

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

Report

North Macedonia



Title: MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – NORTH MACEDONIA 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.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report offers an overview and assessment of the existing youth policy framework, programs and mechanisms of youth participation in North Macedonia. In addition, the report identifies existing support for and gaps in financing of youth actions in North Macedonia. It is drafted based on desk and empirical research. In-depth interviews are conducted with various local, national and international stakeholders in the youth sector.

The desk research primarily consisted of analyzing the law, national strategies, action plans, and youth programs. Statistics from various sources and most recent reports from local and international organizations are analyzed as essential sources of information on the youth sector in North Macedonia. The empirical research was carried out through 16 in-depth interviews with various local and international stakeholders from institutions and organizations. Stakeholders represented the Government, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Agency for Youth and Sport (AYS), different civil society organizations, the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM), the SEGA-Youth coalition, and representatives of international donors (such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, OSCE, and others.)

National youth policy in North Macedonia has repeatedly been a subject of debate in the prolonged transition period. Young people have to deal with persistent challenges, including formal and informal education, unemployment, social protection, gender equality, career development, and others. The National Youth Policy aims to create mechanisms to deal with these challenges and enable young people to develop knowledge, skills, and competencies. Yet, these mechanisms are not fully functional. Young people perceive limited efficient engagement and participation in decision-making processes. More attention should be paid to bridging the gap between the official bodies adopting legislation, and the young people who benefit from it. Thus, genuine and substantial dialogue among all actors involved in the process is of great importance, as well as ensuring the inclusion of the input from young people themselves.

In terms of the legal framework, the most important achievement has been the adoption of the first-ever Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies (hereinafter: LYPYP) in January of 2020. The law aims to create and implement youth policy at all levels through multi-sectoral approaches, starting from the needs and interests of young people. The law also aims to strengthen young people's participation in policymaking processes through the promotion of intergenerational partnerships and the raising of awareness of their importance and social role. It intends to support youth organizations, and encourage structural dialogue at the national and local levels. In terms of policy, second most important document is the National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2016–2025, adopted in February 2016, which has been followed by one action plan only - Action Plan (AP) (2016 – 2017). Based on desk and empirical research, a lack of data available about the implementation of the law and NYS is noticed.



When it comes to youth participation under the new law, a National Youth Policy Advisory Body is foreseen as a body for cooperation between youth representatives and the public administration, with an advisory and supervisory role in implementing youth policies and youth activities. While there is no Ministry of Youth in the economy, the most crucial governmental institution remains the Agency of Youth and Sport (hereinafter: AYS) and Office of the Prime Minister. Under the new law, the Government and municipalities must adopt specific strategies and action plans dedicated to young people. In particular, the municipalities are obliged to facilitate and provide for the formation of local youth councils. It is expected that in each municipality at least one youth center should be established.

The overview of the existing youth policies shows that there are limited evidence-based policies. While inter-institutional cooperation in the field of youth has improved, young people still believe that cross-sectoral cooperation must be stronger and more structured. The economy has a National Youth Council, which is a union of associations where associations and foundations from the Republic of North Macedonia are registered on voluntary basis. The council is a member of the European Youth Forum, nevertheless it is not formally recognized as a representative body of youth, nor does the government financially support it. Still, an example of good practice exists, namely, the inclusion of the NYCM in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Project, which represents the first example of the youth organization being included as a partner in the implementation of a governmental policy.

Moreover, funds for the implementation of the youth policy are allocated from the public budget, but financial support by the donor community in this area is considerably higher.

The report contains some key recommendations outlined for policy makers, the civil society sector, the donor community, youth organizations and young people as well. Some of the key recommendations refer to the compelling necessity of the successful implementation of LYPYP and, at the same time, the necessity to increase public funding to support youth organizations. To this end, institutional support in terms of capacity building for youth organizations and other institutions operating in youth sector, should be prioritized in the future. Overall, a more comprehensive approach and better coordination among the different relevant ministries and governmental institutions should be promoted.

In terms of youth funding, a more effective donor coordination mechanism should be established at a national, and in the future, at the regional level since the current approach has some limitations. Potential priority areas for funding are:

- *Rural youth*, with more programs and projects supporting young people from rural areas to channel their energy, creativity, and aspirations in the areas where they live.
- *Promoting youth activism in a multi-ethnic context*, with more programs and projects engaging youth from all ethnic communities on intercultural dialogue, peace-building, and social cohesion, and active civic and political participation from youth.
- *Youth radicalization and extremism*, focusing more on the drivers of radicalization and extremism but also on also the implications of hate speech, security issues, organized crime and youth.



- *Roma youth and other minority groups*, with enhancing the current focus on education and employment, while also looking to formal and non-formal education, the impact of COVID-19, and empowerment in the digital area.
- *Focus on the migration of young people*, with more programs and projects focused on channeled training of young people and support for them in education and career development. In particular, more efforts on supporting the consolidation of linkages between educated youth and the labor market.
- *Inclusive youth work* to support young people's inclusion and participation in society, fostering active participation, gender equality, and combating all forms of discrimination in the labor market.

Overall, there is the need for an integrated, cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to the issues of young people's development. The mainstreaming of youth issues traditionally addressed on programs related to education, training, health and employment should continue but the aforementioned areas should be prioritized in the context of North Macedonia.

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



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APERNM	Agency for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship in the Republic of North Macedonia
ALMM	Active Labor Market Measures
AP	Action Plan
AYS	Agency for Youth and Sport
CYAP	Club on Youth Affairs and Policies
EC	European Commission
ESA	Employment Service Agency
EU	European Union
IPARD	The instrument for Pre-Accession for Rural Development
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
MP	Member of Parliament
NAEPM	National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility
NDI	National Democratic Institute North Macedonia
NEET	Not in employment, education, or training
NYCM	National Youth Council of Macedonia
NYS	National Youth Strategy
NYA	National Youth Assembly
NYPAB	National Youth Policy Advisory Body
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
UNDP	United Nation Development Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

This chapter presents statistics regarding youth age, gender, education, employment, and migration.

1.1 Age and gender

The total population of North Macedonia in December 2018 was estimated at 2,076,217, divided almost evenly between males (50.1%) and females (49.9%). The last national census in 2002 showed a growing urban/rural divide and a severely skewed distribution of the population, with 58% of the population living in cities, the highest concentration (20.5 per cent) being in the capital city of Skopje. The State Statistical Office estimates show 45 of 81 municipalities having a negative population growth, undoubtedly caused by falling birth rates and migration¹.

Table 1: Population figures 2015-2019

	2015	2016	2017	2018
15-18 years	100,805	99,224	96,517	95,657
19-24	178,538	172,260	166,755	161,056
25-29	161,173	160,662	158,524	155,266
Total youth	440,516	432,146	421,796	411,979
Total population	2,070,226	2,072,490	2,074,502	2,076,217

Source: State Statistical Office, 2019

According to the State Statistical Office in North Macedonia, the estimated dynamics of youth population in the economy showed that in the period 2015 to 2018 this segment declined from 440,516 to 411,979, although the total population has slightly grown from 2,070,226 in 2015 to 2,076,217 in the same period. This is an indication that the population in the economy is ageing, with the proportion of youth in the total population dropping by 1.5 percentage points in the period 2015-2018 from 21.3 % to 19.8%².

Nevertheless, according to Eurostat, there were 421,796 young people in North Macedonia aged 15 to 29 in January 2018, which represented 20.3% of the total population number. The

¹ State Statistical Office of North Macedonia, http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto_en.aspx?id=2

² “Born in transition - Situation analysis of young people in North Macedonia”, Boge Bozinovski, Skopje: UNICEF, 2020, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/reports/born-transition>. (Accessed 10 October, 2020)



number of men in the youth population was 217,029 (51.45%), while the number of women in the youth population was 204,767 (48.55%).³

1.2 Education and employment

Education in North Macedonia is in a continuous process of reform. Such a situation of continuous reform hinders the possibility of a thorough evaluation of the effects of specific educational models and their effectiveness, which might narrow the space for all stakeholders to encourage the process. It is particularly difficult to distinguish between positive and negative effects for direct users of this process, i.e., youth. Youth employment also remains a very important issue for the economy. A key problem relating to youth position in the labor market remains the insufficient quality of education outcomes; the relevance of education outcomes in terms of labor market needs; a still-weak relationship between industry and the working environment; and secondary school curricula that do not yet integrate career orientation.⁴

1.2.1 Education

The percentage of students included in the educational process is one of the highest among participating economies in the PISA Research project, totaling 98.6 %.⁵ Such a situation, among other things, is due to the 2008 legislation. Since 2008, compulsory education in North Macedonia comprises the primary, lower, and upper secondary levels.⁶ Between 2000 and 2015, upper secondary education's gross enrolment rate increased from 67% to 80%. However, in the past three years, there has been a declining trend of gross enrolment rates (from 81% to 75%), with an increasing gap between boys and girls⁷. According to the State Statistical Office data, the number of students in the regular primary and lower secondary schools at the beginning of the school year 2019/2020 was 187,240, a decrease of 0.5% compared to the previous school year. Moreover, the number of students in the regular upper secondary schools at the beginning of the school year 2019/2020 was 69,980, a decrease of 2.3% compared to the previous school year.⁸

The economy's higher education system has expanded rapidly in the past two decades. In 2017, there were 22 higher education institutions, compared to only five in 2003/2004, including 14 universities and 5 universities of applied science. In 2016/17, 58,083 students

³ Data extracted from: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/overview-Former-Yugoslav-Republic-of-Macedonia#> on November, 2020

⁴ "Youth Macedonia 2018-2019", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marija_Topuzovska_Latkovikj/publication/332241977_YOUTH_STUDY_NORTH_MACEDONIA_20182019/links/5e20fa01a6fdcc10156f7fa7/YOUTH-STUDY-NORTH-MACEDONIA-2018-2019.pdf (Accessed January 11, 2021).

⁵ PISA 2015, RESULTS IN FOCUS OECD, 2018, Available at <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2015-results-in-focus.pdf>. (Accessed October 5, 2020).

⁶ Youth Study in North Macedonia 2018-2019, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marija_Topuzovska_Latkovikj/publication/332241977_YOUTH_STUDY_NORTH_MACEDONIA_20182019/links/5e20fa01a6fdcc10156f7fa7/YOUTH-STUDY-NORTH-MACEDONIA-2018-2019.pdf, (Accessed October 7, 2020)

⁷ North Macedonia, available at: <http://uis.unesco.org/economy/MK>, (Accessed October 8, 2020)

⁸ Primary and Secondary Schools in Macedonia at the beginning of the school year 2019/2020, State Statistical Office, available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2020/2.1.20.09_mk.pdf, (Accessed October 4, 2020)



were enrolled in all institutions of higher learning. The expansion of supply is reflected in increased gross enrolment, from 15% in 1991 to over 40% in 2015⁹. The majority of the students (86.6%) were enrolled at public institutions of higher learning, while 13% were enrolled at private institutions.

According to the data of the State Statistical Office, the number of graduated students at higher vocational schools and faculties in the Republic of North Macedonia in 2019, compared to 2018, increased by 2.2%. Out of the total number of graduates, 85.5% were full-time students, while 14.4% were part-time students. The share of graduated female students was 57.7%.

In 2019, a total of 1,916 persons obtained the titles of Master of Science and Specialist, of which 1,736 persons or 90.6% were Masters of Science and 180 persons, or 9.4%, were specialists. Compared with 2018, the number of Master of Science and specialists increased by 1.6%. The participation of women in the total number of Master of Science in 2019 was 60.1%.

In 2019, a total of 204 individuals gained the title "Doctor of Science," which is a decrease of 16% compared with 2018. The largest part of doctorate holders, 43.1%, have gained their doctorate in the field of social sciences, followed by 22.5% in the medical sciences, 14.2% in the field of technical-technological sciences, while the rest have obtained their doctorate in the field of humanities, natural sciences and mathematics and biotechnical sciences. The participation of females who have obtained a doctorate during 2019 was 122 or 59.8% of the total number of doctorates in 2019¹⁰.

Upper secondary students are distributed roughly equally across general (44%) and VET tracks (56%). Within VET, there are three different tracks of two, three or four years of duration. The vast majority of VET students attend the four-year track. In contrast, a very small minority attend the two (2%) and three-year (4%) tracks, which aim to prepare students to directly enter the labor market, or post-secondary education, in the case of the three-year track.¹¹

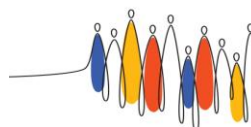
However, there appears an increase of students from both genders enrolling in the general-track high schools (gymnasiums), rather than in vocational education.¹² From VET schools, only medical, economic and law schools are still attractive, whereas the other VET profiles faced decreases in the number of students. Since 2001, when 70% of students enrolled in VET schools, this percentage has decreased to just 50 per cent.

⁹ North Macedonia Information, UNESCO, 2020 <http://uis.unesco.org/country/MK> (Accessed January 11, 2021).

¹⁰ State Statistical Office, Education and Science, available at http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie_en.aspx?rbtxt=21 (Accessed October 4, 2020).

¹¹ Ministry of Education and Science, (MoES) www.mon.gov.mk (Accessed October 4, 2020).

¹² MoES (2013) Strategy for Vocational Education Training 2013-2020



1.2.2 Neither in employment nor in education or training

There is no data available in the economy about young people who are neither in employment nor in education. According to Eurostat in North Macedonia, the number of young people neither in employment nor in education from 20-34 years in 2018 was 31.4 %, and in 2019 was 26.7%, from which 25.3% are men and 37.4% are women¹³.

1.2.3 Unemployment rate

According to the ILO source, in 2019, the estimated youth unemployment rate in North Macedonia was 39.14 percent.¹⁴ Allocating the working-age population by economic activity, age group, and gender, the statistics show the following data:¹⁵

Table 2: Working age population by age groups and gender 2019-2020

Age 15-24	Employed			Unemployed		
	2019/II	2020/I	2020/II	2019/II	2020/I	2020/II
males	33,889	32,738	31,196	15,002	16,173	14,554
females	19,851	18,788	17,178	13,838	11,489	10,105
Total	53,740	51,527	48,374	28,840	27,662	24,658

Source: State Statistical Office, 2019

- The number of employed youth by age group 15-24 in the II quarter of 2019, was 53,740, out of which 33,989 were males, and 19,851 were females.
- The number of employed youth by age group 15-24 in the I quarter of 2020, was 51,527, out of which 32,738 were males, and 18,788 were females.
- The number of employed youth by age group 15-24 in the II quarter of 2020 was 48,374, out of which 31 196 were males, and 17 178 were females.
- The number of unemployed youth by age 15-24 in the II quarter of 2019 was 28,841, out of which 15,002 were males and 13,838 were females.
- The number of unemployed youth by age 15-24 in the I quarter of 2020 was 27,662, out of which 16,173 were males, and 11,489 were females.
- The number of unemployed youth by age 15-24 in the II quarter of 2020 was 24,658, out of which 14,554 were males and 10,105 were females¹⁶.

¹³ Data from Eurostat, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfse_20/default/table?lang=en, (Accessed October 4, 2020).

¹⁴Data retrieved from Statista Source, available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/812208/youth-unemployment-rate-inmacedonia/#:~:text=Youth%20unemployment%20rate%20in%20North%20Macedonia%20in%202019&text=In%202019%2C%20the%20estimated%20youth,Macedonia%20was%20at%2039.14%20percent>, (Accessed October 10, 2020)

¹⁵ Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia Results from the Labor Force Survey, II quarter 2020, State Statistical Office, available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2020/2.1.20.30_mk.pdf, (Accessed 30 September 2020)

¹⁶ Active Population in the Republic of North Macedonia Results from the Labor Force Survey, II quarter 2020, State Statistical Office, available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2020/2.1.20.30_mk.pdf, (Accessed 30 September 2020). p.4



According to the EC progress report 2020, in North Macedonia, youth unemployment has slowly, but steadily, declined in recent years, dropping by over 12pps between 2015 and the first quarter of 2020, to 34.9%, largely on account of emigration, but also supported by the government's Youth Guarantee scheme.¹⁷ The employment rate has increased further, but remains low.¹⁸

1.3 Migration

Migration is considered one of the most important political issues for the economy. It is a significant challenge in creating policies and strategies which affect numerous areas, from economic sustainability to national security. Youth migration and mobility are even more critical. According to the State Statistical Office data, the dominant form of migration was from rural to urban areas with 37.0%, whereas the inter-urban migration was 8.2%. Rural-urban migration at the regional level was highest in the eastern region with 51.8%, while the Polog Region is characterized by inter-rural migration, making up 61.5% of the total migration in the region¹⁹. Simultaneously, the region is characterized by inter-rural migration, making up 61.5% of its total migration.²⁰ Still, the most desired destinations for migration among young people are Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.²¹ No data are available isolating only youth migration from total migration.

Regarding migration issues, different international organizations have conducted opinion polls on perceptions of youth on migration, but limited data are available including actual youth emigration. The *Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2020* shows decreasing numbers for at least the fourth consecutive year for applicants from North Macedonia citizens²². However, the data are missing regarding youth brain drain, or skilled and educated young people that leave for study or as a high skilled labor force. The national authorities continued their cooperation to tackle unfounded asylum applications made in Schengen members economies and associated economies. The number of the first-time asylum applications from the economy in the EU and Schengen associated economies was 2,695, having fallen by 20% in comparison to the year 2018²³.

¹⁷ EC progress Report 2020, North Macedonia, Available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf (Accessed on January 11, 2021).

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 54

¹⁹ "Live births, deaths and migration by urban and rural areas and by regions, 2019", State Statistical Office, 2019, available at http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie_en.aspx?rbtxt=6 (Accessed 30 September 2020).

²⁰ Data retrieved from Statista Source, available at: http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2019/2.1.19.25_mk.pdf (Accessed 25 September, 2020)

²¹ "Youth Study in North Macedonia" 2018-2019, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marija_Topuzovska_Latkoviki/publication/332241977_YOUTH_STUDY_NORTH_MACEDONIA_20182019/links/5e20fa01a6fdcc10156f7fa7/YOUTH-STUDY-NORTH-MACEDONIA-2018-2019.pdf, (Accessed October 7, 2020)

²² EASO Asylum Report 2020, Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union, <https://easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EASO-Asylum-Report-2020.pdf> (Accessed December 29, 2020). p.68

²³ EASO Asylum Report 2020, Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union, <https://easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EASO-Asylum-Report-2020.pdf> (Accessed December 29, 2020). p.45



When deciding about emigrating, young people do not research macroeconomic indicators, but are instead, led by personal motives created by these indicators in everyday life. The reflection of the macroeconomic picture on the life of an individual at the micro level is an important push factor in the migration flow²⁴. Youth Study North Macedonia 2018/2019 showed that nearly half of young people cited the improvement of their standard of living as the main reason for migration; almost 18 per cent cited higher salaries and 11.3 per cent better employment possibilities.

The research data of Cross Sectoral Youth Assessment conducted in North Macedonia surfaced a range of concerns that figure young people's perspectives on their economy and their stated desire to migrate out. Many of these are historical and systemic and require long-term change. Youth do not see themselves as part of the change, which worsens their inclination to leave.

²⁴ "Cost of Youth Emigration" – Western Balkan Democracy Initiatives, funded by UK Government, Available at https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WFD-Web-Brochure-NM_FINAL.pdf (Accessed, January 11, 2021).



CHAPTER 2: NATIONAL YOUTH LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

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

2.1 Constitution

Even though not explicitly, the Constitution of North Macedonia regulates some key rights of youth. For example, the right of young people to vote (Article 22), the right of all people to education (article 44), the right of people to participate in decision-making on issues of local relevance in all units of local self-government (article 115), and others.²⁵ Overall, legal and strategic documents on youth policy are also adopted based on the Constitution's fundamental values of North Macedonia, including the newly adopted LYPYP.

2.2 Law on Youth

In 2011, the AYS submitted the initiative for adopting a Law on Youth, which would address youth participation in decision-making processes at the local and national level. First consultations started with young people in different cities in 2018 and 2019. Namely, in 2018 the issue of drafting this law was raised by the Club for Youth Affairs and Policies of the Assembly of North Macedonia, which, on 11 April 2018, held the first public debate titled "Whether and what kind of youth law is needed." It is of paramount importance to emphasize the role of the Mission of OSCE in Skopje and the National Democratic Institute North Macedonia (NDI). Both of them supported the Club of Youth Affairs and Policies in the drafting law process.²⁶ Finally, in January 2020, the Parliament, for the first time, adopted a law for youth.

Namely, the *Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies* encourages young people's inclusion in policymaking decisions. The subject of regulation of this law includes youth organizations; participation of young people in policy and decision-making processes referring to youth. Moreover, the new law affirms which activities and measures are taken by the public administrative bodies and local self-government units to promote young people's position in society.²⁷ Overall, the law aims to raise awareness of young people's importance and their social role by permanently keeping in mind principles such as: multiculturalism, inter-ethnicity, and inclusiveness in the active participation of young people. These principles are clearly defined in article 5 of the law and are obligatory for all operating on youth sector activities.^{28,29}

²⁵ 'Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia' ("Official gazette of Republic of Macedonia" No. 49/11), Art.22; Art. 44; Art 115. <http://ustavensud.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Ustav-na-RM.pdf> (Accessed September 20, 2020)

²⁶ Statement from an interview with Mrs. Ivana Tufegdžić – MP in the Assembly of North Macedonia – conducted in first report update.

²⁷ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, article 1, No. 08-327/1, January 2020, North Macedonia, Skopje, available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf> (Accessed October 4, 2020).

²⁸ All forms of youth organization, as well as the bodies of the state administration, in the actions and activities relating to young people will adhere to the principles from paragraph (1) of this article.



Other policy documents, prepared and successfully adopted, are the Quality Standards for Youth Work, the Youth Workers Portfolio, and Quality Standards for Youth Centers.

2.3 National Strategy on Youth

In addition to LYPYP, a fundamental mechanism as part of the national youth policy framework, is the National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2016–2025, adopted on 2 February 2016. This is actually the second strategy, as the first referred to the period 2005 – 2015.

The current NYS was drafted with the active participation of young people and representatives of relevant institutions who expressed their opinions and needs regarding the nine priority areas identified in the Strategy. The basis for initiating this process was the youth trends survey conducted by the Institute of Sociological, Political and Juridical Research³⁰ in the period from September to December 2014. The responsible institution for the process was the AYS. The UNDP supported the AYS in North Macedonia during the entire consultation process.

The content of the NYS is comprised of strategic priorities, the key challenges young people encounter, and long-term objectives divided into thematic areas. Nevertheless, there are many gaps perceived by civil society actors. *“The priorities and instruments set in the national strategy are relevant, but we can have feedback on their effectiveness only if annual research is done regarding it”*³¹. There is no data regarding the effectiveness of the national strategy in practice.

The Strategy should lead to an improvement of the social and economic situation of young people and the creation of an environment that will enable youth to fulfil their rights, needs, and interests. The interventions proposed in this Strategy are divided into nine key thematic areas and include the following: youth participation, youth information, local youth work, education, employment and pre-employment support, culture, sports, health and quality of life. Strategic objectives per thematic area are given in *Annex 1*. The NYS targets young people aged 15–29. Under this age group, the measures prescribed by the Strategy include high school students, university students, and vulnerable youth.

In an interview, Youth and Sport adviser of the prime minister affirmed: *“At the moment, the procedures for revising the previous strategy and adopting a new Youth Strategy (2021-2025) have started. The previous one was relevant, but lacked efficiency, comprehensiveness, and inclusion of as many youth and youth organizations as possible”*³².

²⁹ More specifically, the law’s aim and objectives can be found on Annex 4.

³⁰ Institute for Sociological and Political Research - Project., (2014) "YOUTH TRENDS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA "REPORT, Skopje, December 2014, available at: <https://www.docdroid.net/qsrt/finalen-izvestaj-agencija-za-mladi-i-sport-pdf>, (Accessed September 9, 2020).

³¹ Statement from the interview with Government representative, , September 2020.

³² Statement from the interview with Government representative, October 2020



2.4 National Action Plan on Youth

The NYS has been followed by one action plan only – the Action Plan (AP) to implement the NYS for the period from 2016 to 2017³³³⁴. This AP prescribed the critical data needed for planning the activities in correlation with the Strategy's measures.

The AP 2016-2017, as an important tool for the implementation of the NYS, offers some important information, in terms of Results – because it reflects all of the implemented activities and the expected implementation of the activities for the period of implementation of the action plan. Moreover, the AP offers an overview of Measures and activities - planned activities of the institutions and, in some cases, scheduled activities of civil society organizations. Most important, the AP defines a Timeframe - the planned period for the implementation of the activities.

Currently, as confirmed above, since the procedures for adopting a new Youth Strategy (2021-2025) have started, is expected that the new strategy will contain Action Plans with shorter durations for implementation, defined activities, dynamics, and carriers of activities, and projections of budget funds, as well as conditions and evaluation indicators for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy³⁵.

2.5 Institutions dealing with Youth

2.5.1 The Government

The Government has a primary role in providing opportunities for implementing the National Youth Strategy by adopting and implementing cohesive and coordinated programs associated with the measures envisaged in the Strategy. There is no Ministry for Youth in the economy. Agency for Youth and Sport is the key institution that plays the role of a ministry for youth, which also has its own budget. Moreover, through the prime minister's advisor of youth and sport, a bridge is created between the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the AYS, and all other institutions.

2.5.2 Agency for Youth and Sports

The AYS, despite the fact that it is not operating at the same level as a Ministry, has its distinct budget and responsibilities and is the most important institution for youth issues nationwide. As stated in the NYS, “the process of strategy implementation and performance monitoring is coordinated by the AYS, though data collection and reporting is carried out by all institutions that will implement activities from the Strategy within their programs”.

2.5.3 Local authorities

Local authorities are also responsible for implementing youth programs, and, in their activities, they are fully coordinated by the AYS. Some municipalities have developed local

³³ Action Plan 2016-2017 for implementation of National Youth Strategy 2016-2025, available at: http://ams.gov.mk/images/dokumenti/mladi/Akciski_plan_za_mladi_2016_2017.pdf, (Accessed September 9, 2020)

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Statement from the interview with Government representative, , October 2020.



youth strategies following the objectives and measures envisaged in the NYS. On the other hand, the process of establishing independent counselling bodies within the municipal councils, the so-called Local Youth Councils, is still ongoing³⁶. Unfortunately, regarding local youth strategies, there is no information available on the number of existing LYs at this moment.

2.5.4 Other actors

Other actors involved that are addressed by the NYS are:

The civil sector, which permanently focuses on “strengthening the capacities of young people to become independent and proactive and be active participants in the social and political development of the economy.” Anyhow, the civil sector “must cooperate with local authorities and the business community to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing the most urgent problems faced by young people”;

The business community is seen as an essential stakeholder in strengthening the economic prosperity of youth. According to the current NYS, “The business community “should contribute by sharing its resources with institutions and civil society organizations in treating youth problems at the national and local level. The business community should be an active participant in strengthening the economic prosperity of young people in the long term”³⁷;

Educational institutions, mainly teaching staff, as key actors involved in youth development;

Media, parents and young people themselves.

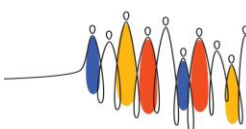
Although AYS has the overall responsibility for the implementation of NYS, other actors are in charge of implementing particular measures.

Additional institutions, such as the Agency for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship in North Macedonia, are also implementing employment measures through young people's capacity building. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Water Economy that provides opportunities for young farmers through the IPARD Funds, which are not primarily targeted measures for young people. Still, young people are favored by facilitating the co-financing of projects and the selection criteria where they receive 20 points more than the other target groups just because they belong to the target group of youth.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has the leading role in managing educational processes in secondary and tertiary education and legislation, scholarships, and participating

³⁶ Ivan Jovanov & Ilija Stankovski, “Regional Research Paper – Youth Policies in the Western Balkans and the EU”, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Office in North Macedonia, available at: <https://www.kas.de/documents/281657/281706/Belegexemplar+2020+Youth+Policies+in+the+WB+and+the+EU.pdf/50e8440f-9315-5226-976a-13d452d0e81b?version=1.0&t=1609249883224>, (Accessed, January 11, 2021)

³⁷ National Youth Strategy 2016 – 2025, Agency for Youth and Sport, North Macedonia, available at: <http://strategijazamladi.mk/sites/default/files/National-Youth-Strategy-2016-2025.pdf>, (Accessed 5 October, 2020)



in international education programs. This means that MES is directly involved in creating youth policy, which is crucial to young people's well-being.

2.6 Other sectors impacting youth

Other institutions supporting or providing policies dedicated to young people, in terms of education and training, youth employment, innovation, and so on, include the following:

Regarding education, The National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility (NAEPM), which is a public institution that aims to promote and implement European programs in the field of education, training, youth, and sports in the Republic of North Macedonia, is one of the most important in terms of additional education opportunities for youth. By implementing the plans, the NAEPM contributes to the development of a knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic growth, more and better jobs, and more significant social cohesion, while at the same time providing environmental protection and mainly exchange, collaboration, and mobility into the areas of education and training. Program beneficiaries are learners, students, teachers, professors, educators, and other personnel engaged in any stage of the educational process, enterprises, and other legal bodies including commercial entities, chambers of commerce and other associations, as well as citizen associations and foundations.

Moreover, additional initiatives in the field of youth work began in 2012, the main purpose of which was to achieve a recognition and professionalization of youth work. The initiative was taken by the Center for Intercultural Dialogue (CID) and was supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI). One of the results of this initiative was the creation of the Union for Youth Work³⁸, which was followed by other projects and initiatives as well.

Employment Agency: In the past few years, the Government focused on reducing youth unemployment by creating action plans for the employment of young people. However, employment measures targeting young people fail to make a significant impact on their situation. The responsible institutions for implementing the youth employment policies and measures in North Macedonia are the Ministry of Labor and Social policy and the Employment Service Agency of North Macedonia.

Law on internship: Pursuant to the Law on internship³⁹, Interns, i.e. unemployed young people up to 34 years of age, are offered the opportunity to work in real conditions, and thus acquire knowledge, skills and qualifications in order to integrate more successfully into the labor market. Young people have the opportunity to gain practical work in companies for a period of six months and to be paid for it, and employers in turn are able to recognize talent in

³⁸ Available at: <https://cid.mk/national-representation/> . (Accessed October 4, 2020).

³⁹ In 2019, the Parliament of North Macedonia adopted a new internship law, which allows companies to hire interns outside of the educational process. The Law on Internship ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 98/2015), available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Zakon-za-praktikanstvo-21-05-2019.pdf> (Accessed, October 4, 2020).



staff who could then be permanently employed. In the first three months, they are entitled to a compensation of EUR 81, and in the second, for minimum wage (EUR 235)⁴⁰.

2.7 Critical assessment of legal and policy framework on youth

Finally, after years of efforts, the first law fully dedicated to youth issues was adopted in North Macedonia. This new law addresses crucial issues related to youth participation and policies and is expected to have a positive impact on the overall situation of young people in the economy. The new law envisages exactly how the NYS and the local youth strategies are carried out, who is in charge, who prepares the action plans, how funds are allocated, and determines organizational, financial and administrative measures for the realization of such plans.

Nevertheless, there are certain weaknesses identified regarding the overall national policy framework. Above all, the new law (LYPYP) is slowly being implemented. Covid-19 pandemic crisis has preoccupied the work of the institutions, while the implementation of the law requires a multi-sectoral coordination which is slow due to pandemic. Besides the new law adoption, another positive step is the fact that the current NYS (second most important document at a national level) was drafted with the active participation of young people and representatives of relevant institutions. They had the opportunity to express their opinions and needs regarding the nine priority areas identified in the strategy. Still, to be effective and to implement the tools sufficiently, it is necessary to adopt a new Action Plan to implement the NYS 2016-2025. In the current action plan, a period for the process of revision and monitoring of the NYS is required, in addition to defined activities, dynamics, actors, and projections of budget funds, as well as conditions and evaluation indicators for the implementation of the NYS⁴¹. Therefore, there is no factual data about the effectiveness of this strategy and the real impact of the action plan following the NYS.

In addition to the argument of NYS, a very good sign of moving the process forward relates to the creation of a new strategy (2021-2025) which has already started. This new strategy will be formulated in accordance with the newly adopted LYPYP, the current situation, and the current economic and social policies and program of the Government⁴².

Regarding institutions: the main gaps are in the capacities of public bodies and youth organizations to coordinate between themselves and to properly support youth participation processes. Although the relevant public bodies have sufficient human resources, they are in need of further capacity development to fully implement the law and maintain structured dialogue with youth and other actors involved. The institutions create and implement NYS measures, but there is no comprehensive and coordinated approach towards the economy's youth policy.

⁴⁰ Statement from the interview with Government representative, , October 2020.

⁴¹ Statement from the interview with Member of Parliament, September 2020.

⁴² Statement from the interview with Government representative, , October 2020.



Overall, the perception is that there is sufficient transparency and participation of young people and public institutions in the policymaking processes, but the implementation and financial resources remains a challenge. An example in that regard is the Action Plan for 2020, which was not adopted by the Government, with the explanation that too much funding would be required, and that the plan is too ambitious⁴³. Therefore, in terms of implementation, the biggest challenge is to provide financial resources.

⁴³ Statement from the interview with representative of the National Agency for Youth and Sport, October 2020.



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

Youth Policy in North Macedonia does not have a specific budget line in the Governmental budget for 2019 and 2020. The budget for youth in the age group 15 to 29 for 2019 was app. EUR 402,081.00 (MKD 24,728,000.00),⁴⁴ or 4% from a total budget of the AYS of app. EUR 9,608,163.00 (MKD 590.902.000,00)⁴⁵.

In addition to the AYS budget for the department for youth, the MLSP allocates financial resources to young people according to the Action Plan for Youth Employment 2016-2020. The total budget is estimated at EUR 30,950,000.00 (1,903,425,000.00 MKD) for five years, excluding the costs for monitoring and evaluation. In the *Operative plan for Active Labor Market Measures (ALMM)* for 2019 there are measures intended for young people, but youth are not defined as a specific target.

The amount for implementing the Youth Guarantee as one of the major governmental programs for 2019 was app. EUR 120,325.20 (MKD 7,500,000.00), and the scheme measures are funded through the Operative plan. In the *corrected Operative plan for Active Labor Market Measures* of 2019, it is stated that in 2020 the “Youth Guarantee” program will continue to be implemented in the whole economy, emphasizing NEET young people. Moreover, in the *corrected Operative Plan for Active Labor Market Measures in 2020*, no financial resources are allocated for the youth programs and activities⁴⁶.

3.2 Youth projects funding

In the AYS budget for 2019, line 15, EUR 78,000.00, or (4,797,000.00 MKD) is dedicated to youth organizations for implementing activities under the Action Plan of the NYS 2016-2025⁴⁷. In 2020, a call for applications of the AYS, 13 projects were approved, and the total budget approved was 3,170,420.00 MKD (app. EUR 54,553).^{48 49} Funds allocated for youth organizations are distributed through open calls for civil society organizations.

⁴⁴ Annual financial plan for youth- 2019, Agency for Youth and Sport, available at: <http://ams.gov.mk/documents/GFISM2019.pdf>, (Accessed October 1, 2020).

⁴⁵ Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia 2020, Ministry of Finance, available at: <https://finance.gov.mk/mk/node/4105>, (Accessed October 1, 2020).

⁴⁶ Corrected Operative plan for ALMM-2020” Employment Agency of NM, published on 09 September 2020, available at: <http://av.gov.mk/content/%D0%9E%D0%9F/REVIDIRAN%20OP%2009%2009%202020.pdf>, (Accessed 29 September 2020).

⁴⁷ Annual financial plan for youth-201, available at: <http://ams.gov.mk/documents/GFISM2019.pdf>, (Accessed 12 October, 2020).

⁴⁸ Decision of the AYS for distribution of the youth projects, AYS, 2020, available at: <http://ams.gov.mk/component/content/article/20-odnosi-so-javnosta/soopstenija/1480-rezultati-javen-povik>, (Accessed 12 October, 2020).

⁴⁹ The list of these projects will be attached in the annexes of this report.



According to the NYS, different ministries or institutions are in charge of implementation for various measures. Thus, the budget for the efforts falls under the budget of those specific institutions/ministries. However, the budgets of these institutions are not dis-aggregated by youth measures. Asked about the planned revision of the NYS and the funding for it, the representative from the AYS stated: “The programs on paper are perfect, in the part of realization they are evaded. Sustainability is minimal and efficiency is short-term.”⁵⁰

Currently, there is not sufficient funding for youth in North Macedonia, and this issue has gotten worse since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, youth projects have been halted, resulting in letting go of staff.⁵¹

3.3 Key Youth Programs and Instruments

Key youth programs and instruments are the Youth Guarantee project and the Youth Card. Recently, the Government of North Macedonia presented anti-COVID-19 measures for funding where they have included young people as well.

3.3.1 Youth Guarantee

Overall objective: The Youth Guarantee is a set of Government measures aimed at guaranteeing the quality services offered to youth in employment, continuous education, retraining, practice, and training.

The Government of North Macedonia, in its work program 2017-2020, introduced the Youth Guarantee as a measure for increasing the employability of young people. In 2017, the Master Plan for the Youth Guarantee was adopted. The Master Plan defines institutions responsible for implementing concrete activities for the realization of the Youth Guarantee. In 2015, the NYCM submitted a proposal, within the framework of Objective 2 of the draft version of the National Youth Strategy 2016-2025 in the Employment and pre-employment support field, to introduce the Youth Guarantee program by the Government of North Macedonia. The Youth Guarantee is open to all young people 15-29 who are unemployed, have already completed their education, and have not been registered within the Employment Agency. The applicants receive a quality job offer, further education, or an internship.

The Youth Guarantee is also part of the Economic Reform Program 2018-2020 of the Ministry of Finance to reduce the rate of youth unemployment. The Youth Guarantee includes the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, the Employment Service Agency, the Ministry of Education and Science, AYS, the National Youth Council of Macedonia and the Bureau for Development of Education in coordination of the body of the policy. In February 2018, MLSP, the Employment Agency of Macedonia and NYCM, started realizing the pilot project Youth Guarantee. With the inclusion of NYCM in the implementation of the fieldwork project, the economy included civil society organizations as a part of the implementation of a Governmental policy for the first time. The Government does not fund the NYCM, but international donors financed the fieldwork

⁵⁰ Statement from the interview with Government representative, , October, 2020.

⁵¹ Statement from the interview with representative of National Youth Council of Macedonia, October, 2020



The Youth Guarantee is still in the pilot phase, even though it was expected to be fully operational in the whole territory of the economy from 2020. The Pandemic crisis affected the implementation, and no data could be found for its implementation in 2020. In 2018 the Youth Guarantee was implemented in 3 pilot employment centers (Skopje, Gostivar, and Strumica). In 2019, the Youth Guarantee implementation was conducted in the whole economy within 30 centers of employment. In Youth Guarantee in 2019 it, 20,302 young people (10,501 women) were included, from which 6,036 were employed, and 1,177 were included in some of the active measures for employment which directs them to employment.

Youth engaged in the Youth Guarantee have been included in the services that the Agency offers for Employment in the Republic of North Macedonia (11,068 young people, or 55%, have been included in some kinds of employment services). Career consultancy has also been offered, and action plans have been prepared for 1,006 employees. 148 people have been included in the motivation trainings, 1,078 young people have been informed about the opportunities in the labor market, and 302 young people have been given help in preparing their CVs. In 2018, the Youth Guarantee program included 1,457 Roma people, as one of the most vulnerable categories in the labor market. 212 Roma youth have been employed within 4 months of their inclusion in the program, and 26 youth have been included in some of the active measures for employment⁵². According to these statistics, the success rate of the Youth Guarantee program in 2019 was 35%.

Budget: The amount spent in implementing the Youth Guarantee for 2019 was close to EUR 120,325.20 (MKD 7,500,00.00). The scheme measures are funded through the Operative plan, with approximately EUR 2,110,400.00 (MKD 1,219,789,600.00). Although no information is available for the exact amount spent on young people (15-29), the outreach and field activities that are conducted by the NYCM are funded by international donors (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), at app. EUR 48,780.00 € (MKD 3.000.000,00)⁵³. The rest of app. EUR 73,170.00 (MKD 4,500,000.00) are directed towards the creation of “second chance” measures, which the Ministry of Education and Science should establish in the framework of the Youth Guarantee project. No official data could be found for the budget used in 2020.

3.3.2 Youth Card

Overall objective: The European Youth Card is a project that is a part of the government program for 2019 and 2020 and part of the work program of the AYS in 2019. The main goal of the “Youth Card” is to facilitate the everyday life of every young person, primarily financially. Further, it also offers many opportunities for youth, increasing their ability to be connected, informed, and mobile.

⁵² Annual Report 2019, Agency for Employment in NM, 2020, available at: <http://av.gov.mk/content/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8/%D0%98%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D0%90%D0%92%D0%A0%D0%A1%D0%9C%202019.pdf>, (Accessed October 10, 2020)

⁵³ Revised operational plan for ALMM 2019, available at: <http://av.gov.mk/operativen-plan.nspix>, (Accessed October,10, 2020)



Activities: The European Youth Card is free for every young person in the economy, aged 15-29. The card's validity period is two years, with the possibility of renewal if the person is within the allowed age limit. As card users, youth have benefits and discounts in various categories including: catering facilities, retail, culture, sports, transport, education centers, training for professional skills, and other entities recognized among young people as those that offer benefits associated with this category. "So far, the number of companies is more than 400, but the number of companies is expected to grow in the future."⁵⁴ The AYS is a partner in this project with the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility. Since North Macedonia is also a member of the Association of European Youth Card, the youth from North Macedonia, besides the benefits offered at home, will enjoy the same benefits with over 6 million young people in over 30 economies across Europe.

Budget: app. 65,040.65 € (MKD 4,000,000.00).⁵⁵

3.3.3 Other youth projects presented recently

As mentioned above, the government of North Macedonia, with its anti-Covid-19 measures, included young people to be financially supported through the following programs:

- **Young farmer**
Young farmers receive EUR 20,000 to be motivated to engage in agriculture and to produce a final product that is attractive to the European market. Previously, this measure was EUR 10,000, and for 2020 the support has doubled.
- **Youth allowance**
With anti-COVID-19 measures, a youth allowance was introduced, encouraging the employment of young people in production activities after graduating from high school. The youth allowance was in the amount of EUR 48 (3,000 MKD) per month and is paid to young people up to 23 years of age who have at least completed their secondary education. The coverage through this measure is 4,000 young people.
- The Government also presented the project on **personal income tax refund** for all new employees under 30, whereby, in the first two years, the funds will be returned directly to the employee's account.

3.4 Critical assessment

In the past two years, things slowly started to change. The creation of the new law included a discussion between representatives of the Club of Youth Affairs and Policies with the MF, where they agreed that 1% of the economy budget should go towards implementation of the law. Nevertheless, even though the law is now approved, the ongoing pandemic crisis makes the evaluation of its implementation challenging.

⁵⁴ Information on the companies included in the network of the Youth Card, 2020, available at: <http://mladinskakarticka.mk/public/popusti>, (Accessed on October 15, 2020).

⁵⁵ Annual financial plan for youth- 2019, Agency for Youth and Sport, available at: <http://ams.gov.mk/documents/GFISM2019.pdf>, (Accessed October 1, 2020).



One of the strengths of youth policy implementation in North Macedonia is that it is currently a Government's priority i.e., youth unemployment reduction. Thus, there are earmarked funds for the implementation of the active labor market measures for this target group. These funds are increasing every year, as can be seen from the *Operative plan for Active Labor Market Measures*. The positive aspect in this situation is that the budget for the AYS is increasing every year to the point that in 2018 the agency started to support youth organizations in the economy to implement activities in correlation with the NYS.

As mentioned, government has prioritized youth employment and active promotion of the Youth Guarantee program. Additionally, more well-trained staff will be needed to implement the Youth Guarantee in the economy's 30 employment centers for 10,000 young people per year. The measure does identify the lack of physical and human capacities of the Employment Agency as a significant risk and suggests some mitigating actions. It is vital to ensure that the measure's focus is on the most vulnerable, particularly women and less represented ethnic groups living in underdeveloped regions and on the collection of data. Networking and exchanges with European Public Employment Services will improve the methods used. Although no reporting was previously done on the Action Plan (AP) for 2016 and 2017, the funds were spent on the AP measures. Furthermore, no official report could be found for the funds used during 2018 and 2019. However, AP implementation will pose a challenge for the institutions involved, namely the MLSP (coordinating institution), the Employment Agency (in charge of registration and counseling) and the NYC (in charge of the fieldwork). Moreover, as stated in the EC progress Report 2020, the youth unemployment rate decreased compared with previous years to 35.6% in quarter four of 2019. It however remains a major concern, addressed with the further implementation of the Youth Guarantee Scheme on the whole territory of the economy. Measures on undeclared work under the 2018-2020 Strategy for Formalisation of the Informal Economy were partially implemented. The occupational outlook was further developed with 45 occupation descriptions published by quarter one of 2020⁵⁶.

The funding framework for youth policy in North Macedonia cannot be perceived as an example of best practice in support of the implementation of the youth policies in the economy. The weaknesses in the funding framework for youth policy in the economy are the limited coordination between institutions and the limited availability of coherent data related to the funds allocated to youth by institutions other than AYS. In addition, the relative lack of a monitoring mechanism prevents AYS and other stakeholders from having insight into the funding framework's efficiency and effectiveness. The government often uses international support for funding the public institutions' projects and activities, which puts sustainability under question. Public funding for CSOs is very limited, and CSOs are not included in the economic measures. During the crisis, the government announced a EUR 525,000 funding cut from the 2020 public budget support to associations and foundations, which has been decided without consulting the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the CSO Sector and the representatives of the civil society in general, as well as without any previous

⁵⁶ EC progress Report 2020, North Macedonia, Available on https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf (Accessed on January 11, 2021). pg.83.



announcement to the public. As identified in the progress report 2020 for North Macedonia, the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility launched the European Solidarity Corps, which specifically supports youth participation, social inclusion and volunteering. The local branch of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office continued to organize capacity building activities and training for civil society 92 organizations and schools, and participated in the legislative reform on youth and student standards.



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

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

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

Until January 2020, when the LYPYP entered into force, there was no legal framework defining youth participation in national policymaking. The new Law in article no. 3/3 outlines: *"youth participation" is the process that enables young people to participate in joint decision-making on policies and programs that directly or indirectly shape the lives of young people.*⁵⁷ As explained in chapter 2, the main decision-maker for youth policies remains the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. Alongside the government, the second most important institution remains AYS. Other ministries and institutions such as the MES, MLSP, EA, the Education Development Bureau, and NAEPPM also contribute to policymaking processes.

Regarding the process, in March 2018 the Government held a special session dedicated to youth policies for the first time. Youth organizations had the opportunity to propose different thematic issues as a part of their work. The new law was brought to the parliament for adoption, thanks to the pressure of youth organizations all over the economy⁵⁸. The process continued and in January 2020, the LYPYP was adopted.

4.1.1 Participation at the central level

First, article 10 of the new law foresees the creation of a National Youth Assembly (NYA), which is a body that elects youth representatives in the advisory body, creates priorities and policies for youth advocacy, and coordinates their engagement. This assembly (not created yet) shall regulate its work with rules of procedure. The scope of work of the NYA consists of the election of youth representatives in the advisory body, creating policies and priorities, monitoring the work of youth representatives, reviewing reports from youth representatives, and other activities following this Law and Rules of Procedure⁵⁹.

At a national level, under the newly adopted law, the creation of a National Youth Policy Advisory Body (hereinafter: NYPAB) is also foreseen, which consists of a body for cooperation between youth representatives and representatives of the public administration bodies. It has an advisory and supervisory role in the implementation of youth policies and

⁵⁷ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, article 3/3, No. 08-327/1, January 2020, North Macedonia, Skopje, available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>, (Accessed October 4, 2020).

⁵⁸ Statement from the interview with youth activist, September 2020

⁵⁹ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, article 11, Nr. 08-327/1, January 2020, North Macedonia, Skopje, available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>, (Accessed October 4, 2020).



youth activities⁶⁰. The NYPAB, in which youth directly participate, is essential due to the competencies it has. This body gives opinions and recommendations for youth policies (regulation of implementation); gives an opinion on the NYS and of the action plan of NYS implementation. Additionally, it provides an opinion on the budget funds intended for young people and any proposals, opinions, and recommendations for financing youth-related activities. It also initiates debates on youth issues to the Government and the Assembly of North Macedonia. It proposes establishing mechanisms for evaluation of youth participation and realization of youth interests in social life. At the least, it publishes reports (thematic and periodic) on the rights, opportunities, and needs of young people in North Macedonia and it follows the recommendations of the EU for youth and advocates for the improvement of youth policies.

Currently, at a central level, following the trend of the European Parliament and other economies good practices, the Assembly of North Macedonia, in September 2017 established the Club for youth issues and policies (CYIP)⁶¹. It is an informal body operating within the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia and is composed of members from all parliamentary parties. The aim of this club is to support young people's efforts to achieve their goals and it cooperates with youth organizations, informal youth groups, and party youth. Most of the members are up to 35 years old.

Currently, the Club does not have a budget, but the National Democratic Institute (NDI) supports it. The CYAP is established to respond to young people and youth organizations in the economy, but currently there is no official Parliament Committee in charge of youth issues where initiatives would be discussed.

4.1.2 Participation at the local level

In the context of North Macedonia, at a local level, the responsibility for decision-making concerning youth is under the municipalities' inferences. With the new law, in Article 16, the establishment of local youth councils by each municipality is foreseen. In fact, even earlier almost all municipalities have formed local youth councils and have adopted local youth strategies but in practice, most of these were not functional.

Anyhow, on paper there are some fundamental rights that representatives of the local youth council have. Most of them include the following⁶²:

- Propose items on the agenda that affect young people directly to the Municipal Council.
- Initiate questions for young people from the scope of work of the municipalities.
- Initiate, participate in, and provide feedback on the process of local youth strategy and other local policies.

⁶⁰ Ibid, article 14/1, No. 08-327/1, (Accessed October 4, 2020).

⁶¹ Statement from the interview with representative of the Youth and community center Gostivar, October 2020

⁶² Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, article 16/1, 16/2, 16/3, No. 08-327/1, January 2020, North Macedonia, Skopje, available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>, (Accessed October 4, 2020).



- Submit information to the municipalities for issues related to youth.

Regarding young people's participation at the local level, it is important to highlight the fact that under the new law, the establishment of local youth assemblies is foreseen as well. Article 17 of the law regulates the constitution of the local assembly for youth. In the same article it is stated that youth organizations can be members of the Youth Assembly in a variety of forms for youth including: political youth, pupil and student organizations, and other youth associations. Since, the new law has not been fully implemented yet, evidence used for the purposes of this report show that these assemblies have not yet been created.

Overall, in the current situation, only a few municipalities have expressed support for youth activities, and most of them simply support youth information centers. Good examples in terms of support would be the Municipality of Gostivar and the Center municipality in Skopje. Both of them had offered grants to support CSOs (including youth organizations)⁶³.

4.2 Evidence-based youth policy

Institutionalized mechanisms for the cooperation of decision-makers and the research community in youth are very limited in North Macedonia. Research into youth conducted by the governmental institutions is not provided continuously but rather occasionally and *ad hoc*. This has been confirmed by stakeholders in some of the interviews conducted including from the representative of AYS, from youth organizations' representatives, and others.

The economy has not conducted a population census since 2002, and all the statistical information concerning youth are only available as estimation from the State Statistical Office. Data is gathered mostly by think-tank organizations and international organizations, e.g., Fredrich Ebert Stiftung studies. Currently, there are political discussions, and the next census is expected to take place during 2021.

4.3 Establishment and functioning of Youth Councils and umbrella organizations

The new law regulates the establishment of an umbrella organization for youth and therefore regulates their status as a youth representative body. According to article 8 of the law⁶⁴:

Youth umbrella organizations are organizations in which youth organizations unite to achieve common goals in specific areas of interest to young people. Youth umbrella organizations can⁶⁵ participate in the process of creating laws, policy documents, and other strategic documents in the field in which they operate; participate in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policies in the areas in which they operate; and support youth organization and association in the Republic of North Macedonia. They have common goals in the specific areas in which they act in the interest of young people and can propose

⁶³ Galevski, M (2019), "Socio-political participation of Youth in North Macedonia: apathy, optimism or disappointment"? A study of Westminster Foundation for Democracy (Accessed November 15, 2020).

⁶⁴ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, article 8, No. 08-327/1, January 2020, North Macedonia, Skopje, available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>, (Accessed October 4, 2020).

⁶⁵ Ibid, article 9, No. 08-327/1, (Accessed October 4, 2020).



measures to decision-makers in the areas in which they operate and conduct analyses and research regarding the development of young people in society.

Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the organizations have slowed their activities. However, even earlier, it must be highlighted that they have experienced challenges related to their activities, which primarily depend on limited funds supporting them. Due to budgetary constraints, some of the organizations typically implement low or no-cost projects. Also due to that, most of the employees in these organizations, work on a voluntary basis.

4.4 Platforms of youth cooperation at the national level

There are two major youth associations in North Macedonia: the NYCM and The Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA. Referring to their statutes, the first is a union of associations and the second is a national platform of youth organizations. None of them is formally recognized by law as official body representing youth at a national level (not even by the newly adopted Law, LYPYP).

4.4.1 National Youth Council of Macedonia

The National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM⁶⁶) is a youth umbrella organization - a union of associations and foundations in North Macedonia. NYCM was established on 29 June 2013 by 55 founding organizations. NYCM is a non-governmental, non-partisan, and non-profit organization. Since 29 November 2015, the NYCM is part of the youth organizations' biggest European platform, the European Youth Forum. On 28 April 2018, the NYCM became a Full Member of the European Youth Forum. Currently, NYCM unites 52 organizations, 18 youth organizations, 20 organizations for youth, 1 union, 8 youth wings of other organizations and 5 associate members, in order to promote and advocate for the rights of the Macedonian youth⁶⁷. NYCM represents the interests of all young people regardless of their socio-economic position, sex, race, ethnic and cultural background, political and religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other form of distinction. NYCM, was mentioned by the European Parliament in the European resolution of 10 March 2016, on the 2015 Report for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in article 37.⁶⁸

NYCM is supported solely by international donors with no specific budget line in the public budget for its activities. The Council is the most prominent youth representative body and other institutions (on voluntary basis) in youth-related issues and initiatives consult with it. There is no structured cooperation with the government. It is an independent, autonomous and inclusive youth sector, representing young people in North Macedonia, even though it is not formally recognized as a National youth representative body.

⁶⁶ Official website of the NYCM: <http://www.nms.org.mk/>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2016 on the 2015 Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0091_EN.html. (Accessed, September 2020).



4.4.2 SEGA – National Platform of Youth Organizations

The Coalition of Youth Organizations, SEGA,⁶⁹ is a national platform of youth organizations dedicated to lobbying for needed legislative changes and committed to supporting youth activism, access to information, and participation of young people in activities related to youth issues. SEGA works on developing and implementing youth policies at the local and national level and connects and strengthens youth organizations aiming to activate youth and improve the conditions for their personal and professional development in the economy.

4.5 Regional platforms and networks

There are only a few regional platforms in the youth sector in the economy. The most important regional platforms operating in the economy are considered to be: the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO),⁷⁰ the **Young European Ambassadors (YEA)**,⁷¹ and the **Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform (WBYCP)**.^{72,73}

4.6 Critical Assessment

The Government and the governmental institutions' readiness to initiate processes based on the needs of the youth organizations and the young people in the economy is one of the strengths of the youth participation process in the economy. For the first time, the government dedicated one governmental discussion session to youth policies on which youth organizations had the opportunity to present their most important issues.

At the local level, local self-governments are responsible for decision-making, and in some of the municipalities, local youth councils exist as a form of local youth participation, but their structure within local decision-making processes have not been unified and the level of participation is still low.

According to the Agency for Youth and Sport, in 2017, there were 63 Local Youth Councils in 80 municipalities⁷⁴. They are created as consultative bodies within the municipalities, under the instructions of the AYS. Moreover, there are local youth strategies that have been adopted, but their real impact remains questionable. The assemblies foreseen to be created according to the new law have not been created yet.

As mentioned above, there are two wide networks of youth organizations – the NYCM and the SEGA. As aforementioned, neither of them have been formally recognized as the official representative body for young people (not even by the newly adopted Law), and neither of the two networks represents all young people and youth organizations' views and interests even

⁶⁹ Official website of SEGA: <https://www.sega.org.mk/en/> (Accessed, September 2020).

⁷⁰ Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), available at: <https://www.rycowb.org/>, (Accessed, October 18, 2020)

⁷¹ The Young European Ambassadors, available at <https://www.webalkans.eu/>, (Accessed October 18, 2020).

⁷² Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform, available at <http://connecting-youth.org/about.php>, (Accessed October 18, 2020).

⁷³ Regional platforms are presented in the Comparative Chapter.

⁷⁴ Ivan Jovanov & Ilija Stankovski, "Regional Research Paper – Youth Policies in the Western Balkans and the EU", Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Office in North Macedonia, available at: <https://www.kas.de/documents/281657/281706/Belegexemplar+2020+Youth+Policies+in+the+WB+and+the+EU.pdf/50e8440f-9315-5226-976a-13d452d0e81b?version=1.0&t=1609249883224>, (Accessed, January 11, 2021)



though there have been cases of collaboration. For instance, the cooperation between the NYCM and other organizations regarding the implementation of the Youth Guarantee program is a good example of participation, but according to what the youth representatives expressed, despite good cooperation that existed at the beginning of the work, the final products do not always contain the input provided by youth organizations. The cooperation between the two major networks is minimal, though collaboration between organizations within each network is good. This means that organizations collaborate and build networks only within their ‘umbrella,’ but they are segregated in terms of having a holistic or unified approach.

Youth policy and youth work in North Macedonia is still in a developing phase and mostly depends on political processes and the economic situation. In addition to this, the main stakeholders, especially youth NGOs, are not financially independent, and they do not have the capacities to take part and have a bigger role in the processes of decision-making. A lack of resources and stable financial support, in addition to the lack of constructive partnerships with other NGOs or other public institutions, make the NGOs very fragile and unproductive.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Statement from the interview with Mr. Sefer Selimi – Youth and community center Gostivar, October 2020.



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

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

5.1 Key donors in the field of youth

In North Macedonia, international organizations and foreign embassies have been active in implementing programs focused directly on youth and youth-related areas such as employment, social inclusion, education and training (VET), digital skills and democratic and civic participation.

The key donors in North Macedonia that are working in the field of youth are: The European Union; the U.S Embassy in North Macedonia; USAID North Macedonia; OSCE Mission in Skopje; the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; the British Embassy Skopje; the UNDP North Macedonia; the German Agency for International Cooperation; the United Nations Children's Fund.

The government has a short but intensive experience in mobilizing and implementing bilateral and multilateral development assistance. Every year, North Macedonia receives a significant amount of foreign aid, including funds from the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Indicative funding allocation 2014-2020 for North Macedonia was EUR 608.7 million⁷⁶. Efficient use of foreign aid in order to achieve better results is crucial for the economy's development, improving living standards, and preparing for EU accession.

Since 2007, *The European Union* has invested EUR 1.2 billion in the development of the economy⁷⁷. In the period 2014-2020, similar to 2007-2013, the Instrument for Pre-accession financial assistance (IPA II) was used to help North Macedonia to meet part of the entry ticket for participation in certain programs, based on an increase in the national contribution per program. Experience from the enlargement context, shows that successful participation in a Union Program requires a high degree of ownership and initiative by the beneficiary.

Participation in an EU Program would not be subject to a public call, but a Government Decision and signed International Agreement between the relevant DG and a line ministry. For the period 2014-2020, the Government has foreseen the participation in the following Programs and Agencies: Horizon 2020; COSME; Europe for Citizen; Culture-Creative Europe; Media-Creative Europe; Customs; Fiscalis; Civil protection mechanism; Erasmus+; Erasmus+ extended actions; Progress; LIFE; Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship;

⁷⁶ "North Macedonia - financial assistance under IPA II", available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/instruments/funding-by-country/north-macedonia_en (Accessed January 10, 2021).

⁷⁷ Information extracted from the webpage <https://euprojects.mk/> (Accessed January 10, 2021).



Program for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and European Earth monitoring Program (GMES).

The European Commission approved the IPA Multi-Country Programme package for 2019⁷⁸. This program package has a value of nearly EUR 194.1 million for the whole Western Balkans region and Turkey⁷⁹. North Macedonia will benefit from this program in energy efficiency, climate, transport, regional security, flood protection, education, youth, statistics, and others. It is appreciated that education and youth are directly included in the program. Another instrument is the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), which supports socio-economic development and EU accession across the Western Balkans by providing finance and technical assistance for strategic investments.

One of the main programs that North Macedonia was engaged in as part of the Programs of the Union was Youth in Action (2007–2013). The main goals of the Youth in Action program were to promote active citizenship, as well as European citizenship among young people, promote mutual understanding between young people on contributing to the development of quality systems to support the activities of young people, as well as strengthening the capabilities of citizens' associations operating in the field of youth, etc. Taking the necessary measures to ensure the smooth running of this Program at the national level, as well as ensuring the participation of stakeholders in accordance with national practice, led to the establishment of the National Education Agency, as a necessary institutional precondition for proper implementation of the Program at the national level. The National Partnership Institution responsible for implementing and coordinating the activities related to the Program is the Ministry of Education and Science. Successful applications from North Macedonia for the Erasmus + program are increasing from one year to the next.

A very attractive initiative founded by the Delegation of the European Union to North Macedonia is the Europe House (formerly EU Info Centre). The main aim of this initiative is to attract the youth sector and stimulate innovation, while the modernized space invites forward thinking individuals, groups, communities and organizations to socialize generate and present new ideas. It's conceptually designed to serve as a meet up place to spur debate, inspire collaboration and networking among various segments including entrepreneurs, young innovators, creatives while promoting EU values⁸⁰.

The project "Make Future Together: EU and Western Balkan for the Youth Perspective" is financed by the European Commission. This project directly contributes to inclusive and participatory policymaking at the EU level by bringing citizens' input into the formulation and redefinition of the EU's enlargement policy to the Western Balkans (WB). This project will contribute to achieving specific objectives concerning the encouragement of democratic and

⁷⁸ Commission's Implementing Decision C (2019/5515) of 19.7.2019

⁷⁹ Information extracted from Secretariat of European Affairs, Available at <https://sep.gov.mk/category/?id=20> (Accessed January 10, 2021).

⁸⁰ Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of North Macedonia is the Europe House (formerly EU Info Centre, available at: <https://www.euhouse.mk/> (Accessed September 25, 2020).



civic participation by developing citizens' understanding of the policy-making process. The project started in March 2020, and the approved budget is EUR 143 640.

The *U. S Embassy in North Macedonia* has established its own Youth Council. The Youth Council of the US Embassy brings together youth from different disciplines, interests, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds. The Youth Council seeks to generate creative ideas and projects to empower youth in North Macedonia and strengthen the youth's voice by advising the Embassy on essential youth issues. The Youth Council finds cooperation with other civil society organizations, Government and inter-governmental agencies, and for-profit corporations to advance their mission-related objectives. Some of the Youth Council Projects financed through US grants are the following: “You are not alone (YANA) Community Service Campaign”; “Find the Green”; “Women's Day Social Media Campaign”; “The Hardest Job is to Find a Job”

USAID North Macedonia, from 2017 until 2022, continues to work on ethnic integration in the economy through the Youth Ethnic Integration Project. The Youth Ethnic Integration (YEI) project is a five-year USAID activity in partnership with the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), implemented by the North Macedonian Civic Education Centre. It seeks to improve the inter-ethnic integration and strengthen civic culture among youth in North Macedonia. The project collaborates with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Bureau for Development of Education, the Vocational Education and Training Centre, the State Education Inspectorate, 450 primary and secondary schools, and all 84 municipalities. In July 2019, USAID North Macedonia also completed a Cross-sectoral Youth Assessment, which will be used for USAID's further internal planning of the programs aimed to help youth in the economy.⁸¹ According to the projects implemented, USAID in North Macedonia has prioritized civil engagement, participation of youth, and inter-ethnic community building.

The *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)* is supporting capacity building at the local youth councils to strengthen youth decision making at the local level as a key priority area. By engaging with young people nationwide in developing their capacities to influence national and local youth policies, the Mission works to respond to the real needs and priorities of youth. To enhance meaningful youth participation in policy dialogue and decision-making processes, the Mission supports the AYS, municipalities, Local Youth Councils, and the local branch of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). The Mission works with youth activists to help raise awareness among young people of the corrosive social effects of hate speech and to build resilience to radicalization that can lead to violent extremism. It provides training courses and capacity building activities for law enforcement to help them work better with young people and increase young people's trust in the police. The total budget of the intervention was EUR 301,956 (18,570,294.00 MKD).

⁸¹ “Cross-sectoral Youth Assessment” document, Available at <https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Cross%20Sectoral%20Youth%20Assessment%20Final%20Report%20-%20North%20Macedonia%20%28USAID%29.pdf> (Accessed, September 25, 2020).



The **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**. The overall goal of Swiss cooperation is to support North Macedonia in its reforms to meet European standards and build a socially inclusive democracy and a market economy, while ensuring the sound governance of natural resources. Some of the significant projects of the Swiss cooperation in North Macedonia are:

- The "Youth guarantee" (a measure introduced by the Government, with Swiss support), providing funds for vocational skills development, and development of new products in companies (details can be found in chapter 3).
- Building a network of Community Mobilizers that will be actively engaged in monitoring policies and governmental programs.
- Education for Employment in North Macedonia (E4E@mk) with a duration from 2016 until 2027. The E4E@mk project aims to increase the employability of the unemployed, especially young people, by improving the Vocational Skills Development (VSD) system. The program's target is 1,500 young people in employment during the current phase 2018-2022, and the anticipated support is EUR 13.4 mil for the program's overall duration. According to the SDC realized projects, their priority themes on youth are employment, VET, and education.

The British Embassy Skopje aims to work on the digital agenda for youth in North Macedonia by establishing a fully functioning MladiHub platform, which mediates between the digital skills among youth and the digital needs of the public and private sector. It will offer a voucher system for youth to be trained in digital skills, a voucher that can be earned by doing community or any other socially responsible work. Simultaneously, the project will offer a digital skills exchange program, a skills exchange platform where young people can provide digital skills, and the public and private sector can use those skills. The project started in 2019 and will last until 2021, and the anticipated support is approximately EUR 400,000.00. Recently, the UK Embassy has approved the project *Empowering Youth During a Global Pandemic Institute For Leadership And Public Policy*, which aims to motivate young people from all ethnic groups in Tetovo.

UNDP has concentrated its greatest efforts in recent years on supporting the Government's commitment to reducing unemployment as an essential step in increasing social inclusion. Much of UNDP's support for social inclusion has been focused on developing measures to promote self-employment, helping train the long-term unemployed and other vulnerable groups such as members of the Roma community, women living in rural areas, and victims of domestic violence to start up their own sustainable businesses. It is important to note that UNDP does not have a concrete program for youth, but that youth is crosscutting in all the organization's portfolios.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has been actively engaged in North Macedonia since 1992. Since 2008, GIZ has been present with a representative office in Skopje. Additionally, since 2007, GIZ has been implementing projects that are focused on fostering the regional cooperation and integration in the Western Balkan Region. The three focus areas are: Economic Development and Employment, Governance and Democracy, and Sustainable Infrastructure. In this respect, international cooperation is



promoting regional and local economic development and supporting the autonomous implementation of EU-compliant policies geared at balancing regional development in the economy. The total funded budget of GIZ in North Macedonia is EUR 6,248,484.

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an independently functioning institutional mechanism, founded by the Western Balkans 6 participants (WB6) to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region. The AYS supports the Branch Office in North Macedonia. RYCO has established its office (2018) and is currently operating with many projects (mentioned above), but they do not possess a bank account yet due to juridical procedures and difficulties in adopting the same system for all WB6 economies.⁸²

5.2 Donor Coordination

Donor coordination is the key provision for more consistent assistance. Better programming also relies on increased cooperation with other donors, international and financial institutions at a strategic level, agreeing on policy priorities and a clearer division of roles and interventions. Improved coordination with the donor community is a key condition enabling (co-)financing of agreed Sector Support Actions contributing to the policy objectives, thus moving away from purely grant-financed projects, and instead increasing the share of assistance through support at the Sector level.

The Secretariat for European Affairs is the main institution coordinating European funds in North Macedonia. The secretariat's mission is to provide professional support and coordination of the work of public administrative bodies and other organizations and institutions to prepare North Macedonia for membership in the European Union. Within its institutional structure, they have a sector for the coordination of European funds and all other foreign funds. Consultation with other stakeholders in the relevant sectors is also organized, as well as more generally with civil society organizations (engagement with civil society being an essential crosscutting obligation of IPA II programming) and other non-state actors, as appropriate. Multi-Economy coordination meetings take place regularly throughout the year either in Brussels or in the Enlargement Region and allow for discussion on the status of current and future programming, as well as implementation.

In North Macedonia, most of the donors directly support young people, or young people are amongst their target groups in crosscutting interventions. The donor community cooperates with the institutions of the economy at the national and local levels. Apart the Secretariat, another important institution that directly cooperates with the international community in projects related to youth is The AYS, which is the highest institution at a National level for youth policy and project implementation. The support is diverse, and the donors support activities on education (VET, higher education, citizen science), youth employment and skills, ethnic integration, innovations for youth, social enterprises, digital education, and so on. The coordination among the donor community happens regularly as well. Specifically, every

⁸² Short interview with Mr. Albert Hani - Head RYCO in NM, conducted on October 26, 2020.



Monday (hosted by OSCE), the donor community has joint weekly meetings. There are thematic meetings organized on different topics (the rule of law, LGBTI, youth, and so on) conducted monthly. The monthly meetings have a rotating host, such as embassies, the EU delegation, international organizations, and others.

5.3 Priority areas for the future in the field of youth

Donors have been assisting and supporting processes of youth policy creation. Their support has been present towards key governmental and municipal authorities, youth structures, formations, and civil society organizations in the economy, while developing relevant youth policies at the local and central levels, and building up paths for sustainable cooperation on issues related to youth participation. Young people from North Macedonia coming from different ethnic communities and backgrounds face social exclusion and marginalization for various reasons.

To respond as closely as possible to the needs of youth, based on donor mapping, key priority areas for future programs and projects in the future would be the following:

Rural youth: statistics show that real disparities exist between urban and rural areas, with rural youth facing distinct challenges relating to poverty, education, training, or employment opportunities. More projects supporting young people from rural areas to channel their energy, creativity, and aspirations in the areas where they live would be beneficial.

Promoting youth activism in a multi-ethnic context: taking into consideration the multi-ethnic composition of the economy's population, it is of paramount importance to engage youth from all ethnic communities and increase their access to projects promoting intercultural dialogue, peace-building, and social cohesion between ethnic communities to combat discrimination and exclusion. A few projects have been developed in this regard and more of them are needed in order to increase active civic and political participation of youth.

Youth radicalization and extremism: Following the above priority area, it is also important to highlight the need of future interventions in the youth radicalization and extremism phenomena. Radicalization and the associated use of violence are frequent among young people from different ethnic communities. This is because of increased hate speech and other factors, such as ethnocentric or other ideological influences on young people. While extremism and radicalization leading to violence are not new phenomena per se, their implications for young people and for the youth sector should be in the highlight in future actions.

Roma youth and other minority groups: According to the last census from 2002, there were 53,879 Romani people in what is now North Macedonia, or 2.66% of the population and 3,843 "Egyptians" (0.2%). Other sources claim the number to be between 80,000 and 260,000 Roma in North Macedonia, or approximately 4 to 12% of the total population. The municipality of Šuto Orizari is the only municipality in the world with a Romani majority and the only municipality where Romani is an official language alongside Macedonian. All this



data shows that the number of young people from this community have many needs that should be further addressed. Most of the Government's interventions have been focused on education and employment. There have been many projects from foreign donors, with increased attention related to formal and non-formal education, but additional data shows that Roma people are still marginalized.

Focus on the emigration of young people: the number of young people leaving the economy has increased in the last years. National policies on active labor market measures have not been as successful as expected. In this regard, more projects should be focused on channeled training of young people and supporting them in education and career development and, in particular, consolidating linkages between educated youth and the labor market. Help is needed for young people to gain work experience before they even start looking for full-time jobs through internships, volunteering, and part-time work. All of these would be priority areas, which would decrease the emigration of young people.

Inclusive youth work: Youth work, through its values and practices, also represents a mean of supporting young people's inclusion and participation in society. Priority areas to focus on to increase the participation of young people with disabilities and promote inclusive youth work would include: fostering active participation, gender equality, and combating all forms of discrimination on the labor market.

5.4 Critical Assessment

The International community working in North Macedonia is investing significantly in projects where youth can benefit directly or indirectly. Donor projects have had a significant impact in the process of the adoption of the new law. Still, it seems that the most recent projects have been largely related to education, employment policies, social inclusion, education and training (VET), digital skills, and democratic and civic participation. Additionally, it should be mentioned that there are some other projects aiming to develop youth skills regarding the monitoring of election promises.

Donors, sharing their values and priorities towards human rights, good governance, and the rule of law, have involved youth in many projects that are also beneficial for most of the population or for other groups targeted. Therefore, it seems like most of the work is being targeted towards youth-related areas and not towards youth directly. There is a pressing need to increase youth engagement and participation in policy processes. Moreover, young people living in rural areas and suburbs must be involved to a larger extent.

Furthermore, career orientation of youth, including labor market measures is important, and would minimize the emigration of young people at the same time. Other priority areas include projects that would contribute to an easier school-to-work transition through better vocational skills development and would mobilize them to become more active in addressing local and national level issues. In addition, particular focus is needed towards Roma youth and other



minority groups in order to engage youth from all ethnic groups, and to increase their access to projects promoting intercultural dialogue, peace building, among others.

An effective model of donor coordination is emerging. According to some of the interviews conducted for the purposes of this report, current donor coordination, which is done through the Secretariat for European Affairs, seems to fall short of the expectations of all of the parties concerned. The suggestion put forth is that donor coordination structures, such as multi-donor trust funds, be a part of facilitating joint approaches in recipient economies. More consistent assistance and increased cooperation should be provided. Furthermore, stronger agreement on policy priorities and a clearer definition in the share of roles and interventions should be a focus as well in order to avoid duplication of projects and activities. Building trust in collaborative partnerships is also important. On one hand, donors have to show more trust when building partnerships with domestic partners as grantees, partners, and CSO's. On the other hand, domestic partners must enhance their capacities to bring coordination to another level.

Besides the urgent need of an improved national donor coordination tool, the regional dimension must not be forgotten. Encouraging regional learning and exchange opportunities for youth is an essential strategy for change. An even larger number of donors seem to agree and call additional attention to joint youth problem solving to address the many problems that exceed the borders of individual economies in the region, and donors and CSOs need to lead the way as pioneers in this sort of cooperation.



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 analyses the impact of COVID-19 on youth and outlines some key recommendations per each key actor.

6.1 Good Practice

In the last years, the economy has progressed in creating youth policy by focusing on consultations with various stakeholders, including young people, youth organizations, ministries, institutions, and the donor community. The creation of the NYS 2016-2025 was inclusive and interactive, which the youth organizations stated during the interviews. None of the processes described are without their flaws, but they represent the start of good practice that should be further developed and improved. It is good that the law introduces minimum funding for its implementation on a local and national level. There are deadlines for implementation of the articles where the public authorities require specific actions.⁸³

In October 2017, the Assembly of North Macedonia established the CYAP. The Club also initiated the creation of the Law on Youth by forming a working group consisting of the youth representatives, MPs, and governmental representatives in which decisions are reached by consensus.

In the new law adopted in January 2020, youth participation in the decision-making processes is introduced by establishing a co-management body in which youth representatives work with governmental representatives on youth-related issues.

In 2018, the Youth Guarantee program⁸⁴ was implemented for the first time. This program was perceived as the most successful youth program in the economy by many institutions. The measures were created based on the findings from the International Labor Organization's research on the NEET group in the economy, and it was designed in correlation with the needs of the NEET in mind. The Youth Guarantee is the first example of implementation by a non-EU Member State. With the involvement of the National Youth Council of Macedonia, the government, for the first time in its existence, engaged civil society organizations in the implementation of a Governmental Policy.⁸⁵

6.2 Gap analysis

Even though there are many good practices highlighted above, there is still the need for improvement regarding the policy framework and, in particular, funding of and support for youth organizations. In terms of financing, the AYS has a limited budget for the

⁸³ Statement from the interview with representative of the Youth coalition SEGA, October 2020

⁸⁴ More information on the Youth Guarantee is given under the section 3.3.

⁸⁵ “The Republic of North Macedonia is the only economy that is not a member of the EU and implements the youth guarantee, which increases the scope and includes young unemployed people in the labour market. In 2019, 6,004 people were employed, and as many as 20,000 were included in the guarantee through the acquisition of new skills, job mediation and the like. As of June 10th, this year, 8,173 young people have been included in the guarantee, of which 1,971 are employed”, statement from the interview with Government representative, October 2020



implementation of its activities and the support of youth organizations.⁸⁶ There is far from sufficient funding in the youth field. The gap must be filled by national and local authorities including: the AYS, the relevant Ministries, the Secretariat of the Government, and the local municipalities.⁸⁷

Youth are considered the most important population group in the economy, any investment in them is investment in the economy. The AYS started a process for revision and development of a new Strategy, but there are still no tangible results from this process.

The new law has been adopted, the NYS exists (the process of creating a new one having already started), but cooperation between institutions appears to be missing. This missed cooperation is reflected as such in analysis, budget for implementation, and cross-sectoral cooperation. There is room for improvement for cross-sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation.

In terms of national youth participation, the NYA and the NYPAB have still not been created, even though the law was adopted a year ago. Besides the fact that youth are included in the broad consultation process to create the policy documents (law, youth policies, programs, and others), it is necessary to actually incorporate their input and to strengthen follow up mechanisms, and, for instance, offer an explanation as to why some of the input was not included.

In terms of local youth participation, the local youth assemblies have not been established yet and the existing local youth councils are not functional. Local youth strategies do not have a real effect in practice.

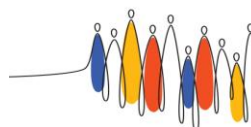
Gaps are also present in the capacities of public bodies and youth organizations to support youth participation processes. The relevant public bodies have enough human capabilities, but they are not always prepared to the extent required to implement the policy framework.

Meanwhile, the human resource capacities of youth organizations are weak and often not sufficient to meet the needs for the organizations' own project activities. Existing programs should be upgraded and revised to improve specific measures envisaged by the programs and to establish new ones that will enable young people to become the primary decision-making factor in North Macedonia.

In terms of funding, there is a delay in implementing the Youth Guarantee program, which is still in the pilot phase. In addition, besides the budget for the active labor market measures

⁸⁶ The programs on paper are perfect; they are evaded in the stage of realization. The responsible institutions are not sufficiently committed to the realization of the youth and youth policies, and for the budget, we are not even nearly close to the needs. Sustainability is minimal and efficiency is short-term.”, Gordana Cekova, Head of Youth Sector, AYSM, 2020

⁸⁷ Statement from the interview with representative of the Youth coalition SEGA, October 2020



included in the Operative Plan for Employment for 2019,⁸⁸ the government does not support the youth organizations included in implementing the fieldwork. The implementation of the fieldwork is still funded by international donors, whose funding raises the issue of sustainability.

Moreover, funds previously planned for the youth sector were withdrawn and moved to the COVID-19 emergency measures. The established practice and the Decrees that were adopted by the Government during the crisis of Covid-19 seem to have had a positive effect on raising the standard of youth in our economy. These ought to be transmitted to Programs.⁸⁹

One hurdle remains even with the newly adopted law, and that is that the NYCM and SEGA are still not formally recognized as the official representational bodies for young people. Another limitation is that neither one of the two networks represents the views and interests of all young people and youth organizations due to the segregation that exists between the organizations.

6.3 The impact of COVID-19 on youth

The pandemic caused by the global spread of the coronavirus COVID-19 is harming the social, educational and physical wellbeing of children and young people. They are being impacted directly through closures of school, extra-curricular and childcare facilities, social distancing rules and confinement. All of these changes have placed a heavy burden on their educational, cognitive and emotional development, with the risk of increasing their anxiety and stress levels. It is critical to understand that the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis may be particularly strong for some groups of children and youth, including those living in poverty, children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, and children in detention.⁹⁰

Young people were also indirectly affected by the crises since youth organizations were also weakened. Many projects in the youth field were delayed or cancelled, and organizations' sustainability was undermined. Meanwhile, the support provided by the government to compensate for these setbacks was limited.

In terms of funding, the funds allocated by the AYS for establishing four youth centers in collaboration with the local municipalities and the Union for Youth Work were ultimately cut.⁹¹ The pandemic has caused a lot of confusion, uncertainty, and challenges for young people. The only policy developed was of financial support for young adults and students. All of the other aspects have been put aside, except the reactions of various youth organizations

⁸⁸ "Corrected Operative plan", June 2019, MTSP, available at; <http://av.gov.mk/content/Dokumenti/Koregiran%20OP-2019%2012%20juli.pdf>; <http://av.gov.mk/operativen-plan.nsp.x> , (Accessed September 30, 2020)

⁸⁹ Statement from the interview with Member of Parliament September 2020

⁹⁰ "The social and economic effect of COVID-19 in children in NM", available at: <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/media/6816/file/Study:%20Social%20and%20Economic%20Effects%20of%20COVID-19.pdf> , (Accessed October 20, 2020)

⁹¹ Statement from the interview with representative of Youth coalition SEGA, October 2020.



that have been trying to fill in the gaps.⁹²

Overall, COVID-19 has had different effects on youth, ranging across changes in employment, education, health, and youth engagement. In that regard, the NYCM in cooperation with other organizations with expertise in each of the fields developed a document with proposed measures, available on the official webpage of the NYM.⁹³ The document itself defines each category and offers a set of measures to address it properly.⁹⁴

They also offer online services, webinars, and legal and paralegal advice online. There are also some initiatives on a national level that are initiated and led by the CSOs. One of the most important of them is the platform to fight against corruption, on which the CSO sector began collaborating with the SCPC (State Commission for Prevention of Corruption) to begin monitoring the transparency risks of corruption during the COVID-19 crisis.⁹⁵

6.4 Recommendations

Based on the data gathered from interviews with different stakeholders, as well as the desk research, this report summarizes the recommendations into the following sectors by also considering the following overall recommendation, which should be permanently taken into consideration by all actors involved:

- There is a need for an integrated, cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to the issues of young people's development and the mainstreaming of youth issues within national goals and programmes including, but not limited to, programs in education, training, health and employment.

Policy makers

- A successful implementation of the new law, LYPYP, should be a priority of the public institutions to develop more opportunities for the youth in the upcoming years and to institutionalize different mechanisms for youth participation.
- A more comprehensive approach and better coordination among the different relevant ministries and governmental institutions should be reinforced. For example, coordination among line ministries on youth-relevant policies needs to engage young people.
- In addition to the existing political will, public institutions need to understand the need for the creation of new policies. The public institutions should accept and fully implement the innovative proposals of the youth organizations to ensure significant youth participation in the decision-making processes.
- Enhanced focus should be placed on the consolidation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for national youth policies and foreseen activities.

⁹² Statement from the interview with representative of KRIK Civil Society, October 2020.

⁹³ Available at: <http://www.nms.org.mk/?lang=en> (Accessed January 10, 2021).

⁹⁴ Statement from the interview with Mrs. Elena Vilarova Velkovska – National Youth Council of Macedonia, October 2020

⁹⁵ “The State of CSOs, their Involvement in the Crisis Response & State and Donor Support”, available at <http://www.balkancsd.net/novo/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/78-6-Balkan-Civil-Society-in-the-COVID-19-Crisis-Part-II.pdf> (Accessed October 20, 2020).



- The public funds for the support of youth organizations should be significantly larger. Youth organizations would be strengthened significantly by the provision of guaranteed public funding and/or tax benefits for organizations and other private sector actors interested in supporting youth initiatives.
- Local youth councils should be actively engaged and the local governments should take into consideration their contributions in order to increase youth participation in the decision-making at a local level.
- The AYS, as the voice of and the bridge between the government and other decision makers, should increase its influence and balance the linkage between young people's aspirations and the resources of the governments.
- It is necessary to create flexible mechanisms for the implementation of youth-driven ideas and a mechanism to speed up the implementation of new emerging ideas and actions from events.
- Youth policy must be promoted in order to reach all major stakeholders and continually increase the awareness among a mass audience. Innovative means to mobilize and garner support from young people should be further developed.

Civil Society and Youth organizations in particular

- The civil society sector should prioritize youth and youth-related issues in their field activities while conceptualizing and implementing projects by ensuring youth participation in both the planning and the implementation of the projects.
- Strengthen capacities of youth coalitions/CSO and youth advocacy platforms at the municipal level on policy dialogue and engagement with local government for local planning, budgeting and monitoring, including in emergencies.
- Avoid segregation between umbrella organizations and further improve their capacities, both in terms of human resources and organizational capabilities.
- Youth organizations should clearly prioritize areas of intervention while requiring national or international funding.

Donor community

- A more effective donor coordination mechanism should be established at a national and additionally a supportive mechanism at regional level.
- Donors should continue and reinforce their willingness to further support youth and youth-related issues by providing direct support for the projects of youth organizations.
- To respond as closely as possible to the needs of youth, and based on the donor mapping, key priority areas for future programs and projects in the future should be considered. Both, project grants and institutional support for capacity building are recommended. On one hand, institutional support for capacity building in order to increase institutional capacities of youth organizations and other institutions operating in the youth sector. On the other hand, project grants would support them expand their activities and respond more closely to the priority areas. Proposed areas for support include:
 - *Rural youth*, with more programs and projects supporting young people from rural areas to channel their energy, creativity, and aspirations in the areas where they live.



- *Promoting youth activism in a multi-ethnic context*, with more programs and projects engaging youth from all ethnic communities on intercultural dialogue, peacebuilding, social cohesion, and active youth civic and political participation.
 - *Youth radicalization and extremism*, focusing more on drivers of radicalization and extremism, but also on implications of hate speech, security issues, organized crime and youth.
 - *Roma youth and other minority groups*, with enhancing the current focus on education and employment, and also looking to formal and non-formal education, the impact of COVID-19 and empowerment in the digital area.
 - *Focus on the migration of young people*, with more programs and projects that are focused on channeled training of young people and the support them in education and career development and, in particular, on consolidating linkages between educated youth and the labor market.
 - *Inclusive youth work* to support young people's inclusion and participation in society, fostering active participation, gender equality, and combating all forms of discrimination in the labor market.
-
- Develop mechanisms for young people to be involved in decision making about establishing new operational programs and grant-making plans.
 - Besides the engagement of young people, major donors should promote inclusion as a good practice in partnership negotiations with other members of the donor community.

Youth

- Youth should be more proactive and initiate youth-driven ideas, projects and activities through fostering communication and cooperation with each other.
- Youth should increase their public presence in the media with the aim to popularize and promote youth issues in order to increase their positive impact and, above all, societal awareness.



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ANNEXES

Annex 1 - National youth strategy 2016 – 2025: objectives per thematic area

1. Thematic area: Youth Participation

- Objective 1: An increased number of youth generated youth initiatives and youth associations.
- Objective 2: Institutions, organizations and youth will have regular, continuous and joint activities in accordance with the interests of young people.
- Objective 3: Local and national authorities provide financial support for the promotion of youth participation.
- Objective 4: More significant institutional focus on youth, ensured through the Youth and Sports Agency.
- Objective 5: Adequate resources provided for the implementation of youth policies and youth participation mechanisms

2. Thematic area: Youth Information

- Objective 1: Availability and transparency of information of interest to young people for fulfilment of their needs.
- Objective 2: Communication strategy on inter-institutional coordination for youth information developed.
- Objective 3: Youth information system on local and national level established with mechanisms for sustainable development (strengthened capacities, quality and quantity increase).

3. Thematic area: Local Youth Work

- Objective 1: Recognition of youth work as a key tool for assisting the positive personal and social development of young people.
- Objective 2: Formal recognition and regulation of the use and availability of youth work as an integral part of the education system of the economy.
- Objective 3: Ensuring the quality and availability of youth work in the territory of each municipality.

4. Thematic area: Education

Section: Use of teaching methods and techniques, educational approach and quality of teaching staff.

- Objective 1: To improve the curricula and teaching techniques in primary, secondary and higher education, including practical teaching in secondary and higher education.
- Objective 2: To improve the quality, training and support of teaching staff in the education process in secondary education and to provide opportunities for the development of staff in higher education institutions.

Section: Scope and quality of study programmes and quality control in education.

- Objective 3: To promote and duly apply external examinations of students' achievements as one of the mechanisms for monitoring and quality control of education.



- Objective 4: Appropriate coverage and treatment of sexual education content in the process of formal and non-formal education.
- Objective 5: To provide all educational institutions with access to reference databases of modern and progressive literature.

Section: Education policies, youth access/participation in educational policies.

- Objective 6: To establish a systematic approach in the adoption of educational policies that will be based on analysis and research and will be in accordance with international standards and best practices involving young people at all stages.
- Objective 7: Regular and consistent implementation of education policies.
- Objective 8: To adjust the legal framework of non-formal education in accordance with the nature of the youth sector and through the widespread application of EU standards.
- Section: Social integration of disadvantaged groups through education and by developing working and learning conditions.
- Objective 9: To achieve significant inclusion and integration in the education system of children and youth with special needs.
- Objective 10: To improve the support of children and youth who are neglected in terms of education and upbringing.
- Objective 11: Adequate inclusion in the education process of children with special needs and interests, including talented children, children with above-average IQ, hyperactive children, and children with dyslexia.
- Objective 12: To improve the availability of non-formal education for specific groups of children and youth.
- Objective 13: To develop a personal data protection system for children and youth in the education system.

5. Thematic area: Employment and Pre-Employment Support

- Objective 1: Creation of accessible opportunities for all young people to acquire competences (knowledge, opinions, skills) that are in demand in the labor market.
- Objective 2: Promotion of a long-term inter-sectoral approach in policies for assisting youth employment.
- Objective 3: Young people to become proactive and creative partners in the process of overcoming unemployment.

6. Thematic area: Culture

- Objective 1: An improved and sustainable system of creative and cultural practices among young people.
- Objective 2: Improved quality of cultural life and entertainment of young people.
- Objective 3: Equal access for young people to quality cultural events and opportunities for cultural cooperation.
- Objective 4: Young people are involved in drafting and implementing cultural policies.

7. Thematic area: Sports

- Objective 1: Creating a sustainable system for motivating young people to be regularly involved and active in sport.



- Objective 2: Equal access for all young people to sports facilities and activities for mental and physical health.
- Objective 3: Comprehensive cooperation of all institutions that contribute to sports and promotion of ‘Sport for Everyone’.
- Objective 4: An increased percentage of young people are involved in the creation and implementation of sport development policies.
- Objective 5: Creative annual activities for young people between the age of 15 and 22 for regular encouragement of participation in sports.

8. Thematic area: Health

- Objective 1: To reduce risk behavior (associated with SRH, use of tobacco, alcohol and PASs) and violence among Macedonian youth aged between 15 and 25 by 2025.
- Objective 2: To improve the conditions for improving the mental health and behavior of young people in Macedonia.
- Objective 3: To establish healthy eating habits among young people aged between 15 and 19.
- Objective 4: To increase awareness amongst young people of their responsibilities in traffic.
- Objective 5: To ensure equal access to healthcare for all young people.
- Objective 6: To set up conditions for the continuous rehabilitation and re-socialization of vulnerable categories of young people

9. Thematic area: Quality of Life

It covers elements from all previous thematic areas, at the same time focusing on new areas.

The National Youth Strategy 2016 – 2025 outlines 4 strategic objectives:

1. Providing a better standard of living and equal opportunities for a decent life.
2. Creating conditions for effective observance and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and systematic integration and interaction of different categories of young people.
3. Creating opportunities for the involvement of young people in the monitoring and implementation of policies and decisions that affect them.
4. Equal access to quality education and other forms of personal and professional development



Annex 2 - overview of national and local level stakeholders in North Macedonia

NATIONAL LEVEL	
Responsible authorities for overall implementation of the NYS	
	- Agency for Youth and Sport – government agency responsible for the youth
Other authorities at national level	
	- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - Ministry of Education and Science - Employment Service Agency - Club on Youth Affairs and Policies - Ministry of Culture - Agency for Promotion of the Entrepreneurship in the Republic of North Macedonia - National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility
Non-governmental organizations at national level	
	- National Youth Council of Macedonia - Coalition “SEGA” - Union of Youth Work
International organizations and donors at national level	
	- USAID North Macedonia - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of North Macedonia - UNDP North Macedonia - United Nations Children’s Fund - British Embassy Skopje - OSCE Mission in Skopje - National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility
LOCAL LEVEL	
Local level authorities	
	- Local Municipalities



Annex 3 – Key contents of LYPYP

LYPYP’s aim and objectives include the following⁹⁶:

- 1) Creating and implementing youth policy at all levels through multiple sectoral approaches, starting from the needs and interests of young people;
- 2) Strengthening the participation of young people in the policymaking processes for youth, active information, promotion and protection of the interests of young people, as well as raising awareness of the importance of young people and their social role;
- 3) Promoting intergenerational partnerships to support youth participation in the decision-making and policymaking process;
- 4) Support and promotion of youth organization;
- 5) Encouraging structural dialogue at the national and local level;
- 6) Encouraging volunteering, youth activism, and youth work, and
- 7) Encouraging personal, professional, and social development of young people.

⁹⁶ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, article 2, Nr. 08-327/1, January 2020, North Macedonia, Skopje, available at: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf> , (Accessed October 4, 2020).



Annex 4 - List of interviews

No.	Institution	Sector	Contact Person	Position
1	SEGA Youth Coalition -	Non-gov	Dragan Atanasov	Secretary General of SEGA coalition
2	National Youth Council of Macedonia	Non-gov	Elena Vilarova	Secretary General, National Youth Council
3	Agency for Youth and sport	Gov	Gordana Cekova	Head of youth sector
4	Youth and community center Gostivar	Non-gov	Sefer Selimi	Executive director
5	National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility	Gov	Snezana Simonovska	Head of Department for individual Mobility in the field of Education, Training and Youth & European Solidarity Corps
6	Community Youth Center in Chair	Non-gov	Nderim Nagavci	Coordinator
7	Youth Council of the US Embassy	Non-gov	Amantin Qamili	Member
8	Center for youth activism KRIK	Non-gov	Oliver Andreevski	Coordinator for Youth Programs
9	Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia	Gov	Irena Ivanovska	President of the Youth Committee
10	Youth Empowerment Platform (YEP)	Non-gov	Arlind Musliu	President of YEP
11	Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia	Gov	Arber Ademi	Former Minister of Education, current member of the Assembly
12	Embassy of Switzerland in North Macedonia Swiss Cooperation Office	Gov	Ibrahim Mehmeti	National Programme Officer
13	OSCE Mission to Skopje	Non-gov	Jasmina Todorovska Miteva	Youth Sector
14	Horizon Civitas	Non-gov	Samet Shabani	Chief Executive
15	Government of the Republic of	Gov	Mr. Gjorgji Tasev	Youth and Sport Adviser to the Prime



	North Macedonia			Minister of North Macedonia
16.	RYCO North Macedonia	Non-gov	Mr. Albert Hani	Head RYCO in NM

