, such as KAS, universities, ministries, and so on. This database provides useful data and evidence on employment/unemployment data specified by age, gender, qualification, education, vocation and so on. The Employment Agency also provides online platforms for jobseekers and for mediation for employment. However, there is not a youth information system in place yet in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

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

The Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) was established in 2011. Formation of the CYCA is foreseen under Article 8 of the LEPY. The CYCA is a voluntary organization with a specific role towards central authorities and international youth mechanisms. Around 130 Youth organizations are represented to the Council through their LYACs.<sup>91</sup> The CYCA has a key role on representing Kosovo\* youth organizations before government institutions and participating in

<sup>89</sup> Interview, Municipality of Prishtina Representative, Prishtina October 27, 2020.

<sup>90</sup> More details available at: <https://appdec.com/portfolio/portfolio-details/labour-market-information-system> (Accessed December 27, 2020).

<sup>91</sup> The CYAC is still not a member of the European Youth Forum (since Kosovo\* is not member of the Council of Europe).



national policy making.<sup>92</sup> Accordingly, the CYCA is responsible to build a common vision for youth and to promote this vision to the national authorities and partners, to develop an action plan to accomplish the vision, to represent and promote the works of the Council, and to coordinate, exchange experiences and cooperate with youth organizations.

Apart from the CYCA, at the central level, there is another youth organization, the Assembly of Kosovo\* Youth, independently established by a group of young Kosovars in 2009 that to-date operated in 20 out of 38 municipalities, counting over 500 members.<sup>93</sup> The General Assembly as the highest decision-making body elected their president in June of 2017, who remains in power. The Assembly of Kosovo\* Youth is active in the youth sector with a focus in the field of voluntarism and youth activism and participation. In addition, they participated in the working group to amend the LEPY.<sup>94</sup>

Similar duties and responsibilities of the CYAC are reflected at the local level through Local Youth Action Councils. LYACs are established in light of Administrative Instruction 09/2010 for the Responsibilities and Procedures of the Establishment and Functioning of LYACs in Kosovo\* as non-governmental organizations through an application process with the municipal authorities. The role of LYAC is to bring together representatives of youth NGOs in any given municipality.<sup>95</sup> The LEPY in Article 10 stipulates that the LYACs are advisory entities representing interest of youth organizations and young people in local level.

Apart from LYAC, the LEPY provides for the establishment of Youth Centers for the empowering and participation of youth at the local level. Youth Centers provide space and working conditions for youth and youth organizations. In addition, the Youth Center Network – Kosovo\*, composed of 12 Youth Centers is also an existing voluntary body active in the youth sector. Youth Center Network-Kosovo\* aims to coordinate activities among youth Centers and promote youth needs.

#### 4.4 Platforms of youth cooperation at the central level

**The National Youth Congress - Kosovo\*** is an informal umbrella organization of youth, initiated by Fridrich Ebert Stiftung. The National Youth Congress-Kosovo\* brings together over 100 members from different youth organizations, informal groups and individuals with the aim

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<sup>92</sup> Article 2 of the Administrative Instruction 09/2010 for the Responsibilities and Procedures of the Establishment and Functioning of LYACs in Kosovo\* has further specified the role of CYCA.

<sup>93</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, October 27, 2020.

<sup>94</sup> This information is collected from the social media (<https://www.facebook.com/kuvendiiterinjve/>) and news portals (<https://telegrafi.com/te-rinjte-kerkojne-mbeshitetjen-e-institucioneve-te-kosoves/>).

<sup>95</sup> In a report in 2017 the Working Group of the Kosovo\* Assembly Committee state that some of the youth centers were very active in providing support for youth (such as Peja/Pec, Rahove/Orahovac, and Suhareka/Suva Reka), whereas others were not so engaged to almost non-operational (Klina, Skenderaj and Kamenica). According to the same report, the work of these centres depended a lot on existence or lack of donor support since municipalities did not have the needed funds to support youth activities.



of information exchange, enhancing youth opportunities, discussion of youth issues, and advocating for solving these issues at national level.

**The Youth Council of the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo\*** is a non-profit organization launched in April of 2014, which aims to raise the awareness relating youth issues, promote an all-inclusive society and strengthen the sense of active citizenship among the youth through leadership and community service activities. The members of the Youth Council of the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo\* are a diverse group including U.S. alumni, civil society members and students.

#### 4.5 Regional platforms and networks

**The Regional Youth Co-operation Office Kosovo\*** is member participant of RYCO, whose aim is to promote the reconciliation and cooperation of youth and support regional youth exchange alongside with the implementation of joint regional programs on youth.<sup>96</sup> Currently Kosovo\* is represented in the RYCO governing board by the Minister of MCYS Ms. Vlora Dumoshi, while Mr. Edis Prapashtica is the youth representative since August of 2020.

Apart from RYCO, in July 2015, Kosovo\* and Albania signed a Memorandum of Understanding aiming to stimulate cross-border/boundary cooperation in the youth sector.<sup>97</sup>

**The Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform - The CYAC** is representing Kosovo\*'s youth in the WBYCP, a platform that promotes youth connectivity in the Balkans. The “WBYCP is a grassroots regional youth platform implemented by the Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), together with the umbrella youth organizations of the six Western Balkans economies, and with the support of the Hanns Seidel Foundation”.<sup>98</sup>

**The Young European Ambassadors (YEA) Kosovo\*** is represented in YEA. The YEA is made of six Ambassadors and six Attaches from across the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The YEA aims to share learning about the EU's values and to promote the opportunities that the EU offers. The YEA aims to inspire changes within communities of the Western Balkan regions and across the EU by allowing youth to share ideas and developing their talents.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> The signed memorandum of understanding on July 4, 2016 within Berlin Process by six Western Balkan economies; Kosovo\*, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, an act that open the road for Kosovo\* Parliament to ratify the law on the establishment of the Regional Youth Co-operation Office of the Western Balkans (RYCO) on March 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between responsible youth minister of Albania and Kosovo\*. Available at: <https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Marrevshja-Kosove-Shqiperi-Rinia.pdf> (Accessed on December 3, 2020).

<sup>98</sup> More details available at: <https://connecting-youth.org/about.php> (Accessed on December 3, 2020).

<sup>99</sup> More details available at: <https://www.webalkans.eu/en/yea/young-european-ambassadors/> (Accessed December 3, 2020)



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

This chapter presents programs and interventions of key donors in youth-related issues. It also outlines how donor coordination works in Kosovo\* and what are priority areas for the future in the field of youth.

### 5.1 Key donors in the field of youth

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

**The European Union:** The EU has supported Kosovo\*'s youth, particularly after 2008. Through the IPA and other instruments, the EU aims to increase youth employment, improve access to active labor market measures, and improve quality and vocational skills. The area of education, capacity building of academic staff, and increased grants in the research, is the EU Office's primary focus. Moreover, the EU aims to make youth a mainstreaming issue. The youth sector will have a dedicated IPA in the near future.

The IPA funds build up the capacities of the economies throughout the accession process, resulting in progressive, positive developments in the region. The IPA Programming for Kosovo\* is focused on a) Democracy and Governance, b) Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights, c) Energy, d) Competitiveness and Innovation, e) Education, employment and Social Policies f) Agricultures and i) Regional Cooperation. Youth and women provide an essential part of the 2014-2020 IPA.

The EU Program Erasmus + Kosovo\* is a partner economy of the Erasmus+ Program in the Western Balkans section. The Erasmus+ Office in Kosovo\* has been established to assist the European Commission, the Executive Agency, and the local authorities to implement the Erasmus+ Program. The program aims to boost skills and employability and modernize Education, Training, and Youth work. Through its Key Actions, Erasmus + program supports (i) mobility in the education, training, and youth sectors, (ii) transfer of best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training, and youth, and capacity building in the field of youth and higher education, and (iii) grants for a wide variety of actions in the areas of education, training, and youth. To date, Kosovo\* has benefited from Erasmus+ in over 60 projects. At the last call for applications, 11 projects from Kosovo\* were supported. The budget is not available for the projects or mobility for them.<sup>100</sup>

**The US Embassy / USAID:** USAID has been supporting Kosovo\*'s institutions since 1999. USAID's project in Kosovo\* focuses on economic growth, democracy, and governance. USAID/Kosovo recently started its new 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy.

<sup>100</sup> Individual projects have different budgets. Student mobility [yes](#) has [ve](#) also different amounts for different exchange programs and economies.



The goal of the new Strategy is that “*Kosovo\* realizes its democratic and demographic dividend through Kosovo-led solutions.*” To achieve this goal, USAID will strive to increase government accountability and seek to leverage new democratic and economic opportunities. Fundamental to the realization of this strategy are two development objectives 1) citizens are better served by accountable and effective governance institutions and 2) increased opportunities for inclusive democratic and economic participation. In addition, USAID/Kosovo is engaging youth and emerging leaders in a continuum of youth civic education, engagement, and leadership development. Through the new Strategy USAID/Kosovo\* seeks to create and sustain opportunities to engage youth as an asset and help them use their voices and skills for Kosovo\*'s development. Currently, USAID/Kosovo\* is implementing a different project which aims to: (a) empower youth participation, (b) youth employability, entrepreneurial skills and positive attitude, (c) to improve workforce skills of youth, (d) create self-employment opportunities through ICT and (e) engage youth of different communities to share the commitment to democratic principles.

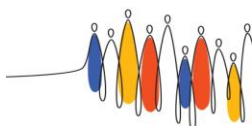
**The Swiss Embassy / Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation:** The agency has supported Kosovo\* since 1999. Reforms to facilitate the European and regional integrations related to democracy, economic development, and infrastructure improvements are the cornerstone of the Swiss agenda in Kosovo\*. The funded project "**Enhancing Youth Employment – Phase 2**" covering the period of 2017-2020 has as its main goal for the young women and men to use the acquired skills and increase their employability through a more market-oriented training system. Under this intervention, the project addresses the problem of the skills mismatch in the labor market. The project targets young women and men in transition from education to work (age 15-34 years), including youth from minority communities and youth with a lower educational background. The total budget is EUR 6,800,000. The main activities are improving the labor market information and career guidance systems, improving education, creating new jobs, and providing quality training.<sup>101</sup> In addition, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is also funding the project on "**Promoting Private Sector Employment, phase II,**" covering the period of 2017-2021. The overall goal is to increase sustainable employment for young women and men through small and medium enterprises. The project tackles private sector development and job creation in the field of food processing and tourism. The project has supported the creation of over 2,000 full-time jobs, and over 100 SMEs have provided new services and products alongside increased food production and sales channels. The project budget for phase II is 7.3 million CHF.<sup>102</sup>

**The German Embassy / The German Development Agency (GIZ)** GIZ has been working in Kosovo\* since 1999. Economic development, employment, the rule of law, education, culture youth, and sports and the European agenda are areas of GIZ support to Kosovo\*'s institution.

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<sup>101</sup> The project is expected to start the third phase in January 2021 in a 4-year project long. The expected budget it exceeds 5mln €.

<sup>102</sup> The third, 4-year phase is expected to be approved by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The budget for the new phase is expected exceed 5 million CHF.



Currently, GIZ is implementing a three-year project on Youth Employment and Skills in Kosovo\* (YES). The project aims to improve the employability of young Kosovars aged between 15 and 35 years. The budget of EUR 12,000,000 is used to provide training and employment for youth and market analysis, support for start-ups, and empowerment of youth centers and civil society. 40% of beneficiaries are female, over 25% returnees, and 10% from ethnic minorities.

**The Austrian Embassy / Austrian Development Agency:** The Agency is present in Kosovo\* since 2003 and supports Kosovo\*'s institution in Higher Education, economic development, and cross-cutting theme governance. Currently the "**Aligning Education and Training with Labor Market Needs - ALLED Phase II**" is being implemented with a total budget of EUR 3,800,000. The project aims to reduce poverty through increased labor market participation and improve employability (the project is co-funded by the European Union).

**UNICEF: The UNICEF Innovations Lab –Kosovo\*** project started in 2010 and is still ongoing. The main goal is to invest in human capital, especially in youth, to the social and economic prosperity of a Kosovo\*. The program has three main components: Social entrepreneurship (Upshift Initiative), Active citizenship (Podium initiative), and Media critical thinking (Ponder initiative). The Lab works with teenagers and youth (14-24 years), emphasizing marginalized, vulnerable, and socially excluded groups (non-majority communities; rural communities; communities living in poverty; and teenagers with disabilities). The annual budget for this project is EUR 1,000,000.

**OSCE:** the OSCE office in Prishtina has youth engagement as one of its priorities. The project "**Advancing Societal Confidence Building Measures, Phase II**" seeks to increase youth participation and advocacy efforts in the dialogue and public participation. Activities of the program bring together groups of young people from 40 to 500 persons. The program has a total budget of Eur 200.000. The project has started in January 2020 and completed in December 2020.

**UNDP:** is also active in Kosovo\* since 1999 and is focused on building and supporting Kosovo\* in three areas: sustainable development, democratic governance and peacebuilding, environment, climate, and disaster resilience. The UNDP Office in Prishtina is implementing the project "**Active Labor Market Programs 2**". The project is focused on vulnerable young men and women to find a job or establish a new venture through supporting Kosovo\*'s institutions in designing strategic, evidence-based policies and programs and providing skills development and employment opportunities. To date, the project has supported the Kosovo\* Employment Agency and MLSW. At the same time, over 2,500 young women and men unemployed people received skills development and employment opportunities. Moreover, over 500 new small businesses have been established through the support given by the program. The program started in 2014, and the estimated end date is December 2021. The program is financially supported by several



governments and organizations, including the Government of Kosovo\*. The program budget exceeds EUR 7 million.<sup>103</sup>

**The Council of Europe:** interventions impacting youth are mostly in education, human rights, and discrimination. The project "**Building Capacity for Inclusion in Education – INCLUDE**" aims to foster quality education in Kosovo\* and improve access to education for children from disadvantaged groups, including Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children and children with special education needs. The project will support implementing the existing beneficiary's legislation and Council of Europe policy and standards relating to education and anti-discrimination measures. The project covers the period of January 2020 to December 2023.

**The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina:** The Norwegian Embassy has actively supported Kosovo\*'s institutions and NGOs in the fields of education, the rule of law, good governance, environmental protection, human rights, etc. The assistance provided has had a particular emphasis on improving the condition of minorities, women, and youth. The Embassy supports a local NGO (Balkans Policy Research Group) to implement a training program "Youth in Politics." The program aims to develop skills among youth individuals and political parties to overcome some of the most critical hurdles in their political engagement.

**The Swedish Embassy / SIDA / The Olof Palme International Center:** SIDA /Swedish embassy has also been active in supporting Kosovo\*'s institutions and NGOs in various sectors. Youth and gender mainstreaming are part of each supported project or program. Dictated by the Government policy on focusing more on youth, the engagement of Swedish presence in Kosovo\* in the youth sector will be intensified in the near future. Also, the Olof Palme International Center is funding various NGOs on promoting democracy, human rights, and peace.

**The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives / Embassy of Canada to Croatia and Kosovo\*:** The Embassy through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives supports small-scale projects aligned with action areas set by the Government of Canada international assistance. The projects supported by the program are in the thematic priorities: gender and the empowerment of women and girls, human rights and the rule of law, peace and security, human dignity, health and education, and the environment. The program has supported several NGOs with proposals to increase youth participation in the decision-making process.

**The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands / Matra Programme:** The Matra Program is a regular funding scheme dedicated to non-governmental organizations and is focused on supporting projects that strengthen democracy and the rule of law, vis-à-vis the EU candidate

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<sup>103</sup> In mid-October 2020, the MCYS and UNDP signed a funding agreement in the amount of 500 thousand €, to support 400 young jobseekers who are registered in the Employment Agency to undertake paid internships in the private sector, with funding provided for 6 months. The fund dedicated to this agreement is foreseen in Measure 1 of the Economic Recovery Plan approved by Kosovo\* Government in August 2020 in the amount of 365 million €. Available at: <https://www.mkrs-ks.org> (Accessed on October 23, 2020)



economies to fulfill conditions required by the EU accession process. Youth and gender mainstreaming are encouraged to be promoted from each supported project.

**The Embassy of Finland/Fund for Local Cooperation:** The Finnish Embassy is also supporting small-scale projects. Youth and gender mainstreaming are part of the projects or programs supported. The Fund has supported among others the UNDP to implement the project Active Labor Market 2 with EUR 15,000.

## 5.2 Donor coordination

Since June of 1999, Kosovo\* has received tremendous financial and technical assistance from the international community. To date, the support is continuing. Until 2020, Kosovo\* was ranked as a low middle-income economy.<sup>104</sup> This fact has mobilized the donor community to support Kosovo\*.<sup>105</sup> Currently, USAID, EU Office in Prishtina, GIZ, OSCE, Swiss SDC, and many others are supporting Kosovo's\* institutions' efforts to improve the position of youth. Donors have taken different approaches to supporting youth. Most of them design specific projects to tackle youth issues, while others have taken a more integrated approach to improve the youth situation.<sup>106</sup> Most of the ongoing projects are working on similar objectives as foreseen under the National Youth Strategy. Involving youth in the decision-making process, capacity building through training and other non-formal education programs and promoting youth employment are only some of the donor community's interventions. The donor community is allocating approximately EUR 7 million a year to implement such projects.<sup>107</sup> To date, donors' interventions are mainly implemented by international implementing agencies. Funds are not disbursed through direct budget support.

To coordinate the donor community, the Government of Kosovo\* in June 2015 approved the Regulation No.09/2015 on Coordination of Foreign Donors Assistance, aiming to coordinate the foreign aid, creating a system that ensures effectiveness and transparency between the activities of the Government of Kosovo\* and the donor community. The regulations stipulated in Article 3, the establishment of the High-Level Forum as a permanent mechanism with the purpose of assessing the progress in social and economic-development and external aid efficacy. The Forum is chaired by the Prime Minister and is the highest decision-making body for the donations, with the right to take political decisions. Besides the High-Level Forum, the regulation provided the formation of the Sector Working Groups and the Sub-Sector Working Groups. The first is responsible for coordinating the foreign donor assistance, harmonizing the service with national

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<sup>104</sup> Only in fiscal year 2020 Kosovo\* was ranked as upper-middle-income economy according to World Bank. Available at: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase> (Accessed on December 25, 2020)

<sup>105</sup> Back in 2010 a change in approach to the external assistance between Government of Kosovo\* and donor community was agreed. The project-based approach was to be changed into a sector program-based approach. The rationale of this change was to streamline Kosovo's\* and donors' efforts and thus on the one hand to improve the effectiveness and impact of donor interventions in Kosovo\* and on the other hand for the Government to better plan and implement assistance provided

<sup>106</sup> USAID in line with its economy development cooperation strategy 2014-2020, gave support to youth mostly through support given for another sector, however, recently USAID has designed a specific youth project. See under 5.1. section.

<sup>107</sup> This is a rough estimate, based on official data revealed from donors on their project descriptions.





priorities, and monitoring foreign donor assistance. The latter is responsible for exchanging information on a technical level between Kosovo\* institutions and the foreign donors to identify activities that need donor support, to link actions of donor community with the activities funded by the Government, and to support implementation of sectoral policies and strategies, monitoring, reporting and so on.<sup>108</sup>

However, the implementation of the regulation in place has faced difficulties. The coordination of the donor community is mostly missing. According to donors, a handful of meetings have taken place so far. Consecutive governments did not manage to build proper communication tools with donors. The sector of youth was not an exception. Although the Regulation No.09/2015 has foreseen these tools: from designing of the intervention in line with sectoral strategies, the cooperation with beneficiary authorities, monitoring and reporting, practical implementation has faced challenges. The past has shown an overlapping of interventions. One representative from the donor community confessed that when they “face cases of overlapping with other donors. [they] change [their] planned activities to avoid overlapping”.<sup>109</sup> In several cases, local partners have not responded to their commitments, and, consequently, donor projects face difficulties at the implementation phase.

A more active role of the Government in coordinating donor projects is needed, alongside day-to-day involvement on the implementation side. From a member of the donor community, the frustration is apparent, due to the fact that *Systematic and well-organized coordination does not exist*". Only a few institutions at both central and local levels are active. The representative goes on to mention that "*Every six months we submit a report to our partner at the central level. They have never given us any suggestion.*".<sup>110</sup> Even in cases when the Government agrees and is well-consulted before the interventions, the donor has faced problems at the stage of funding.<sup>111</sup>

In the absence of coordination from the Government, donors have 'sporadic' meetings aiming to coordinate and avoid overlapping of activities. Also, the lack of coordination and impact pushes the donor community to seek ways to "bypass" institutions: "We are designing interventions to the extent possible to work directly with the private sector. The impact is bigger, and the success is almost guaranteed."<sup>112</sup>

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

The current sectorial governmental strategies, in particular, the Youth Strategy and its Action Plan, have emphasized the government's priorities in the youth sector. Formal and non-formal education, employment, and active youth participation remain high priorities in the government's

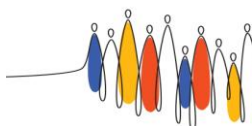
<sup>108</sup> The first approved Government of Kosovo\* Regulation on Donor Coordination was done in June 2011. In force Regulation was approved during Isa Mustafa's led-Government. See at: <http://kryeministri-ks.net/Rregullore-09-2015>

<sup>109</sup> Interview, Donor Community Representative, Prishtina October 21, 2020

<sup>110</sup> Interview, Donor Community Representative, Prishtina, October 22, 2020

<sup>111</sup> Interview, Donor Community Representative, Prishtina October 21, 2020

<sup>112</sup> Interview, Donor Community Representative, Prishtina October 21, 2020



plan. On the other hand, donor priorities lay in good governance and democracy, the rule of law, economic development, energy, and the environment. The below underline-issues represent the institutional priority areas for the future in the field of youth and the gaps identified by the report:

***Empowering Youth Organizations:*** Youth participation and activism in all levels of decision-making and public life remains low. The current state of youth organizations and funds provided by public institutions has proven to be insufficient. Above and beyond being inactive, in many cases youth organizations have been used by different groups to move their political interest forward. Enhancing and empowering youth organizations to access and manage funds from various sources other than public funds are necessary. In this regard, the donor community should focus on youth organizations' capacity building and the empowerment of youth structures. Increasing youth capacity to access funds, will prove valuable at least in two directions; to increase youth participation and prevent cases of politicization of youth organizations.

***The Linkage of Education and Industry;*** Youth unemployment in Kosovo\* remains high. On the other hand, specific sectors are lacking in finding qualified employees. The link between the education sector and industry will tackle both; the unemployment on the one hand, and on the other hand, the education system will transform both the curriculum and methodology in more up-to-date trends and labor requirements.

***The Rural Youth;*** According to KAS, 64.8 % of young people live in rural areas. Youth living in rural areas face additional obstacles in employment and education compared to their urban counterparts. The Lens study on Kosovo\* Rural Youth has shown that over the long run these barriers lead to the social marginalization and exclusion of rural youth which further diminishes their employment and education opportunities. In addition, a larger portion of youth in rural areas belong to NEET. Tackling this issue requires a multi-level and holistic approach. Together with Kosovo\*'s institutions, the donor community should find new ways to create incentives to engage rural youth. Subsidizing VET education schemes alongside changing the perception and social norms towards VET education may prove successful in engaging rural youth and reshaping the overall economy and youth position.

***The Youth Activism in Multiethnic Context:*** Although interethnic tensions in Kosovo\* have significantly decreased, the divisive conflict narratives, in particular among youth of Kosovo\*-Albanians and Kosovo\*-Serbs is present in the social discourse. Although to some extent trade and economic cooperation is taking place, social cohesion and stable intercommunity relations are still missing.<sup>113</sup> Little is known about youth activism and participation of ethnic minorities in decision-making in Kosovo\*. Increasing activism in decision-making and engaging in actions and activities about youth issues from different ethnic groups, with special attention Kosovo\*-

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<sup>113</sup> "Social Cohesion in Kosovo\*: Context Review and Entry Points" UNDP, 2019.



Albanians and Kosovo\*-Serbs through youth organizations, is needed. This will bring together youth as well as articulate youth needs from all communities. The government and donors should combine efforts on tackling the status-quo.

#### 5.4 Critical assessment

The lack of institutional ownership agenda for orienting and coordinating the donor community has provoked interventions that not necessarily are in line with the government strategic objectives in the youth sector.<sup>114</sup> The government's ownership is critical in achieving long-term and sustainable results for the donor community. Prior Government measures to coordinate donors proved to be insufficient. Until 2009 the Office of the Prime Minister operated as a donor coordination body within the Kosovo\* government. From 2009 until June 2020, the Ministry of European Integration was responsible for coordinating Kosovo\*'s overall development aid. Currently, this responsibility is back under the office of Prime Minister. Under both MEI and office of Prime Minister, the donor coordination was weak. The designated office has not proven to be proactively engaged with donors and coordinating the donors' interventions.

The development assistance constitutes to be a vital source of revenue for Kosovo\*. Medium-to-long-term predictability of the donor aid in the youth sector is critical. Kosovo\* institutions are not able to predict aid disbursements in terms of timelines and amounts. Harmonizing these factors with the economy's ability to manage and plan public finances is crucial. Better harmonization and medium-to-long-term predictability will enable institutions to optimize the allocation of resources within the youth sector. To date, a lack of coordination has produced similar or identical activities.

To date, the donor community has faced numerous challenges. The donor intervention's success should not be "*according to the will of a public officer*" either in the "*consciousness of staff hired to implement the project.*"<sup>115</sup> Accountability mechanisms are much needed at all levels. Together with the donor community, the Government should establish those mechanisms and jointly assess the implemented interventions' progress, including impact and funds spent. Further, aid-and-donor effectiveness are needed. The government of Kosovo\* should work on a sound mechanism for donor coordination and aid effectiveness. Unifying of donor projects in the youth sector should be considered. Using joint arrangements, donor community interventions will increase sustainability, avoid overlapping, and better services to youth and decision-making bodies.

In addition to the above, the Government should closely work with the donor community to reform the donor contribution's current format. Strengthening the Government capacities as a

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<sup>114</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, September 27, 2020.

<sup>115</sup> Interview, Donor Community Representative, Prishtina, October 22, 2020.



first step to transform the current project, the implementation configuration to direct budget support from the donor community is suggested. Increasing funds available for youth organizations alongside the capacity building and more-orientated interventions in the youth sector should occur. To this end, the ownership of the Kosovo\* Government over donor community interventions is required. The coordination mechanisms should be reviewed. After two decades of continuous support by the donor community, Kosovo's institutions should coordinate the donor community and interconnect donor efforts with its strategic objectives.



## 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

Since 2008, progress is evident in the youth sector in Kosovo\*. Institutions have managed to establish a system that responds to and deals with youth issues. The legal framework in place is sound and has foreseen central and local structures, and youth organizations who contribute to policy development and implementation. The MCYS has identified shortcomings in the current LEPY thus, a working group has prepared the amendments and soon will be presented to the Parliament for final approval. The MCYS has created a program to disburse funds to youth organizations for the implementation of projects and promotion of strategic objectives on improving better youth participation in public life and decision making. While, on the other hand the Labor Market Information System developed by the Employment Agency is an example to be followed by other institutions, as their system provides real time and reliable data on employment, unemployment and vocation training for institutional needs.<sup>116</sup>

In addition, the municipalities have also been supporting youth organizations. The cooperation among municipality and LYAC is at good level. The municipality of South-Mitrovica and the LYAC-Mitrovica worked closely together in the preparation of the municipal development plan this year. Likewise, the municipalities of Vushtrri, Lipjan and Drenas are engaging with respective LYACs in the decision-making process. Lately, the municipalities and LYACs have combined efforts on the fight against COVID-19. Many LYACs together with mayors have campaigned to wear face masks and follow the recommendations of the Ministry of Health.<sup>117</sup>

On the other hand, the donor contribution through different projects and programs has resulted in improving and advancing the youth situation. Several projects and programs implemented have created great tools which can serve for the future as good practices to Kosovo\*'s institutions. The EYE project has worked with career guidance offices within the public and private higher education institutions by linking those institutions with the private sector, whereby students have gotten jobs and internships. Moreover, the project has offered capacity building courses and study visits for career guidance of higher education officers.<sup>118</sup> Likewise, the UNICEF Innovation Lab project, is applying a typical cross-sector approach designed in Kosovo\* to

<sup>116</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina October 27, 2020.

<sup>117</sup> The 2019 report has taken the cooperation between Municipality of Kamenica and the LYAC-Kamenica as a good and fruitful example of cooperation on drafting the Local Youth Action Plan. The Municipality provided transport to LYAC activist to ensure youth participation in meetings and decision-making process. Likewise, the Municipality of Vushtrri and LYAC Vushtrri have been working closely to draft the Local Youth Action Plan and secure public spaces for youth activities.

<sup>118</sup> The author of the report has participated in those trainings and study visits back in 2016.



empower youth by addressing concrete issues that are faced. Equally, the narrow and specific scope of international donor projects should be considering as a model, in particular when grants are allocated for youth organizations in this way institutions at both central and local level, would be able to better monitor and measure the results, to engage youth organizations in achieving set strategic objectives and create target-oriented youth interventions.

Evidently, these combined efforts have resulted in strengthening of youth capacities and the implementation of youth policies. Moreover, the interventions and the support provided for the youth sector from both Kosovo\*'s institutions and donor community pay adequate attention to issues of gender, minorities and other marginalized groups.

## 6.2 Gaps

### *The legal framework*

The youth sector is 'suffering' from fragmented cross-sectorial interventions.<sup>119</sup> The implementation of the legislation requires improvement. The MCYS as the primary responsible institution to set youth policies has faced difficulties to coordinate with other public institutions and agencies. Therefore, the development and implementation of youth policies is fragmented. The MESTI and MLSW as primary stakeholders on the 'indirect' implementation of the Strategy of Youth 2019-2023, should harmonize better their own processes and measures with the MCYS. On the other hand, MCYS must be involved at the local level in order to create sustainability. The municipal level has minimal ability in regard to the implementation of the strategic objectives. Systematic donor coordination is missing on both central and the local level, as a result of no sound mechanism for donor coordination and aid-effectiveness. Consequently, cases of overlapping interventions are present, along with the lack of aid-and-donor effectiveness, thus, minimizing the impact of the donor contribution.

### *The funding framework*

This report finds a mismatch between the funds spent on youth and the actual impact achieved, which is limited. Similar to the legal framework, the funding framework is not unified or coherent among institutions. MCYS has its funding mechanisms that target the implementation of the Youth Strategy objectives while the other line ministries and the local level have no such reference or obligation under the Youth Strategy 2019-2023. As such, neither the Ministry of Education, nor the Ministry of Labor or the local level makes any direct or indirect reference to the KNYS 2019-2023 when they allocate grants. Institutions have not diversified funds allocated for youth sector. The MCYS remains the primary sustainable funding mechanism for youth organizations through small grants. Apart from the fact that these funds have supported the existence of a large number of youth organizations, these funds are small to produce the impact or sustainability for the youth organizations. In addition, funds distributed from MCYS require more transparency in one hand, while on the other hand, oversight mechanisms and results

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<sup>119</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina, December 4, 2020.



should be measured and documented for each funded project. Currently, the practice of reporting through narrative and financial reports is not enough.

The municipal level also funds youth organizations. Municipalities have no dedicated budget code for youth. The support is allocated from the category of subventions, and therefore, they are fully at the discretion of the municipality. Municipalities should create specific budget codes for supporting youth and coordinate better with MCYS. Draft-amendments to LEPY in Article 7 has foreseen the establishment of a special sub-code for youth.<sup>120</sup> Having a separate sub-code for the youth will contribute to at least two directions: the municipal level will anticipate the budget dedicated for youth and will avoid overlapping of funded projects.

Lastly, the implementation of donor projects continues to be done by donors themselves with little to no through direct budget support. The lack of coordination has forced donors to implement projects not always in line with the strategic priorities of Kosovo\*'s institutions. Thus, the donor funds are only partly contributing to the accomplishment of the local youth policies and there is little synergy with the local interventions.<sup>121</sup>

### *The youth participation*

The youth participation has increased but it still remains limited. A range of factors is causing the current situation. The legal framework ensures youth participation; however, the current structure of youth organizations has partially responded to the mission, mostly due to a lack of funds. Limited funds disbursed in the form of small grants from authorities to youth organizations that have produced limited results, thus limiting youth engagement to only a handful of youth activists. On the other hand, limited participation of youth may be a result of youth hesitation to engage in voluntary initiatives, as the legal framework in place counts voluntarism as the key form of youth engagement. The donor community is not highly engaged directly with youth organizations.

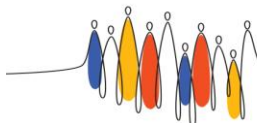
The legislation has proven to be too weak to prevent political penetration within youth organizations. Almost full dependence from public funds has created space for political parties to decide whom to support at both central and local levels at the same time. Some have used youth organizations to support a certain a political candidate or party, or to find ways to secure financial support.<sup>122</sup> A functional review of the current situation with the focus on the current organization of youth in both central and local level is a must. Youth civil society representatives

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<sup>120</sup> The draft-law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, available at: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=40989> (accessed on December 4, 2020).

<sup>121</sup> The 2019 report has highlighted the UNICEF experience. This donor has spoken affirmatively of the coordination of policies and action with the Kosovo\* authorities. The author agrees with the 2019 report that in order to have a better picture of the funds allocated by donor community and national policies a more in-depth research is needed. The author stress that from the description of donor projects, clearly, they are working in most pressing issues related to youth and in some ways are in line with Kosovo\*'s\* strategic objectives, but not limited to the Youth Strategy and its Action Plan 2019-2023.

<sup>122</sup> The 2019 has brought this issue. The author has done desk research about few LYCA activists. Many are publicly supporting different political parties and political candidates.



are skeptical that changes proposed in the draft-law on Youth will increase youth participation in the decision-making process. Little attention is given to the structure of youth organizations and operation, which are two of the main struggles that youth organizations are facing currently.<sup>123</sup>

### *The lack of data*

The youth sector suffers from lack of credible and relevant data. There is no database or list of active youth organizations, neither organizations who are benefiting from the public funds, donors involved in the youth sector or other institutional interventions in the form of numbers, work or projects dedicated to youth. The MCYS should foresee the creation of a database where relevant and credible data for the youth sector, including donor projects, youth organizations at central and local level, and opportunities can be found, not only for research purposes but also to have a better channel of communications with the youth and the public, vis-à-vis to engage youth in policy and decision-making. On the other hand, youth organizations are seriously lacking to communicate with the public. The CYAC has no website, while their official Facebook page is outdated with the last post from October 2018.<sup>124</sup> Few LYACs are more active, but information given through their channels of communication (mostly Facebook) remains limited.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic is associated with an increased level of fear and anxiety at the individual and societal level, alongside its economic and social impact. The COVID-19 crisis poses a considerable risk for young people in the fields of employment, education, mental health and income loss.<sup>125</sup> In addition, youth will shoulder much of the long-term economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 crises.

The Government of Kosovo\*, at the end of March 2020, decided to temporarily close some economic activities. The spread of COVID-19 and restrictions had an immediate impact. According to the Employment Agency, in April 2020 alone a total of 32,377 new jobseekers were registered. Nearly half of them (16,820) were women. In the effort to reduce the economic consequences of the pandemic, the Government of Kosovo\* in March 30, 2020 approved the EUR 179 million Emergency Fiscal Package. This package contained 15 measures among others to support small businesses, increase the social insurance, incentivize export, and restore the health system.<sup>126</sup> To further mitigate the COVID-19 consequences, in early August, the Government of Kosovo\* allocated EUR 365 million to implement the Economic Recovery Program, of which EUR 2.5 million are allocated to support youth employment. Funds will support businesses, create jobs and stimulate aggregate demand. In addition, in early December

<sup>123</sup> Interview, Civil Society Representative, Prishtina December 4, 2020.

<sup>124</sup> More details available at: <https://www.facebook.com/KQVR1>. (Accessed on December 5, 2020).

<sup>125</sup> “Youth and COVID-19, Response, Recovery and Resilience”, OECD, June 2020.

<sup>126</sup> Government of Kosovo\* received over 150 million € financial assistance and loans from International Monetary Fund, European Union and others. The EU has also committed 168 million € for post pandemic recovery in the form of budget support and project and loan. See further at: Southeast Europe – COVID-19 Bulletin no.3, June 2020.





2020, on the seventh attempt, the Parliament approved the Law on Economic Recovery – COVID- 19. The financial value of the Law alone reaches EUR 600 million, which will go to benefit businesses and citizens.<sup>127</sup> It is concerning that the law has no specific provisions to support youth.<sup>128</sup>

Low-paid and temporary jobs in the sectors (HoReCa – hotels, restaurants and service providers) most severely affected by the crisis, were held by young people. As a result, people belonging to the young generation are facing a higher risk of a job and income loss.<sup>129</sup> The Central Bank of Kosovo\* has communicated that the economic decline in Kosovo\* for 2020 amounts to a negative 7.2 %, while according to the World Bank the GDP will drop by 8.8 %. In addition, according to the KSA report on Gross Domestic Product, the Q2 of 2020 declined by 9.28 percent compared to the same quarter of the previous year.

It is clear that outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has made policymakers and the public sector face their biggest test in generations. Less than a year after the approval of the National Youth Strategy and its Action Plan, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the planned implementation. Clearly, the COVID-19 crisis has added new priorities for the Government, mostly related to economic issues. Still, the government must bring youth into the conversation. The implementation of the National Youth Strategy and its Action Plan in particular, by reducing inactive youth and creating jobs, might prove to be the only way to build the sustainable and resilient solutions that fit into the current government objectives. “COVID-19 has ruined everything. All planned activities have been rescheduled or canceled. We have not been able to conduct proper trainings planned nor supervise NGOs which have been supported. MCYS and its beneficiaries are not able to switch the work online”<sup>130</sup> Besides the central level COVID-19 is hitting hard also the local level work. “We are trying to adopt to the new circumstances, but it is hard. Youth organizations have no tools to completely work online, thus, many especially those working with students have canceled activities or postpone for few months”.<sup>131</sup> Few municipalities have cut initial budgets for youth to mobilize necessary funds on the fight against COVID-19.

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<sup>127</sup> The Law on Economic Recovery approved by Kosovo\* Parliament in early December 2020, has been heavily criticized by the largest opposition party Vetevendosje!, mainly because of the possibility of citizens to access the 10% of the pensions contributions before the retirement age and usage of the funds from the privatization assets by the Privatization Agency of Kosovo\*. International Monetary Fund has also reacted on the possibility of withdrawing 10% of the pension contributions. IMF has requested from the Government of Kosovo\* to carefully assess this initiative.

<sup>128</sup> Laws that will be supplemented and amended: – Law on the Establishment of the Kosovo\* Credit Guarantee Fund; Law on Pension Funds of Kosovo\*; Law on Personal Income Tax; Law on Value Added Tax; Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability; Law on Corporate Income Tax; Law on Tax Administration and Procedures; and Law on the Privatization Agency of Kosovo\*.

<sup>129</sup> Institute for Free Market Economics, Bizneset e Sektorit të HoReCa-se/Gastronomisë Para, Gjatë dhe Pas COVID-19, May 2020 (Accessed on November 20, 2020).

<sup>130</sup> Interview, MCYS Representative, Prishtina According to the same official due to Covid-19 also the working group on amending the LEPY postpone the work for several months.

<sup>131</sup> Interview, Municipality of Prishtina Representative, Prishtina, October 27, .2020



To date, there was no government's support to youth organizations as part of anti-COVID-19. 45 youth organizations signed a petition requesting financial support during and after the pandemic situation from the Kosovo\* Institutions. However, to date their petition remains unanswered. Moreover, the Law on Economic Recovery has not foreseen any particular support to youth or youth organizations.<sup>132</sup>

COVID-19 is having a negative impact on education as well. Over 400 thousand students in all levels of education were disrupted from going to school in early March 2020. Only in September, primary and high school students when back to school, but problems with the infection are present, thus many schools have been closed for 2 or 3 weeks as a preventive measure. COVID-19 has found Kosovo\*'s education system unprepared. The Ministry of Education manages to organize the distance learning through the public broadcaster RTK by transmitting classes with a specific schedule. Nevertheless, difficulties to synchronize the school curriculum and the socio-economic situation of a large portion of students who lacked technology and equipment to attend the online classes were some of the many challenges that followed this process, alongside with the limited social interaction.

Last but not least the donor community has also suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Their work was largely affected. Many have told that the interventions were canceled, at best shifted for several months. One of the interviewers stated: "our work is based on the participation of a large number of people. Online communication platforms do not fit in our institutional culture. Online platforms cannot replace the face-to-face impact. In addition, we spent months to adjust all the internal administrative process to the new circumstances".<sup>133</sup> Donors lack an integrated plan to face COVID-19 and continue their work. Moreover, the Kosovo\* government has failed to create an integrated tool to combine its efforts with the donor community which will deliver results quickly and transparently and which will mobilize funding and resources for effective impact. Donors have to switch to online work, but most of them are unsure about the final impact of their interventions.<sup>134</sup>

## 6.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are outline for policy makers at a central and local level, youth organizations and the donor community.

### **Recommendations of policy makers at central and local levels**

- It is essential that prior to the approval of the amendments to Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, the government should start a broad consultation with the local level, the donor community and youth councils. Amendments should unambiguously define the

<sup>132</sup> CSI are on the same situation. According to a KSCF study due to COVID-19; 30 % of CSI have suspended their staff, while 62,5 % of CSI seriously endanger the continuity of the work of the organization. See further at: <https://www.kcsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/How-is-COVID-19-affecting-CSOs.pdf> (Accessed on December 4, 2020).

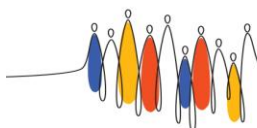
<sup>133</sup> Interview, Donor Community Representative, Prishtina, October 20, 2020

<sup>134</sup> Interviews with representatives of OSCE, USAID, GIZ, EYE Project



obligations of the central and local level and present tools of cooperation between the two. In addition, amendments should also deal with the legal status of the youth councils.

- Amendments should offer fair and equitable treatment to youth organizations. Sustainable funds for CYAC and LYACs/ should be secure and the politicization of youth councils should be tackled. Once amendments are approved and are active, the MCYS should expedite the adoption of the bylaws to facilitate the transition to the framework and secure the smooth functioning of the central and local youth representative organizations. The government should identify and allocate the resources needed for the implementation.
- The government should develop programs which will bring together MCYS, MESTI and MLSW and Donor Community to support youth employment, reduce NEET and tackle the consequences of COVID-19 among youth. These programs should focus on career guidance and job matching, skills training, vocation education and self-employment. Young women's employment should get special attention. In addition, the Government should extend for another year the Action Plan for Increasing Youth Employment during the period of 2018-2020.
- The youth would benefit from a harmonized inter-institutional and cross-sector approach on youth policy and funding. Institutions should unify the approach and implementation of youth policies and also better coordination between the central and local government is encouraged. MCYS, MESTI and MLSW as well as municipalities should closely collaborate, build synergies and harmonize interventions, policies and strategic objectives.
- The government should create a sound database regarding youth with comprehensive up-to-date information based on open data standards about programs, institutions, policies, procedures, finances (including data on funds allocated and/or in disposal, public calls for funds dedicated to youth and youth organizations, and expenditures for all youth institutions). The online database will guide policy planning in the field of youth and will be a useful tool for the donor community, academia and researchers.
- The youth would benefit if the government were to empower the current youth councils foreseen under legal articles. Youth councils should be able to own, plan and spend a limited budget to support the work of youth organizations in their area. This would make them the focal points of the youth organizations and a credible partner for the respective authorities.
- It is necessary for the government to increase human resources and accountability as a first step to transforming the current project implementation configuration to direct the budget and the support from the donor community.
- Better coordination between respective beneficiary ministries and/or other public institutions and the donor community is required. MCYS and the Office of the Prime Minister should play a key role in planning and design of each project, to ensure the cost-analysis, and sustainability of each intervention. Overall, the government-donor coordination must improve in order to better serve youth needs and meet objectives.
- The youth sector would benefit if capacities of the Government donor coordination office were enhanced. Furthermore, it should establish the mechanisms under each ministry/agency



and municipality to coordinate the aid and serve as a focal point for both, designing the donors' interventions and assessing the effectiveness of the interventions.

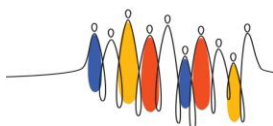
- The government should ensure that planning takes place in accordance with a set of strategies; the government should make an ex-ante impact assessment and reflects on the pros and cons of the actions taken while planning government policies and interventions. The relevant institutions should systematically conduct such analyses before any government decision, in order to improve and secure an evidence-based policy.
- The establishment of a transparent, competitive and open process at both the central and local level for funds disbursed to youth organizations should be a priority to ensure merit-based and sustainable projects and initiatives are supported. In addition, the MCYS should be supported to reinforce the capacities and mechanisms for monitoring and quality control.
- The municipal level capacities within youth divisions should be strengthened. Municipalities with more than 100,000 citizens could consider setting up of youth department. This would bring a better response to the youth community which would facilitate the planning, budgeting and implementation of youth activities at the municipal level. In addition, municipalities of the same region should work closely and implement regional youth projects.

#### **Recommendations for the donor community**

- The donor community should support the youth sector in priority areas which include rural youth, youth activism in multiethnic context, linkage of education and industry and empowering of youth organizations. The support provided should be focused on capacity development and budgetary means.
- The donor community should provide increased funds for the local and grassroots youth organizations. To the extent possible, these funds should allow flexibility in order for the youth organizations to respond to the needs of youth.
- It would be beneficial for the youth sector if the donor community increases the support in areas in need for youth councils, primarily to ensure the sustainability of youth organizations, and increase capacities to engage in advocacy and policy dialogue.
- The donor community should gradually transform the current project implementation configuration to direct budget support. The donor community should engage with the government to make this transition faster and smoother.

#### **Recommendations for the youth sector (NGOs, informal groups, platforms)**

- The youth organizations should develop a clear mission and develop a strategic plan for the organizations that guide priorities for the short-term and long-term periods. In addition, youth organizations should prepare members or staff with the necessary information to support youth causes.
- The youth organizations should work in partnerships with others which are youth-led and should belong to specific youth networking organizations to leverage efforts, especially when resources are limited. These partnerships are critical to advance youth issues.



- The youth organizations should seek funding from diverse sources if at all possible. Private foundations, international agencies and the donor community present in Kosovo\* could be approached, besides the local and central institutions. In spite of the small size of the funds, obtaining support from diverse entities provides financial security for youth organizations as well as organizational flexibility.



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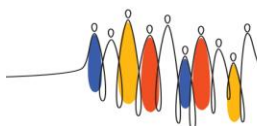
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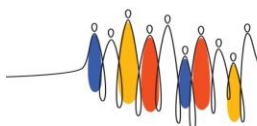
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## ANNEXES

### **Annex 1: Bylaws to the Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation**

#### ***AI No. 9-2010 on Procedures and Responsibilities for establishing Youth Action Councils in Kosovo\****

This Administrative Instruction provides for procedures of setting up of Central and Local Youth Action Councils, as well as their duties and responsibilities, membership, reporting, and financing. The instruction has been implemented since quite successfully, with a Central Council functioning at the national level and local councils established and operational in most municipalities.

#### ***AI No.01-2016 on voluntary youth work***

This AI regulates rights, obligations and procedures related to voluntary youth work. The Instruction regulated issues like providers of voluntary work (VW), criteria for engaging in or organizing VW, workload, age issues, working conditions, compensation of damage caused by VW, contracting and certification of VW, database of VW, awards and so on. The Youth Department is the main authority to coordinate, promote, assess, certify and recognize voluntary work in Kosovo\*.

#### ***AI No. 11-2010 on Registration of Youth Centers***

This Administrative Instruction sets out the procedures for licensing of the Youth Centers in Kosovo\* (Article 1). It also states that the municipality will license and support sustainable functioning of youth Centers that meet the registration criteria set out in the AI (Article 3.2). The Instruction (Article 3.3) provides for municipalities to be able to license more than one Centre, but they do not take on to finance their sustainable functioning. In larger municipalities, it is possible for a Centre to apply for licensing also of an affiliate branch within the same application. Further the AI specifies the application procedure, criteria and conditions for licensing, the evaluation procedure, decision and complaints procedure.

#### ***AI No. 04-2015 on Non-Formal Youth Education***

The purpose of this instruction is to increase awareness and promote participation of youth in various forms of non-formal education (Article 1). Article 4 sets out areas of training that are relevant and recognized by the MCYS: democracy, tolerance and humanity; youth participation in the decision-making process; youth safety; cultural and intercultural development; health protection; physical education and sports; employment; promotion, empowerment and networking of youth, volunteer work and other. Further, the Instruction provides for form of education, criteria for the providers, criteria for programs, application procedure, monitoring and certification. The Instruction provides that all providers and programs need to be accredited by the Kosovo\* Qualifications Authority. It also calls for other public institutions and authorities to





participate in information, promotion, certification and recognition of skills obtained through programs of non-formal education.

## Annex 2: List of Interviews

No.	Institution	Sector	Contact Person	Position
1	German International Cooperation (GIZ)	Donor Community	Kumrije Kelmendi Aliu	Project Advisor
2	United States Agency for International Development	Donor Community	Berenika Gashi	Program and Policy Officer
3	SWISS Contact I Promoting Private Sector Employment	Donor Community	Alida Muhaxhiri	WEE Facilitator
4	Swiss Contact I Enhancing Youth Employment	Donor Community	Albina Berisha	Project Manager
5	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	Donor Community	Edona Bajrami-Shala	Program Officer
6	Municipality of Prishtina	Government Institution – local level	Bardh Avdiu	Senior Officer
7	Peer Education Network	Non-Governmental Organization	Hane Ilazi	Researcher
8	Cultural Heritage without Borders	Non-Governmental Organization	Alban Morina	Program Manager
9	Central Youth Action Centre	Non-Governmental Organization	Vesa Ibrahimimi	Director
10	RYCO Board Members- Kosovo Representative	Non-Governmental Organization	Edis Prapashtica	Board Member
11	Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports	Youth Department	Xhevat Bajrami	Director

