

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

REPORT

MONTENEGRO

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

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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.



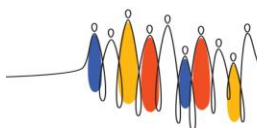
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of youth policy framework and youth participation, while identifying available funding frameworks and elaborating on the existing gaps and development in financing youth actions in Montenegro. The report is based on desk and empirical research. The desk research is consisted of analyzing laws, regulations, national strategies, action plans, programs and reports. Additional statistics were sourced primarily from the European Statistical Office and the Montenegrin Statistical Office, the most recent reports from public institutions, and local and international organizations deemed to be essential sources of information on youth in Montenegro. The empirical research was carried out through 7 interviews with representatives of the former Ministry of Sports and Youth (MSY), as well as representatives of donor community in Montenegro.

Out of the total number of people living in Montenegro in 2019 (622,028), 19.07% are young people. According to the statistics consulted for this report, there are almost 14,500 of young people less in Montenegro, representing a 10.73% drop from 2010-2019, accompanied by a nearly 2.5% fall in the share of young people in the total population over the last 10 years. In terms of ethnicity, 49% of youth declare themselves as Montenegrins, then Serbs (32%), Bosniaks/Muslims (13%), and Albanians (6%). While the rate of early school leavers is low (5%), the NEET rate is almost twice as high in Montenegro (21.3%) compared to the EU27 (12.6%). In 2019, the overall activity rate for persons aged 15-29 was much higher than in 2011, but the gender employment gap did not improve; the employment rate in 2019 for females was 34.8% and for young males was 44.1%. In the third quarter of 2020, the youth unemployment rate increased by 32.8%, which is 10.5% higher than it was at the end of 2019. The internal migration trend has trended down, while there is no official data on external migration.

Youth policy framework in Montenegro is cross-sectorial, and as such, it involves several important policies and actors in charge of implementing those policies. Despite a solid normative framework and great efforts of the former Ministry of Sports and Youth (MSY), the lack of desirable results remains. This is largely due to the absence of an effective and sustainable cross-sectorial cooperation and coordination that would aim to synchronize efforts in the field of youth.

Implementation gaps and challenges that need to be addressed are being observed, which include: the coordination of activities at the both national and local level, improving the practice of indicator-based reporting, and ensuring competent social workers in youth services. In 2020, all municipalities adopted the Local Youth Action Plan (LYAP), but there is still very low capacity of the current departments or sectors under the local governments which are in charge of youth policy, as well as the political will to work in this area. Despite the plan to establish youth services in all municipalities (youth clubs and youth centers), youth clubs were established



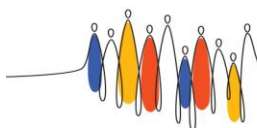
in 11 municipalities, notably: Mojkovac, Plav, Petnjica, Danilovgrad, Nikšić, Šavnik, Podgorica, Cetinje, Bar, Kotor and Pljevlja, while youth center exists only in Podgorica. The impact of other sectors on youth is very low as most young people are still not familiar with the measures and activities applied under those sectors.

The Central (Umbrella) Youth Association called Youth Network of Montenegro (YNM), gathering 35 member organizations, is established in September 2020. YNM's members will participate in a future Council for Youth (CfY) whose actual formation is still on hold. Nonetheless, this report finds that youth participation is at a low level and needs to be increased using existing mechanisms, but mainly by recognizing the youth voice.

As regards financing of youth actions, most of them are being funded through the Action plans (AP) accompanying the National Youth Strategy (the Strategy). Financing of the Action Plans is envisaged by the annual budgets of the former MSY, currently of the new Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MESCS). Still, many international organizations support the youth policy development and implementation process by funding youth-related projects and by offering external expertise when needed. However, there is evidence of a lack of funding aimed at improving the position of youth. The budget of the former MSY for financing the projects and programs of NGOs dealing with youth and implementing the youth policy has been decreased six times in the past three years.

Adequate donor coordination mechanism is still missing. There is limited information exchange regarding the youth projects supported by different donors, so the overlapping of projects and activities is a matter of concern in Montenegro. This especially refers to various regional initiatives and projects of youth mobility and participation. There is no unique database of different donors and supported projects and programs targeted at youth, so the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of these projects are widely missing.

In the upcoming period, it is necessary to establish a coordination mechanism in order to synchronize efforts in the field of youth between public institutions and to strengthen trust in institutions and processes, as well as to invest in the further development of youth friendly mechanisms for ensuring youth participation on the local and national level. It is necessary to keep up with the fast changes and development of society, which is mainly affecting youth, and to improve management of consultations and public debates in the area of youth policy. To further improve youth participation and involvement in the elaboration of policies that affect them, it is necessary to start with a permanent structure of dialogue between decision makers, young people and organizations dealing with youth. Also, there is a need to develop an application which would encompass all items such as calls, advice, and general content related to youth in the fields of employment, culture, entrepreneurship, and education.



Local self-governments should increase the capacities of those working with young people, establish departments or sectors that will be solely in charge of implementing youth policy, and support structured dialogue at the local level. At the national and local levels, it is necessary to provide sustainable and continuous funding for youth policy through investing in human resources and funds in long-term projects and programs implemented by youth and for youth.

The new government should continue to strengthen the institutional and individual capacities for monitoring of youth policy implementation at the national and local levels, remaining focused on indicator-based reporting by all relevant stakeholders that implement youth policy.

There is a need for generating new forms of NGO activities to increase the number of young individuals involved in the creation and implementation of those programs, and organizations should strive to reach beyond the best students and young people from urban areas, and to involve other, harder-to-reach youth.

The report is organized into six chapters. The first presents youth population data according to different aspects and continues into the second chapter which depicts the normative and institutional youth policy framework and the other sectors impacting youth. The third chapter analyzes the funding framework and its instruments, notably the financing of the Strategy and accompanying AP. The fourth chapter focuses on analyzing mechanisms and channels for the inclusion of youth into decision-making and youth participation on a national and local level, as well as on youth cooperation platforms that exist on national and regional levels. Major interventions by key donors and development partners targeting the youth population are discussed in the fifth chapter, which also encompasses a proper explanation of donor coordination and priority areas for the future developments of youth policy. The concluding sixth chapter aims at identifying good practices and gaps based on the main recommendations that are structured into key themes presented in the previous chapters, with a particular focus on the impact of COVID-19 on youth.



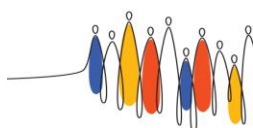
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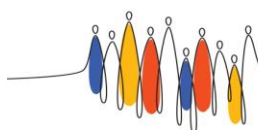
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Action Plan
CIPS	Center for Information and Professional Counselling
CfY	Council for Youth
DGECC	Directorate General for Economic and Cultural Cooperation
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (thematic funding instrument for EU external action aiming to support projects in the area of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy in non-EU economies. This instrument is designed to support civil society to become an effective force for political reform and defense of human rights)
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (the means by which the EU supports reforms in the ‘enlargement economies’ with financial and technical help)
ILO	International Labour Organization
LYAP	Local Youth Action Plan
LBO	Local Branch Office
MO	International organizations
MC	Ministry of Culture
ME	Ministry of Economy
ME	Ministry of Education
MF	Ministry of Finance
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSY	Ministry of Sports and Youth
MHMR	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights
MLSW	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
MSDT	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism
MESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MONSTAT	Montenegrin Statistical Office
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
SALTO	SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre
SEE	
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
EU	The European Union
EVS	European Voluntary Service
ESC	European Solidarity Corps
EUROSTAT	European Statistical Office
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank
YDI	Youth Development Index
YWI	Youth Wellbeing Index





CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

This chapter presents statistics regarding youth age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment, and migration. According to the provisions of the Article 2 of the Law on Youth (LoY) young people are persons of 15 to 30 years of age¹.

1.2 Age and gender

Based on the Montenegrin Statistical Office's (MONSTAT) census data from 2011, out of the total number of people living in Montenegro (620,029), there were 132,702 young people aged 15 to 29, i.e., 21.4% of the total population.² Divided by gender, young people were split into 68,198 (51.39%) young males and 64,504 (48.61%) young females living in Montenegro in 2011. Besides the census data collected each ten years, MONSTAT also provides population estimations for each year³. In 2019, out of the total number of people living in Montenegro (622,028), there were 118,649 young people aged 15 to 29, i.e., 61,393 (51.74%) young males and 57,256 (48.25%) young females, which makes 19.07% of the total population of Montenegro.

Divided into age cohorts, MONSTAT youth statistics from population estimates data in 2019⁴ shows the following data:

- The number of young people in age group 15 to 19 is 39,768 (51.8% male and 48.2% female)⁵, which is 6.39% of the total population.
- The number of young people in age group 20 to 24 is 39,671 (51.6% male and 48.4% female)⁶, which is 6.38 % of the total population.
- The number of young people in age group 25 to 29 is 39,210 (51.8% male and 48.2% female)⁷, which is 6.3% of the total population.

The data shows that while there have been an increasing number of people living in Montenegro, at the same time, the number of young people has been decreasing. There are almost 14,500, or 10.73%, fewer young people in 2019 in comparison to 2010. The ratio of young people in the total population in 2011 was 21.46%, while in 2019 it was 19.07%, which indicates a decline of almost 2.5% of the share of youth in the total population in 10 years. Also, there is a slightly

¹ Law on Youth, "Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/19 from April 30, 2019, available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> (Accessed on October 16, 2020).

² If we take into account the gender of young people, there were 68,198 (51.39%) young males and 64,504 (48.61%) young females living in Montenegro in 2011.

³ Legal basis for production of population estimates is regulated by the Law on Official Statistics and Official Statistical System of Montenegro (Official Gazette of Montenegro 18/12) and Annual Plan of Statistical Surveys (Official Gazette of Montenegro 53/11) which is published in Official Gazette of Montenegro for the current year.

⁴ There are no data available for 2020 and it is usually published in the beginning of March.

⁵ "Data on Population estimates", MONSTAT, 2020, available at <https://www.monstat.org/eng/page.php?id=48&pageid=48>, (Accessed October 4, 2020) p.1.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid



higher number of young males among Montenegrin youth than females. The ratio of young people in the total population in Montenegro is slightly higher than in the EU-27, which was 17%⁸ in 2019.

1.2. Education and employment

1.2.1. Education

Based on MONSTAT's Labor Force Survey data, in the third quarter of 2020, 60,100 people aged 15-24⁹ completed a certain educational level, out of which 30,700 primary education, 1,800 vocational education after primary school, 12,800 secondary general education, 12,800 secondary vocational education and 1,500 young people completed tertiary education. The ratio of early dropouts from education and training in Montenegro in 2019 was 5%,¹⁰ representing the percentage of population aged 18–24 with a lower secondary education or those not included in further education or training. This rate was slightly higher for young males (5.2%) than for young females (4.9%) in 2019.¹¹ In 2020 MONSTAT did not include data on the ratio of early dropouts from education and training within their quarterly reports. The data for the previous 10 years shows a downward trend of this indicator, when compared with the EU-27 (10.2%), where there is a lower rate of early dropouts from education and training in Montenegro (5%).

1.2.2. Neither in employment nor education or training

The ratio of the young people in the NEET category who are neither involved in employment nor in education or training during 2019 was 21.3% (age group 15-29), which is 1.3% higher than in 2018 when it was 21.0%. In 2019, the NEET rate was marginally higher for young women (21.5%) than for young men (21.0%).¹² In 2020 MONSTAT did not include data on the ratio of early dropouts from education and training in their quarterly reports. The data for the previous 10 years shows a downward trend of this indicator in Montenegro. Still, compared to the average of the EU-27 (12.6%),¹³ the NEET rate is almost twice as high in Montenegro (21.3%).

1.2.3. Unemployment rate

Considering MONSTAT's Labor Force Survey data, the youth activity rate for both genders was 51.1% in 2019 (57% for young males and 44.6% for young females),¹⁴ while in the EU-27 it was

⁸ "Being young in Europe today - demographic trends", EUROSTAT, 2020, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_demographic_trends, (Accessed October 5, 2020) p.1.

⁹ Although the youth are persons of 15 to 30 years of age, MONSTAT's Labor Force Survey provides data population aged 15 and over by school attainment by the following age cohorts [15-24], [24-49], [50-64] and 65+. For this Report age cohorts [15-24] was used.

¹⁰ "Labor Force Survey", MONSTAT, 2019, available at: <https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ars/2019/2019.xls>, (Accessed October 7, 2020), p.26.

¹¹ Ibid, p.26.

¹² Ibid, p.26.

¹³ "NEET rate", EUROSTAT, 2020, available at: <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> (Accessed October 8, 2020) p.1.

¹⁴ "Labour Force Survey", MONSTAT, 2019, available at: <https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ars/2019/2019.xls> (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.23.



54.7%.¹⁵ In 2019, the overall youth activity rate was much higher than it was in 2011, when it was 40%¹⁶. In the third quarter of 2020, the youth activity rate for both genders was 46.1% (51.3% for young males and 40.5% for young females).¹⁷

Based on the official data published by MONSTAT, the youth unemployment rate was 22.3% for 2019 (21.9% for young females and 22.5% for young males), which is 3.7% lower than in 2018. The employment rate was 39.7% (44.1% for young males and 34.8% for young females).¹⁸ According to this data, the unemployment rate has had a continuous downward trend compared to the previous decade. In the third quarter of 2020, the youth unemployment rate has increased to the level of 32.8%¹⁹, while in the EU-27's youth unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2020 was 17.7%. In comparison to the EU-27's youth unemployment rate in 2019 (11.4%),²⁰ the Montenegrin youth unemployment rate was almost twice as high (22.3%).

1.3. Youth migration

In recent decades, Montenegro has been aging rapidly and youth emigration has recently increased. Montenegro is facing internal and external migrations. Emigration is caused by economic insecurity and instability, accompanied by several causes²¹ such as social exclusion, poverty, globalizations, economic crisis, political instability, corruption, and nepotism due to the political affiliation, which has a strong and significant impact on the success of a candidate in getting a job in public sector institutions. Besides this, policymakers and the media should be aware that constant and especially over-blown criticism of the situation in the Montenegro generates a more negative perception among youth, significantly increasing the likelihood that they will emigrate, and thus exacerbate the brain-drain problem.²² Based on World Bank (WB) data,²³ the estimates suggest that close to 25% of Montenegrins live abroad. By 2050, the UN estimates that there will be 150,000 fewer Montenegrins of working-age.²⁴ The average number of working-age migrants leaving Montenegro is around 3,320 persons per year. The losses that Montenegro faces annually due to emigration amount to EUR 70 million, meaning that every work-capable person who leaves Montenegro takes approximately EUR 21,561 of some potential

¹⁵ "Activity rate", EUROSTAT, 2020, available at <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.1.

¹⁶ "Labour Force Survey", MONSTAT, 2019, available at: <https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ars/2019/2019.xls> (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.26.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.26.

¹⁸ "Labour Force Survey – 3rd Quartal report", MONSTAT, 2020, available at <https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/ARS/2020/3/III%20quarter%202020%20.xls> (Accessed on January 8, 2021), p. 25.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

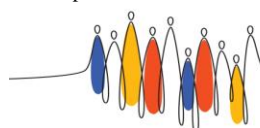
²⁰ "Youth unemployment", EUROSTAT, 2020, available at https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_empl_100&lang=en, (Accessed January 8, 2021), p.1.

²¹ "Cost of youth migration", Westminster foundation for Democracy, 2019, available at https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WFD-Web-Brochure-Montenegro_FINAL.pdf (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.4.

²² "Youth study SEE 2018/2019", The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2019, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15274-20190408.pdf>, (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.109.

²³ "Montenegro Growth and Jobs", The World Bank, IBRD, IDA, 2018, available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/787451545030793133/pdf/Montenegro-Growth-and-Jobs.pdf> (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.7.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 7.



future annual GDP with them.²⁵ In the last two decades there has been noticeable internal migration to the capital and the coastal region and around 62% of the population lives in urban communities.²⁶

Regarding the emigration data, in Montenegro there are no accurate records of emigration which would enable an analysis of its scope, or of the age, gender, educational structure, and other characteristics of the migrant population, or support the establishment of a database to systematically monitor this phenomenon in the future. Some rough estimates indicate that about 173,000 young people have left the economy since 1991.²⁷ In this context, based on the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) data²⁸, slightly more than a third of the young people want to leave Montenegro and move permanently to another economy, while 29.2% may or may not leave Montenegro, depending on what the “economy has to offer.” In addition, based on the data from Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) study,²⁹ more than 70% of Montenegrin youth stated that economic reasons are a greater motivation to move abroad, than education (less than 20%), and experiencing cultural diversity and other reasons (less than 10%). Furthermore, the Balkan Barometer commissioned by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) records a surge in interest when it comes to emigration from the region³⁰. On the other hand, the main reasons for internal migration are better conditions for business and life.³¹ Internal migration in Montenegro is mainly characterized by migration from rural to urban areas. Youth from rural areas face a range of challenges associated with longer travel distances for the service workers and providers, and a lack of opportunities for a good quality of life.³² Due to these reasons, all northern municipalities have negative migration balances. MONSTAT publishes data on internal migration on a yearly basis. In this regard, the latest data published by MONSTAT shows that 1,763 out of 6,504 (27.1%), or every fourth young person aged 15-29, has migrated within Montenegro in 2019 (38% of young males and 62% of young females). Each year since 2011, at least 1,400 youth have migrated internally in Montenegro, while comparison of data for 10 years shows an upward trend, particularly since 2015.

²⁵ “Smallest nation shrinking – Montenegro”, Westminster foundation for Democracy, 2019, available at <https://www.wfd.org/2019/10/24/youth-emigration-is-damaging-for-western-balkan-economies/> (Accessed January 4, 2021), p.1.

²⁶ “Employment Policy Review Montenegro”, International Labour Organisation, Council of Europe, 2007, available at <https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialrights/source/EmploymentPolicyReviewMontenegro.pdf>, (Accessed January 4, 2021), p. 3.

²⁷ Evropski puls, Center for Civic Education, 2019, available at: <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2019/06/evropski-puls-134.pdf> (Accessed on October 12, 2020), p.5.

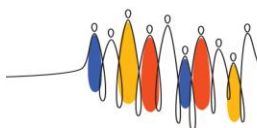
²⁸ Bešić, M, Pejović, M., „Civic and Political participation of youth in Montenegro”, Center for Democracy and Human Rights, 2020, available at <http://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanja/politicko-javno-mnjenje/send/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1962-politicka-i-gradanska-participacija-mladih-u-crnoj-gori>, (Accessed on November 12, 2020), p. 48.

²⁹ “Youth study SEE 2018/2019”, The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2019, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15274-20190408.pdf>, (Accessed January 4, 2021), p. 76.

³⁰ “Balkan Barometer 2020”, Regional Cooperation Council, 2020, available at https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/2020-06-Balkan-Barometer-Public-Opinion_final.pdf/bf27f9fc10de8a02df9db2b60596f0cd.pdf (Accessed on January 8, 2020), p. 11.

³¹ “Migration profile - extended version”, UNDP, 2013, p. 4.

³² Ibid, p.6.



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

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

2.1. The Constitution

Article 6 of the Montenegrin Constitution³³ guarantees universal protection of human rights and freedoms, and that the “state shall guarantee and protect citizens’ rights and liberties.” A specific provision concerning youth rights and protection is defined by article 64 of the Constitution: “youth, women, and disabled persons shall enjoy special protection at work.” In this regard, the youth that is allowed to work must have working conditions appropriate to their age and be protected against economic exploitation and any work likely to harm their safety, mental or physical health, moral or social development, or to interfere with their education.

2.2. Law on Youth

The Parliament of Montenegro adopted the new LoY on April 4th, 2019³⁴. The MSY was in charge for the overall coordination of the implementation of LoY until the new Montenegrin government was elected in December 2020. Pursuant to the most recent Decree on public administration organization³⁵, the MSY has ceased to exist and was replaced by the new governmental body, i.e., Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MESCS). As of the 4th of December 2020, MESCS has been responsible for overseeing the implementation of the LoY and other regulations stemming from this LoY, while monitoring is performed by the competent inspector.³⁶ The implementation of the LoY is more closely regulated by the three bylaws: 1) the Rulebook on criteria and conditions for choosing a space for youth service,³⁷ 2) the Rulebook on the method of operating youth services and the performance of the administrative and technical jobs needed for their functioning³⁸ and 3) the Rulebook on conditions, manner and procedure for the election of the members of the Youth Council.³⁹

³³ “Official Gazette of Montenegro” No. 1/2007 i 38/2013 - Amendments I-XVI

³⁴ “Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 025/19 from April 30, 2019 and 027/19³⁴ from May 17, 2019.

³⁵ “Decree on public administration organization”, Government of Montenegro, 2020, available at https://www.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=420972&rType=2&file=2_1_07_12_2020.pdf, (Accessed on December 29, 2020), pp.9-12.

³⁶ Law on Youth “Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/19 from April 30, 2019, available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> (Accessed on October 16, 2020).

³⁷ “The Rulebook on criteria and conditions for choosing a space for youth service”, MSY, 2020, available in Montenegrin language at <https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=395448&rType=2&file=Pravilnik%20o%20kriterijumima%20i%20uslovima%20za%20izbor%20prostora%20za%20omladinski%20servis.pdf> (Accessed on October 16, 2020).

³⁸ “The Rulebook on the method of functioning youth services and the performance of the administrative and technical jobs needed for their functioning”, MSY, 2020, available in Montenegrin language at <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={B87FEF77-B787-482E-89E5-FAC0712FFF8E}> (Accessed on October 16, 2020).

³⁹ “Rulebook on conditions, manner and procedure for election of members of the Council for Youth”, MSY, 2020, available in Montenegrin language at <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={3E02A809-1E95-4AC4-9EF8-C714F284723F}>, (Accessed on October 16, 2020).

The LoY significantly influenced the environment for young people in Montenegro, as it was the first time that a separate Ministry in charge of Youth Policy was established within the Government of Montenegro. The key systemic improvements prescribed by the LoY in force in comparison to the first LoY adopted in 2016 are the following: institutionalizing and empowering youth services (opening new services, adapting/reconstructing/equipping existing ones) in which young people acquire skills, competences and knowledge that contribute to their personal and social development through non-formal education projects/programs; identifying, financing and implementing priority measures and activities to improve the position in all areas of public interest for youth, based on a comprehensive needs' assessment.

The LoY has introduced a new concept Program of public interest in the field of youth policy⁴⁰ (Program). Details on its implementation and results in 2020 are described in section 3.3. Key youth programs and instruments.⁴¹

The LoY enables the creation of conditions for strengthening the institutional framework for planning and implementation of youth policy,⁴² with a focus on strengthening youth services in which youth activities are conducted and youth work is performed. Also, the LoY has created opportunities for the MESCS to directly invest⁴³ in the construction, reconstruction, adaptation or equipping of youth centers and clubs up to the amount of EUR 30.000 per year.⁴⁴ However, despite the plan to establish youth services in all municipalities, youth clubs are currently open only in 11 municipalities. Details on youth clubs are described in section 2.6. Other sectors impacting youth.

Despite the normative framework being rounded off with a bylaw-rulebook on the conditions, manner, and procedure for the election of the members of the Council for Youth, the establishment of the CfY is still on hold due to the Parliamentary election held on August 30 and the new Government structure. Furthermore, the Umbrella Youth Association is not the same as a Youth Council, as it is in some economies. However, it is important to emphasize that the Youth Council is not recognized by the LoY on a national level. Details on youth umbrella organization are described in section 4.3. The establishment and functioning of Youth Councils and umbrella organizations.

⁴⁰ Article 5 of LoY "Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/2019" from April 30, 2019 available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> (Accessed on October 16, 2020)..

⁴¹ Article 5, paragraph two and three, of LoY "Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/2019" from April 30, 2019, available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Article 25 of LoY "Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/2019" from April 30, 2019, available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> (Accessed October 8, 2020).

⁴⁴ The MESCS may, with previously obtained agreement of the Government, fund or co-fund a construction, reconstruction, adaptation or furnishing of a youth service in the amount higher than 30.000 EUR. The MESCS or the municipality may delegate, based on results of a public call, the performance of administrative and technical work needed for regular functioning of youth services to an NGO that implements youth policy.

2.2. National Strategy on Youth

The Strategy 2017-2021 was adopted by the Government on September 29, 2016. Article 13 of the LoY describes that directions of development and improvement of youth policy shall be determined in the Strategy. The essential parts of the Strategy are the Implementation Plan,⁴⁵ with general measures and sub-measures (

Annex 2: National Youth Strategy 2017-2021 – Priorities and relevant measures and priorities) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework⁴⁶ of the implementation of the Strategy and the AP⁴⁷ for 2017, while other AP were published later on. Until 2016, the Ministry of Education was in charge, then from 2016 to 2020 the MSY, while as of December 2020 the implementation of the Strategy is under the responsibility of MESCS.⁴⁸

In June of 2017, a Coordination Body for monitoring the Youth Strategy 2017 – 2021 was created, consisting of different representatives of the public administration bodies⁴⁹ to follow the implementation of key outcomes and activities of the Strategy (2017-2021), examining the adoption of annual action plans for the implementation, and providing support for its implementation. The meetings of the Coordination Body for the monitoring of the Strategy are held once a year, even though the AP for 2019 has foreseen at least two meetings per year.

Regarding the needs-based annual planning of activities to be implemented under the Strategy, the Directorate for Sports and Youth organizes a planning meeting/seminar at least once a year. These meetings/seminars are very productive since they gather the representatives of the most active NGOs in order to define priority activities for the next year, in addition to the representatives of other relevant ministries and institutions. Besides that, in the last quarter of the year, the Directorate for Sports and Youth collects reports from other ministries and NGOs on activities that they implemented in line with the Strategy and AP, and their proposals for the year to come.

The Strategy has been implemented by APs developed for each year and will be detailed in the following section.

2.3. National Action Plan on Youth

The MESCS develops and adopts an AP for the purpose of the implementation of the Strategy, for the period of at least two years in close communication with public institutions, NGOs and other youth policy actors and in accordance with the key strategic priorities for the period 2017-2021 of the Strategy. The AP specifies priority measures to be implemented and describes the

⁴⁵ Implementation plan of the Strategy, available at: <http://www.strategijazamlade.me/download/Plan%20implementacije.pdf> (Accessed October 12, 2020).

⁴⁶ Monitoring and evaluation plan, available at: <http://www.strategijazamlade.me/download/Monitoring%20i%20evaluacija.pdf> (Accessed October 12, 2020).

⁴⁷ Annual Action plan is available on the website of the MSY, available at <http://www.ms.gov.me/ministarstvo> (Accessed October 19, 2020).

⁴⁸ The Strategy shall be adopted by the Government, on the proposal of the line ministry – currently the MESCS, for the period of at least four years. The final report on implementation of the Strategy shall be submitted to the Government by the MESCS within three months from the day of expiration of the Strategy.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of European Affairs, Ministry of Science, Ministry of Health.

key activities which will be implemented (Annex 1: National Action Plan 2020-2021).⁵⁰ The APs are financed from regular budget funds, but also from the appropriate funds of international organizations, with the aim of improving the position of young people and implementing youth policy. The MESCS shall produce an annual report⁵¹ on implementing the action plan for the previous year in the first quarter of the current year, and it shall submit it to the Government for its adoption⁵².

Reports on the implementation of the Annual Action plan are published every year⁵³ and, as can be seen from the reports of the former MSY, since its adoption in September 2016, it is one of the national strategies with the best implementation rate of its APs. The report on the implementation of the AP of the Strategy for 2019 shows that the total percentage of implemented activities planned by the Action Plan of the Strategy for 2019 is 95% (76 activities) with 90%, or 72 activities, fully implemented, and 5%, or 4 activities, partially implemented in relation to the planned number of activities (80) for the reporting period. A total of 5%, i.e., 4 activities were not implemented⁵⁴.

2.5. Institutions dealing with youth

Youth policy is cross-sectorial, and, as such, it involves numerous actors for the implementation as stated in the article 3 of the LoY., i.e.: The Government; Public administration bodies; Local self-government bodies; NGOs; Students/pupils parliaments and other legal entities for the purpose of improving the position of the youth, their personal and social development and inclusion in social affairs.

2.5.1. Directorate for Sports and Youth

At the national level, the most important institution in the domain of youth policy is the Directorate for Sports and Youth, functioning under the supervision of the MESCS. The MESCS was established within the newly established Government of Montenegro by integrating the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

The Directorate for Sports and Youth is in charge of tasks related to the domain of youth policy. According to the Government's Decree⁵⁵ of December 2020, the main competences of the

⁵⁰ National Action Plan on Youth of the implementation of the Strategy 2020-2021, available at https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=404505&rType=2&file=AKCIONI%20PLAN%202020_2021%20Nacrt.docx, (Accessed October 9, 2020).

⁵¹ Annual Report for 2017, Annual Report for 2018 and Annual Report for 2019 are available at the website of the former MSY - <http://www.ms.gov.me/biblioteka/izvjestaji> (Accessed October 9, 2020).

⁵² Article 13 of the LoY "Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/2019" from April 30, 2019 available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

⁵³ Ministry of Sports and Youth, Reports available at: <http://www.ms.gov.me/biblioteka/izvjestaji> (Accessed October 9, 2020).

⁵⁴ "Annual Report on implementation of the Youth Strategy Action Plan for 2019", MSY, 2020, is available in Montenegrin language at: [https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=402593&rType=2&file=Izvještaj%20o%20realizaciji%20Akcionog%20plan%202020Strategije%20za%20mlade%202020202019.final%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=402593&rType=2&file=Izvještaj%20o%20realizaciji%20Akcionog%20plan%202020Strategije%20za%20mlade%202020202019.final%20(2).pdf), (Accessed October 9, 2020), p.6.

⁵⁵ Decree on Amendments to the Decree on the State Administration's Organization and Manner of Work adopted by the Government of Montenegro on 7th December 2020 ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 118/2020), p.1.

Directorate for Sports and Youth regarding the area of youth policy are the following:⁵⁶ creation and improvement of youth policy; creation and development of strategies, action plans and programs for youth; cooperation with NGOs and other entities in order to improve youth policy; encouraging the proactive participation of young people in the creation and implementation of youth policy at the national and local levels; encouraging the inclusion of young people in non-formal education, and encouraging regional and international cooperation related to policy for the youth.

The Directorate for Sports and Youth was functioning in the previous Government within MSY, which achieved impressive outcomes. Besides the improvement of the legislative framework, the former MSY was focused on the implementation of the legislative framework and strategic documents. In this regard, there has been a visible commitment to investing in youth infrastructure and improving youth policy implementation at the local level, as well as to continue with the improvement of the policy framework. The former MSY established 11 youth clubs and hired 11 youth club administrators in order to improve the realization of the youth policy at a local level, while encouraging the participation and inclusion of young people. Additionally, there has been an excellent cooperation of the former MSY with the international organizations and foundations, such as the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, the Heinz Seidel Foundation, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Regional Cooperation Council. This has resulted in the improved work and effectiveness of the performance of the former MSY and better implementation of youth policies. Also, it is important to emphasize that the former MSY had showed a commitment to enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation. The former MSY ensured regular communication with youth NGOs and all other relevant stakeholders, especially local self-governments, and invested significant effort into the coordination of youth policy related to activities in the economy. Also, the former MSY recognized the importance of the European Youth Card and its benefits in Montenegro and abroad which provided economic privilege of the European Youth Card for all youth free of charge.

2.5.2. Local self-governments

The Law on Local Self-Government stipulates that local self-government bodies (secretariats, administrations and directorates) shall be formed to perform the tasks of the local government. Among the secretariats, there are those dealing with youth issues and youth policy in each municipality (e.g., the Secretariat for Social Affairs, the Secretariat for Culture and Sport, Youth and Social Care, and others).⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.1.

⁵⁷ The competency for creating and implementing local youth policy mostly belongs to the aforementioned secretariats, which are differently called in different municipalities (however, those are mostly secretariats for social affairs). In terms of the local structure that supports local youth policy implementation at the municipal level, there are different approaches: the one with appointed youth advisors that work specifically on youth issues in Youth offices (Youth offices exist in the following municipalities: Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, Nikšić, Petnjica, and Budva) and the other where a municipal employee has in his/her job description is also to cover some youth-related issues (usually, these are the employees of the Secretariat for Social Affairs or Office for Youth and for Prevention of Substance Abuse).

The main instrument of local youth policy is the Local Youth Action Plan (LYAP) as described by the LoY⁵⁸. Furthermore, all municipalities are obliged to adopt LYAPs for the period of validity of the National Youth Action Plan, and in line with the National Youth Strategy. Accordingly, 24 municipalities adopted the LYAPs, which are already being implemented and no later than February 15th of the current year,⁵⁹ the first annual report on the implementation of LYAP is expected. In accordance with the LoY, a Local CfY has been established in Podgorica,⁶⁰ while Local Youth Councils in Kotor, Cetinje and Pljevlja were established in accordance with the previous LoY.

The Municipality of Budva is an example of good practices, taking into consideration that the youth club was established in 2017 by the Municipality, managed by an experienced part-time youth worker employed. Furthermore, youth club in Budva established cooperation with the representatives of educational institutions and NGOs at both local and national level.

2.5.3. Non-governmental organizations

NGOs active in the field of youth policy are much broader than what can be seen from the official data and reports as well as from the legislation itself. The LoY envisages that “an NGO may implement youth policy in accordance with the LoY, the Strategy and APs, if its statute allows for dealing with youth policy as one of its goals, i.e., areas of activity.”

There is no official data on the number of youth organizations/youth led organizations or organizations implementing programs for youth, so the approximate number of civil society organizations dealing with youth cannot be provided. Some organizations continually work on youth issues for 15 to 20 years or even more, as they take part in the work of government policy development and monitoring working groups and international networks. Their projects are financed by different donors and are supported by the work of local and international volunteers such as: ADP - Zid, Juventas, Forum MNE, UMHCG, Prima, CAZAS, SOS Podgorica, Centre for civic education, Bonum, Proactive, Red Cross, and others. Examples of active organizations at the local level are: the Youth Cultural Center Herceg Novi, Seventh Youth Force Budva, New Horizon Ulcinj, Da Zaživi Selo Pljevlja, Sjeverna Zemlja Berane, 9. December Danilovgrad, Naša Budućnost and ALD Nikšić, as well as many others.⁶¹ Some of the organizations that have worked for a shorter period reached a great number of young people with their programs e.g., the Union of high school students who achieved remarkable results on a national but also international level, and the Union of Young Entrepreneurs. Some organizations focus on a specific vulnerable group of youth e.g., the Roma youth organization - Phiren Amenca, or specific human rights issues e.g., LGBTQ rights like Spectra and Queer Montenegro.

⁵⁸ The LYAP shall be created no later than October 31 and adopted by December 31 of the current year for the year ahead. Otherwise, penal provisions are prescribed in the Law, in the amount of 500 to 2,000 euros for the responsible person within the municipality.

⁵⁹ Municipalities are obligated to submit the annual report on LYAP implementation to the Ministry no later than February 15th of the current year for the previous year.

⁶⁰ “Decision on establishment of a Local Council for Youth of the Capital City”, the Capital City, 2020, available at <http://podgorica.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ODLUKA-O-OSNIVANJU-SAVJETA-ZA-MLADE-2020.doc>, (Accessed December 29, 2020).

⁶¹ This list is not complete but just present some examples of active NGOs working with and for youth.

2.6. Other sectors impacting youth

Other public administration bodies⁶² that participate in the creation and implementation of youth policy at the national level are the centers and agencies in different sectors. Entities which are competent in specific youth policy areas are obliged to cooperate in the implementation of youth policy and appoint the contact person for youth, such as the Centers for Social Welfare, Resource Centre for Children and Youth, Centers for Information and Professional Counselling (CIPS), Career Centre at the University of Montenegro, Day Care Centers, Offices for Risky Behavior and Drug Prevention, Youth Counseling Centers and Youth Services. The only place where the role of a specific sector is mentioned in the new LoY is in the description of the composition of the future CfY⁶³ structure, for the purpose of fostering the development of youth policy, stating that: “one member is nominated by the public administration bodies responsible for labor affairs and education”.

Youth social welfare services are exercised in the field of social protection, protection of children and youth with disabilities, juvenile delinquency, human rights protection, drug prevention, and employment. This has resulted in the creation of the centers for social welfare in each municipality. Their performance is quite negligible due to the following⁶⁴: 1) the number of employees, especially workers in direct work with youth is not sufficient to provide quality services; 2) only 17.3% of the total number of workers are following the appropriate professional procedures; 3) skilled workers work on an average of 44 cases simultaneously.

The Resource Centre for Children and Youth currently exists only in Podgorica. Its work is focused on the continuous education and rehabilitation of children, youth and adults with disabilities. In 2019, there have been 105 children and youth with whom 20 teachers and 18 associates worked with the support of medical staff.⁶⁵

In the field of employment, among other programs and services targeting young people, the Employment Agency of Montenegro started developing the Centers for Information and Professional Counselling (CIPS) in 2007. There are CIPS centers in Podgorica, Bijelo Polje, Bar, Pljevlja, Berane, Mojkovac, Nikšić and Herceg Novi. Based on the report⁶⁶ of the Employment Agency of Montenegro, around 8,630⁶⁷ high school and university students used both group and individual services of the CIPSS.

In 2012, the National Employment Agency and the University of Montenegro opened a Career Centre at the University of Montenegro. The Career Center is situated in Podgorica, and it

⁶² Other institutions are mentioned under Article 5 and implementation of Program where besides former MSY, there are mentioned: Government of Montenegro, the public administration body and other administrative bodies responsible for certain areas of importance to youth, municipalities, the Capital, Old royal capital and other legal entities in accordance with the LoY.

⁶³ For more details please see 4.1.1. The key existing mechanisms of youth participation on national level.

⁶⁴ “Analysis of Centers for Social Welfare work in Montenegro”, UNICEF in Montenegro, 2020, available at <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/9551/file/MNE-media-MNEpublication506.pdf>, (Accessed on January 5, 2021), p. 76.

⁶⁵ Resource Centre for Children and Youth, Podgorica, 2020, available at <https://www.resursnicentarpj.me/dokument> (Accessed on January 5, 2021).

⁶⁶ “Annual report, Employment Agency of Montenegro”, Employment Agency of Montenegro, 2020, available at <https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Izvjestaj-o-radu-ZZZCG-za-2019.-godinu.pdf>, (Accessed on December 4, 2020) p. 29.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 29.

combines services that are available primarily to students of the University, but also to the academic staff, employers and future students. There is no data how many students use the Career Centre, but the organization of workshops, seminars, trainings, lectures and consulting sessions have improved the students' competencies, especially the development of their practical and soft skills.⁶⁸

The Day Care Centers are tasked with the protection of children and youth with disabilities. The network of these institutions provides a wide range of social services for children and youth with disabilities, such as: socialization, care, social and medical rehabilitation, training for independence in day-to-day activities, leisure activities, and support for parents. There are 13 Day Care Centres in: Podgorica, Nikšić, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Berane, Cetinje, Mojkovac, Herceg Novi, Rožaje, Ulcinj, Plav, Danilovgrad and Bijela. Within these centres there are 211 employees. The capacity of these Day Care Centres in Nikšić, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Berane, Cetinje and Ulcinj is above 30 children and youth, while others can provide services to less than 30 children and youth. The total number of users of these Centers in 2019 was 248.⁶⁹

Offices for Risky Behavior and Drug Prevention have been established in each municipality in order to implement various free time activities for children and young people to strengthen their life skills, information, creativity and resilience against risky behavior. The main goal of these Offices is to prevent the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs among young people, to raise awareness on consequences of such use through: media appearances, public events, and various forms of educational events; educational and counseling work with parents of children and youth; distribution of drug tests to parents; production and distribution of informative and educational material and motivating young people to participate in sports activities in their free time. Each Office has one person who is in charge of these activities. As described in this section, these offices are also in charge for the implementation of youth policies at a local level.

At the Primary Health Care centers, Youth Counseling Centers are established in all municipalities, with the task of preventing and familiarizing young people with important characteristics of development in their transition to adulthood, the difficulties and problems they may face during this period, as well as the ways of avoiding and overcoming these difficulties. There are no employees who are employed full-time in the Youth Counseling Centers. This means the employees of the Primary Health Care Centers are also working with YCC.

Youth services (youth clubs and youth centers) are also one of the key infrastructural mechanisms for implementing youth policy, practicing youth work and improving youth participation. Their work is regulated by the Plan and Program of the Youth Service,⁷⁰ which is

⁶⁸ Career Centre at University of Montenegro, available at <https://www.ucg.ac.me/rektorat/karijera>, (Accessed on December 29, 2020).

⁶⁹ "Annual report of the Institute for Social and Child Protection", Institute for Social and Child Protection, 2020, available at <https://www.zsdzcg.me/images/Biblioteka/Izvestaj%20o%20radu%20dnevnih%20centara%20za%202018%20godinu.pdf>, (Accessed on December 29, 2020), p. 14.

⁷⁰ "The Rulebook on the method of functioning youth services and the performance of the administrative and technical jobs needed for their functioning, MSY, 2020, available at <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={B87FEF77-B787-482E-89E5-FAC0712FFF8E}>, (Accessed on December 29, 2020)..

created by the MSCS at least once in three months in order to implement activities proposed within the Strategy, the AP and the Program, but this depends on the needs of the local communities. According to the LoY, the MSCS is in charge of financing or co-financing the construction, reconstruction, adaptation or equipping of youth services. Former MSY established youth clubs in 11 municipalities, notably Mojkovac, Plav, Petnjica, Danilovgrad, Nikšić, Šavnik, Podgorica, Cetinje, Bar, Kotor and Pljevlja. Also, each youth service (either youth center or youth club) is run by an administrator, chosen through a call published by former the MSY.

2.7. Critical assessment

The Law has been improving the planning and implementation of youth policy at the national and local level, by strengthening the institutional framework, and by empowering youth services in which young people can acquire skills and knowledge that contribute to their personal and social development. Despite a generally solid legal framework, the implementation gaps and challenges that need to be addressed have been observed, such as: the coordination of activities at a national level and between national and local level; improving practice of indicator-based reporting; and ensuring competent social workers in youth spaces (youth centers and youth clubs).

Although the Strategy is one of the national strategies with the best implementation rate of its action plans, there remains a lack of long-term desirable results due to the absence of cross-sectoral cooperation and the coordination. Furthermore, when it comes to the Strategy results, there is no information about the level of achievement of indicators from the Monitoring and evaluation Framework of the Strategy, due to the lack of indicator-based reporting by responsible entities. Namely, the Strategy has a clear Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that includes over 50 national and international indicators that can help to monitor the situation on youth, while providing at the same time opportunities to compare with other economies. The proposed international indicators are, to a large extent, defined and monitored by EUROSTAT and their introduction in Montenegro's official statistics is in line with meeting the requirements of the EU accession process and alignment with the EU statistics system. The weakness⁷¹ in this area is that institutions are still reporting on "the activities implemented" and indicators at the level of activities, but not on higher level of indicators of achievements defined by the M&E Framework.⁷² On the other hand, the new methodology for policy development, drafting and monitoring of strategic planning documents⁷³ will improve reporting since it requires the exact

⁷¹ This is not unique case – this is the practice for all other national strategies and the reason might be that: there are not enough resources allocated for research (especially qualitative research) that would give relevant information on situation in certain area (in this case – youth), there are not enough human resources to implement this type of research, there is no practice of creating regular analysis of statistic data or statistics data are missing. In this area, there are some improvements e.g. after adoption of first LoY MONSTAT included youth (15-30 age old) in some indicators followed by them, but this is far from the planned by Monitoring and evaluation Framework (that includes 52 indicators).

⁷² EUROSTAT indicators, Eurobarometer indicators, International composite indices -Youth Development Index – YDI, Youth Wellbeing Index YWI; The UN sustainable development indicators integrated in Montenegro's National Sustainable Development Strategy by 2030; Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators, UNICEF Adolescent Assessment Card & selected indicators from the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool, European Youth Forum and CoE 11 indicators for youth policy monitoring.

⁷³ "Methodology for policy development, drafting and monitoring of strategic planning documents", General Secretariat of the Government, 2019, available at <http://www.gsv.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rId=357599&rType=2> (Accessed on November 15, 2020).

data on the realized activity, such as budget and visibility. So far, it could be stated that the activity was implemented but there was no evidence for the implementation within the report.

Additionally, there is still room for improvement for the commitment and advocacy of the public representatives of the Coordination Body for monitoring of the Youth Strategy 2017 – 2021, which are usually proposed by the public institutions. . There is also an absence of a multisectoral approach during the implementation of the strategic documents related to youth, especially with the educational system. The weakness of this and other annual reports is that they do not include broader information about the situation of youth policy e.g., the number of municipalities having LYAPs and their level of implementation, the existence of local CfY and others. Regarding this issue, it would be very useful to include this data in order to have a comprehensive report in the field of youth at a national and local level.

The new government does not include in its organizational chart the Ministry of Sports and Youth. At a later time, the Directorate for Sports and Youth will be in charge of youth under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. This practice was already implemented in the previous years, but it resulted in a limited impact at strengthening the position of youth at the national and local level. In this regard, the main competences of the new Directorate for Sports and Youth have been narrowed, when compared with competences that this Directorate had from 2016 to 2020. However, due to the institutional memory issue within the public institutions, it is important to continue strengthening the capacities of the Directorate for Sports and Youth.

Despite the positive measures, there is still a very questionable provision related to fines for the local self-government employees (persons responsible for local youth policy) in the case that the Local Parliament does not adopt LYAP⁷⁴. This would not align with the provisions of Article 9 of the Law on Local Self-Government,⁷⁵ which stipulates that: “In the performance of local government, municipalities are autonomous, and their rights cannot be denied or restricted by acts of public authorities, except in cases and under conditions determined by law, in accordance with the Constitution”. Also, new sustainable solutions for the institutionalization of youth services have been created; the Ministry in charge of Youth is responsible for ensuring conditions for the functioning of youth services together with responsible municipal authorities. There is still a very low capacity of the current departments or sectors under the local governments, while being accompanied by a political desire to form departments for the implementation of youth policy within the self-local governments who will be only in charge of implementing youth activities and tasks related to the Local Action Plan for Youth.

The role of NGOs and their impact is very important, since the non-formal education is mainly implemented through their activities. Despite their efforts, there is a need for innovative methods and better cooperation with stakeholders and youth club administrators, while trying to utilize the oft-overlooked skills of the participants. The impact of the other sectors on youth is limited as

⁷⁴ According to Law on Local Self-Government ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", No. 2/2018) the Local Parliament (in accordance with Article 39, paragraph 4) is the one that “adopts development plans and programs for specific areas”, and (Article 39, paragraph 7) adopts the budget”.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

most young people are still not familiar with the measures being applied under these areas. There is a need to improve capacities of staff who works with youth in these areas, as well as approach towards youth.

CHAPTER 3: YOUTH FUNDING FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL YOUTH PROGRAMS AND INSTRUMENTS

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

3.1. Youth Policy Funding

The implementation of the youth policy is funded from the public budget and municipal budgets. The main implementer of LoY and youth policy is the newly established MESCS. According to the LoY, the financing of the strategy is supported from the public budget for activities carried out by the former MSY in accordance with the Strategy and AP. Apart from MESCS, there are also other ministries and public institutions that indirectly target youth, even though youth issues and youth policy are not their core focus, meaning that they (indirectly) offer funding for youth-related activities and/or projects/programs (3.3. Key youth programs and instruments).

At the central level, according to the LoY, the Budget of Montenegro provides funds for: the implementation of the youth specific policy - Program for the construction, reconstruction, adaptation and equipping of youth services allocated by the MESCS; the functioning of the youth services provided by the MESCS, as well as funds for the activities implemented by the MESCS in accordance with the Strategy and AP.

The budget for the implementation of the strategy is provided within the overall budget of the MESCS/former MSY for each year. The budget for the Strategy (2017-2021) implementation has been introduced by the Law on Budget (2017, 2018 and 2019) and announced in the Official Gazette of Montenegro as well as on the website of the former MSY.⁷⁶

As per the amount of funds earmarked in the budget of the former MSY, the allocations for the last 3 years and 2020 are as follows:

- In 2017: EUR 180,000.00 - for projects and programs of NGOs;
- In 2018: EUR 511,976.00 - for projects and programs of NGOs;
- In 2019: EUR 300,000.00 - for general support to youth policy implementation, including but not limited to NGOs;
- In 2020: EUR 94,545.36 - for projects of NGOs in the field of youth policy: around EUR 700,000.00 has been allocated for the implementation of the Program for 2020.

⁷⁶ Budgets of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, available at: http://www.ms.gov.me/ministarstvo/Budzet_Ministarstva_sporta, (Accessed on November 28,2020).

The total budget funds used for the implementation of the strategy of the AP for 2019 was over a million Euro (regular budgetary funds). Some of the activities were completed through donations of international organizations (OSCE, UNDP, UNICEF).⁷⁷

International stakeholders are acting at the national level in two main ways: as a strategic partner to MESCS/former MSY in development and implementation of youth policy, or through co-financing or full financing of youth related projects implemented by civil society or other relevant stakeholders.⁷⁸

3.2. Youth projects funding

MESCS is in charge of implementing youth policy focusing on increasing youth mobility and participation in different fields of public interest defined by LoY and by the Strategy. Other ministries are in charge of implementing youth related programs and projects in line with the Strategy, but there is no available information about the financial aspects since they do not report to MESCS on this.

From the establishment of the former MSY in November 2016, the budget for financing the projects and programs of NGOs dealing with youth and implementing the youth policy have increased threefold during 2018 compared to 2017, but later declined six times until 2020.

During the period of 2017 to 2020, former MSY and its Directorate for Youth implemented activities planned by the Strategy, but also (in line with the previous LoY) published once a year a call for proposals for NGOs and financed projects of NGOs that were in line with the Strategy and Action plan for the current year. This has contributed to a larger extent to the status of young people, involving them into the implementation of youth policy.

Through the public calls for financing projects of NGOs, implementing the youth policy according to the LoY from 2016 and the Law on NGOs, the Ministry allocated almost EUR 800,000.00 for around 150 projects of NGOs aimed on the implementation of youth policy measures and activities within the six key priorities defined by the Strategy 2017 – 2021 and in 2020 the amount of EUR 94,545.36 was allocated for the projects of 12 NGOs implementing youth policy in line with the Strategy and AP of the implementation of the Strategy for 2019.

⁷⁷ “Annual report of the Action Plan“, MSY, 2020, available at [http://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=402593&rType=2&file=Izvje%C5%A1taj%20o%20realizaciji%20Akcionog%20plana%20%20Strategije%20za%20mlade%20%20za%202019.final%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=402593&rType=2&file=Izvje%C5%A1taj%20o%20realizaciji%20Akcionog%20plana%20%20Strategije%20za%20mlade%20%20za%202019.final%20(2).pdf) (Accessed on November 28, 2020).

⁷⁸ Positive examples of the first case are the following: 1) UN system in Montenegro that was with the ministry leading process of evaluation of previous youth strategy implementation and creation of Youth Strategy 2017-2021; 2) OSCE mission to Montenegro that is supporting development of annual Action plans for Youth Strategy implementation as well as financing implementation of certain measures; 3) Hans Seidel Stiftung⁷⁸ that was financing implementation of certain measures e.g. capacity building of local self-governments for Training for public administration officials and local government on the implementation of youth policy in 2018; 4) Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) that supported strengthening the capacities of the youth services' administrators for efficient managing and performing administrative tasks and duties in youth services, etc.

On the other side, some of the international stakeholders (donors) offer co-financing or fully financing of youth related projects (e.g. the European Commission, OSCE, RYCO, etc.).

In line with the AP, the former MSY allocated funds for direct grants to NGOs that implement projects and programs in line with the Strategy. This funding mechanism ensured for the realization of the annual AP and contributed to the achievement of strategic priorities. The funding mechanism of the former MSY had visible positive results in the first several years of implementation, with a high number of young people involved in projects, bigger regional coverage with activities for youth, and a high level of satisfaction of organizations working for and with youth. However, the year 2020 had sudden negative changes, reflected in the budget of the former MSY for direct financing of NGO activities which declined by six times compared to 2018 (from EUR 510,000.00 in 2018 to EUR 96,000.00 in 2020).

Municipalities do not provide annual information about allocations for local youth policy at the municipal level (besides Tivat). The budget of the municipality, according to the LoY, shall be used to provide the resources for the establishment and functioning of youth services established by the municipality and activities that are implemented by NGOs in line with the LYAP, and with the LoY.

Decisions on financing/co-financing of projects of NGOs implementing youth policy in 2020 were made through the Public Call “Youth in focus,” mostly for the projects/programs of NGOs in the field of social care for youth. The amount of EUR 94,545.36 has been committed through this fund for the implementation of 12 projects of NGOs in the field of youth policy.⁷⁹

3.3. Key youth programs and instruments

A new instrument for creating and implementing youth policy has been described in the Program⁸⁰ as one of the key improvements of the new LoY, as explained previously (chapter 2.2. Law on Y). The Program included measures and activities on strengthening youth in Montenegro defined by all the above-mentioned fields of public of interest by ensuring cross-sectorial cooperation between all relevant youth policy subjects, at least once in two years. To define respective priority areas of the Program, the MESCS prepares a Needs Analysis. The proposal of the Program is submitted to the Government by the end of the second quarter of the current year for the upcoming year and once it is endorsed by the Government it is implemented by the MESCS⁸¹. Accordingly, Former MSY in 2020 prepared a Needs Analysis⁸² covering 9 key areas, notably: participation, education and training, culture, free time, the decision-making process, health, social welfare, informing, employment and media consumption, in accordance with the

⁷⁹ Public call for NGOs on implementing the youth policy for 2019, MSY, 2020, available in Montenegrin language at: <https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=400434&rType=2&file=Javni%20konkurs-mladi%20u%20fokusu.docx>, (Accessed on September 30, 2020).

⁸⁰ Article 15 of LoY “Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/2019” from April 30, 2019, available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

⁸¹ Article 15 of LoY “Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 25/2019” from April 30, 2019 available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={C56175D1-A03E-4DD1-A62C-720432E3896C}> paragraph four: “The program adopted by the Government is implemented by the Ministry.” (Accessed October 4, 2020).

⁸² “The Report on conducted research on position, assessments, attitudes and perspectives of youth population in Montenegro”, MSY, 2020, available at: <https://www.ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=415877&rType=2&file=Analiza%20potreba%20mladih%202020.%20god.d> ocx (Accessed October 4, 2020).

research findings developed by the Program for 2020.⁸³ The first Program was adopted by the Government on January 16, 2020 and around EUR 700,000.00 has been allocated for the implementation of the Program for 2020. The Program included measures and activities on strengthening youth in Montenegro defined within all above-mentioned fields of public interest by ensuring cross-sectorial cooperation between all relevant youth policy subjects. Under this Program, the former MSY established youth clubs.

As youth policy is a multi-sectorial issue, youth programs have been created and implemented by different ministries and other institutional bodies covering employment, education, social welfare, social inclusion, and others, including the following current or former ministries: Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Science, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Employment Agency, and as per the new Government structure: Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, MESCS and the Employment Agency.

It is difficult to obtain clear budget information because these projects and programs are also guided by the sectorial strategies that the afore-mentioned ministries are implementing and are, for example, included by the budgets related to elementary or secondary education as youth policy related budget since it contributes to the improvement of the quality of formal education, and the like. In the annual reporting related to the Strategy implementation, ministries are including information on the status of activities from this specific policy document, and they do not provide information about other programs since they are implemented and reported under other strategies.

Other ministries are involved in the implementation of measures recognized as priority within their programs and listed in the strategy and annual action plans, and do not envisage specific budget lines for the measures from Youth Strategy but implement activities from their regular budgets or in line with their other program budgets (very often in line with the other strategies that they coordinate). There are not so many national youth programs/instruments that are active for a long-term period, but below are listed the ministries and other institutional bodies which implement some of these programs:

1. The former Ministry of Science (current MESCS) stimulates scientific productivity and enhances the quality of scientific research through numerous public calls for supporting researchers and young scientists: competition for research projects, competition for innovative grants, calls for PhD research fellowships and competitions for co-financing of scientific research and innovation in 2019 as well as Annual Scientific Achievement Awards. One of the categories is the: Most successful scientist up to 30 years old.

⁸³ "Program of the public interest in the field of youth policy for 2020", MSY, 2020, available at <https://ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=393997&rType=2&file=Program%20ostvarivanja%20javnog%20interesa%20u%20oblasti%20omladinske%20politike%20za%202020.pdf>, (Accessed October 4, 2020).

2. The former Ministry of Culture (current MESCS) supports organizations that implement youth cultural projects.
3. The former Ministry of Economy (current Ministry of Economic Development) continuously works on implementing programs to increase the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, while providing support to young entrepreneurs through the Program for improving the competitiveness of the economy for 2019⁸⁴.
4. The Ministry of Education (current MESCS) based on a public competition, through the Fund for students and teachers awards 400 prizes to students and teachers for the results achieved in the 2019/2020.
5. The Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro (IDF) was established for the purpose of encouraging and facilitating economic development of Montenegro while the following priorities are mostly related to young people: Supporting startups, enabling entrepreneurs to launch a new investment cycle; Strengthening entrepreneurship capacities; Supporting new work capacities.
6. The former Ministry of Public Administration (current Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media) in accordance with the Regulation on the procedure and manner of co-financing projects and programs supported from European Union funds announces the Call for co-financing of EU projects.
7. The former Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (current Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management) prevents migration of young people from rural areas through the support of starting new activities in rural areas, mostly in agriculture.
8. The Employment agency of Montenegro supports unemployed persons within the Program of Support to Self-Employment. Priority in the award of grants is given to the following categories of unemployed: up to 35 years old, women and long term unemployed.

3.4. Critical assessment

The new LoY has created opportunities for the MESCS to invest directly in the construction, reconstruction, adaptation or equipping of youth centers and youth clubs, through transferring funds directly to local authorities, so 2/3 of the youth policy budget for 2019 and 2020 was planned for that purpose. On the other hand, the budget for financing the projects and program of NGOs dealing with youth and implementing the youth policy influenced to have less people involved in the youth programs and projects in the middle-term since the budget allocated for NGOs has been six times decreased. The opinion of the MESCS is that this investment in youth spaces on a local level can contribute to sustainability of existing and creation of new youth clubs, which represent an important environment for informal and non-formal learning, socializing and exchange of knowledge and youth experiences. However, focusing on local self-governments as the main partner without a visible role of NGOs can push aside young people, and make youth centers not interesting for them. Furthermore, the quality of programs can be questionable since youth work is primarily civil society based in Montenegro and there is usually no experience among the public sector employees.

⁸⁴Program for Improving the Competitiveness of the Economy for 2019, former Ministry of Economy, 2020, available at http://www.mek.gov.me/program_za_unapredjenje/, (Accessed on October 15, 2020).

Also, opening youth centers by the municipalities will lead to creating new jobs. However, one of the threats within this process could be hiring politically affiliated individuals as administrators, which could lead to the lack of quality programs in youth services. So far, the former Ministry of Sports and Youth, according to article 24 of LoY has been in charge of establishing youth clubs and hiring the youth club administrators. Since these activities were conducted right before the Parliamentary elections, the contracts for youth club administrators last for six months and there is no information if the MESCS would extend the contract durations. This could have a negative impact on the work of youth clubs and youth perception towards youth club activities.

Evidence so far has shown that local self-governments do finance projects and programs related to youth under their Call for projects open to all NGOs, but youth is usually not a priority, and there is no information as to how much is invested for NGO projects focused on local youth policy.⁸⁵ There are no open calls open only for youth organizations. In addition, reports on implemented activities that are coming from local self-governments do not always contain information on the funds spent directly on youth policy implementation, which greatly complicates the monitoring of the implementation as well as the assessment of the LYAP and the Strategy implementation.

Other ministries are in charge of the implementation of youth related programs and projects in line with the Strategy, but there is no available information about their financial aspects since they do not report to MESCS on this topic. Other ministries have, besides the Strategy activities, some other policy priorities that also include youth and those are developed for their specific areas of work (education, employment, among others). However, neither these activities, nor the financial aspect of their implementation are shown in the annual reports on the implementation of the youth policy in Montenegro. This practice should be changed within the newly established Directorate for Sports and Youth when planning future steps, aiming to encompass all youth activities related within the reports. Furthermore, for most of the mentioned programs of ministries it is not known whether these will continue as a practice in the future, since these depend on international funding, as well as on the priorities of the new Government.

The newly established MESCS has joined four ministries of the former Government of Montenegro: The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Science. This raises the concern on how the youth policy will be funded in the future and by what amount, as well as which programs and instruments will remain and still be active.

⁸⁵ Sometimes only from the title of the project can it be concluded that it is youth related project.

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

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

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

Youth engagement and participation, especially the participation in the decision-making process is governed by the LoY, but also by other laws which define, in general terms, citizens' participation in the decision-making process and community development, which are therefore applicable to young citizens as well. Legal provisions specifying this area are contained in: The Law on NGOs,⁸⁶ the Law on Local Self-Government,⁸⁷ the General Law on Education,⁸⁸ and the Law on Higher Education.⁸⁹

4.1.1. Participation at a central level

Based on the Youth Strategy of 2017-2021, there are two forms of participation for the youth: the so-called “prescribed” participation through mechanisms and opportunities offered and requested by the government and “self-initiated” – those forms of participation coming from citizens themselves, i.e., based on their initiative. Regarding the latest data⁹⁰ on civic and political youth participation published by CEDEM, young people generally do not participate in the decision-making process at the national level, but over 80% consider that youth should be more involved and asked to participate in the decision-making process at all levels.

A public debate is the most common mechanism for involving young people in the decision-making processes. It is used to obtain information from stakeholders during the preparation of laws and strategies. Youth is not drawn in for different reasons, but mainly they do not believe that their voice will be heard. Notably, only 5.7% of youth participated in public debates⁹¹. The most important legal acts and strategic documents, which are directly related to young people, and which have been subject to public debates at previous times are the LoY⁹², the Strategy, Action Plan and Program, while LYAP has been on the local level. The draft of the LoY

⁸⁶ Law on NGOs (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 039/11 and 037/17), available at: <http://www.mju.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=265432&rType=2&file=Zakon%20o%20nevladinim%20organizacijama.pdf> (Accessed on November 12, 2020).

⁸⁷ Law on Local Self-Government (“Official Gazette”, No. 2/2018), available at: <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon-o-lokalnoj-samoupravi.html>, (Accessed on November 12, 2020).

⁸⁸ General Law on Education (“Official Gazette”, No. 45/11).

⁸⁹ Law on Higher Education (“Official Gazette”, No. 60/03).

⁹⁰ Bešić, M., Pejović, M., „Civic and Political participation of youth in Montenegro”, Center for Democracy and Human rights, 2020, available at <http://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanja/politicko-javno-mnjenje/send/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1962-politicka-i-gradanska-participacija-mladih-u-crnjoj-gori>, (Accessed on November 12, 2020), p. 47.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 48.

⁹² Representatives of the Ministry of Sports and Youth participated in the round tables, as follows: Nikola Janović, Minister; Nenad Koprivica, Director General of the Directorate for Youth; Enesa Hasanagić, Head of the Department for International Cooperation; Andrea Popović, independent advisor and member of the Working Group for Drafting the LoY and Danijela Vujošević, independent advisor. Representatives of the Ministry presented the text of the Draft Law and participated in the discussion with the participants who expressed great interest in giving their opinion and suggestions on the provisions of the Draft Law during the discussion.

generated a great public interest. During the public debate on the LoY, three round tables were held: on June 11 in Podgorica, on June 14 in Kolasin and on June 20 in Tivat (2018). An example of taking into account the views of young people and NGOs on the draft LoY is reflected in the fact that the former Ministry accepted 2/3 of the comments received and substantially amended the LoY in comparison to the draft.

Additionally, according to the Regulation on the election of NGO representatives to the working bodies of the public administration bodies and the conduct of public hearings in the preparation of laws and strategies⁹³, representatives of NGOs can participate in working groups which are formed with the aim of preparing or drafting normative acts or programs in certain areas of intervention and include joint work of public and civil society sectors on creating public policies with the aim of achieving common interest. This means that NGOs, including those dealing with youth issues, have a right to participate in the working bodies established by the public administration entities. These NGOs represent a form of (youth) participation in the decision-making processes at the national level when representing the rights and interests of youth. Concretely, the LoY has been drafted by the Working Group which has included three NGO representatives, representing a voice of 29 NGOs which have supported their appointments for members of this Working Group.⁹⁴

The establishment of the CfY is envisaged by the LoY. However, as previously mentioned, due to the Parliamentary elections and the constitution of a new Government the establishment of CfY is still on hold.

Student parliaments of various higher education institutions are the representative bodies of students established with the aim of protecting students' rights and interests. However, due to the lack of intensive and constructive communication with various partners, and among the students themselves, the ability of students' parliaments to actively influence and work on encouraging and improving student activism remains limited. Representatives of student parliaments are often referred to as politically eligible representatives, especially when it comes to a State University, and that their decisions often do not represent the position of those who elected them.

On the other hand, student organizations such as the Montenegrin Association for Political Science Students (MAPPS), AISEC and ELSA contribute to the satisfaction of social, cultural and academic needs and the need for physical recreation of students, as stipulated by the Law on Higher Education. Their activities foster participation and networking which result in a very constructive participation of their members within different participation mechanisms.

⁹³ "Regulation on the election of NGO representatives to the working bodies of state administration bodies and the conduct of public hearings in the preparation of laws and strategies," former Ministry of Public Administration, 2018, available at <https://mju.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=343431&rType=2&file=Uredba%20o%20izboru%20predstavnik%20nevladinih%20organizacija%20u%20radna%20tijela%20organa%20drzavne%20uprave.doc>. (Accessed on November 12, 2020).

⁹⁴ "Decision on the NGO representative of the Working Group for Drafting the LoY", MSY, 2018, available at <https://ms.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=292113&rType=2&file=Odluka%20o%20izboru%20kandidata%20za%20izradu%20Nacrta%20zakona%20o%20mladima.doc>. (Accessed on November 12, 2020).

Through the membership, founding and running of an NGO that implements youth policy, as one of the traditional forms of participation, young people have the opportunity to directly participate in the decision-making process. NGOs that implement youth policy are those that have specified, in their statutory acts, that they are dealing with the implementation of youth policy.

The Union of High School Students of Montenegro is the umbrella organization of student parliaments of all high schools in Montenegro and a great example of youth participation at the national and local levels. The impact of their work in this field is explained in the subchapter - 4.4. Platforms of youth cooperation at the national level .

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

4.1.2. Participation at local level

The Local CfYs are established in four municipalities but have not been established as a common practice yet. In accordance with the LoY, a local CfY is established in Podgorica⁹⁵, while the Local Youth Councils in Kotor, Cetinje and Pljevlja have been established in accordance with the previous LoY. In this regard, it is very important to emphasize that structures of the Local CfY and Local Youth Councils are completely different. While members of the Local Youth Councils have only young people, a local CfY shall consist of representatives of municipality bodies in charge of youth policy and NGOs that implement youth policy and at least one member of the Local CfY shall be a representative of NGOs that implement youth policy or a young person.

Although the above-mentioned Youth Councils have been operating for many years, the Local Youth Council in Cetinje is very active and continuously works towards achieving greater participation of young people in the public and social life of Cetinje, whose visibility is mostly improved by the efforts of the NGO Aktivna zona from Cetinje.

On the other hand, youth and citizens, in general, are not familiar with a mechanism such as Initiative, Citizens' assembly, Local and the Municipal referendum.⁹⁶ There is no evidence in any municipality that these mechanisms have been used so far to enhance youth policy issues.

⁹⁵ "Decision on establishment of a Local Council for Youth of the Capital City", available at <http://podgorica.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ODLUKA-O-OSNIVANJU-SAVJETA-ZA-MLADE-2020.doc>, (Accessed December 29, 2020).

⁹⁶ Bešić M., Pejović M. „Perception and attitudes towards public policies”, CEDEM, 2020, available at <http://cedem.me/aktivnosti/1237-javne-politike-se-u-javnosti-shvataju-kao-personifikacija-djelovanja-politicara>, (Accessed on December 28, 2020), p.1.

4.2. Evidence-based youth policy

The Strategy was created based on the evaluation of the implementation of the previous strategy, and based on the analysis of the youth needs, and the position of youth in different areas of youth policy.

LYAP in each municipality (which at a certain point was called Local Strategies for Youth – in line with the LoY valid for the period 2016-April 2019)⁹⁷ have been developed based on the research on the position and needs of youth implemented by the local self-governments and members of Working groups, often in cooperation with NGOs active in that field⁹⁸. This same practice has continued during preparations of LYAP in 24 municipalities in accordance with Law on Local Self-Government⁹⁹, although the new LoY does not oblige municipalities to apply an evidence-based approach in youth policy creation, planning and implementation according to Article 3,¹⁰⁰ which defines the youth policy. However, the Decree on the election of representatives of NGOs into the working bodies of public administration bodies and conducting public consultation in preparation of laws and strategies, clearly lays out the necessity of the evidence-based approach for the creation of laws, strategies and programs to benefit the public interests.

Additionally, Article 15 of the LoY, which elaborates on the Program, states that the Ministry is obliged to implement research on youth needs, specifically the following: “In order to define priority areas of public interest for the development of the Program, the Ministry prepares the Analysis of Youth Needs.”¹⁰¹ Taking into consideration that this plan is to be generated once every 2 years, it is expected that similar research should be conducted with the same frequency. In this regard, as described in chapter 2.2, the former MSY has started with this practice and in accordance with it, developed the Program for 2020 under which youth clubs, which are supposed to be a cornerstone of youth activism at the local level, are established.

The evidence-based planning practice of other relevant ministries and public institutions at the national level (including MONSTAT) that are feeding the system with data on youth in different areas (such as education, health, security) is signaling that data assembled for youth from the last decade, was collected in the form that was needed for specific planning and research of individual institutions. Certain adjustments, although limited, took place after the adoption of the first LoY, in order to provide for a definition of youth covering individuals in the range of 15-30 years of age. Regarding the general information on youth, which is the most important precondition for an evidence-based youth policy, it can be stated that a certain number of NGOs

⁹⁷ The Strategy 2017-2021, available at <http://www.strategijazamlade.me>, (Accessed on November 16, 2020).

⁹⁸ NGO Proactive from Podgorica, NGO Aktivna zona from Cetinje (<https://www.aktivnazona.me>).

⁹⁹ Law on Local Self-Government (“Official Gazette”, No. 2/2018), available at: <https://www.paragraf.me/propisi-crnegore/zakon-o-lokalnoj-samoupravi.html>, (Accessed on November 16, 2020).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Article 15 of the LoY, available at <http://zakoni.skupstina.me/zakoni/web/dokumenta/zakoni-i-drugi-akti/630/1922-11863-26-1-19-1-9.pdf>, (Accessed on November 17, 2020)

and researchers in Montenegro collect data about young people¹⁰², but a single hub where one could find all important data related to youth is still missing.

4.3. The establishment and functioning of Youth Councils and umbrella organizations

The new procedure introduced by the LoY defines the establishment of an Umbrella Youth organization or Association of NGOs implementing the youth policy in Article 20, paragraph 1, as follows: “NGOs that implement youth policy may establish an association in line with a law that governs the establishment of NGOs”¹⁰³. Furthermore, a representative association, in terms of LoY, is an association that consists of several entities. At least 30 NGOs that implement youth policy, from at least six municipalities, of which coastal, central and northern municipalities are represented by two members, as determined by the law that governs regional development. Also, the representation of the association of NGOs shall be determined by the MESCS/former MSY for a period of one year by issuing a certificate for its representation. Accordingly, the process of establishing the Representative Umbrella Association of NGOs implementing youth policy, called Youth Network of Montenegro (YNM), has been initiated by youth NGOs in March 2020 and the former MSY has immediately established the cooperation with the Initial Board. The Founding Assembly took place in September 2020 and the Association was officially set up. On November of 2020, a Certificate of Representation has been issued by the former MSY, recognizing it as a representative association of NGOs that implement youth policy for the period of one year.¹⁰⁴¹⁰⁵

The difference between the CfY and the Association of NGOs implementing the youth policy is that the newly proposed one represents a network of NGOs (associations) implementing youth policy, while the CfY is planned to be an advisory body made up of representatives of ministries, public administration bodies, legal entities that manage youth services, two members of the Association of NGOs implementing the youth policy - YNM, of which at least one shall be a young person, and they shall be appointed for the period of one year. Moreover, by adopting the Rulebook on conditions, manner and procedure for election of members of the CfY¹⁰⁶ all legal conditions for establishing CfYs have been fulfilled. In the upcoming period it is expected to establish a CfY, since its establishment was postponed due to absence Association of NGOs implementing the youth policy, which was necessary since the YNM is an as umbrella Youth organization which is supposed to have membership in the government of CfY. Although the Association of NGOs is established, the establishment of the CfY is still on hold, because of the Parliamentary election which was held on August 30. This body, once it is set up, shall be in

¹⁰² Publications can be found at websites of: Juventas, ADP – Zid, NGO Prima, Center for civic education, CEDEM and many others.

¹⁰³ In the Montenegrin language: “Savez nevladinih organizacija odnosno udruženja koje sprovode omiadinsku politiku” (Article 20 of the LoY).

¹⁰⁴ Youth Network of Montenegro, available at <https://www.mmcg.me/clanstvo> (Accessed on December 19, 2020).

¹⁰⁵ It currently has 35 member organizations, among which those targeting youth with disabilities, Roma youth, NEET youth, etc., namely: 35mm, Aktivna zona, Alfa Centar, Asocijacija Spektra, Asocijacija za demokratski prosperitet - ZID, CAZAS, Centar za ekonomski prosperitet i slobodu – CEPS, Centar za omladinsku edukaciju, Queer Montenegro, Crnogorska asocijacija za samostalnost i mobilnost omladine – COSMO, Djeca Crne Gore, Don Bosko centar, Fondacija Budva, Forum MNE; Inicijativa mladih za ljudska prava – YIHR, Juventas, Omladinski klub Berane, Omladinski klub Tivat, Omladinski kulturni centar Herceg Novi, Omladinski servis Mikanje, Organizacija crnogorskih studenata u inostranstvu – OSCI, Phiren amenca, Savez izviđača Crne Gore, Savez slijepih Crne Gore, Specijalna olimpijada, Studentski kulturni centar, Svetionik, Udruženje mladih sa hendikepom Crne Gore – UMHCG, Udruženje pedagoga Crne Gore i Unija srednjoškolaca Crne Gore.

¹⁰⁶ “Rulebook on conditions, manner and procedure for election of members of the Council for Youth”, MSY, 2020, available at <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/prehled-dokumenta-2/?id={3E02A809-1E95-4AC4-9EF8-C714F284723F}>, (Accessed on October 16, 2020).

charge of the following: making proposals for the improvement of youth policy; giving suggestions regarding the process of preparing the Strategy; delegating its members to participate in the procedure of preparation of laws in the areas that regulate issues of importance for youth; monitoring the position of young people and proposing measures for their improvement and at the request of the MESCS, giving an opinion on other issues of importance for young people.

It is important to emphasize that the LoY does not recognize the Youth Council, which should be consisted without governing officials and that the LoY does not foresee the mandatory financing of this alliance by the public budget.

4.4. Platforms of youth cooperation at the national level

There are no platforms of youth cooperation on a national level, besides the High School Students Union of Montenegro, aiming at the gathering high school representatives from all across Montenegro. The Union is a very good example of the youth participation in the decision-making process, since its representatives are democratically elected by the 83 delegates of the National Conference. Also, they have an excellent cooperation with different donors and Ministry. The Union organizes the Solidarity Action day, through the established cooperation with different stakeholders in Montenegro and by collecting funds to support projects from High school student parliaments in Montenegro. Also, as a member of Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform, they organize public activities involving youth in different areas of intervention. Through a various number of smaller projects every year, the Union seeks to improve the quality of life of high school students through different activities and interactive events. The Union has also coordinated the Youth center in Podgorica, since its opening. Their work is widely known through their activism and work toward creating better conditions for youth development, as well as transparency and involvement of many high school students in their activities.

4.5. Regional platforms and networks

Several Montenegrin institutions or organizations are involved in various platforms of youth cooperation such as Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform (WBYP), RYCO, SALTO-YOUTH network, SEEYN – South East Europe Youth Network and Young European Ambassadors (YEA).

The Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform WBYP is a grassroots regional youth platform implemented by the Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI) which offers a unique and tailor-made space to youngsters from the region where they meet, plan, organize, implement and voice up their action. This platform contributes to Montenegrin youth in the following: addressing discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices and raising awareness of the issues such as gender equality, LGBTIQ rights; strengthening dialogue and increasing young people's advocacy and influencing abilities toward these institutions and increasing regional networks – better promotion of work of youth organizations.

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an independently functioning institutional mechanism, aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programs. The government was represented by Nikola Janović, and the Youth Representative is Andrea Mićanović.¹⁰⁷ This mechanism contributes to the Montenegrin youth through the following: the transfer of knowledge and skills; promoting diversity, strengthening intercultural competences, interethnic cooperation and dialogue, developing capacities of youth organizations and increasing the quality of youth work in the region; sharing of best practices and exchanging experiences; communication and networking to create links between youth organizations and other stakeholders, including national, regional and local authorities and decision-makers.

SALTO-YOUTH is a network of seven Resource Centers working on European priority areas within the youth field, which provides non-formal learning resources for youth workers and youth leaders and organizes training and contact-making activities to support organizations. This platform contributes to Montenegrin youth in the following: transfer of knowledge and skills; developing capacities of youth organizations and increasing the quality of youth work in the region; sharing of best practices and exchanging experiences.

The Young European Ambassadors (YEA) platform is a creative network of future young game changers from across the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) and the European Union (EU).¹⁰⁸ This platform contributes to Montenegrin youth in the following: promoting youth activism and participation in the decision-making process; promoting youth involvement in community life by encouraging structured dialogue and youth collaboration with authorities and community; promoting volunteerism among young people; emphasizing the importance of values and diverse groups; stimulating constructive dialogue and discussion in society; promoting values of human rights, tolerance, respect, democracy and good governance.

4.6. Critical assessment

The establishment of the YNM is very encouraging since for a long time Montenegro did not have umbrella youth association. Furthermore, it gathers very well-known organizations which can contribute to the work of CfY, once it is established, and organisation that deal with vulnerable groups.

Despite various mechanisms, there is a lack of structured dialogue, as a process of consultation between young people and decision-makers in order to jointly define and implement policies relevant to youth at all levels. The only example of structured dialogue is the participation of youth representative within the Governing Board of RYCO. In addition, the differentiation of “sub-groups” belonging to youth population are not taken into consideration enough when

¹⁰⁷ Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) available at https://www.rycowb.org/?page_id=5664, (Accessed on December 19, 2020).

* 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.

¹⁰⁸ The Young European Ambassadors, available at: <https://www.webalkans.eu/>, (Accessed on December 19, 2020).

creating and implementing participation processes: e.g., young women, Roma and Egyptian community, young persons with disabilities do not have equal opportunities for economic, social and political participation.

Youth participation at the national and local level is limited. Although a certain number of NGOs in Montenegro implement activities aimed on increasing youth participation in decision-making, there is a great number of youngsters who are passive and additional efforts should be undertaken to encourage them to participate in the decision-making process. In addition, young people who are at the risk of discrimination (young Roma, young persons with disabilities, young women, youngsters living in rural areas) still are not participating at an equal level like other youth groups in the field of participation and mobility. It seems that the youth often do not recognize the presence of the existing programs, thus creating a feeling of being used only as a décor by institutions/organizations, as stated by 60% of the youth in Montenegro¹⁰⁹. Often there is a difficulty to understand that the youth's contribution to the decision making is important and to accept the fact that their participation leads to better outcomes. This is a critical issue, since youth needs to have a strong voice in deciding about all the relevant social matters (employment, health, education, etc.) and that voice should be respected and valued.

The fact that youth are often not aware of the mechanisms that could enable their participation and therefore are not able to meaningfully participate in decision-making is proven by the data that only 30% of young people¹¹⁰ have heard of the mechanisms of youth participation at the national level¹¹¹. Therefore, despite the fact that there is a growing need for innovative approaches in including young people, the public bodies, as well as NGOs should work on a stronger promotion of the existing mechanisms.

Although all the conditions for constituting the CfY have been created, the influence of political changes and the new Government structure delayed its constitution. Also, regarding the CfY or Local CfY, the hope remains that these bodies will work toward higher youth participation and improving the position of youth, as its structure mostly involves representatives of public administration bodies who are not necessarily young people. Finally, representatives of young people could only be two representatives of YNM on a national level or at least one member of the CfY as a representative of NGOs that implement youth policy on a local level.

Student parliaments need to pay significant attention to improving the teaching method and conditions and enhancing the professional practice within different faculty units, as that would significantly contribute to their substantial participation in the decision-making process and improve the position of young people.

¹⁰⁹ Bešić, M, Pejović, M. „Civic and Political participation of youth in Montenegro”, CEDEM, 2020 available at <http://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanja/politicko-javno-mnjenje/send/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1962-politicka-i-gradanska-participacija-mladih-u-crnoj-gori>, (Accessed on November 12, 2020) p. 46.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 46.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 46.

Despite a myriad of efforts invested into working with youth since the adoption of the latest Strategy, the coordination of the implementation of the Strategy should be improved, and programs often target the same youth groups (so called “easy targets”: the best students, already active). More significant efforts should be invested in adjusting the programs to youth’s long-term needs and in improving the procedures that would ensure better involvement of this target group in the decision-making process.

Research sometimes covers only one specific topic which is important for young people (e.g., mobility, economic participation) or cover only one subgroup of young people (LGBT, girls or similar). Generally, there is no continuous (regular) systematic collection of data on youth, which is usually conducted as part of a certain research or project initiative implemented by an international organization and financed via project grants or an individual contract with researchers. Certain repetitions or overlaps in research topics and formats have been evidenced, since most of these data collection efforts are project-based and often implemented in close time slots.

All LYAP in municipalities (at a certain point named Local Strategies for Youth – is in line with the LoY valid for the period of 2016-April 2019)¹¹² have been developed based on the research on position and the needs of youth implemented by the local self-governments and members of Working groups, often in cooperation with NGOs active in that field.¹¹³ However, these researches were not implemented on a regular basis and in most of the cases these were conducted only once, as the first step in creating policy documents.

Every year the former MSY, in cooperation with different international organizations, organized trainings for the local self-governments on structured dialogue with youth, and on ensuring their full participation in relevant municipal processes. However, the secretariats in charge of implementing the youth policy within the local self-governments are mostly run by employees who usually do not gather youth when it comes to drafting youth policies or simply engage experts for its drafting. Such a practice leads to the lack of structured dialogue.

A positive example is the Ministry of Sports and Youth that, in order to ensure youth participation in national policy making, has been using an “open doors” system, being available for individual young people and their associations and for their comments and suggestions. Besides organizing consultations with youth, former MSY has been regularly present at events implemented by all stakeholders in the field of youth policy.

Regional platforms and networks could have significantly larger impact if their work and activities are better communicated to the target group by using youth friendly methods of communication. RYCO’s Local Branch Office (LBO) in Montenegro has very good streaming of

¹¹² The Strategy, available at <http://www.strategijazamlade.me>, (Accessed on December 19, 2020).

¹¹³ NGO Proactive from Podgorica, NGO Aktivna zona from Cetinje (<https://www.aktivnazona.me>).

their activities which are focused at three levels: youth, NGOs and schools and international organisations.

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

This chapter elaborates on the programs and interventions of key donors in youth-related issues. It also outlines how donor coordination works in Montenegro and what are future priority areas in the field of youth policy.

5.1 Key donors in the field of youth

Over the years, the number of donors supporting projects related to the youth population has been increasing, but there are still not many donors. Some of the most relevant donors in Montenegro in the area of youth policy are as follows:

The European Commission

European Commission programs and projects in the youth sector, are funded under different EU programs and channels:

- The European exchange program for Entrepreneurs.
- European Solidarity Corps¹¹⁴ (ESC).
- ERASMUS+ program and Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus within IPA II

Also, there are other programs not only directed to youth as follows:

- The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) programs, such as Civil Society Facility, Regional CSF – support to regional networks.
- EIDHR.
- Europe for Citizens.
- Creative Europe, etc.

There is no accurate information on how much the EU invests in youth programs and projects because there is no coordination mechanism to gather information on this issue.

The Western Balkans Youth Window (2017-2020) reinforces the levels of participation of the Western Balkans in Erasmus+ in a twofold way¹¹⁵: 1) by increasing the number of Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects involving the participation of organizations and participants - notably young people and youth workers - from the Western Balkans and 2) by allowing organizations from Western Balkans to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

¹¹⁴ Montenegro belongs to the second type of economies in the European Solidarity Corps – partner economies . Furthermore, there are 5 accredited sending/host organizations , available at (Accessed on December 29, 2020).

https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organizations_en?country=ME&topic=&scope%5Bq%5D=&town=&name=&combine=&inclusion_topic=&op=Apply+Filter . Within this programme more than 20 Montenegrin youth participated in the last two years.

¹¹⁵ “Western Balkans in Erasmus+”, EC, 2018, available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/ipa/2016/ipa_ii_2016_si2.729762.03_mc_youth.pdf, (Accessed on November 20, 2020), p. 4.

Under the Erasmus+, based on the Delegation of the EU in Montenegro and Erasmus+ Office in Montenegro data,¹¹⁶ young people from Montenegro participated from 2012-2017 in 261 project activities related to capacity-building: in 64 of European Voluntary Service projects (EVS), 81 of youth exchange projects, and 116 of youth workers' mobility. The higher education institutions have participated in 35 projects built around capacity building activities from 2015 to 2020, out of which five have been structural projects. Within 27 projects, the institutions had a partnering role, while eight projects were run by these institutions in the capacity of project coordinators. The ESC program in the previous financial perspective of the EU, was called European Voluntary Service under the Youth in Action Program.

From 2014 to 2018, a total number of 357 young people participated in 136 youth worker mobility projects, 94 in youth exchange projects, 73 in EVS projects, and 24 in capacity-building projects. In 2019/2020, there were 30 approved projects in which Montenegrin organizations took part as either a coordinator or a partner. The latest data published by the EU Info Center in Podgorica, regarding the participants in ESC covers the participation within EVS as well.

Within the ESC program for the period January 2018 - December 2020, there is the following data regarding participants: The Don Bosko Center sent and hosted in total 13 short- and long-term volunteers; the Avenir organization hosted one volunteer in 2019 and the ADP-Zid sent 18 short and long-term volunteers.

The UN system in Montenegro

The UN system supported the creation of Youth Strategy 2017 – 2021, within the UN Joint Program on Youth Empowerment's framework, concretely concerning the harmonization with international standards in the area of youth policy, the involvement of young people and other actors in the process of drafting the strategy, as well as in the development of the framework for monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. In addition, the UN supported the creation of the Youth center in Podgorica and developed a youth-friendly version of youth strategy.

In 2010, UNICEF launched an ambitious network of innovation labs (Innovation Labs), recognizing the need for a deep understanding of all layers of society for the best application of innovative solutions. The Youth Innovation Laboratory in Montenegro, named “Kreaktivator,” is the sixth laboratory of this kind in the world. Its goal is to link government agencies and NGOs with young people and teenagers to work together to find creative solutions to problems identified in local communities. The Laboratory supports a large number of projects with young people and teenagers in Montenegro through UPSHIFT workshops. It is a part of the broader United Nations Youth Empowerment Program, which aims to contribute to creating environments that will empower and motivate young people to use current and new personal development opportunities that contribute to the growth and development of society.

¹¹⁶ Erasmus+ Office in Montenegro, available at <http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/?p=21112> (Accessed on November 20, 2020).

In 2016 and 2017, UNICEF launched a pilot initiative called “Prilike” (Opportunities) to help teenagers in Montenegro to gain important first-hand experiences in the job market. The idea was to add the missing link between the individual and the labor market; social and emotional skills programs improve the quality of education, UPSHIFT and related programs provide the necessary skills, and Prilike would offer them much needed work experience. In 2020¹¹⁷ the main objective of the Prilike program was to design a meaningful internship program for a total of 1,500 teenagers in Montenegro, across the duration of the program, which would allow them to learn more about potential career opportunities and prepare them for the job market. The main target group was high-school students in the 3rd and 4th years of secondary schools (17-19 years old), since research showed that they need the most help with career guidance and potential career decisions.

In 2019 The Joint Program “Activate! Integrated Social Protection and Employment to Accelerate Progress for Young People in Montenegro”¹¹⁸ (JP Activate), worth US\$ 2,890,000, represented the UNCT joint initiative to be implemented in Montenegro, funded by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Fund, in order to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. The program will be jointly implemented by UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO and IOM from December 2019 to 2021 and will involve national partners such as public institutions, NGOs, and private sector partners. The Program aims to enhance the capacities of the national social protection system to better serve people in need. It focuses on youth, children, migrants and refugees, and addresses root causes of human trafficking, while supporting decent work and employability/skills development. The on-going COVID pandemic has affected the dynamic of the implementation of this Program in 2020¹¹⁹.

The cooperation with the UN System in Montenegro is also reflected in activities aimed at improving the quality of life of young people in Montenegro through strengthening their potential, an affirmation of human rights, participation, activism, social cohesion, but also at enhancing regional cooperation. Currently, the regional program Dialogue For the Future¹²⁰ is being implemented. The program was launched in 2019 and aimed at fostering dialogue and social cohesion between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia. In Montenegro, program activities are carried out by UNDP, UNICEF, and UNESCO. It has four streams of action: 1) dialogues with youth and other stakeholders, resulting in a set of recommendations for boosting social cohesion (3 dialogues with youth and one with all stakeholders held); 2) building capacities of youth, women, media, and teachers to contribute to social cohesion (ongoing training of youth and women , media, students of journalism and teachers to start from

¹¹⁷ Since the activities were delayed due to coronavirus influence, the result was not achieved in 2020. On November 30 is closed the Call for Proposal to identify eligible Civil Society Organizations for a prospective partnership that will support the implementation of the programme “Prilike”.

¹¹⁸ The Joint Programme “Activate! Integrated Social Protection and Employment to Accelerate Progress for Young People in Montenegro”, UN, available at <https://jointsdgfund.org/programme/activate-integrated-social-protection-and-employment-accelerate-progress-young-people>, (Accessed on December 19, 2020), p.1.

¹¹⁹ It started, but not as planned due to coronavirus pandemic. Here are more information on this program: <https://jointsdgfund.org/programme/activate-integrated-social-protection-and-employment-accelerate-progress-young-people> and https://www.ilo.org/budapest/what-we-do/projects/WCMS_732984/lang-en/index.htm (Accessed on December 19, 2020).

¹²⁰ The regional program Dialogue for the future, UNDP, available at <https://www.me.undp.org/content/montenegro/en/home/projects/DFF.html>, (Accessed on December 4, 2020.), p.1.

September), 3) small grants facility to fund cross-border/boundary projects which implement recommendations which were defined during dialogues (5 projects from Montenegro launched, 19 in total in 3 economies) and 4) policy action - implementing policy level recommendations from dialogues (continuous).

RYCO

In close cooperation with the governments of Western Balkans economies, the EU provided support for the development of the initiative of Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) as an independently functioning institutional mechanism, founded by the Western Balkans in order to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programs. The Montenegrin Government consistently supports the local branch office of RYCO with the clear commitment and political will to support reconciliation within the region and enhance mobility of young people.

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office has been implementing different kind of activities supporting youth policy implementation as a stakeholder and supporting youth policy implementation through donor activities. All activities implemented in Montenegro are being implemented as part of the overall RYCO Secretariat and under the overall RYCO budget for regional activities. The RYCO office in Montenegro has managed to implement additional activities when it comes to supporting the youth sector and implementing the youth policy. Until now, RYCO conducted four Open Calls for submitting project proposals:

- Through the First Open Call,¹²¹ published in 2017 (designed for CSOs and high schools), three projects were supported with a leading partner from Montenegro, notably the NGO Alfa Center (project: REACT!), the secondary economic and catering school Nikšić (Two schools – one story), and the NGO Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) (project: YOUTH CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE);
- The Second Open Call¹²² was published in 2018 (designed for CSOs and high schools) which supported three projects with a leading partner from Montenegro, notably the Grammar school “Stojan Cerović” (project: Rewind to the Future), NGO Association Spectra (project: Empowering voices of transgender communities in Western Balkans region), and a secondary school for vocational and higher education “Sergije Stanić” (project: A Step Forward);
- The Third Open Call in 2019¹²³ was designed only for high schools and it supported one project with a leading partner from Montenegro, notably Secondary Vocational school “Spasoje Raspopović” (project: Region without prejudices and stereotypes);
- The Fourth Open Call published in 2020 was designed for CSOs and the final list has not been published, but the total amount of the funds for this call is EUR 330,000.

¹²¹ For more details please see: <https://www.rycowb.org/?p=4864> (Accessed on December 28, 2020).

¹²² For more details see https://www.rycowb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Final-List_Second-RYCO-Open-Call.pdf (Accessed on December 28, 2020).

¹²³ For more details please see: <https://www.rycowb.org/?tag=supported-projects> (Accessed on December 28, 2020).

RYCO office in Montenegro also implemented a series of other activities in the overall amount of approximately EUR 150,000, from 2017 to 2020, with the support of donors and partners in Montenegro (mainly the OSCE Mission).

Council of Europe

Through the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), representatives of ministries or bodies responsible for youth matters from all Member States of the Council of Europe are brought together to, inter alia, develop youth policies and standards that tackle the challenges and obstacles young people face in Europe and guarantee youth participation and young people's access to rights. However, in cooperation with the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) and the NGO "Center for Youth Education," the Montenegrin Government and Ministry of Sports and Youth has been implementing the project of the European Youth Card in Montenegro since April 2018 and thus contributing to the fulfillment of obligations described by the CoE Partial Agreement on Mobility through the Youth Card. The Council of Europe is active in the field of youth policy on the European level, especially through a EU - CoE Youth partnership that maintains a website with information on youth policy in Montenegro, creates publications with relevant information on youth policy and youth work, also ensuring report contribution of non-program economies, including Montenegro to EU YOUTH WIKI: Chapter I: Youth policy governance¹²⁴ and Chapter II: Voluntary activities,¹²⁵ organize a regular meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and so on. Developing youth policy and constructing its links with research and practice are at the core of the EU-CoE youth partnership's mission. However, the Program Office of the Council of Europe in Montenegro has been supporting youth policy through the wider projects. In this regard, The Council of Europe implements important projects within the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey (Horizontal Facility II) 2019-2022, which is a co-operation initiative of the European Union and the Council of Europe for the Western Balkans region and Turkey. In Montenegro, projects related to youth, are "Promotion of Diversity and Equality in Montenegro" and "Quality Education for All". There is also a ROMACTED project whose aim is to build up political will and sustained policy engagement of authorities to enhance democratic participation and empowerment of local Roma communities, to design and implement projects, and to access national and external funds. These projects are essential for Outcome B of the Youth Strategy: "Young people have access to quality education," and better involvement of all young people.

OSCE Mission to Montenegro

With the support of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, the Montenegrin Government regularly organizes seminars and training activities gathering all relevant institutions, youth NGOs, international organizations, young people, and other youth policy actors with the aim of building

¹²⁴Chapter I: Youth policy governance, Montenegro, Sladja Petkovic for EU – CoE Youth partnership. Available at: https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262379/YOUTH+WIKI_Montenegro.pdf/0c70c930-8310-435c-bbf6-08601dd21601. (Accessed December 17, 2020). p.23.

¹²⁵ Chapter II: Voluntary activities, Montenegro, Aleksandra Gligorovic for EU – CoE Youth partnership. Available at: <https://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262475/CHAPTER+2+Montenegro.pdf/33d6f404-cefe-5353-bcd3-f6faf2cb4e08>. (Accessed December 17, 2020). p.12.

capacities of officials dealing with youth as well as of drafting action plans for implementing National Youth Strategy (2017-2021). The OSCE Mission to Montenegro usually organizes or supports two-day events related to youth. In 2020, it organized or supported the following activities: 1) Two online training courses to strengthen capacities of the civil society organization in using digital platforms; 2) Two online training workshops for seven young participants from several Montenegrin cities as part of the “Leaders against Intolerance and Violent Extremism – LIVE” program; 3) A two-day workshop on strengthening the capacities of municipal youth focal points; and 4) A training course for potential applicants on the fourth Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) Call for Proposals.

US Embassy in Montenegro

While the USAID was present in Montenegro until 2013,¹²⁶ the US Embassy continued to support the democratization process by supporting NGO projects. Thus, in previous periods the U.S. Embassy Podgorica / The U.S. Embassy’s Public Affairs Section used to publish specific grant programs, including the Democracy Commission Small Grants program, the Public Affairs Section grants program, and the Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation and Media Professionalization Assistance Program. Other sections of the Embassy also administer certain grant programs, such as the Criminal Justice Grants Program. In 2019, the US embassy announced an open competition for organizations to submit applications to carry out a program to address one of the priority areas. Among them was the project Youth Empowerment through Educational Initiatives.¹²⁷ In 2020, the call was published for organizations to submit applications to carry out a project to address the secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable populations in Montenegro. In this regard, the US embassy provided small grants (from \$5,000 to \$10,000) for NGOs dealing with women, youth, minorities, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

GIZ

The Internship Program of the German Business for the economies of the Western Balkan, which lasted for two years (2017-2019), was implemented by GIZ. The Internship Program of German Business for the economies of the Western Balkans provided up to 75 scholarships each year, offering young graduates and students from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia the opportunity to do internships for three to six months in leading German companies. The scholarship holders gain an insight into the corporate culture in Germany and get to know management methods and working processes in modern organizations.¹²⁸

Sida

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has a long-standing commitment to the growth and prosperity of the Western Balkans, but in Montenegro was not

¹²⁶ USAID, available at <https://www.usaid.gov/montenegro>. (Accessed on November 9, 2020).

¹²⁷ “Call for project proposals public affairs office grants program 2019”, US Embassy, available at <https://me.usembassy.gov/call-for-project-proposals-public-affairs-office-grants-program-2019/>. (Accessed on November 9, 2020).

¹²⁸ GIZ, available at <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/20626.html>. (Accessed on December 29, 2020)

present for a long time. In 2020 in partnership with HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation started implementation of the “New regional inclusive economic development program”¹²⁹ aimed to enable women and men, particularly young people and those from disadvantaged and excluded groups, to benefit from economic opportunities by increasing their income and taking up decent employment/self-employment.

5.2. Donor coordination

Despite many analyses and recommendations towards national institutions regarding donor coordination, there is minimal formal or structured donor coordination either at the sector or sub-sector level managed by the national authorities. The first attempts to institutionalize donor coordination were initiated in 2008 through the UN, OSCE, and EC Delegation to Montenegro. To pursue joint resource mobilization, the UN Team in the economy committed to quality and timely reporting to donors, and regular information sharing with resident and non-resident donor representatives. It was planned that through the existing donor coordination mechanism, the importance of contributions to the UN Fund for the economy could be underlined and plans made for donor visits to project sites as well as for coordinating donor participation in Integrated UN Program events.

Overall donor coordination in Montenegro is centralized and performed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Directorate General for Economic and Cultural Cooperation (DGECC)¹³⁰ has been established with the key task to implement and coordinate the development and humanitarian aid policy. The mandate of DGECC is to establish the legal framework, but also to collect data on provided aid and to prepare the methodology of calculating its value. In 2016, the DGECC was expected to develop the database that tracks both the incoming donor assistance and Montenegro’s allocations for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The first advanced version of the database was expected to be prepared by November 2016, but this database has not yet been created, due to the lack of an adequate software tool.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that in 2019 the project¹³¹ supported by UNDP was initiated with an objective to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the areas of international development cooperation and humanitarian aid sending.

¹²⁹ The German organisation Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe signed the Partnership Agreement with the Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, a Cooperation Partner to Sida, and thus became an Implementing Partner to Helvetas in Sida’s Regional programme on inclusive economic development in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans in Montenegro. The Help pilot project “Vibrant ICT-BPO sector for better economic opportunities” will support skills, knowledge and intermediation development in the Western Balkans. Replicating and improving successful models from Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the ICT (Information communication and technology) and BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) sectors in Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo* and Montenegro, the project will lead towards the better functioning of the business services and the supply of skilled workforce as well as the promotion of the regional brand and the BPO sector. The focus of this pilot is on promoting and strengthening the economic “regional value addition” of the ICT-BPO sector in Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo* and Montenegro, building on successful models tested in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹³⁰ Law on international development cooperation and sending international humanitarian aid, (“Official Gazette of Montenegro,” No. 013/18), available at: <https://www.mvp.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=319151&rType=2&file=Law%20on%20International%20development%20Cooperation%20and%20Sending%20Humanitarian%20Aid.pdf>, (Accessed on December 29, 2020).

¹³¹ Official development assistance and humanitarian aid sending, UNDP, available at <https://www.me.undp.org/content/montenegro/en/home/projects/ODA.html>, (Accessed on December 29, 2020).

However, ECs Montenegro Report 2019¹³² states that although the Law on international development and international humanitarian assistance was adopted in 2018, relevant secondary legislation should be adopted to ensure further alignment in this area and to develop a database of donor support projects. No developments in this regard have been reported during 2020,¹³³ and the secondary legislation for the implementation of the Law on international development cooperation and international humanitarian assistance is yet to be adopted. Additionally, the EC indicated the importance of using the OECD Development Assistance Committee methodology for creating a database of donor support projects.¹³⁴

The EU Delegation, UN agencies, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are prominent donors and coordinate closely amongst themselves and with the other donors. There are also coordination groups organized by line ministries at the sector level, whose role should be further enhanced to reflect the sector's approach.

Particularly in the field of youth, there is no specific mechanism for the coordination of donors' activities. Having said that, donor coordination in the field of youth policy represents one of the biggest challenges in supporting youth projects and programs and the impacts and results of projects.

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

Despite many needs' assessments of Montenegrin youth, donors usually implement programs or projects to fit within their priorities. In this regard, donors have been focusing on increasing capacities of national institutions and organizations through capacity-building activities, while there is lack of activities tackling youth needs or involving members of youth on a larger scale. It is expected from national institutions and organizations to implement different activities for youth, but with the exception of an "easy-to-target" group, the approach to involve youth is not yet effective and stimulating enough.

Thus, the approach should be changed in order to involve central and local organizations working with youth to identify key issues in order to implement worthwhile projects or programs so as to make sustainable results in the field of youth. Projects or programs that have been implemented are fit into a context that most youth are not familiar with. These should be designed in order to tackle basic needs of young people - economic and social security. Without strong long-term actions in this field and a strong focus on formal and non-formal education opportunities and culture, and without space to implement what has been learned, the expected results can hardly be achieved.

¹³² "Montenegro 2019 Report", European Commission, 2019, available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/montenegro_report_2019.pdf, (Accessed on December 29, 2020), p. 114.

¹³³ "Montenegro 2020 Report", European Commission, 2020, available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/montenegro_report_2020.pdf, (Accessed on December 29, 2020), p. 117.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 117.

On the other hand, evaluation of innovative projects or those which address youth needs should be strengthened. There are no possibilities for program funding which directly affects lack of sustainable results and lack of continuity in the implementation of certain services and programs. Due to the long-term challenges youth in Montenegro face caused by the lack of employment opportunities and lack of knowledge and skills, the area in youth that the donors should prioritize is employment. In addition, new problems are arising, and the existing problems are being exacerbating in the sphere of employment. Although both official and real unemployment rates are growing, the supply and demand in the labor market tend to have a mismatch and the time of searching for a job for University graduates continues to increase, among other problems.

The unemployment rate has had a continuous downward trend compared to the previous period until 2020, but still it was double compared to the EU average. In 2020, the unemployment rate increased by 10,5% which will, as a consequence, affect youth migration data in the upcoming period. With that said, funding for initiatives and programming should provide a "response to this issue" and, furthermore, prepare young people for success as employees and entrepreneurs with an understanding of managing available financial services and resources. The current program and initiatives have not been giving long-term results in the field of the key existing issues for youth. Therefore, the programs and projects should focus on the labor market, labor mobility, migration, youth employment, and active inclusion, notably technical and vocational training, life skills development, work readiness programs, job placement services, entrepreneurship support and financial inclusion. On the other side, there is room for improvement of constructive relations between donors and local self-governments in this field, as well as with national institutions, which can result in sustainable and long-term effects and mechanisms for youth employment, especially with educational institutions and the labor market. Other stakeholders such as schools and other bodies implementing youth policies may be targeted, but monitoring mechanisms should be changed in order to achieve long-term results.

5.4. Critical assessment

Numerous projects or programs are being implemented in the field of youth, but they are not well-coordinated. Even though much effort has been invested into a needs assessment of youth in Montenegro, there are many challenges in several areas, particularly in employment, education, and participation in the decision-making process. Available projects or programs are only visible to a small group of youth and information about those projects or programs are sometimes hard to find. On the other hand, available programs and projects often target the same youth groups. Therefore, the programs should be adjusted to long-term youth needs and procedures to ensure better involvement of this target group's broader scope should be improved.

Youth issues and needs are rarely mentioned in donors' overall strategic priorities and plans. Most donors state that their current approach is to "mainstream" or "integrate" youth issues across other sectors, for example, by including a specific horizontal youth component or identifying groups of male and/or female youth as explicit target groups. Policy responsibility for youth is often spread across departments, including departments working on education,

economic recovery/development, humanitarian aid, conflict and peacebuilding, and civil society. In recent years, there has been growing donor momentum around youth-focused programming, focusing on youth's role in social, economic, and political development. However, there is a lack of detailed information about donor policies and strategies and whether these strategies have been matched by an increase in funding and specific programming to meet youth needs, as well as ongoing projects of the key donors.

Nonetheless, all donors fund or implement development programs with or for youth. Some donors have a long track record of implementing specific youth programs or targeting their programs at youth. The challenge is that most donors cannot generate accurate quantitative information about their level of spending on youth, in general, in specific sectors. At present, no donors have a specific “youth” marker in their project management system, which would allow them to accurately quantify the number and location of projects and overall levels of funding devoted to general youth or specific sectors. On the other hand, there is a lack of information exchange regarding the youth projects supported by different donors, so overlapping projects and activities is a matter of concern in Montenegro. This especially refers to various regional initiatives and projects of youth mobility and participation. There is no unique database of different donors and supported projects and programs aiming at youth, so the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of these projects are widely missing.

CHAPTER 6: GOOD PRACTICE 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 practice

As regards the development and implementation of youth policy in Montenegro, it should be stressed that since the preparation and adoption of LoY, the strategy has always been an inclusive process that involved partnership with a wide spectrum of institutions and civil society organizations working with youth. Methodologically, it always included national consultation processes and public debate organized directly with youth, usage of a pool of national youth policy experts and the utilization of international knowledge on youth policy through cooperation with international organizations. Notably, in regard to LoY, the process of its drafting has been carried out by the multi-sectorial working group managed by the Ministry. Public consultations around the initial draft of the LoY have been organized and representatives of the former MSY have opened a space for fruitful discussion in order to get feedback that will improve the next draft of the LoY. This is very positive but proves to be the exception when it comes to influencing the public debates.

The Strategy since the beginning has had a specific budget line for its implementation, and this approach has been giving visible results in the area of youth empowerment and the development of programs and services for youth. Financing youth policy and partnership with civil society in the period from 2017 to 2019 is a good example on how an institution such as the former MSY can plan, adopt and implement its strategy, and how it can cooperate with international stakeholders to create the conditions to improve the position of youth in Montenegro. It is important to emphasize that since the adoption of the strategy, the former MSY showed a strong commitment for its implementation. Formerly, the MSY was ensuring regular communication with youth NGOs and all other relevant stakeholders, especially local self-governments, and investing significant efforts into the coordination of youth policy related activities in the economy. There has been a visible commitment to invest in youth, improve youth policy implementation at the local level, and to continue with the improvement of the policy framework. The identification and recognition of the importance of regional platforms, networks or organizations by the former MSY leads to improving youth cooperation and establishing a new base for the Western Balkans youth. A good example is the RYCO budget for the Office in Montenegro that has doubled in 2019.

New instruments for creating and implementing youth policy as prescribed in the LoY program is seen as a good method of ensuring cross-sectorial cooperation between all relevant youth policy subjects, including measures and activities on strengthening youth in Montenegro.

A new sustainable solution for institutionalization of youth services has been created, while the MESCS and municipalities, within their competencies and abilities, must ensure conditions for the work and functioning of youth services.

Excellent cooperation of the former MSY and international organizations and foundations, such as the OSCE Mission in Montenegro, the Heinz Seidel Foundation, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Regional Cooperation Council improve the work and effectiveness of the performance of the Ministry and the implementation of youth policy.

The benefits in Montenegro and abroad of the European Youth Card are recognized by the MESCS, and Montenegro is a rare economy which offers this card free of charge for all youth. The Union of High School Students of Montenegro is an example of youth participation in the decision-making process and activism, since its representatives are democratically elected by the 83 delegates of the National Conference, while the example of the Municipality of Budva and its Youth Office should be followed, taking into consideration that the youth club was established in 2017 by the Municipality and there is an experienced part-time youth worker with a very collaborative approach and enthusiasm. Furthermore, there is very good cooperation of this Youth Office with representatives of educational institutions and NGOs in Budva and Montenegro.

RYCO's Local Branch Office (LBO) in Montenegro has very good streaming of their activities which are focused in three levels: youth, NGOs and schools and international organisations.

6.2 Gaps

Despite the results achieved, lack of cross-sectorial cooperation remains, resulting in a decrease in the youth population and increase of internal and external migration. Very low capacity of the current departments or sectors within the local self-governments hampers the improvement of structured dialogue. There is a lack of willingness to form departments for the implementation of youth policy within the local self-governments who will be only in charge for implementation of youth activities and tasks related to the LYAP.

Apart from the former MSY, most youth programs or youth projects in other public administration bodies are provided with international rather than public funding, which raises the issue of uncertainty in providing permanent financial support.

Evidence-based planning practice of other relevant ministries and public institutions at the national level (including MONSTAT), that are feeding the system with data on youth in different areas (such as education, health, and security) is signaling that data on youth were for the last decade collected in the form that was needed for specific planning and the research of individual institutions. Furthermore, it is rare to find data segregated by the age cohort 15-29, as prescribed by the LoY.

A positive picture on youth policy development and implementation in Montenegro is sometimes confronted with the view of a certain number of youth and youth-led NGOs who claim that “there are no participation mechanisms that are adjusted to youth” and “young people need to be more actively involved in all processes but using youth friendly methods”. They often say that “initiatives that promote youth participation are mostly on an ad-hoc basis and do not provide the opportunities for true participation in the decision-making process” and that they are “used merely as props, and not taken seriously.” Many of them do not believe in the process of consultations and give this as a reason for not participating in such consultations.¹³⁵

Youth policy framework goes above and beyond the creation of action plans for youth, but young people are often not perceived seriously, and their needs are not adequately addressed. Often, in the action plans at the national and local levels, there are activities that are interesting, but they do not provide long-term results because they do not address the most important, basic needs of young people: economic and social security, and health.

When it comes to youth programs that are implemented by NGOs, the main weaknesses are that they rely on mostly project-based funding. There are no possibilities for program funding, and that directly affects a lack of sustainable results and a lack of continuity in implementation of certain services and programs. In general, the amount of funds allocated for youth policy implementation, especially in the areas of non-formal education, and participation of youth (social, economic, and political) is not at a sufficient level if full participation of all youth is to be ensured.

Although for many years new recommendations were developed, the national youth policies framework was improved, and progress to a certain extent has been achieved, there is a need for further improvements in three key areas – employment, education and the decision-making process.

6.3. The impact of COVID-19 on youth

The COVID-19 outbreak affects all segments of society, but particularly impacts the most vulnerable groups. Assessing of the influence of COVID-19 on youth and identifying its impacts on the social, economic, health field, and employment is therefore crucial before outlining the key recommendations in three key areas: education, employment, and socialization and mental health.

– Education

Vulnerable categories in societies are the most influenced by the impact of COVID-19.

In particular, representatives of the Roma and Egyptian population, due to poverty present an imminent need for subsidies for the internet and other tools to use in distance learning.

¹³⁵ Based on the round tables feedback with youth in 2019 that the researcher conducted in several municipalities of Montenegro.

Persons with disabilities need further support for distance learning, especially keeping in mind different obstacles they face while trying to complete the requested tasks. In particular youth with mental disabilities need to be provided with assistance during the online education program as well. Youth in general also face problems including a lack of self-confidence, mental health issues due to hate speech, bullying, and other problems that influence their engagement in school.

A former Ministry of Education, in order to respond to the needs presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, developed a free-of-charge online platform #Učidoma (#LearnAtHome) in cooperation with the Amplitudo company to help teachers and students keep up with the school schedule. Despite the efforts, the quality of education decreased and some of the teachers, as well as youth, do not have the skills needed for online learning.

In order to contribute to the digital transformation of educational processes, as well as to smart and inclusive growth, it is recommended to ensure the development of quality digital curricula with a special focus on 21st Century skills (such as critical thinking, problem solving, digital literacy, team work, and empathy), and to provide capacity-building programs that will support teachers to use digital tools in an effective manner and ensure that their learners develop the skills they need for success in the labor market.

– Employment

In relation to the influence of COVID-19 on youth employment, the latest data on the labor market, published for the 3rd quarter of 2020 by the Employment agency of Montenegro and MONSTAT, shows that the youth unemployment rate was 32.8%¹³⁶ (32.8% for young females and 31.8% for young males),¹³⁷ which is 10.5% higher than it was in the end of 2019.

Again, vulnerable groups are the most influenced by the crisis caused by COVID-19, due to the reduced incomes of families whose members are not working. School to work transition is expected to be prolonged and even more difficult, keeping in mind labor market challenges and disruption of seasonal jobs. Young entrepreneurs face multiple challenges, on top of being already vulnerable in the first years of business operations. They are usually running micro businesses, which tend to get left behind when it comes to support measures. Poor liquidity and cash reserves are placing them at the top of the list of the most vulnerable businesses.¹³⁸

Key recommendations in the field of employment regarding the assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the business sector and the growth prospects of the Montenegrin economy¹³⁹

¹³⁶ “Labor Force Survey – 3rd Quartal report”, MONSTAT, 2020, available at <https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/ARS/2020/3/III%20quarter%202020%20.xls> (Accessed on January 8, 2021), p. 25.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 25.

¹³⁸ The UN Socio-economic response plan to COVID-19 in Montenegro, UN in Montenegro, 2020, available here: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MNE_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf, (Accessed on November 15, 2020), p. 34.

¹³⁹ Assessment Of The Impact Of Covid-19 On The Business Sector And The Growth Prospects Of The Montenegrin Economy, UNDP with contributions from UNESCO and UN Women, 2020, available at

include, but are not limited to, analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on the social sectors' sustainability, enhancing consultations among social partners and the business community, extending the program of so-called economic passports, and implementing innovative internship which can contribute to a reduction in youth unemployment. It is also considered relevant to continue with the development of internship models and quality digital curricula focusing on skills for the 21st century and also to re-introduce or create new public works and employment programs such as afforestation, waste disposal, and management, among others.

Furthermore, rapid assessment of the employment impact and policy responses conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) outlined several important policy issues as well as options for supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes during the next phases of the COVID crisis, focusing on broadening eligibility criteria for social assistance, introducing unconditional and non-contributory unemployment assistance to young people and establishing additional employment retention programs. Restructuring of the existing, expensive graduate professional training program into a universal and open-ended internship program for young people under the age of 30 is also seen as one of the options. This should be addressed, along with the promotion of in-work intergenerational solidarity and the facilitation of adequate tripartite negotiations around the Covid-19 response and the elements of a new social compact in response to the crisis, while including youth in these negotiations.

– Socialization and mental health

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to youth spending more time on smartphones using social networks, communication applications, and chat rooms. While this has undoubtedly allowed them to keep in touch with friends or connect with new ones during the pandemic, they have also been exposed to increased levels of online hate. Restricted movement has resulted in more time spent online by young people. This has increasingly exacerbated the spread of hate speech, cyber bullying, racism, and incitement to violence during the pandemic.

Regarding the UN Socio-economic response plan to COVID-19 in Montenegro,¹⁴⁰ people with disabilities and LGBTI persons¹⁴¹ indicated that they needed health services, followed by psychological support. Some of them have faced additional health problems due to restricted movement, such as rising levels of depression and anxiety.

Adolescents and young people stressed the importance of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and that there is not enough psychological support, in general, but particularly for young people.

https://www.me.undp.org/content/montenegro/en/home/library/economy_environment/Covid19EconomicImpactAssessment.html, (Accessed on November 15, 2020), pp. 12-48.

¹⁴⁰ The UN Socio-economic response plan to COVID-19 in Montenegro, UN in Montenegro, 2020, available here: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MNE_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf, (Accessed on November 15, 2020) pp. 19-22.

¹⁴¹ Monitoring report of reported cases of hate speech and discrimination in the online space, LGBTIQ organisation, 2020, available at https://media.lgbtiq.me/2020/10/Monitoring-izvjestaj_final.pdf, (Accessed on November 25, 2020), p. 5.

To respond to this situation, the media and digital spaces should be used to promote exchanges and intercultural dialogue that further common values, human rights, tolerance, and peace. It is necessary to discuss such issues, challenges, and good practices in supporting young people to counter and prevent online hate speech, cyber bullying, racism, and violent extremism, among others, using media and ICTs in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also requires the identification of effective measures that can be used to prevent and combat online hate speech, cyberbullying, racism, promote peace building and sustainable development, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, donors have to focus more on media and information literacy education.

6.4. Recommendations

The situation and position of young people in Montenegro's life spheres need to be improved and systematically monitored against the progress made. Policy frameworks, programs, and projects implemented by all stakeholders have to be carefully designed and well-coordinated in order to foster appropriate actions of different organizations, donors and government bodies to avoid overlaps and ensure synergies. Since the new Government structure does not involve MSY, it is even more important that the youth agenda remains high on the political agenda. The recommendation draws special attention to the fact that Montenegrin youth need, besides legal support, political support, sustainable funding and structures, improved coordination across sectors and between the local and the national levels, and structured dialogue in order to improve their position.

Policy actors:

- Strengthen trust in institutions and processes, and invest in further development of youth friendly mechanisms for ensuring youth participation and permanent structured dialogue between decision makers, young people and organizations dealing with youth at local and national level. In this area innovative approaches need to be implemented that should bear in mind the importance of adequate communication with this target groups, as well as to adjust the content of the communication.
- Establish a coordination mechanism in order to synchronize work and efforts in the field of youth of public institutions and organizations which could be governed by the Prime Minister Office in order to improve intersectoral cooperation and ensure better coordination among the different ministries important to youth issues. As one of the young representatives consulted during this research concluded: “Policies that regard young people are to be found across different sectors and fields, and there shall be a systematic approach, in which young people must be seen as forces for positive change.¹⁴²” The youth policy is a cross-sectoral issue, and it is crucial to focus on monitoring and evaluating the work of public institutions in this regard.
- Develop an application which will encompass all items such as calls, advice, facts related to youth in the field of employment, culture, entrepreneurship, education and

¹⁴² Dimitrije Jovicevic, ex RYCO Youth Representative of Montenegro.

others, that will provide a space for youth to get all their information in different social spheres.

- Continue work on strengthening the capacities of local governments for development and implementation of youth policy and support the establishment of a department or sector which will be only in charge of implementing youth policy aiming to provide more effective youth policy implementation.
- Strengthen the institutional and individual capacities for monitoring of youth policy implementation at the national and local level, focused indicator-based reporting by all relevant stakeholders that implement youth policy.
- To improve evidence-based youth policy creation and implementation, it is essential to facilitate further stronger cooperation between researchers at the national level that study youth and youth related issues.
- Provide sustainable and continuous funding for youth policy through investing in human resources and funds in long-term projects and programs implemented by youth and for youth (administrative grants for organizations providing youth work activities and other youth related activities in line with LoY and the Strategy), but also create more flexible mechanisms for financing youth-led initiatives, keeping in mind the needs and demand. The amount of funds allocated for youth policy-related projects and programs of civil society organizations, especially in the areas of non-formal education, volunteering, and the participation of youth (social, economic, and political), needs to be increased.
- Strengthening local structures is critical for achieving long term goals, and in line with this, organizations need to have the possibility for getting administrative grants and additional capacity-building when required, since youth programs that are implemented by NGOs are mostly based on project-based funding.
- Concerning the policy level, continuous monitoring of implementation and steps towards additional improvement of the policy framework is needed to ensure appropriate coordination of all youth policy-related activities, proper funding, and reporting.

NGOs dealing with youth:

- In order to improve the implementation of youth policy at the national and local levels, as well as to encourage proactive youth participation in this process, NGOs should strengthen their work in empowering cooperation with different public actors and structures dealing with youth, as well as with companies supporting MSCS's efforts to improve the position of youth in Montenegro.
- Even in the management of NGOs and implementing programs that are intended for youth, there is a need for new forms of working to increase the number of young individuals involved in the creation and implementation of those programs.
- Organizations should strive to go beyond the "usual suspects" (the best students, young people from urban areas and similar groups) and involve other, harder to reach youth.
- It is necessary to keep up with the fast changes and development of society, which is mainly affecting youth, and to overcome the dated style of management of consultations and public debate in the area of youth policy. It is essential to organize structured

dialogue with youth and to create youth-friendly consultation processes and ways of involvement in decision making.

Donors:

- Adjust the programs to long-term youth needs and to improve procedures to ensure better involvement of this target group's broader scope in order to provide sustainability and long-term effects, especially in the field of employment and education.
- Youth issues and needs should be recognized in donors' overall strategic priorities and plans, while trying to change the approach from “mainstream” or “integrated” youth issues across other sectors to including a specific horizontal youth component.
- To provide detailed information about donor policies and strategies and whether these strategies have been matched by an increase in funding and specific programming to meet youth needs, but as well as ongoing projects of the key donors.
- Provide a base of supported projects or programs where there is a lack of information exchange regarding the youth projects supported by different donors due to overlapping projects and activities in Montenegro.
- Support the creation of a donor coordination database in the field of youth, and enhance monitoring and comprehensive evaluation of projects or programs.
- Continue support to the public institutions and NGOs, but with particular attention to the following dimensions: employment, education, media, data and digital literacy, and health and social protection.
- Provide institutional funding for the youth sector (organizations, associations, groups, networks and other forms) to ensure sustainability of operations through financial means and providing skills development.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: National Action Plan 2020-2021

Within the **key priority A: Young people achieve economic and social security through improved access to the labor market and employment**, main activities planned through the Action plan 2020-2021 are related to the promotion of youth entrepreneurship and active measures of youth employment; education of employers about the benefits of youth employment focusing on the employment of young people with disabilities; networking of young entrepreneurs at local, national and EU level, peer education and activation of young people in the field of their economic independence and job search as well as mapping of young people who are not educated, employed or trained (NEET persons).

The main activities planned within **the key priority B: Young people have access to quality education** refer to increasing the quality of formal education and professional competences of young people as well as improving the competencies of the organizers of practical education in schools and promoting examples of good practice in the field of cooperation between schools and employers. Strengthening of socio-emotional competences of school and student population is one of the key activities that will be conducted through series of workshops, trainings and programs implemented by relevant institutions and other youth policy actors.

Main points of activities planned through the **key priority C: Young people are active citizens, involved, motivated, proactive and participate in decision-making and community development processes, in the creation of policies and their implementation** considers implementing the projects/programs of non-formal education implemented by NGOs operating in the field of proactive youth participation on democracy, youth participation culture, human rights, entrepreneurship, various volunteer actions, environmental campaigns prevention of peer violence etc.

Key priority D of the Strategy: Young people are healthy, they are safe, have access to an adequate support system for transition to adulthood and self-realization refer to the activities on: strengthening the work of counselling services for young people in schools and community health centers on the topics of prevention and preservation of health, peer violence and providing psychosocial support; conducting the projects aimed on prevention of health risk behaviors of young people as well as co-financing of various sports programs to improve healthy lifestyles by providing support to national sports' federations, sports organizations to participate in various competitions as well as NGOs in the field of sports.

Within the **key priority E: Young people have access to quality cultural contents as creators and consumers**, relevant institutions in close cooperation with other stakeholders including NGOs will conduct activities aimed on providing support to young artists in culture, youth NGOs dealing with culture and media content for young people, as well as support for amateur

youth programs, educational institutions and cultural centers. Special attention is paid to the continuous realization of cultural contents available to young people with disabilities.

Activities prescribed through the **key priority F: Normative and institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy has been established** are aimed on promoting and implementing the legal mechanisms prescribed by the LoY; preparing the Program of Public Interest in the field of Youth Policy; strengthening capacities of local civil servants dealing with youth policy; increasing the capacities of youth services and their further institutionalization; promoting youth policy legal mechanisms at national and local level and etc.

Annex 2: National Youth Strategy 2017-2021 – Priorities and relevant measures

The Strategy specifies following **six key priorities (outcomes)**:

- A. Young people achieve economic and social security through improved access to labor market and employment.
- B. Young people have access to quality education.
- C. Young people are active citizens, involved, motivated, proactive and participate in decision-making and community development processes, in creation of policies and their implementation.
- D. Young people are healthy, they are safe, have access to an adequate support system for transition to adulthood and self-realization.
- E. Young people have access to quality cultural content as creators and consumers.
- F. Normative and institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy has been established.

Besides the identification of key priorities for the period 2017-2021, this Youth Strategy also defines the **24 measures, 73 sub-measures and different number of activities defined in annual Action plans** that need to be implemented in order to fulfil the defined priorities, as well as the actors in charge for their implementation.

- A. Measures for achievement of economic and social security of young people through facilitated access to labor market and employment:
 - 1) Removal of barriers for accessing the labor market for all young people.
 - 2) Supporting development of youth entrepreneurship.
 - 3) Establishment of an integrated and holistic youth support system for transition to decent employment.
 - 4) Reduction of youth inactivity (NEET).

B. Measures for ensuring access to quality education for youth:

- 1) Supporting development of non-formal learning and improvement of tools for verification of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge.
- 2) Improvement of quality of organization, delivery and evaluation of practical education in VET schools.
- 3) Development of social and emotional skills of young people.
- 4) Prevention and reduction of dropout rates.
- 5) Promotion of youth educational mobility.

C. Measures for the enhancement of a culture of participation of youth:

1. Development of youth participation culture
2. Putting in place mechanisms / systems for fostering activism.
3. Supporting youth organizing and youth networking.

D. Measures ensuring that young people are healthy, safe, and have access to an adequate support system for a transition to adulthood and self-realization:

1. Establishment of efficient inter-sectoral information and counselling services for young people and parents.
2. Development of youth work as support to transition to adulthood.
3. Supporting development of young people's psychological and physical health.

E. Measures for ensuring that young people have access to quality cultural contents:

1. Supporting young creators of culture and media contents.
2. Providing equal access to cultural contents for all young people.

F. Measures for establishment of legal and normative framework for implementation of youth policy:

1. Strengthening the capacities for youth policy implementation and monitoring.
2. Improvement of normative support.
3. Providing sustainable and continuous funding for youth policy.
4. Improvement of intersectoral cooperation.
5. Improvement of national youth statistics and knowledge about young people.
6. Strengthening the capacities of local governments for development and implementation of youth policy.
7. Supporting youth organizations.
8. International cooperation.
9. Improvement of informing young people on youth policies.

Annex 3: List of interviews

	Institution	Sector	Contact Person	Position
1	Former Ministry of Sports and Youth	Governmental organizations	Mr. Nenad Koprivica	Director General
2	Delegation of the EU in Montenegro	International organizations	Ms. Ana Margarida Mariguesa	Program Manager for Civil Society of the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro
3	OSCE	International organizations	Ms. Lia Magnaguagno	OSCE Democratization Program Manager
4	UNDP	International organizations	Ms. Jelena Miljanic	Youth focal Point
5	RYCO	International organization	Mr. Edin Koljenović	Local Branch Officer in Montenegro
6	RYCO	International organization	Ms. Andrea Mićanović	RYCO Youth representative for Montenegro
7	WeB4YES (Western Balkan Civil Society Organizations for Youth Employment Support)	A regional-scale initiative	Mr. Božina Stešević	Representative of the organization ADP ZID, project partner