

# MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN SERBIA



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**Title:** MAPPING OF YOUTH POLICIES AND IDENTIFICATION OF EXISTING SUPPORT AND GAPS IN FINANCING OF YOUTH ACTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS - SERBIA REPORT

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The report is based on comprehensive research, organised and overseen by the Group for Integration and Democracy in Albania, and involving six researchers, one in each Western Balkans economy, between August 2023 and November 2023, with Ketrina Çabiri Mijo and Erjola Vako Kaçi as Research Team Leaders.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>APV</b>	Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
<b>CBC</b>	Cross Border Cooperation
<b>CP</b>	Contracting Party
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>EIP</b>	Economic and Investment Plan
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUYD</b>	EU Youth Dialogue
<b>EYF</b>	European Youth Foundation
<b>GB</b>	Governing Board
<b>GIZ</b>	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>IPA</b>	EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
<b>KOMS</b>	National Youth Council of Serbia
<b>LBO</b>	Local Branch Office
<b>LoY</b>	Law on Youth
<b>LSGU</b>	Local Self-Government Units
<b>MIS</b>	Young Researchers of Serbia
<b>MLEVSA</b>	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs
<b>MOYS</b>	Minister of Youth and Sports
<b>MOTY</b>	Ministry of Tourism and Youth
<b>NaKZM</b>	National Association of Local Youth Offices
<b>NAPOR</b>	National Association of Youth Workers
<b>NES</b>	National Employment Service
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NYC</b>	National Youth Council
<b>NYS</b>	National Youth Strategy
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>RYCO</b>	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
<b>SfY</b>	Strategy for Youth
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Cooperation Agency



<b>SIS</b>	Scout Organization of Serbia
<b>SORS</b>	Statistic Office of Serbia
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USAID</b>	US Agency for International Development
<b>UYO</b>	Umbrella Youth Organization
<b>WB</b>	Western Balkans
<b>WBYL</b>	Western Balkans Youth Lab
<b>YAC</b>	Youth Advisory Council
<b>YEA</b>	Young European Ambassadors



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on the current state of the youth policies in Serbia, showing the trajectory of youth policies for the period 2020-2023. It examines the available support by identifying gaps in the financing of youth initiatives and maps donor programs in the youth sector. Additionally, it analyses youth participation in decision-making processes, highlighting successful approaches and offering recommendations.

The report was developed based on desk and empirical research. The desk research consisted of an analysis of laws, regulations, national strategies, and programs. Statistics from various sources, as well as the most recent reports, were analysed as important sources of information on the youth sector in Serbia. The empirical research was carried out through 14 interviews with representatives of institutions, youth-led and youth-oriented organizations and their associations and the donor community.<sup>1</sup>

Under the Law on Youth, young people are individuals from 15 to 30 years. According to the 2022 Population Census, Serbia has 1,047,543 young people (aged 15-29), which accounts for 15.75% of the total population. Compared to data from 2019, with a number of 1,156,611 young people, or 16.6% of the total population it is noticeable that the number of young people is decreasing. The gender distribution among young people is nearly equal, with 48.9% female and 51.1% male, where the majority of young people have completed secondary education (56.6%), and employment, with a decreasing NEET rate (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).<sup>2</sup> Unemployment rates among young people have been dropping, however, detailed comparison of the limited data available brought to the conclusion that youth migration, both internal and external remains at a high level.

The existing legislative and strategic framework for Serbian youth policy includes the Law on Youth and the new policy documents, such as the Strategy for Youth in Serbia for 2023-2030 and the Youth Action Plan 2023-2025. These documents are considered to be examples of good practice in terms of setting the ground for effective policy implementation. Ministry of Tourism and Youth provided support to the establishment of various youth policy actors on the national level, such as the National Youth Council of Serbia, the Scout Organization of Serbia, the National Association of Youth Workers and the National Association of Local Youth Offices, which strengthened the structure for youth policy implementation.

Other various institutions, bodies and organizations including the Youth Advisory Council, the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth, as well as the RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, on the regional level are established to help the implementation of youth policy and involvement of youth in decision-making processes.

The Strategy for Youth in Serbia is funded by various sources, including the national budget, autonomous provinces, and local governments. However, only 0.03% of Serbia's annual budget is allocated to youth programs. The 2023-2025 Action Plan has a budget of 10,648,263,494 RSD (approx.

1 See ANNEX 1

2 See below CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA, 1.2 Education and Employment, 1.2.2 NEET Youth



90,812,238.67 EUR), with 3,201,116,142 RSD (approx. 27,300,275.13 EUR) allocated for the first year. The Ministry of Tourism and Youth is the main donor, followed by other ministries. However, the set time framework of public competitions each year leaves little time for project implementation.

Although national documents emphasize the importance of active youth participation, there is no specific legislation requiring the government to include young people in policymaking. The main mechanisms and processes for engaging young people at both the central and local levels include the EU Youth Dialogue and Youth Dialogues with decision-makers.

The European Union plays a significant role through initiatives such as the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ Program. Other important international donors include GIZ, USAID, UNICEF, and the OSCE Mission to Serbia and others. These donors support various projects aimed at enhancing youth employment, education, and social inclusion. The issue of donor coordination is emphasized, with efforts being made to establish a Broad Coalition on Youth to improve policy alignment and coordination among donors.

Serbia has made significant progress in its youth policy by adopting a new strategy and allocating budgets. Some good practices include establishing the Youth Advisory Council and implementing the EU Youth Dialogue. However, several gaps need to be addressed. For example, there are inconsistent definitions of youth by-laws, incomplete data collection on youth demographics, and a lack of local-level research due to limited funding. Additionally, local youth policy instruments, including funding for youth organizations are not legally binding for local governments. Prioritizing youth policy and allocating funds also remains a challenge, which affects the sustainability of youth organizations. Finally, there are concerns about overlapping priorities among donors and government structures, which can hinder the achievement of youth policy goals.

Some of the key policy recommendations include ensuring the establishment and implementation of all instruments of the local Youth Policy, as well as that LSGUs have original jurisdiction over care for young people and budget allocations for the implementation of Youth Policy. Also, increasing the capacities of the Youth Sector within the Ministry of Tourism and Youth is highly necessary. When it comes to the donor community, in addition to project-based funding, they should also develop long-term programmatic financing to support activities over multiple years, ensuring that results are continuous and more purposeful.

The report is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides general data on the youth population. The second chapter discusses the legal and strategic framework for youth policy, as well as the key institutions accountable for youth policies. In the third chapter, the funding framework and its mechanisms are analysed, with a focus on the funding of the Strategy for Youth and its Action Plan. The fourth chapter examines the mechanisms and channels for including youth in decision-making and youth participation. The fifth chapter discusses the major interventions by international organizations and development partners that target the youth population. The sixth and concluding chapter identifies good practices and gaps, based on the key themes presented in the previous chapters. Each chapter also provides an insight into progress and/or changes made between 2020 and 2023.





# CHAPTER 1: YOUTH POPULATION DATA

This chapter presents statistics regarding youth age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment, and migration based on Serbia's available data.

At the very beginning, it is worth mentioning that the Law on Youth (LoY) defines the age range of young individuals (from 15 to 30), but its application is inconsistent, making it difficult to conduct research in the youth sector. Additionally, there is an overlap in the definitions of young persons and children,<sup>3</sup> which further adds to the confusion. There is also an uneven use of the youth age category across various laws and institutions, such as data on youth employment and social protection services.<sup>4</sup> Based on the analysis of the 13 most relevant national strategies, it was determined that in nine of them, young people were recognized as a special interest group and not as part of the general population, while in five other strategies the ministry in charge of youth is recognized as implementor of some of the measures.<sup>5</sup> It is worth mentioning that all 13 strategies analysed, include young people within the implementation of their activities and measures. However, only two strategies (the Strategy for the Development of Education and Upbringing, 2030 and the Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia, 2021 - 2026) define young people as persons between 15 - 30 years of age. Other Strategies refer to young people in a category of age from 15 - 18 years old, 15 - 24 years old and 18 - 25 years old.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.1. Age and Gender

According to the 2022 Population Census report, Serbia has a population of 6,647,003, with 1,047,543 young people (aged 15-29),<sup>7</sup> accounting for 15.75% of the total population.<sup>8</sup>

3 Definitions of young people overlap with the definition of children. Article 11 of Serbia's Family Act stipulates that the age of majority is acquired at the age of 18, while the Law on Youth defines young people as persons from the age of 15 to the age of 30. The question is whether such dual status affects the exercise of certain rights and how young people with dual status are treated in different legal situations. If such status were found to put youth between the ages of 15 and 18 at a disadvantage, then it would be necessary to revise the aforementioned laws regulating the status of children and youth.

4 Statistical Office of Serbia through the Labor Force Survey collects statistical data on youth employment defining these category 15-24 years old, and the social protection service collects data up to youth who are 26 years old.

5 Strategy for Youth 2023-2030 refers to the "Comparative Analysis Of The National Youth Strategy For The Period From 2015 To 2025 And International And National Strategies/Programs In The Field Of Youth Policy" which outlines the following documents: Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development for the period 2014-2024, Public Health Strategy 2018-2026, Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence 2020-2025, Strategy on Economic Migration 2021-2027, Strategy for the Development of Digital Skills 2020-2024, Strategy for Improving the Position of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2024, Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence 2020-2023 with the Action Plan 2020-2021 for the implementation of the Strategy, Industrial Policy Strategy 2021-2030, Mental Health Protection Program 2019-2026, Smart Specialization Strategy 2020-2027, Employment Strategy 2021-2026 and the Action Plan 2021-2023 for the implementation of the Strategy, Education Development Strategy until 2030, Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development 2021-2025 "The power of knowledge".

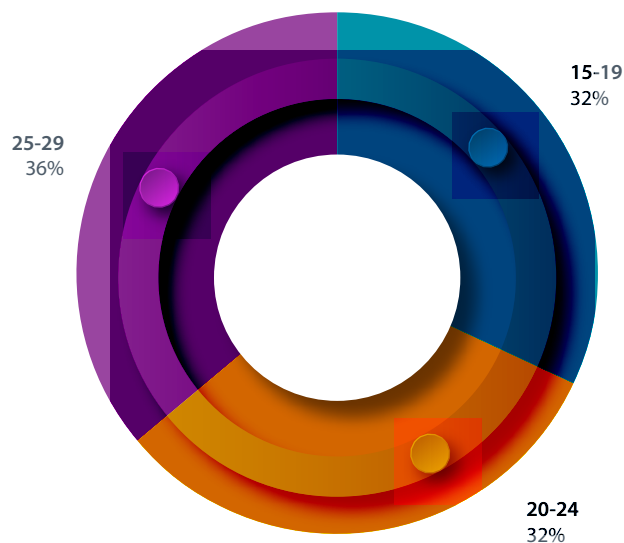
6 Ministry of Tourism and Youth. 2023. "Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the Period from 2023 to 2030." [Link](#).

7 Statistical Office of Serbia. 2022. "Census of Population, Households and Dwellings."

8 Discrepancy with the age category with in the LoY statistics and keeping data on youth are not done uniformly.



Chart 1: Number of Young People Divided in Age Cohorts



Source: Population Census report, 2022

Divided in age cohorts, data shows that young people age:

- 15-19 make 5.08% of the total population (337.351),
- 20-24 make 5.07% of the total population (337.105), and
- 25-29 make 5.61% of the total population (373.087).

Data shows that the number of young people has been continuously decreasing since the last census in 2011. The estimated number of young people aged 15 to 30 in 2019 was 1,237,628 (17.8% of the general population).<sup>9</sup> According to the Ministry of Tourism and Youth (MoTY) and based on data from the Statistical Office of Serbia (SoRS) for 2022, 1,124,392 young people (aged 15-30) live in Serbia which makes up to 16.9% of the total population. This decrease follows the general trend in the total number of citizens in Serbia which has been steadily decreasing over the past two decades.

Taking into consideration the gender perspective of the data, it shows that 48.9% of young people are female, while 51.1% are male. While in the overall population, the proportion of women is higher compared to men, in the young population, it is the opposite.

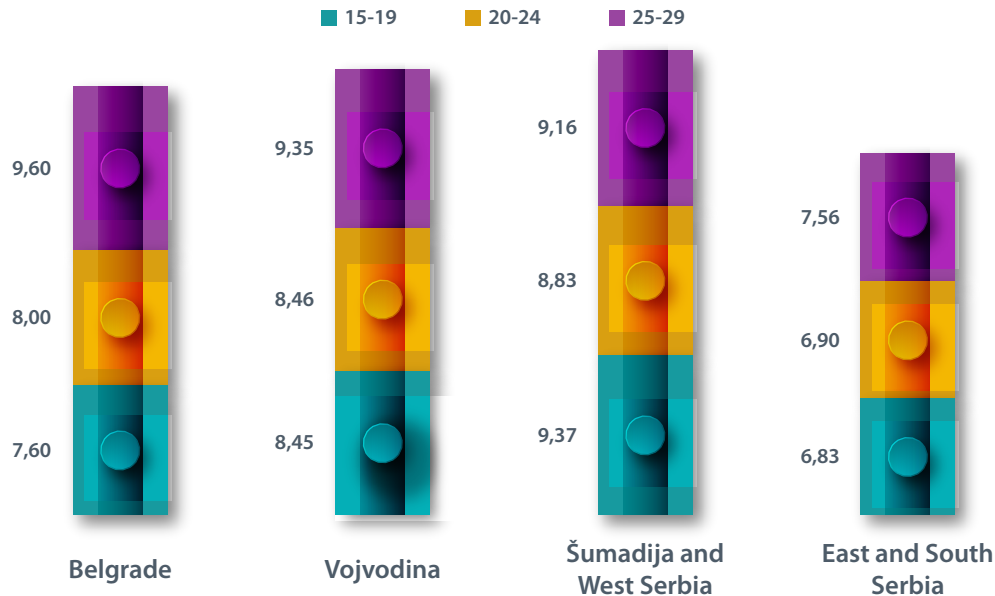
Considering the geographical distribution of young people, it is noteworthy that 656.415 or 62.7% of young people live in urban areas, whereas 391.128 or 37.3% of young people live in rural areas. Geographically, the Belgrade region has 25.2% or 263,520 young people, Vojvodina region has 26.2% or 274,479 young people, Šumadija and West Serbia region has 27.3% or 286,559 young people, and East and South Serbia region has 21.3% or 222,995 young individuals. The biggest number of young

<sup>9</sup> The difference between SORS and Eurostat data stems from different definition of the upper boundary for the age cohort – SORS counts young people that are 29 at the time of data collection even if they turn 30 in the year when data is collected, unlike Eurostat that does not include those who turn 30 in the year when data is collected.



people aged 15-19 live in Šumadija and Western Serbia Region (98.144 or 9,7% of young people), as well as the biggest number of people aged 20-24 (92.495 or 8,8%) while the largest number of young people aged 25-29 lives in Belgrade region (100.497 or 9,6%).<sup>10</sup>

Chart 2: Distribution Of Young People By Regions



Source: Population Census report, 2022

A depopulation trend is visible in the population projections for Serbia 2011-2041. In more concrete terms, according to the SoRS, population projections for the age group 15-29 show that in 2031 there will be 80,307 young people less than in 2018, while in 2041 the decrease will reach 91,064.<sup>11</sup> The projection of the age population is expected to be an average of 43.85 years.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it is a prerequisite for policymakers to reflect on the data and invest more efforts and sources in improving the quality of life for young people in Serbia.

10 The difference between SoRS and Eurostat data stems from different definition of the upper boundary for the age cohort – SoRS counts young people that are 29 at the time of data collection even if they turn 30 in the year when data is collected, unlike Eurostat that does not include those who turn 30 in the year when data is collected.

11 Nikolić, Nevena. 2021. "Mapping of Youth Policies and Identification of Existing Support and Gaps in Financing of Youth Actions in the Western Balkans."

12 Percentage is provided by the representative of the MoTY based on the data from SoRS.



## 1.2. Education and Employment

### 1.2.1 Education

Based on the data from the “Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in Serbia: Field Research” the highest percentage of youth in the 25-30 age group have obtained a four-year high school degree (74.40%), with the next most prevalent level of education in this age cohort being a Bachelor’s degree (21.30%).<sup>13</sup> A smaller percentage of individuals (2.60%) in the 25-30 age group have pursued Master’s or Ph.D. degrees, with 2.60% of them having achieved this highest level of education.

In the 20-24 age group, 53.70% have completed a four-year high school degree, making it the most prevalent education level in this age range. Among youth aged 15-19, the majority (73.60%) have education levels at or below elementary school.

The percentages for other education levels, such as three-year high school, specialization one year after high school, and college, are relatively lower across the age groups.

College education is more prevalent among females (7.20%) than males (5.00%). Also, a higher percentage of females (10.90%) have completed a Faculty Bachelor’s degree compared to males (9.10%). The percentage of Master’s or PhD degrees obtained is relatively low but slightly higher for females (1.70%) than for males (0.40%). Compared with data on youth employment we can notice a gap between higher levels of education among young women and their disadvantaged position in the labour market (see below).

Table 1: Highest completed level of education based on Gender and Age in 2022

	Gender		Age		
	Male	Female	15-19	20-24	25-30
Elementary School or Less	22,80%	21,70%	73,60%	1,50%	2,10%
Three-year high school	12,90%	5,50%	4,20%	14,20%	8,70%
Four-year high school	49,90%	52,40%	22,10%	74,40%	53,70%
Specialization 1 year after high school		0,70%		0,40%	0,50%
College	5,00%	7,20%		5,20%	11,10%
Faculty, BA	9,10%	10,90%		4,30%	21,30%
MA, PhD	0,40%	1,70%			2,60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100,00%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in Serbia: Field Research, 2022<sup>14</sup>

Young people in urban areas have higher levels of education, with 52.80% completing four-year high school. College and university-level education is more common in urban areas across all regions, and Belgrade has the highest percentages in these categories.<sup>15</sup>

13 Nina Media. 2022., „Истраживање о Положају и Потребима Младих у Србији: Теренско Истраживање.“ / Nina Media. 2022. “Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in Serbia: Field Research.”

14 Nina Media. 2022., „Истраживање о Положају и Потребима Младих у Србији: Теренско Истраживање.“ / Nina Media. 2022. “Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in Serbia: Field Research.”

15 *Ibid.*



Table 2: Highest completed level of education based on Region and Settlement in 2022

	Region			Settlement		
	Belgrade	Vojvodina	Western Serbia and Šumadija	East and South Serbia	Urban	Rural
<b>Elementary School or Less</b>	24,10%	24,30%	18,90%	22,10%	20,80%	24,30%
<b>Three-year high school</b>	11,90%	10,50%	5,60%	9,50%	5,80%	14,10%
<b>Four-year high school</b>	47,90%	52,80%	53,80%	49,20%	52,80%	48,80%
<b>Specialization 1 year after high school</b>	0,80%		60,00%	0,60%		
<b>College</b>	7,60%	4,50%	5,60%	6,90%	7,00%	4,80%
<b>Faculty, BA</b>	8,50%	6,50%	14,90%	9,10%	11,80%	7,20%
<b>MA, PhD</b>		80,00%	1,20%	2,50%	1,20%	0,80%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Source: Report on the Position and Needs of Youth in Serbia: Field Research, 2022<sup>16</sup>

### 1.2.2. NEET Youth

Eurostat data shows that the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate among young people in Serbia was 14.0% in the first quarter of 2023. This is a decrease of 3.4% compared to 2022 and a decrease of 6% compared to 2020. The NEET rate for young people from 15-24 was 11.4%.<sup>17</sup>

As indicated in the "Position of NEET Youth in the Republic of Serbia" report there are seven categories of NEET youth:<sup>18</sup>

1. Those who are entering the labour market or starting the next level of their education or training and will soon be leaving this group,
2. Short-term unemployed,
3. Long-term unemployed,
4. Persons with a disability,
5. Persons taking care of their family members – at large women,
6. Discouraged,
7. Others.

In general, the lack of experience in dealing with youth with NEET status and the lack of regular data collection on them poses a significant challenge in developing evidence-based youth policies.<sup>19</sup>

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

<sup>17</sup> Stojanović, Boban, i Aleksandar Ivković. 2023. „Alternativni Izveštaj o Položaju i Potrebama Mladih 2023.“ Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. [Link](#). / Stojanović, Boban and Aleksandar Ivković, 2023. "Alternative Report on the Position and Needs of Young People in Serbia." National Youth Council of Serbia. [Link](#).

<sup>18</sup> Anđelić, Jelena, i Dina Rakin. 2020. „Položaj NEET Mladih u Srbiji.“ Fondacija Ane i Vlade Divac. [Link](#). / Anđelić, Jelena, and Dina Rakin. 2020. "Position of NEET Youth in Serbia." Foundation Ane and Vlade Divac. [Link](#).

<sup>19</sup> Đukić, Mihajlo. 2022. "Youth Entrepreneurship, NEET Employability, And Youth Career Management Skills in Serbia." Regional Cooperation Council. <https://rb.gy/vme4n>.



### 1.2.3. Unemployment

According to the National Employment Service (NES), there were 372,436 unemployed individuals in Serbia in August 2023.<sup>20</sup> Out of this number, 67,131 or 18.02% were young people. This is a positive development compared to August 2021, when there were 483,058 unemployed people, whereas 95,273 or 19.72% were young people.<sup>21</sup> This could be attributed to employment programs targeting youth such as the “My First Salary” program, and even more likely to large-scale emigration of young people as it was also the case in 2020.<sup>22</sup>

It is also noteworthy that the statistical reports on the number of unemployed young people are based on the register of the National Employment, however, data shows that less than ¼ of unemployed youth have been registered with the NES,<sup>23</sup> implying that rates of unemployed youth could be higher than projected.

NES data indicates that the highest number of unemployed young people (39.97%) lives in Šumadija and West Serbia region compared to only 8.84% that live in Belgrade region. Moreover, the highest unemployment rate is among young people aged 25-29 and it is as high as 47.33%.

Table 3: Youth unemployment data in Serbia

County/Region	Age			Total young people	Total number of unemployed people
	15-19	20-24	25-29		
Belgrade	697	1.619	3.620	5.936	46.001
Vojvodina	2.949	4.755	6.330	14.034	79.518
Šumadija and West Serbia	4.064	10.508	12.258	26.830	139.159
South and East Serbia	3.334	7.433	9.564	20.331	107.758
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.044</b>	<b>24.315</b>	<b>31.772</b>	<b>67.131</b>	<b>372.436</b>

Source: National Employment Service, 2023

Table 4: Youth unemployment in Serbia based on gender

Total number of unemployed youth –	15-19		20-24		25-29	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>67.131</b>	<b>5.927</b>	<b>5.117</b>	<b>11.216</b>	<b>13.129</b>	<b>12.722</b>	<b>19.050</b>

Source: National Employment Service, 2023

Young women in Serbia are a highly vulnerable group in the labour market, as indicated by the values of key labour market indicators. Out of the total unemployed young population, there are

20 Национална Служба за запошљавање. Август 2023. „Месечни Статистички Билтен Незапосленост и Запошљавање у Србији.” [Link.](#) / National Employment Service. August 2023. “Monthly Statistical Bulletin Unemployment and Employment in Serbia.” [Link.](#)

21 Data on employment in Kosovo\* is excluded as it will be covered by another report. \*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ.

22 Government of Serbia. 2020. “Strategy on Economic Migration for The Period 2021 – 2027.” and European Commission. 2022. “COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2020 Report Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy.”

23 Stojanović i Ivković 2023



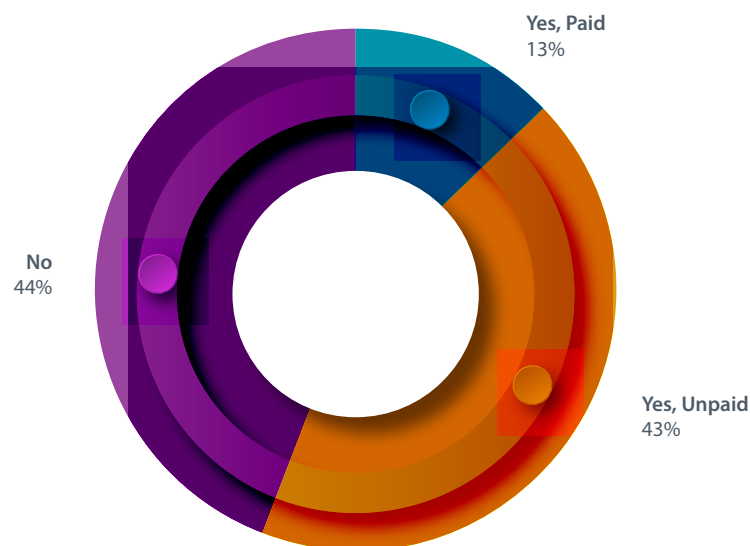
37,296 young women, which represents 55.56% of the group. On the other hand, there are 29,835 young men, accounting for 44.44% of the unemployed youth. It is worth mentioning that there is a noticeably higher number of unemployed young women in the age categories 20-24 and 25-29. However, there is a slightly higher unemployment rate among young men in the age category 15-19.

Regrettably, a large number of employed young individuals do not work in decent jobs.<sup>24</sup> Research shows that only 22% of employed youth have jobs that match their educational level. Thus, when it comes to job security among employed workers, there is a significant share of those who lack job security (44.1% in Serbia and 35.8% in the EU 27). Also, although the majority of employed young people have permanent employment contracts (38%), there is still a significant worry about the substantial percentage of young workers without employment contracts (17.7%).<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, to a certain extent, the position of young people in the labour market can be attributed to their education level, since young individuals who are currently pursuing education tend to be less involved in the labour market compared to their counterparts in the EU countries.<sup>26</sup> It also takes young people in Serbia almost two years, to transition from school to a stable and satisfactory job, a timespan significantly longer compared to the EU.

In this regard, internships often provide young people with temporary work experience in a professional environment. For many young people internships are an important part of the journey from the education system to the labour market and towards obtaining a permanent job.<sup>27</sup>

Chart 3: Young People and Internships



Source: *Alternative Report on Position and Needs of Young People in Serbia, 2023*

24 Decent jobs are jobs that enable young women and men to earn a fair income while working in conditions of security, dignity and equality. Read more about decent jobs for youth: [Link](#).

25 Stojanović and Ivković 2023

26 Nacionalna služba za zapošljavanje. 2021. „Nacionalna strategija zapošljavanja za period od 2021. do 2026. godine.“ / National Employment Service. 2021 “National Strategy for Employment for Period 2021-2026.”

27 Ng, Jenny. 2022. “High Quality or Unpaid and Unregulated? Uncovering National Internship Policies in Europe.” European Youth Forum.





In 2023, over ½ of young people in Serbia have completed an internship programme while 43% of them have performed unpaid internships.<sup>28</sup> This would have led them to a loss of 560 EUR on average per month. This was allowed by the lack of adequate regulations that would protect their labour rights.<sup>29</sup>

Compared to 2021, improvement in regulation has been made as the Government has drafted the Law on Internships.<sup>30</sup> The Law will govern the process of acquiring practical knowledge and skills through internships related to a specific occupation and improve one's chances of finding employment or starting a business while also offering guidance and supervision of a mentor. Once adopted, it will also cover the conditions for organizing internships, the duration of internships, and the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of both the employer and the intern.

One of the downsides of this legislative proposal is that it only regulates the internships on the open labour market and not the ones that take place in the framework of formal education. It also prescribes remuneration of at least 60% of the NET basic salary for the same or similar jobs with the employer, increased by the corresponding contributions and tax.<sup>31</sup> This is below the remuneration demanded on the EU level which is "at least at the level of the national minimum wage and above the national poverty threshold, with overtime additionally compensated".<sup>32</sup>

Complementary to these trends, the European Commission Report for Serbia in 2022, indicates that "Serbia should in particular ensure adequate financial and institutional resources for employment and social policies to more systematically target the young, women and long-term unemployed; in particular, take further steps to start piloting the Youth Guarantee in Serbia".<sup>33</sup>

### 1.3. Youth Migration

In recent decades, Serbia has been dealing with the issue of a significant number of young, educated individuals leaving its borders. While it is difficult to determine the exact number accurately, data from the European Statistical Office reveals that over 4,000 people emigrate from Serbia each month, amounting to 51,000 annually.<sup>34</sup> As of the end of 2021, there were 4.2 million citizens of the WB and Türkiye with valid permits to reside in the EU Member States and 11 % were held by citizens of Serbia (approx. 462,000 people).<sup>35</sup>

Only in 2021, approximately 44,800 Serbian citizens were issued with first residence permits by EU Member States with 58% of permits from Germany, Croatia and Austria. Family and employment

28 Stojanović and Ivković 2023

29 Moxon, Dan, Cristina Bacalso, and Solome Dolidze. 2023. "The Costs of Unpaid Internships." European Youth Forum and People, Dialogue and Change.

30 The Law has been put for public discussion for representatives of state authorities, public services, business entities, trade unions, employer associations, chambers of commerce, experts, representatives of the non-governmental sector, and other interested participants has been open until September 18, 2023.

31 Ministarstvo za rad, zapošljavanje, boračka i socijalna pitanja. n.d. "Nacrt Zakona o radnoj praksi - Tekst propisa." Accessed September 22, 2023. [Link](#). / Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy. n.d. "Draft Law on Labor Practices - Text of regulations." Accessed September 22, 2023. [Link](#).

32 European Youth Forum. 2022. "European Youth Forum's Demands on the Review of the Quality Framework on Traineeships."

33 European Commission. 2022. "COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Serbia 2020 Report Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy."

34 Nikolić 2021

35 Eurostat. 2023. "Enlargement Countries - Statistical Overview." [Link](#).





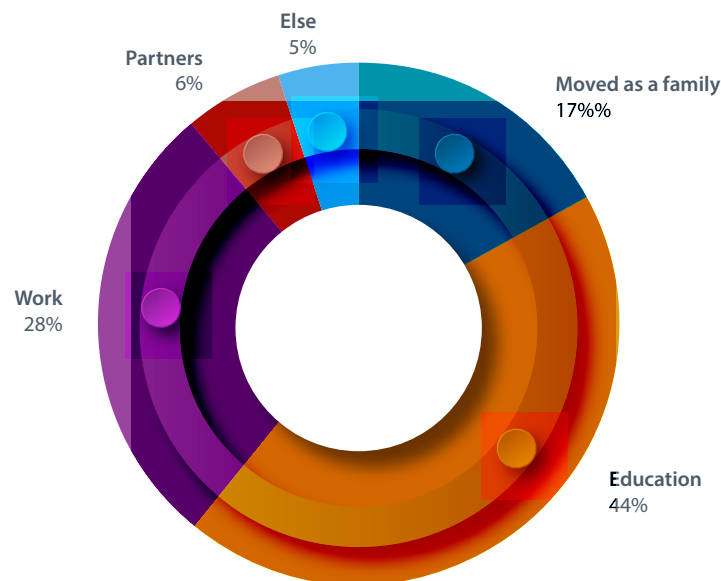
were the most common reasons for which first permits were issued. Also, in 2021, approximately 8,000 Serbian citizens acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State as it brings new rights and opportunities, such as the right to move, live and work freely within the EU.<sup>36</sup>

The lack of sufficient data on the structural attributes of external migrants makes it impossible to accurately determine the total losses incurred by Serbia due to the emigration of the population. However, when considering data from potential migration incomes, the most favourable case suggests that another country would benefit from an investment of approximately 300 million euro while in the most pessimistic scenario, this investment could reach as high as 1.2 billion euro. A more positive impact of emigration includes remittances, which position Serbia as one of the leading countries in the region in terms of annual remittance amounts.<sup>37</sup>

Youth emigration, whether internal or external, has the most negative effects such as demographic effects - depopulation and a higher proportion of elderly individuals, economic effects - reduced GDP growth and slower economic development, and negative impacts on social and pension systems.<sup>38</sup>

Regarding internal migrations, data shows that 68% of young people still live in their hometowns, while 32% have moved away, with the main reason for their migration primarily being education (44%), followed by job opportunities (28%), and family relocation (17%).<sup>39</sup>

Chart 4: Reasons For The Migration Of Young People



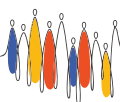
Source: *Alternative Report on Position and Needs of Young People in Serbia, 2023*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> National Strategy for Employment for Period 2021-2026

<sup>38</sup> Research on the Costs of Youth Emigration in Serbia found that the state suffers losses not only because highly educated individuals leave, but also because the potential for GDP growth decreases by 19,446 euros per person each year. The decrease in population leads to reduced consumption, which in turn affects the economy's ability to create new jobs. Moreover, the departure of predominantly young people results in a decline in the demographic potential, further hindering substantial economic development. As a result, the potential GDP is reduced by 0.9 billion EUR. When considering the amount invested in the education of those who have left, the annual loss ranges from 1.2 to over 2 billion EUR.

<sup>39</sup> Stojanović and Ivković, 2023

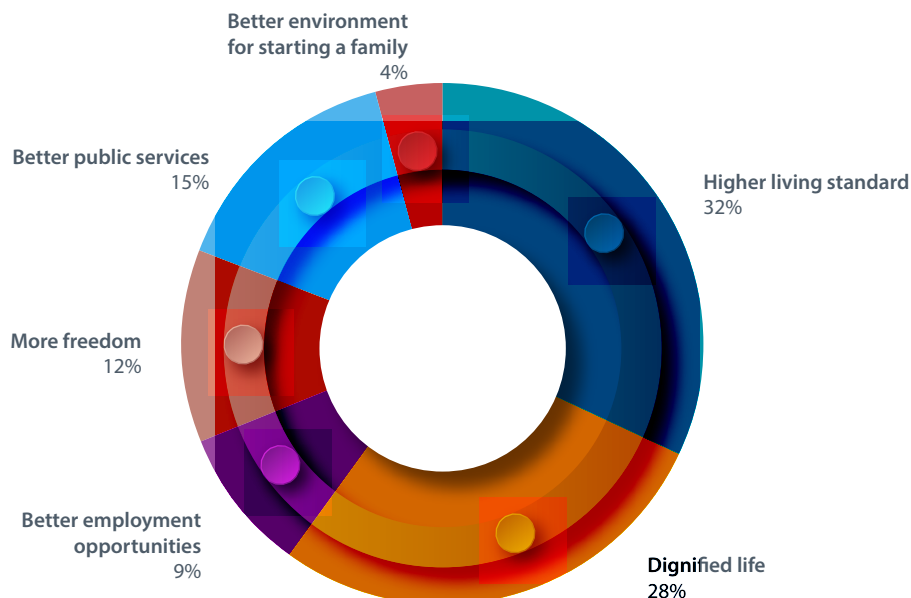


In 2023, 23.6% of young people said they already have plans in progress for moving abroad, while 25.6% mentioned that they are currently in the planning phase but have not yet started the actual process. Over half of them (54,8%) would prefer to move to (Western) Europe.<sup>40</sup>

In 2021, the most common reasons quoted by young people were unemployment, economic problems, lack of security, the socio-political situation, and problems in the corrupt operation of local governments. In addition to these factors, it also stands for corruption, nepotism, and the hiring of members of the ruling party. Despite the negative factors, other influencing ones are related to the opportunity to learn about other cultures, develop professionally, learn foreign languages, or reunite with their parents or other family members who already live abroad.<sup>41</sup>

In 2023, a higher standard of living remains the primary reason (32.2%) and a more dignified life (27.7%) are the top reasons why young people wish to move abroad. It's interesting to note the increased emphasis on the importance of better public services.<sup>42</sup>

Chart 5: Reasons Why Young People Consider Moving Away



Source: *Alternative Report on Position and Needs of Young People in Serbia, 2023*

To tackle severe economic migration Serbia adopted a Strategy on Economic Migration for 2021-2027, which aims at fostering circular migration by retaining workers and encouraging the diaspora to return to the country. An Action Plan for the period 2021-2023 was adopted in September 2021 followed in November 2021 by a decision to establish a working group for the implementation and monitoring of the strategy and Action Plan. The strategy is also incorporated as a reform measure in the ERP 2022-2024 while the coordination of implementation and reporting is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans, and Social Affairs.<sup>43</sup>

40 *Ibid.*

41 Nikolić 2021

42 Stojanović and Ivković 2023

43 European Commission 2022



# CHAPTER 2: NATIONAL YOUTH LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

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

## 2.1. Legal Framework

### 2.1.1. The Constitution

Young people are not a constitutional category in Serbia, hence there is no definition or particular reference to them. Only Article 60 stipulates that: “Women, youth and the disabled are provided with special protection at work and special working conditions, by the law”.<sup>44</sup>

### 2.1.2. Law on the Planning System

The Law on the Planning System in 2018, requires that within two years of its enactment, all existing laws and regulations related to the process of adopting policy documents must be aligned with its provisions. Additionally, during the first round of revisions to these documents, they must also be brought in line with the Law on the Planning System.<sup>45</sup>

The adoption of this Law heavily influenced the development and adoption of key youth policy documents since 2021.<sup>46</sup>

### 2.1.3. Law on Youth

The LoY was written through a broad participatory process and was adopted by the National Assembly in 2011.<sup>47</sup> Article 1 defines its scope and purpose, stating that it regulates measures and activities undertaken by the Government, Autonomous Province (AP) and Local Self-Government Units (LSGU) aimed at improving the social status and position of youth and at creating conditions for addressing young people’s needs and interests in all the areas of interest. The Law aims to facilitate support for young people in organizing, social involvement, development, and the realization of their potential, benefiting both individuals and society. It also outlines the specifics of youth policy and the youth sector, as well as the roles of stakeholders in this field.

The main responsibility for implementing the LoY lies with the Government, particularly the line ministry. This is done in collaboration with other ministries and institutions at the national level. At

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44 “Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.” n.d. Accessed September 24, 2023. [Link](#).

45 “Law on the Planning System of Serbia.” n.d. Accessed September 24, 2023. [Link](#).

46 See below: [2.1.3 Law on Youth](#) and [2.1.5 National Youth Strategy](#)

47 Nikolić 2021



the provincial level, the AP of Vojvodina is responsible for implementation, while at the local level, it falls under the jurisdiction of the LSGU.

At the end of 2018, the National Youth Council of Serbia, the National Association of Youth Workers, and the National Association of Youth Offices reached an agreement on common and priority goals to amend the LoY and the Law on Volunteering. The aim was to improve the institutional framework and create conditions for better care for young people. It was recognized that the existing law does not adequately support the needs of young people, their organizations, and their development in Serbia.<sup>48</sup>

Despite being mentioned in the Government's Work Program for 2020,<sup>49</sup> and 2021, specifically in the section proposing amendments to the LoY, no changes have been made. In general, over the last couple of years, the process of amending the LoY has been initiated several times,<sup>50</sup> but until 2023, it has not been successfully finalized.

In February 2023, the newly established Ministry of Tourism and Youth (MoTY) announced the start of drafting a new LoY.<sup>51</sup> The reasons for this new law include the need to align it with the changes in the legal system of Serbia, addressing the discontinuation of certain legal solutions and the necessity to establish a legal framework for the progressive development of young people. The key changes will include:

1. The financing and co-financing system for programs in the youth sector;
2. Coordination among stakeholders in youth policy – in this regard clear definition of the Umbrella Federation emerges as crucial;<sup>52</sup>
3. The Unified Register of youth-led and youth-oriented organizations and their alliances;
4. Creating conditions to professionalize and standardize youth work, youth offices, youth councils, and youth spaces.

#### 2.1.4. Law on Volunteering

The Law on Volunteering was adopted in 2010 and it regulates issues of interest to young volunteers, starting with concepts related to volunteering, principles of volunteering and volunteering contracts to the rights and obligations of volunteers and volunteering organizers.<sup>53</sup> Since 2021 preparation of Amendments to the Law on Volunteering have been in process with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy in charge.

48 Nikolić 2021

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*

51 The working group responsible for drafting the new Law on Youth was established on February 13, with a deadline to finish the task by December 1, 2023.

52 See Chapter 4, 4.1 Youth Engagement and Participation in Policy-Making: Key Mechanisms and Processes, 4.1.3 Establishment and Functioning of Youth Council and Umbrella Organizations.

53 "Law on Volunteering." n.d. Accessed October 28, 2023. [Link](#).



### 2.1.5. National Youth Strategy

As prescribed by the LoY, the National Youth Strategy (NYS) should be adopted by the Government after the proposal of the line ministry for 10. The first NYS was adopted in May 2008, for the period 2008-2014 while the second document was adopted in February 2015 for the period 2015-2025.<sup>54</sup>

Due to changes in the legal system, it was decided that revising the existing NYS would be a more effective way to align it with the provisions of the Law on the Planning System. It was deemed that this would not only improve its implementation and evaluation but it was also needed before the adoption of the new Action Plan.

In July 2021, the Minister of Youth and Sports (MoYS) issued a decision on the establishment of a Special Working Group for the preparation of the Proposal for a National Youth Strategy, while on January 26, 2023, the Government adopted the new Strategy for Youth in Serbia (SfY) for the period from 2023 - 2030.<sup>55</sup> The decision to adopt a new strategy instead of revising the existing one was made to effectively address the changed legal context, which was primarily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic situation and the introduction of new strategic, national, and international documents.

Unlike the NYS 2015-2025 which had nine strategic goals, the new SfY 2023 – 2030 has one general goal - To improve the quality of life of young people. There are five specific goals, as follows:

1. Youth work is standardised in the system of non-formal education and is continuously implemented;
2. Spatial capacities and services for the implementation of youth policy have been improved and functional in all local governments;
3. Young people are active participants in society at all levels;
4. Young people have equal opportunities and incentives to develop their potentials and competencies, which lead to social and economic independence;
5. Create conditions for a healthy and safe environment and social well-being of young people.

In comparison to the NYS 2015–2025, the SfY 2023–2030 places greater emphasis on youth work and the implementation of youth policy at the LSG level.

MoTY reports every three years to the Government on the results of Action Plan implementation.

### 2.1.6. Action Plan for the Implementation of the Youth Strategy

Action Plans adopted for the previous NYS 2015-2020, were targeting the periods 2015-2017 and 2018-2020. However, there was no valid Action Plan for the implementation of the NYS 2015–2025 after 2020, as explained above.

54 Nikolić, 2021

55 "Strategy for Youth in Serbia for the Period from 2023 to 2030." n.d. [Link](#).



Following the adoption of the new SfY 2023-2030, the MoTY established a Working Group to write a Draft Action Plan for its implementation from 2023 to 2025,<sup>56</sup> and the Action Plan was approved with a slight delay during the meeting of the Government on July 6, 2023.<sup>57</sup>

The Action Plan as a policy document, puts into action the general and specific goals outlined in the SfY. It establishes priorities for implementing specific measures and activities and identifies the required financial resources and funding sources. The adoption of the Action Plan is essential for achieving the goals set by the Strategy. MoTY is responsible for monitoring its implementation and is required to report on the results of its implementation every year.

The proposed budget for the implementation of the Action Plan from 2023-2025 is 10,648,263,494.00 RSD (Approx. 90,849,494 EUR). For the first year of the Action Plan in 2023, a total of 3,201,116,142.00 RSD (Approx. 27,311,475 EUR) has been allocated (see: Table 8 below).<sup>58</sup>

### 2.1.7. Other Important Documents for Youth

As noted in the SfY 2023-2030, other laws and documents of significance for youth, are related to the following areas: education at all levels, national qualifications framework, science and research, pupil and student standards, student organization, health, social protection, work and employment, volunteering, family, culture, public information and media, justice, non-discrimination, especially for persons with disabilities, gender equality, migration and associations.

Some of the key documents are as follows: The Law on Secondary Education and Upbringing ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 55/13, 101/17, 27/18 – amending law, 6/20, 52/21 and 129/21), The Law on Dual Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 101/17 and 6/20), The Law on Higher Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 88/17, 73/18, 27/18 – amending law, 67/19, 6/20 – amending law, 11/21 – authentic interpretation and 67/21 – amending law), The Law on Dual Model of Studies in Higher Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 66/19), The Law on the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 27/18, 6/20 and 129/21 – amending law), The Labour Law ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" Nos. 24/05, 61/05, 54/09, 32/13, 75/14, 13/17 – Constitutional Court, 113/17 and 95/18 – authentic interpretation), The Law on Volunteering ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 36/10), The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 22/09 and 52/21).

In addition to that, the following national strategies are also relevant for the development of the SfY: The Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia 2021 - 2026 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 18/21 and 36/21 – corrigendum), The Strategy for Education and Upbringing Development in the Republic of Serbia by the year 2030 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia",

56 "Обавештење о почетку израде нацрта акционог плана за спровођење Стратегије за младе у Србији за период од 2023. до 2030. године." n.d. Gov.rs. Accessed September 23, 2023. [Link](#). / Notice on the Start of Drafting an Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Youth in Serbia for the Period from 2023 to 2030

57 "Усвојен Акциони план за период од 2023. до 2025. године за спровођење Стратегије за младе у Србији за период од 2023. до 2030. године." n.d. Gov.rs. Accessed October 28, 2023. [Link](#). / The Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 was adopted for the implementation of the Strategy for Youth in Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030

58 Ministarstvo Turizma i omladine. n.d. "Акциони план за период од 2023. до 2025. године за спровођење Стратегија за младе у Србији за период од 2023. до 2030. године." [Link](#). / Ministry of Tourism and Youth. n.d. "Action Plan for the Period from 2023 to 2025 for the Implementation of the Strategy for Youth in Serbia for the Period from 2023 to 2030." [Link](#).



No. 63/21), The Strategy on Economic Migration of the Republic of Serbia 2021 - 2027 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 21/20) and others.

## 2.2. Institutional Framework

### 2.2.1. National Level

#### 2.2.1.A The Ministry of Tourism and Youth

Since 2021, significant changes occurred in the structure of the key institution in charge of youth policy. With the adoption of the Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Ministries on October 22, 2022, after 15 years, the Ministry of Youth and Sports ceased to exist, and the Ministry of Tourism and Youth was established.

The MoTY comprises several sectors, including the Youth Sector, Tourism Sector, Tourism Inspection Sector, and International Cooperation and European Integration Sector. The Youth Sector is responsible for tasks related to the system, development, and improvement of youth policy.<sup>59</sup> This includes implementing the national policy as well as preparing and implementing the national youth strategy, action plans, and programs. Additionally, the sector is responsible for drafting laws, sub-legal acts, and other acts related to youth.

Among others, the sector is also responsible for monitoring and assessing the position and role of young people in Serbia; creating conditions for the establishment and operation of youth offices; promoting the development of youth policy and the work of national and regional youth offices; encouraging the development of youth policy and the work of youth offices at the local level; providing proposals for the development of the Sector's public procurement plan, participating in processes related to the professional development of state officials in the Sector, as well as other tasks within the scope of the Sector.

Within the Youth Sector, there are specific internal units:

1. Department for Strategic, Normative, Legal, and Operational-Analytical Affairs.
2. Section for Collaboration with Associations and Youth Offices.

In the Youth Sector, there are currently 11 employees out of a total of 17 planned positions. This is an improvement compared to 2022 when the sector was under the Ministry of Youth and Sports and had 15 planned positions.

#### 2.2.1.B Youth Advisory Council

Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was established by the Government Decision on 24 January 2014, and it is chaired by the Minister of Tourism and Youth. The competence of the Council is to encourage and coordinate activities related to the development and implementation of youth policy as well as to propose measures for its improvement. The YAC currently has 44 members, including 23

59 "Сектор за омладину" n.d. Gov.rs. Accessed September 21, 2023. [Link](#). / Youth Sector





representatives from government authorities, one representative from the provincial authority responsible for youth, one common representative from national councils of national minorities, two representatives from youth offices and one distinguished expert.<sup>60</sup> Young people make over 1/3 of the YAC with total of 16 representatives, who are selected by the Umbrella Federations in accordance with Article 14 of LoY.<sup>61</sup>

The primary task of the YAC is to encourage and coordinate activities related to the development, implementation, and promotion of youth policy, proposing measures for its improvement, as well as suggesting measures for harmonizing and coordinating activities of the Ministry and other authorities responsible for specific areas within the youth sector. As an advisory body of the Government, the YAC has a specific role in cross-sectoral coordination and it ensures the voice of youth is heard and respected, allowing young people to participate in the development, implementation, and monitoring of public policies.

## 2.2.2 Autonomous Province Vojvodina

### 2.2.2.A Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth

The Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth is the highest authority in the AP Vojvodina that deals with youth. It monitors and supports the work of youth-led and youth-oriented organizations, their associations and local youth offices in AP Vojvodina. It also establishes and coordinates the work of the Provincial Youth Advisory Council.

## 2.3 Critical Assessment

National youth policy in Serbia is often recognized as an example of good practice at the EU level when referring to the legislation in place, support structures on the national and local levels, and the systems that are developed.<sup>62</sup> Even though the LoY provides declarative support for establishing a responsible youth care system, its provisions do not carry any legal weight for local decision-makers. This is one of the main reasons why amendments to the LoY are necessary and it appears that the establishment of the MoTY has brought more consistency to the process of drafting the new Law.

Since 2020, Serbia has made positive progress by adopting all key national youth policy documents. Moreover, the new SFY 2023-2030 and the complementary Youth Action Plan 2023-2025 adopted in 2023, were developed on an evidence-based approach and in an inclusive manner. These documents also set specific goals, indicators, actions and budgets for their implementation which should lead to the improvement of the position of young people in Serbia. This can also help overcome some of the past challenges related to the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation of youth policy development and implementation.<sup>63</sup>

60 "Савет за младе." n.d. Gov.rs. Accessed September 23, 2023. [Link](#). / Youth Advisory Council

61 See: Chapter 4, 4.1 Youth Engagement and Participation in the Policy-Making: Key Mechanisms and Processes, 4.1.3 Establishment and Functioning of Youth Councils and Umbrella Organizations

62 Nikolić 2021

63 *Ibid.*





When it comes to the Ministry in charge of youth, there are no fundamental changes within MoTY when compared to the MoYS. However, there have been some changes in the approach toward youth issues, when it comes to the increased attention toward the connection of youth and tourism, whereas in the past, the focus was on sports. Also, the budget for 2023 has increased by 36% compared to 2022. Addressing all this, a new Strategy was adopted, along with the first three-year Annual Plan for its implementation.

However, MoTY did face significant challenges after its establishment, since many sectors (the Youth Sector, the International Cooperation and European Integration Unit, the Secretariat of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as the head of the Legal Affairs Department from the Youth Sector) were transferred to the newly established Ministry of Sport. A new Acting Assistant Minister for youth was appointed in January 2023 and it took time to establish new structures, announce public procurements, implement systematization, and hire new staff. This situation led to a delayed announcement of jobs and delayed publication of open calls for funding programs and projects in the youth sector.

It is worth noting that the general opinion among stakeholders in the youth sector is that there is a clear need to increase the capacity of the Youth Sector or ideally Youth should have its agency or Ministry.

Since 2021, YAC can be considered functional but there is always space for improvement as youth representatives are calling for regular sessions to be held every two months and to strengthen collaboration between youth representatives and institutional representatives. Enhancing the Rules and Procedures would also be necessary to regulate the frequency of sessions, the manner of submitting initiatives by young people, the scope of work, and similar matters.



Table 5: Policy Developments 2020-2023

Institution/Policy	2020-2021	2022-2023
<b>Ministry in Charge of Youth</b>	Ministry of Youth and Sports was established in 2007 and was in charge of the coordination, development, improvement and implementation of youth policy, the NYS, and other national plans and programs for youth. In 2020, in the Youth Sector, out 11 planed positions only eight people were employed. <sup>64</sup>	In October 2022 the Ministry of Tourism and Youth was established with no fundamental changes to the Youth Sector of the Ministry which is responsible for tasks related to the system, development, and improvement of youth policy. In the Youth Sector, there are currently 11 employees out of a total of 17 planned positions.
<b>Youth Advisory Council</b>	From the establishment in 2014 to 2020, 13 meetings in total were held. In 2020 no meetings were held. <sup>65</sup>	Between 2021 and 2023 seven meetings in total were held including the meeting on youth health and security held after the mass shootings in May. <sup>66</sup>
<b>Law on Youth</b>	The LoY has been in force since 2011. It regulates measures and activities undertaken by the Government, AP and LSGU aimed at improving the social status and position of youth and at creating conditions for addressing young people's needs and interests in all the areas of interest.	In February 2023, the newly established MoTY announced the start of drafting a new version of the LoY.
<b>National Youth Strategy</b>	National Youth Strategy 2015-2025. Strategic Goals: 1.Improved employability and employment of young women and men 2.Improved quality and opportunities for acquiring qualifications and development of competences and innovation of the youth 3.Enhanced active participation of young women and men in society 4.Improved health and well-being of young women and men 5.Improved conditions for the development of youth safety culture 6.Improved support to social inclusion of young people at risk of social exclusion 7.Enhanced mobility, scope of international youth cooperation and support to young migrants 8.Improved system of informing young people and knowledge about young people 9.Enhanced cultural consumption and participation of young people in the creation of cultural programmes	Strategy for Youth in Serbia in Serbia 2023 – 2030. General goal: To improve the quality of life of young people Specific goals: 1.Youth work is standardised in the system of non-formal education and is continuously implemented; 2.Spatial capacities and services for the implementation of youth policy have been improved and functional in all local governments; 3.Young people are active participants in society at all levels; 4.Young people have equal opportunities and incentives to develop their potentials and competencies, which lead to social and economic independence; 5.Create conditions for a healthy and safe environment and social well-being of young people.
<b>National Action Plan</b>	The National Action Plan 2018-2020 was not followed by another Action Plan under the same National Youth Strategy.	The Action Plan 2023-2025 for the implementation of SfY 2023-2030. Proposed budget for the implementation 10,648,263,494.00 RSD (approx. 90,812,238.67 EUR).

64 Stojanović, Boban, and Aleksandar Ivković. 2020. „Alternativni Izveštaj o Položaju i Potrebama Mladih u Srbiji.“ Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. / Stojanović, Boban, and Aleksandar Ivković. 2020. “Alternative Report on the Position and Needs of Young People in Serbia.” National Youth Council of Serbia.

65 Stojanović and Ivković 2023

66 *Ibid.*



# CHAPTER 3: YOUTH FUNDING

## FRAMEWORK: NATIONAL YOUTH PROGRAMS AND INSTRUMENTS

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

### 3.1 Youth Policy Funding

According to Article 12 of LoY “the funds for National Youth Strategy implementation shall be provided in the budget of the Government of Serbia, as well as the budget of the autonomous province and local self-government unit, and from other sources, by the Law”. Therefore, there is more than one specific budget line within the Law on the Budget of Serbia dedicated to the implementation of the NYS, however, due to the lack of a comprehensive system for data gathering, there is no precise information on the total budget that supports the implementation of youth policy. Based on an examination of the overall budget, it appears that only 0.03% of Serbia’s annual budget is allocated for youth programs through MoTY.<sup>67</sup>

The proposed budget for the implementation of the Action Plan 2023 - 2025 is 10,648,263,494.00 RSD (approx. 90,812,238.67 EUR), while in 2023 a total of 3,201,116,142.00 RSD (approx. 27,300,275.13 EUR) has been allocated.

Table 6: Funds for the First Year of Implementation of the Action Plan

Stakeholder	Amount in RSD / approx. EUR
Ministry of Tourism and Youth	526,870,000.00 / 4,493,337.74
Ministry for the care of the countryside	500,000,000.00 / 4,264,180.67
Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation in the amount	957,000,000.00 / 8,161,641.80
Ministry of Culture	26,343,000.00 / 224,662.62
Ministry of Economy	913,279,000.00 / 7,788,773.31
Ministry of Environmental Protection	8,000,000.00 / 68,226.89
Ministry of Information and Telecommunications	8,000,000.00 / 68,226.89
Other holders and partners	261,624,142.00 / 2,231,225.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,201,116,142.00 / 27,300,275.13</b>

Source: Action plan for the period 2023 - 2025

According to the Law on the Budget, the 2023 budget has allocated a total of 603,031,000 RSD (approx. 5,144,976 EUR) for youth policy. This is an increase of 472,052,000 RSD (approx. 4,027,481 EUR) compared to the budget allocated in 2022 (excluding funds for the Youth Talent Fund). In

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



terms of the MoTY's overall budget of 3,163,156,000 RSD (approx. 26,987,604 EUR), the percentage allocated toward youth is 19,06% (approx. 5,143,837 EUR). This is a significant increase compared to previous years, but it is primarily attributed to changes in the organizational structure of ministries. Funds that were allocated to sports within the Ministry of Youth and Sports were much higher than the funds allocated to tourism within the MoTY, which is the primary explanation for the change in the share of the budget.<sup>68</sup>

In accordance with the LoY, the Regulation on Financing and Co-financing of Programs and Projects of Public Interest in the Youth Sector,<sup>69</sup> and the Execution Plan of the Ministry of Tourism and Youth for the year 2023 MoTY announced the five public competitions (see Table 8).

Table 7: MoTY Public Competitions in 2023

Public competition	Announcement of the open call	Announcement of the results	Planned resources (RSD)	Allocated resources (RSD)	Number of funded projects	End of project
<b>For financing and co-financing programs and projects aimed at implementing the goals of the Youth Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2030 and the "Youth are the Law" program</b>	March 29, 2023	September 1, 2023	103,000,000.00	102,985,929.06	68	December 10, 2023
<b>To stimulate various forms of youth employment, self-employment, and entrepreneurship</b>	March 29, 2023	August 29, 2023	88,000,000.00	88,000,000.00	51	December 10, 2023
<b>For the development and implementation of youth policy</b>	March 29, 2023	September 1, 2023	28,500,000.00	8,900,000.00	5	December 10, 2023
<b>To support local self-government units in the implementation of youth policy at the local level</b>	March 29, 2023	August 10, 2023	62,000,000.00	62,000,000.00	41	December 10, 2023
<b>For financing and co-financing programs and projects in the youth sector that have been approved by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ EU program and cross-border cooperation programs</b>	July 5, 2023	August 28, 2023	4,000,000.00	4,000,000.00	3	December 10, 2023

Source: MoTY website<sup>70</sup>

When it comes to the provincial level, the total funds allocated in the 2023 budget of APV for youth policy is 42,000,000 RSD (approx. 358,338 EUR), which represents an increase of three million RSD

68 *Ibid.*

69 "Law on Youth." n.d. <https://shorturl.at/hoY27>.

70 "Министарство туризма и омладине." n.d. Gov.rs. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).



(approx. 25,595 EUR) compared to 2022. However, the share of youth policy in the total budget of the APV has decreased from 8.4% to 6.1%. Additionally, the share of funds allocated for youth policy in the overall APV budget has decreased from 0.04% to 0.03%.<sup>71</sup> The total funds in the budget of the APV for youth policy in 2020 amounted to 27,000,000 RSD (230,360 EUR) which was 6% of the total funds allocated for the PSSY.<sup>72</sup>

## 3.2. Key youth programs and instruments

### 3.2.1. My First Salary

In 2020, the government of Serbia launched a youth employment incentive program titled “My First Salary”, aiming at enabling young people under the age of 30, registered with the NES, to gain their first work experience within nine months.<sup>73</sup> In 2022, the program received international recognition in Brussels, awarded by the organization Emerging Europe in the “Prosperity” category, recognizing it as the best initiative of the last years that places people at the centre of the economy, bridging the gap between urban and rural development, income disparities, and labour market development.<sup>74</sup>

For their work, young individuals initially received 20,000 RSD (approx. 170 EUR) if they had completed high school and 24,000 RSD (approx. 204 EUR) if they had a college degree. These amounts were later increased, so those with a high school diploma received their “first salary” at 24,000 RSD, while others received 26,000 RSD (approx. 221 EUR). In 2023, these amounts were once again increased to 25,000 RSD (approx. 213 EUR) for those with a high school diploma and 30,000 RSD (approx. 255 EUR) for others.<sup>75</sup>

According to amendments to the Regulation About the Young Employment Encouragement Program “My First Salary” for September 2023, the beneficiary of the Program with secondary education will be provided with a monthly financial allowance in the amount of 28,000 RSD (approx. 238 EUR), and the beneficiary of the Program with higher education in the amount of 34,000 RSD (approx. 289 EUR), for the duration of nine months.<sup>76</sup>

### 3.2.2. Youth Guarantee

From 2020 to 2022, young individuals and decision-makers collaborated through the Western Balkan’s Youth Lab first cycle. Their efforts focused on amending laws and devising strategies to align the education system with the labour market and vice versa. Additionally, the Youth Lab Working Group in Serbia created several reports on the current status of youth in the labour market and carried out a social media campaign aiming at piloting the Youth Guarantee program in Serbia.

In January 2022 the Government of Serbia established the Coordination Body for the Development and Monitoring of the Implementation Plan of the Youth Guarantee with the task to oversee the

71 “Budget of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for 2023.” n.d.

72 Nikolić 2021

73 See: <https://mojaprvaaplata.gov.rs/>

74 FoNet. n.d. “Nagrada projektu ‘Moja prva plata’: Nacionalni program dobio međunarodno priznanje u Briselu.” Euronews. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

75 “NZS još nije odlučila da li i kada kreće program ‘Moja prva plata.’” n.d. Južne vesti. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

76 “Uredba o Programu podsticanja zapošljavanja mladih ‘Moja prva plata.’” n.d. Neobilten. Accessed October 8, 2023. [Link](#).



development of this document and guide the work of other government bodies in implementing necessary reforms related to youth employment and opportunities. In addition to the Coordination Body, an Expert Group was also established with the task of conducting preparatory activities for the development of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan.<sup>77</sup> Some of the Youth Lab members (see below) became members of the expert groups as well.

In 2022, the European Commission recognized the limited progress made within Chapter 19: Social Policy and Employment by taking steps to gradually establish the Youth Guarantee scheme.<sup>78</sup> It has also been recommended to ensure adequate financial and institutional resources for employment and social policies that systematically target the young, women and long-term unemployed people; in particular, take further steps to pilot the Youth Guarantee program in Serbia.

Moreover, the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans was adopted by the European Commission in October 2020, to encourage the long-term economic recovery of the region, supporting the green and digital transition, regional cooperation, and rapprochement with the EU. By the adoption of the next Multiannual Financial Framework and related legal bases, the Commission proposed the mobilization of up to 9 billion EUR for financing to the region from the IPA III program for the period 2021-2027 to support economic rapprochement with the EU, primarily through investments and support for competitiveness and inclusive growth, sustainable connectivity and dual green and digital transition. The governments of the WB should implement the flagship project Youth Guarantee through four phases with the EU support for all of them.<sup>79</sup> It is currently unclear how much resources the Serbian government will allocate towards the implementation of the Youth Guarantee program and what percentage of those resources will be given to youth organizations, due to the lack of a clear Implementation Plan for Youth Guarantee.

### 3.3. Critical Assessment

A significant number of interviewees conducted for this report, have highlighted the issue of the timing of public competitions in the field of youth policy conducted by the line ministry. It seems that the ministry has difficulty in carrying out public competitions promptly, mainly due to the lack of human capacity (as mentioned above). Over the past years, a significant portion of the time was spent on the process of announcing public competitions and waiting for the results, leaving very little time for project implementation. The situation improved slightly in 2021, and the positive trend continued in 2022. However, in 2023, calls for public competitions were once again announced only at the end of March. The delay of 2023 can be attributed to the establishment of the new ministry, which took over the responsibilities of the previous one.

In the interviews was also noted that the existing dynamics of project cycles continue to significantly impact the sustainability of youth-led and youth-oriented organizations and their alliances. These dynamics also create challenges in terms of implementing continuous activities and hinder the ability to engage in long-term planning or design programs that can achieve lasting effects in the field of youth policy. This particularly hinders advocacy campaigns or the development of plans and

77 Stojanović and Ivković 2023

78 European Commission 2022

79 "Zapadni Balkan: Ekonomsko-investicioni plan za podršku privrednom oporavku i konvergenciji." 2020. EU u Srbiji. October 6, 2020. [Link](#). Accessed: September 23, 2023



strategies for youth at the local or national level, which often requires more time and a longer-term perspective. To sustain their functioning activities, youth organizations usually apply for different foreign funds.

The National Youth Council of Serbia has published a report on competition and transparency, following the announcement of results for public competitions, continuing a trend from previous years.

This report highlights that the funds were awarded to 119 youth organizations, which represents a significant increase compared to 2022 when only 77 organizations were funded. Out of these, 52 were from Belgrade, 22 from Vojvodina, and 45 from the rest of Serbia, including the regions of Šumadija and Western Serbia, as well as the regions of Eastern and Southern Serbia. For organizations from Belgrade, a total of 53% of the financial resources were allocated, continuing the trend of Belgrade receiving a disproportionately large share of funds. However, the percentage of associations from Vojvodina that received funding, decreased from 32% to 18%, while the percentage of associations in the remaining regions increased, which is a positive development.<sup>80</sup>

Regardless of the money they received, young participants often highlighted that the “My First Salary” program was a good opportunity to gain first work experience in their field of study. However, many participants encountered issues with payment delays of several months. It was also common for young individuals not to get the chance to continue working at the same place where they spent nine months gaining experience.

The most recent issues in the program emerged in 2023, when young participants were asked to repay the money, they had received because „some irregularities were identified“. The irregularity in question was that students under the age of 26 were not considered unemployed, so even though the call stated that the NES would verify compliance with legal conditions and conditions before signing the contract, students were only „penalized“ later for providing incorrect information.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, it was emphasized by various stakeholders during the interviews that in order to successfully implement the Youth Guarantee program, it is crucial to enhance the NES’s capabilities and work together with youth organizations that can reach out and promote the program among young individuals.

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80 Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. 2023. „Analiza Konkursa Ministarstva Turizma i Omladine.“ [Link](#). / National Youth Council of Serbia. 2023. “Analysis of Public Competitions of the Ministry of Tourism and Youth 2023.” [Link](#).

81 “Problemi u programu ‘Moja prva plata’ - traže od mladih da vrate novac.” n.d. Južne vesti. Accessed October 28, 2023. [Link](#).



Table 8: Budget Allocation for Youth Policy 2020-2023

Budget of Serbia RSD/EUR approx.		Budget of AP Vojvodina RSD/EUR approx.		LSGU RSD/EUR approx.	
2020 <sup>82</sup>	2023	2020 <sup>83</sup>	2023	2020 <sup>84</sup>	2023
The percentage of the budget allocated for youth through the MoYS is 0.09% of the annual public budget		27,000,000 / 227,884.101	42,000,000 / 358,191.18	No access to detailed information	No access to detailed information

Table 9: Budget Allocation for Youth Policy by the Ministry in Charge of Youth 2020-2023

Ministry in Charge of Youth Year	MoYS <sup>85</sup> 2020	MoTY 2023
<b>Budget Allocated for Youth Policy RSD/EUR approx.</b>	328.768.000 / 2,803,852.30	603,031,000 / 5,142,866.26
<b>The Share of The Budget Allocated to Youth Policy</b>	7,42%	19,06%

82 Nikolić 2021

83 *Ibid.*84 *Ibid.*

85 Stojanović and Ivković 2020





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

Even though active youth participation is highlighted in different national documents, there is no distinctive legislation that would oblige national, regional, or local governments to include youth in policy-making. Article 16 of LoY stipulates: “At the proposal of the Ministry and in accordance with the regulations governing the work of the Government, the Government shall form a Youth Council as an advisory body initiating and harmonizing activities related to the development and implementation of Youth Policy and proposing measures for its improvement... Representatives of young people shall make up no less than one-third of the Youth Council membership”<sup>86</sup>

The chapter analyses 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-Making: Key Mechanisms and Processes

### 4.1.1. Participation at the Central Level

#### 4.1.1.A EU Youth Dialogue

EU Youth Dialogue (EUYD) is a continuous process of consultation between young people and decision-makers to jointly define and implement policies relevant to youth at all levels, implemented in EU member states. Since 2020, KOMS has been implementing a project under the name “Odlučionice” which has been implementing the methodology of the EUYD on the local level. Moreover, in 2019 KOMS formally launched an initiative to establish a National Working Group for Structured Dialogue (now EUYD) within the YAC.<sup>87</sup>

In May 2021, a Permanent Expert Team for EUYD was established within the YAC, modelled after National Working Groups for the implementation of EUYD, which are typically required only for EU member states.<sup>88</sup> By establishing it, Serbia became the first non-EU economy to implement such a mechanism. The expert group is composed of representatives from KOMS, MoTY, the Ministry for European Integration, the National Association of Youth Work Practitioners and the Tempus Foundation.

<sup>86</sup> See: [Chapter 2, 2.2 Institutional framework](#), Youth Advisory Council

<sup>87</sup> Nikolić 2021

<sup>88</sup> Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. 2021. “Announcement: Permanent Expert Team on EU Youth Dialogue is Formed.” Accessed September 25, 2022. [Link](#).



This mechanism and the existence of a cross-sectoral coordination group represent a significant step toward youth involvement and active participation. Its institutionalization within the YAC ensures that the proposals and input from young people become a key element in the development of youth policies.

So far, the process has been project-funded mostly through funds provided to the KOMS by Belgrade Open School and Tempus Foundation. Also, the members of the Permanent Expert Team have rarely received invitations to take part in the EU Youth Dialogue cycle on the EU level, including the EU Youth Conferences. However, youth representatives of the Permanent Expert Team have been invited to take part in the EU Youth Conference 2023 in Alicante, Spain.

#### 4.1.1.B Youth Dialogues with The Decision-Makers

The first Youth Dialogue with the Prime Minister, as one of the key decision-makers was held in December 2019. The event was accompanied by additional meetings of the KOMS team with the Cabinet of the Prime Minister in 2020 to agree on concrete activities in the operationalization of youth recommendations in thematic areas of youth concern. From 2019 - 2023 three more Youth Dialogues with the Prime Minister have taken place, resulting in policy and program recommendations and developments in areas such as employment, health, youth participation, etc. with the aim to improve the position of young people.

Aside from the Youth Dialogue with the Prime Minister, so far KOMS has also organized two dialogues with the minister in charge of youth (2020 and 2021), Youth Dialogue with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (2021), Youth Dialogue with the Minister of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue (2021) and Youth Dialogue with Young Members of Parliament (2020).

Furthermore, various CSOs facilitated similar discussions with government ministers. For example, the Youth Department of the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights held a dialogue with the Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Dialog, as Nikolić reported in 2021. Moreover, in 2022 and 2023, similar dialogues were initiated by local youth organizations, some of which sought guidance from KOMS for mentoring support.

This mechanism has been recognized as good practice and replicated in Estonia in February 2023.<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Participation at the Local Level

Local self-government units in Serbia, in accordance with the Law on Local Self-Government (LSG), have the authority to engage in youth policy. Article 20, paragraph 15 states that a local self-government unit also performs other tasks of local significance determined by law, including youth policy, as well as tasks of direct interest to citizens in accordance with the Constitution, law, and statute.

Article 3 of the LoY also defines measures and activities undertaken by LSGU improve the position of young people and create conditions for meeting their needs and interests in all areas relevant

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<sup>89</sup> Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. 2023. "Od Srbije do Estonije: Dijalog mladih sa donosiocima odluka." Accessed September 25, 2022. [Link](#).



to youth. LSGU are subjects of youth policy, alongside the government and autonomous province as the main entities responsible for youth policy, along with other entities such as institutions, organizations conducting youth activities, and other entities involved in the implementation of youth policy.

Table 10: Instruments of Local Youth Policy Recognized Under the LoY

Article	Instrument	
Article 12	Financing of local youth policy and the implementation of the NYS	Funds for the implementation of the Strategy are provided in the budget of Serbia, as well as in the budget of the autonomous province and LSGU, and from other sources, in accordance with the law.
Article 12	Local Youth Action Plans - LYAP	In accordance with the NYS, the autonomous province and local self-government units establish action plans for the implementation of the Strategy within their territory and allocate funds in their budgets for the implementation of these plans
Article 17	YAC of the LSGU	To coordinate activities related to the implementation of youth policy within the territory of the autonomous province and the LSGU, the competent authority of the autonomous province and the competent authority of the LSGU may establish provincial, city, and municipal YAC
Article 18	Youth Office	To ensure conditions for the active involvement of young people in the life and work of the community, empower young people, provide support for organizing various social activities for young people, and promote learning and creative expression of young people's needs, the LSGU may, within its powers, needs, and capabilities, establish a youth office. The youth office is funded from the budget of the LSGU, as well as from other sources, and its activities are carried out in accordance with the NYS and LYAP
Article 26	Involvement of youth-led and youth-oriented organizations, and their associations in the implementation of local youth policy	Funding for the needs and interests of young people in the LSGU is carried out in accordance with the interests and needs of the LSGU - encouraging youth associations, youth organizations, and federations to participate in the implementation of youth policy, including building the capacity of youth organizations, within the territory of the LSGU
Article 26	The establishment and operation of youth clubs, youth centres, and the like are important components of local youth policy.	

Source: Law on Youth, 2021

In the newly adopted SFY 2023 - 2030, the third section titled "Overview and Analysis of the Current State of Youth Policy" stipulates that in Serbia at the local level, there are 140 youth offices and 78 youth councils. There are currently 43 local action plans for youth in effect, and approximately 20 are in the process of being developed.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to comprehensive data on the instruments of local youth policy, it is important to note that the MoTY has concluded agreements with the city administrations of Niš, Subotica, Sombor, and Novi Pazar to establish youth centres in these four cities, with a total value of 180 million dinars. The

90 Strategy for Youth in Serbia 2023-2030, p 40



primary objective of these centres is to create conditions that encourage young people to stay in their local communities and enhance their knowledge and skills for a better quality of life following the SfY. In Niš, Subotica, and Sombor, the plan involves the adaptation of existing spaces into youth centres, while in Novi Pazar, the construction of a completely new centre is planned.

### 4.1.3 Establishment and Functioning of Youth Council and Umbrella Organizations

In Serbia, there are three main associations of organizations that play a significant role in national youth policy and are commonly referred to as the “three pillars of youth policy.” These organizations are the National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR), established in 2009, the National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS), established in 2011, and the National Association of Local Youth Offices (NaKZM), established in 2014. Since 2019, two more associations emerged as relevant for the institutionalized approach to youth policy: OPENS, established in 2016 and Scout Organization of Serbia (SIS) established in 1911.

Initiated through a bottom-up approach, these have been supported by the line ministry and their mandates are the following:

1. NAPOR is a professional alliance of associations engaged in youth work, with a mission to provide support to youth workers and young people in achieving their full personal and professional potential, essential for the development of local communities and society as a whole. NAPOR’s mission includes creating conditions to ensure the quality and recognition of youth work at the local, national, and international levels.<sup>91</sup>
2. NaKZM is the association for cities and municipalities in Serbia that have Youth Offices and are actively involved in the development of local youth policy. Currently, the National KZM has 117 members, which consist of cities and municipalities.<sup>92</sup>
3. OPENS is an association of local youth organizations and a resource centre dedicated to empowering young people and those who work with them, as well as youth-led and youth-oriented organizations. It educates the community and creates youth policies. It also raises the capacities of young people and youth associations through program activities, while it raises awareness of the public and private sectors on youth issues.<sup>93</sup> OPENS also carried the title of European Youth Capital in 2019.<sup>94</sup>

When it comes to KOMS and SIS they both hold the status of Umbrella Federations as defined under Article 14 of LoY.<sup>95</sup>

91 “NAPOR.” n.d. Napor.net. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

92 “Nacionalna asocijacija kancelarija za mlade.” 2017. Nacionalna asocijacija Kancelarija za mlade. September 23, 2017. [Link](#).

93 “OPENS.” 2018. OPENS. May 23, 2018. [Link](#).

94 “European Youth Capital Winner 2019 - Novi Sad, Serbia.” n.d. Youthforum.org. Accessed October 26, 2023. [Link](#).

95 The status of an Umbrella Federation shall have every federation consisting of at least 60 registered associations and, having their head office on the territory of at least two-thirds of counties in Serbia and which have carried out youth activities in several local self-government units for at least two years, and which have at least 2,000 individual members, registered once, of whom at least two-thirds are young people.



**KOMS** is a network of 111 youth-led and youth-oriented organizations and the highest independent youth representative body in Serbia. It is an advocacy platform that represents the interests of young people, provides active participation, and develops systemic solutions to improve the position of young people through the development of strategic partnerships, cross-sectoral and international cooperation, as well as strengthening the capacities of member organizations and other subjects of youth policy. Also, since 2016 KOMS has been a full member of the European Youth Forum, the largest network of youth umbrella organizations in Europe consisting of over 100 National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organizations.

In 2015 KOMS applied to the MoYS for the status of an Umbrella Federation. The KOMS application was rejected as it did not fulfil all the requirements stated in the LoY related to the number of counties and administrative confirmation of the number of its member organizations. In mid-September of 2019, KOMS re-applied for the status. The next formal request for the status of an Umbrella Federation to the MoYS (September 20, 2019) was preceded by months of administrative obstacles, as well as exhaustive work on collecting and consolidating the documentation provided for in Article 14 of the LoY. On July 20, 2020, KOMS was recognized as having the status of the Umbrella Federation.

Funding of KOMS activities, infrastructure and staff at the secretariat is project-based, supplemented by membership fees. The structure of KOMS funding scheme has changed significantly thus funds received by the MoYS/MoTY no longer constitute the bulk of its annual budget. Nowadays, KOMS is mostly funded through European projects, as well as funds received from international organizations, foundations, and development agencies.

**SIS** is the oldest, largest, and most active youth movement in Serbia, focused on the informal education and upbringing of children and young people. Along with its member organizations SIS has been systematically and continuously working on implementing programs for children and young people for over 100 years, with a mission to develop individuals who play a constructive role in society.<sup>96</sup>

For most of its existence, both the SIS and its local member organizations have had the status of organizations of special interest to society, and the Scout program has been recognized locally as a program of public interest. However, after changes to the law in 2011, many of the privileges that the Scouting organization had enjoyed for over a century due to its significant contribution to the community, were ceased. Since then, the SIS had the same status as other CSOs, even though many local units are still informally recognized and acknowledged by LSGU as important actors in community social activities.

In October 2022, the SIS acquired to obtain the legal status of Umbrella Federation, which would set it apart from other CSOs, while also recognizing the tradition of the Scouting movement. SIS aims to use the newly gained status to achieve their mission more efficiently and provide opportunities for young people and children, in various urban and rural local communities, to acquire competencies that will benefit their personal and professional development.

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96 "Savez izviđača Srbije stekao status krovnog saveza." 2022. Izvidjaci.rs. November 11, 2022. [Link](#).



As SIS was the one to obtain the status of an Umbrella Federation after KOMS, however, it has been stated that the organization will achieve its goals by operating in partnership with KOMS as the highest representative body for youth in Serbia.

Funding means of SIS differ compared to KOMS and the rest of the associations, as it is mostly funded through membership fees and through different scout foundations such as the European Scout Foundation, Friends of Scouting and other foundations that provide resources for the implementation of the scouting program. Also, SIS has received in the past and will receive in 2023 funds from the MoYS/MoTY.

#### 4.1.4. Regional platforms and networks

##### 4.1.4.A RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab

Western Balkans Youth Lab (WBYL) is an EU-funded project implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) that kicked off in January 2020 and aims to provide opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making in the Western Balkans.<sup>97</sup>

WBYL consists of four components and strives to create a long-term structured regional dialogue between youth organisations and national administrations, focusing on jointly developing policies which increase youth participation in decision-making, and improve the overall socio-economic environment and mobility of youth in the WB economies.

Table 11: WBYL Components

Youth Policy Mapping	Map Youth Policies and Identification of Existing Support and Gaps in Financing of Youth Actions in the WB
<b>Youth Policy Lab</b>	Offers a unique approach to policy-making, centered around youth participation and inclusivity. By engaging young people on an equal basis with decision-makers, it creates space for meaningful collaboration towards developing, evaluating, and revising policies using co-management and co-production principles
<b>Strengthening Youth Councils</b>	Establishes procedures and prepares documentation necessary for deploying Technical Assistance to meet the needs of national administrations and Capacity Building to meet the needs of youth organizations.
<b>Events Participation</b>	Supports the active involvement of the youth participants and provides an opportunity for networking and building connections among National Youth Councils and Youth Organizations Umbrellas with public administrations.

Source: [RCC's website](#).<sup>98</sup>

Since 2020, two Youth Policy Labs have been implemented. The first one was on Youth Unemployment and the second on Youth Mental Health. In the beginning, young people and policymakers from Serbia underwent training on the Methodology and Model, which was followed by the establishment of the Regional and National Pool of Experts. The experts then had the opportunity to meet through online and offline meetings when needed as well as through Mid-Term and Final Conferences.

<sup>97</sup> "Western Balkans Youth Lab Project." n.d. Rcc.int. Accessed September 20, 2023. [Link](#)

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*



**The Youth Policy Lab on Unemployment** was implemented from 2020-2023 and had gathered representatives of the MoYS, Ministry of Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy (MLEVSP) and young people. Jointly and with Technical Assistance and Capacity Building support from the RCC, they have:

- Implemented a social media campaign on Youth Guarantee,<sup>99</sup> that has reached over 700,000 people and
- Developed research in the field of Youth Entrepreneurship, NEET employability, and Youth Career Management Skills in Serbia.

Research put a special focus on the needs and capacity assessment of the local youth offices as contributors to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Serbia and provides significant input on NEET youth in Serbia.<sup>100</sup> Through this process, youth organizations and governmental stakeholders embarked on the preparation for piloting the Youth Guarantee program in Serbia.<sup>101</sup>

**The Youth Policy Lab on Mental Health** gathered representatives of the Ministry of Health, MoYS/MoTY and young people. Collectively and through Technical Assistance and capacity-building support from the RCC in 2022 and 2023, they have achieved the following in the field of youth mental health:

- 1 Social media campaign that reached over 250,000 people in Serbia;<sup>102</sup>
- 5 Local events for young people with KOMS member organizations;<sup>103</sup>
- 1 Analysis of the needs assessment of young people at the local level;
- 1 Analysis of public policies;
- 1 Multi-sectoral conference.<sup>104</sup>

These activities were carried out with the main goal of advocating for the establishment of a national multi-sectoral coordination body aimed at improving collaboration, planning, and coordination of public policies, programs, activities, and budget allocations to address issues affecting the mental health of young people.

In 2023 was not only this body recognized within the SfY 2023-2030, but the Ministry of Health also established it in the form of the National Coordination Group for the Protection of Mental Health of Youth and Adolescents. The Group was regarded by the Government as one of the key mechanisms to respond to the dire situation and two mass shootings that occurred in May 2023, and the general deterioration of mental health among youth in Serbia.<sup>105</sup>

99 "Šta su Garancije za mlade i zbog čega bi trebalo da nam budu važne?" n.d. Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. Accessed September 23, 2023. [Link](#).

100 Đukić 2022

101 See: [Chapter 3, 3.2. Key youth programs and instruments, 3.2.2 Youth Guarantee](#)

102 "Da znam da si dobro." n.d. Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

103 KOMS. n.d. "Da Znam Da Si Dobro - Novi Sad." Accessed September 23, 2023. [Link](#).

104 KOMS. n.d. "KOMS na Konferenciji o mentalnom zdravlju mladih." Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. Accessed September 23, 2023b. [Link](#).

105 Rujevic, Nemanja. 2023. "Serbia: Two Mass Shootings in Two Days." Deutsche Welle. Accessed September 23. [Link](#).





#### 4.1.4.B Regional Youth Cooperation Office

Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an intergovernmental organization that leads and promotes regional and intercultural cooperation within and among its six Western Balkans Contracting Parties (CP): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>\*106</sup>, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. RYCO's program focuses on creating opportunities for young people to engage in activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation in the civic, social, educational, cultural, and sports domains. With the new Strategic Plan 2022 - 2024, RYCO introduces the initiation and participation in policy-making and advocacy. It supports the development of a political and social environment that empowers and facilitates youth exchange and enables young people to be active contributors to democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in the WB.

Financial Contributions for RYCO from its six CPs during 2022 amounted to 994,400 EUR with Serbia contributing to 39% of the budget.<sup>107</sup> For this reason, the biggest number of projects (proportionately to the budget allocation) is granted to organizations and schools from Serbia. Also, RYCO has six Local Branch Offices (LBO), one in each of the six CPs, including the one in Belgrade. LBO in Serbia is the largest one out of six and currently employs six people.

RYCO ensures the participation of young people at all levels of its function in a youth-friendly manner. Starting from the decision-making process, it will strengthen the independence of the youth representatives on its Governing Board (GB), continue to involve young people in the co-design of projects and programmes supported and run by RYCO, strengthen their capacities to support and deliver its mission and as the final beneficiaries of all its work.

The GB is the highest decision-making authority of RYCO. It is based on the co-management mechanism, and it is composed of two representatives from each CP one Government representative in direct charge of youth policy and one youth representative. Serbia currently does not have a youth representative in the GB.

On February 12, 2021, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between KOMS and the RYCO in order to formally verify the long-term successful cooperation and determination to work jointly and continuously to improve the position of youth and contribute to reconciliation in the region. This established a framework of cooperation in the coming period, which includes supporting mutual work in the most important strategic processes, joint action, research and launching initiatives, and organization of joint activities.<sup>108</sup>

#### 4.1.4.C Connecting Youth Platform<sup>109</sup>

Connecting Youth (CY) is a grassroots regional youth platform implemented by the Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), together with the umbrella youth organizations from the WB - National Youth Congress of Albania (KRK), National Youth Council of North Macedonia (NMSM), National

106 This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

107 Regional Youth Cooperation Office. 2023. "Annual Report 2022." [Link](#).

108 "KOMS Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)." n.d. Krovna Organizacija Mladin Srbije. Accessed October 26, 2023. [Link](#).

109 "Connecting Youth." n.d. Connecting-youth.org. Accessed September 20, 2023. [Link](#).





Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS), Youth Network of Montenegro (MMCG), The Kosovar Youth Council (KYC), Youth Council of Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina (VMFBiH), with the support of Hanns Seidel Foundation.

With the aim to promote youth connectivity, CY offers a unique and tailor-made space for youth from the WB to meet, plan, organize, implement and voice up their actions. CY also offers a wide array of existing initiatives, national, regional, and EU-supported that target youth and cover the Western Balkans.

#### 4.1.4.D Young European Ambassadors<sup>110</sup>

A team of 180 YEAs comes together from Western Balkan countries. Despite different backgrounds, all are interested in learning about the EU values, connecting and engaging with their peers both online and offline, pursuing their talents and passions and being the voices of their generation. Most importantly, YEAs are open to sharing ideas and inspiring change within their communities, the WB region, and across the EU. They are involved in activities such as webinars, online learning platforms, virtual events, conferences, and cultural events. They participate in study trips across the EU and the WB and get involved in all kinds of creative and social action projects.

Currently YEA team in Serbia gathers 27 young people, and although active, they are not directly, programmatically, or systematically involved in the mechanism that aim to implement the goals set under the NYS/SfY.

## 4.2. Critical Assessment

Despite the existence of instruments which aim to strengthen local Youth Policy, the level of implementation remains low, as these instruments remain at the level of a recommendation in the majority of LSGUs. For this reason, a significant number of interviewed stakeholders strongly emphasized the need for the LoY to be more specific regarding the obligations of LSGU to implement these instruments.<sup>111</sup>

WBYL has proven to be a great mechanism to strengthen cooperation between youth organizations and institutional representatives. For two cycles it has provided young people the opportunity to participate in equal terms in policy-development processes as their governmental officials' contra parts. The Youth Co-Chairs of the two cycles of the Youth Policy Labs during the Evaluation Meeting held in Skopje in 2022,<sup>112</sup> recognized the need to increase Technical Assistance and Capacity-Building to further support the success of the initiatives carried out.

Moreover, it is essential to prioritize the inclusion of independent youth representatives in all mechanisms that facilitate the participation of young people. This ensures that the values of active youth participation and their ability to make independent and autonomous decisions are protected.

110 "Young European Ambassadors." n.d. WeBalkans | EU Projects in the Western Balkans. European Union. Accessed September 20, 2023. [Link](#).

111 See: [Chapter 2, 2.1 Legal Framework, 2.1.3 Law on Youth](#)

112 KOMS. 2022. "KOMS Representatives Participated at RCC's Regional Youth Meeting with Youth Co-Chairs in Skopje." Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije. February 18, 2022. [Link](#).



Unfortunately, the appointment of the Youth Representative of Serbia in the RYCO Governing Board in 2022 at the time made by MoYS, was not transparent, inclusive, or democratic. This jeopardized RYCO's values and caused a reaction within both the youth sector in Serbia,<sup>113</sup> and the RYCO Secretariat.<sup>114</sup> After MoTY was established and the new Minister was appointed in discussion with the organizations responsible for the selection process, he expressed political will to try and resolve the situation and prevent the reoccurrence of similar situations.<sup>115</sup>

Lastly, both WBYL and RYCO played a significant role in strengthening cooperation between the National Youth Councils (NYC) and Umbrella Youth Organizations (UYO) in the WB. In that instance, the first-ever Regional Strategic Meeting of the NYC/UYO of the WB that resulted in the signing of the Memorandum of Partnership and Understanding between the six NYC/UYO was organized by KOMS with the support of RCC's WBYL.<sup>116</sup> Through the Memorandum, UYO strive to strengthen their position, but also to pave the direction of partnership, which is based on principles of mutual respect and understanding, alliance, affirmation, confirmation, and sharing of experience and expertise.

The Second,<sup>117</sup> and the Third Regional Strategic Meeting of the NYC/UYO of the WB were also organized by KOMS and with the support of RYCO LBO in Serbia.<sup>118</sup> During these meetings the representatives of the UYO recognized and discussed the need for standardization of cooperation with RYCO, that is, with RYCO LBOs in six CPs in order to operationalize the Memorandum of Cooperation that RYCO has signed with them.

113 "National Youth Council of Serbia Press Release REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF THE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE IN THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE REGIONAL YOUTH COOPERATION OFFICE (GB RYCO)." n.d. Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije. Accessed September 29, 2023. [Link](#).

114 "RYCO Secretariat Invited the Government of Serbia to Replace the YR in RYCO GB Jagos Stojanovic with Immediate Effect." n.d. Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Accessed September 29, 2023. [Link](#).

115 "Legitimate Representatives of Young People for a Stable Region and Cooperation." n.d. Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije. Accessed September 29, 2023. [Link](#).

116 "Strengthening Regional Youth Cooperation - Memorandum of Understanding and Partnership between Umbrella Youth Organizations of the Western Balkans." n.d. Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije. Accessed October 27, 2023. [Link](#).

117 KOMS. 2021b. "The Second Regional UYOs Strategic Meet-Up." Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije. Accessed October 27, 2023. [Link](#).

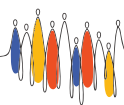
118 KOMS. 2022. "What Did We Discuss at the Third Strategic Meeting of the Youth Umbrella Organizations of the Western Balkans?" Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije. Accessed October 27, 2023. [Link](#).



Table 12: Youth Participation in Policy and The Decision-Making Process 2020-2023

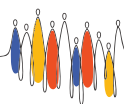
Comparative Unit	2020	2023
<b>EU Youth Dialogue</b>	KOMS is implementing “Odlučionice” and advocates for establishing the National Working Group for Structured Dialogue. There is no program funding. Project funded by the variety of donors.	KOMS is implementing “Odlučionice” and a Permanent Expert Team for EUYD is in place. There is no program funding. Project funded by the variety of donors.
<b>Youth Dialogues with the Decision-Makers</b>	KOMS has implemented a Youth Dialogue with the Prime Minister (2019), a Youth Dialogue with the Minister of Youth and Sports (2020) and a Youth Dialogue with Young Members of Parliament (2020). Project funded by the variety of donors.	Since 2020, KOMS has implemented three more Youth Dialogues with the Prime Minister (2021, 2021, 2023), one more Youth Dialogue with the Minister of Youth and Sports (2021), Youth Dialogue with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (2021) and Youth Dialogue with the Minister of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue (2021). Youth Department of the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights held a dialogue with the Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Dialog (2021). In 2022 and 2023, similar dialogues were initiated by local organizations, some of which sought guidance from KOMS for mentoring support. Project funded by the variety of donors.
<b>Participation at the Local Level</b>	Instruments of Local Youth Policy are defined under the LoY, however they are not legally binding for the LSGU. There is no exact data on the number of LSGU that have all instruments of Local Youth Policy in place.	Instruments of Local Youth Policy are defined under the LoY, however they are not legally binding for the LSGU. In 2021, only six out of 145 LSGU have all instruments of Local Youth Policy in place. <sup>119</sup> There is no exact more recent data on the number of LSGU that have all instruments of Local Youth Policy in place, however it can be estimated that this number remains low.
<b>Associations of Youth Organizations</b>	Three Associations of Youth Organizations constitute “three pillars of youth policy” – NAPOR, KOMS and NaKZM.	Five Associations of Youth Organizations are active and involved in the youth policy development - NAPOR, KOMS, NaKZM, OPENS and SIS.
<b>Umbrella Federations</b>	Status of Umbrella Federation is defined under Article 14 of LoY. On July 20th 2020, KOMS received the status of the Umbrella Federation, as the highest independent youth representative organization in Serbia. Umbrella Federation does not receive program/institutional grant from the Ministry of Youth and Sports.	Since 2020, KOMS holds the status of the Umbrella Federation. In 2022, SIS as the Scout Association of Serbia has also been granted the status of the Umbrella Federation. Umbrella Federations do not receive program/institutional grants from the Ministry of Tourism and Youth.

119 Stojanović, Boban. 2021. „Lokalna Omladinska Politika u Republici Srbiji: Saveti Za Mlade Jedinica Lokalne Samouprave.” Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije. / Stojanović, Boban. 2021. „Local Youth Policy in Serbia: Youth Advisory Councils of Local Self-Government Units.” National Youth Council of Serbia.



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

Comparative Unit	2020	2023
<b>WBYL</b>	No Results	<p>Two Policy Youth Labs implemented resulting in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Local events for young people with KOMS member organizations;</li> <li>2 Social media campaigns that reached over 750,000 people in Serbia;</li> <li>1 Analysis of the needs assessment of young people at the local level;</li> <li>1 Analysis of public policies;</li> <li>1 Research in the field of youth employment;</li> <li>1 Multi-sectoral conference</li> </ul> <p>Strengthening Youth Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Memorandum of Understanding and Partnership between Umbrella Youth Organizations of the Western Balkans</li> </ul>
<b>RYCO LBO in Serbia</b>	Four Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six Employees</li> <li>Memorandum of Cooperation with KOMS</li> <li>2 Regional Strategic Meeting of the NYC/ UYO of the WB organized with KOMS</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Initiatives</b>	Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform, Young European Ambassadors	Connecting Youth, Young European Ambassadors



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

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

## 5.1. Key Donors

Major donors working in the field of youth have been incorporated as part of this Report, based on the following criteria: 1) duration of their engagement in Serbia; 2) amount of funding they have allocated in the youth sector; 3) influence on decision-making within the country; and 4) the degree their interventions affected the field of youth.

### 5.1.1. EU Funding

**The Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans** was adopted by the European Commission in October 2020, to encourage the long-term economic recovery of the region, supporting the green and digital transition, regional cooperation, and rapprochement with the European Union. The Economic and Investment Plan identifies 10 flagship initiatives. In accordance with the adoption of the next Multiannual Financial Framework and related legal bases, the commission proposed the mobilization of up to 9 billion EUR of funding projects and investments in the region through the **IPA III program**, for the period 2021-2027. This aim to support economic rapprochement with the EU, primarily through investments, competitiveness and inclusive growth, sustainable connectivity and dual green and digital transition. It was also proposed to expand the “Youth Guarantee” programme to the Western Balkans. The “Youth Guarantee” ensures that all young people receive a decent job, continue education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. The governments of the Western Balkans should implement the flagship project “Guarantee for Young People”, whereby EU support can be used in all phases.<sup>120</sup>

**Interreg** is a key EU instrument that strengthens cooperation between regions and countries within the EU. As part of the EU’s Cohesion Policy, Interreg plays a vital role in promoting regional development, and cohesion, and reducing economic disparities. For the 2021-2027 period, Interreg is focused on addressing current challenges like climate change, digital transformation, and social inclusion. In some cases, it includes neighbouring non-EU countries.<sup>121</sup> In that instance organizations from Serbia can access funds from Interreg IPA CBC Croatia – Serbia, Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia, Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Serbia Programme and Interreg-IPA CBC Hungary-Serbia. Social inclusion in education and skills development are among the 2023 priorities, considering this as the European

120 “Zapadni Balkan: Ekonomsko-investicioni plan za podršku privrednom oporavku i konvergenciji” 2020

121 “Interreg Programmes Portal: Find Programmes, Calls and Jobs.” 2022. Interreg.Eu. February 3, 2022. Accessed September 20, 2023. [Link](#).



Year of Skills. Through the new INTERREG IPA and IPA CBC 2021-2027 calls, young people will be given numerous opportunities to engage in projects on these topics.

The Centre for Democracy Foundation, in collaboration with partner CSOs from the WB region, has initiated the implementation of the three-year project **“Regional Youth Dialogue for Europe” (2023-2026)** funded by the EU. The project is carried out in the context of the EU Youth Strategy, the accompanying Action Plan, and the EIP for the WB. It incorporates experience in promoting European and democratic values, human rights, and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on improving the status of young people and vulnerable groups. It also draws from experience in encouraging public dialogue, creating, and monitoring public policies, and involving citizens in decision-making processes. The project envisions a sub-granting scheme for 30 youth organizations from the WB.<sup>122</sup> This project is being supported by the WBYL in regard to the content and organization of Youth Lab workshops.

**Erasmus+ Program** is the leading program in education and training, youth, and sports that has provided opportunities for 9 million people - especially young individuals. The current Erasmus+ program, running from 2021 to 2027, allocates a budget of 26 billion EUR and offers the opportunity for over 4 million people to study, receive training, gain work experience, and volunteer abroad.<sup>123</sup>

Since 2019, Serbia has been a full member of the Erasmus+ program and has been recognized as a third country associated with the program. As a result, institutions and organizations from Serbia can apply for all types of projects, whether as coordinators or partners, just like the member states of the EU.<sup>124</sup>

The division is based on the dominant characteristics of the projects and expectations regarding their objectives:

1. Key Activity 1 encompasses projects related to mobility in the fields of education, youth, and sports.
2. Key Activity 2 covers projects of institutional cooperation in the areas of education, youth, and sports.
3. Key Activity 3 provides funding for specific projects that support the improvement of educational policies, policies related to youth, and sports policies.

A special part of the program is Key Action Jean Monnet, which supports the study, research, and analysis of European integration processes, focusing on youth. Jean Monnet also includes projects aimed at pre-university levels of education, through which it is possible to design training for teachers in schools related to the goals and functioning of the EU and its values.

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122 “Regionalni Dijalog Mladih Za Evropu (Regional Youth Dialogue for Europe).” n.d. Fondacija Centar Za Demokratiju. Accessed September 20, 2023. [Link](#).

123 EU Za Tebe.” n.d. Euzatebe.Rs. Accessed September 20, 2023. [Link](#).

124 “O programu.” n.d. Erasmusplus.rs. Accessed September 20, 2023. [Link](#).



The total amount of funds for the 2023 application round is 8.632.202 euro, for applications submitted to the Tempus Foundation, which is responsible for implementing the Erasmus+ program in Serbia. Its role includes, inter alia, providing support to all organizations applying for projects within the program while the special focus is put on the less developed youth organizations.

Table 13: Total Funds Allocated for Open Call 2020 and 2023 Through Tempus Foundation

Mobility	Funds in EUR	
	2020	2023
KA1 Mobility in the field of general education	560.515	936.909
KA1 Mobility in the field of vocational education and training	788.620	1.252.364
KA1 Mobility in the field of adult education	132.859	221.386
KA1 Mobility in the field of higher education	1.817.358	2.605.280
KA1 Mobility in the field of youth and youth workers	197.703	442.609
KA1 DiscoverEU inclusion projects	-	41.295
KA1 Projects for active youth participation	42.598	84.889
KA1 Mobility in the field of sports	-	68.966
KA2 Partnerships for cooperation in general education	355.704	400.000
KA2 Small-scale partnerships in general education	75.051	120.000
KA2 Partnerships for cooperation in vocational education and training	856.504	400.000
KA2 Small-scale partnerships in vocational education and training	132.309	120.000
KA2 Partnerships for cooperation in higher education	299.312	400.000
KA2 Partnerships for cooperation in adult education	307.765	400.000
KA2 Small-scale partnerships in adult education	112.589	120.000
KA2 Partnerships for cooperation in the field of youth	307.765	400.000
KA2 Small-scale partnerships in the field of youth	50.965	120.000
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.400.030</b>	<b>8.632.202</b>

Sources: Erasmus+ brochure 2020 and 2023

**Human Rights, Democracy and Civil Society Facility.** Human Rights and Democracy is an EU programme that aims to promote democracy and human rights through the support to civil society initiatives and human rights activists.<sup>125</sup> In the context of the pre-accession process, the focus of the HR&D is on the role of the CSOs with an emphasis on areas linked to the Copenhagen political criteria. As regards the support to civil society, the Civil Society Facility (CSF), aim is to support the development of a civil society that participates actively in the public debate on democracy, human rights, social inclusion, the rule of law and other fields relevant to the accession process of Serbia to the EU and can influence policy and decision-making processes. Under the program in 2023, a call was open for CSOs with a total amount of 5,772,000 EUR, divided into lots:

LOT 1: Human Rights and Democracy - 3,300,000 EUR- To protect and empower individuals to contribute to the full enjoyment by everyone of all human rights, be they civil, political, economic, social, or cultural rights. Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the minimum of 200,000 EUR and a maximum of 500,000 EUR; and

<sup>125</sup> "Human Rights, Democracy and Civil Society Facility, Republic of Serbia 2023." n.d. Europa.Rs. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#)



LOT 2-5: - Civil Society Facility - 2,472,000 EUR (618,000 EUR per lot) - To raise awareness and create participation of Serbian citizens throughout different regions, in particular the youth, about the benefits and the implications of Serbia's EU accession process on their everyday lives, as well as economic, social, and cultural interlinkages between Serbia and the EU in one of the regions of Serbia. Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the minimum of 500,000 EUR and a maximum of 618,000 EUR.

LOT 1 envisions promoting the inclusion of women, youth, and other marginalised groups into formal and informal decision-making structures, including the political party system, while LOT 2-5 prioritizes youth initiatives and dialogue in relation to the above priorities as well as Serbia's EU accession and the involvement of an expanded constituency of civil society, in particular youth organisations.

### 5.1.2. Other International Donors

**The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)** recognizes high youth unemployment as a crucial obstacle. In order to bring more people into employment GIZ supports activities which align vocational education and training to the needs of the young people and the private sector.

GIZ in Serbia implements projects on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and defines priorities in coordination with the Serbian government. GIZ works on five programmatic areas, while explicitly recognising youth as beneficiaries in two: Economic Development and Employment and Governance and Democracy. It implements the following projects of relevance to youth:

"Vocational education and training for better employability of young people in Serbia - Dialogue on Employment Creation, Initiative and Dual Education" (2020 - 2023) implemented with political sponsorship from the Ministry of Education. The project promotes six selected secondary vocational schools in the process of becoming regional competence centres. The schools receive support in offering high-quality formal (dual) education, expanding their academic offer to adult education, and establishing a dialogue on youth employment with local stakeholders. Moreover, the project advises the relevant institutions on improving the legal and regulatory framework for dual education and non-formal training.<sup>126</sup>

"Supporting Young People in Rural Areas of Serbia - Prospects for Young People in Rural Areas in Serbia" (2021-2024) is implemented with political sponsorship from the MoTY to improve the economic and socio-cultural prospects of young people – including returnees from abroad and the cities – in the pilot regions in rural areas. A fund has been established to support young people's active participation in society within the pilot communities. The program offers guidance to young individuals, those who have returned, etc, on how to diversify their sources of income in rural areas and create connections with one another. Additionally, the program has established participation structures that facilitate young people's involvement in local politics and enable them to contribute to shaping their communities.<sup>127</sup>

126 "Vocational Education and Training for Better Employability of Young People in Serbia." n.d. Giz.de. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

127 "Supporting Young People in Rural Areas of Serbia." 2023. Giz.de. September 25, 2023. [Link](#)





“The Youth Exchanges in the Western Balkans” (2020-2024) project, is co-funded by the EU and implemented by RYCO, to establish the regional school exchange scheme in the WB as well as strengthen RYCO’s institutional competencies (see below).<sup>128</sup> The project has a total budget of 5,500,000 EUR.<sup>129</sup>

**The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** also focuses on creating more employment opportunities and better living conditions for all, particularly youth and women, through increasing competitiveness and employment. The SDC implements the following projects in Serbia:

“Private and public actors working together: pilot education project in Serbia” (01.10.2014 - 31.12.2023). The project takes an integrative approach towards providing young people with the skills demanded by the private sector. The project aims on one hand to bring positive change in a promising economic sector – timber and furniture, – and on the other to solve the underlying problem by establishing a foundation of trust between the private and public sectors, by allocating 5,530,000 CHF (approx. 5,804,249 EUR).<sup>130</sup>

“The Private Sector Development South-West Serbia Programme” (01.06.2017 - 30.06.2024) supports the development of more inclusive, equitable and non-discriminatory market systems. This is done through interventions in the sector of traditional products (raspberry and honey) and tourism, to provide the rural population, specifically young people and women, access to employment and income opportunities, as well as improved access to finance, social benefits, and know-how. For this phase of the project, a budget of 4,000,000 CHF (approx. 4,198,372) has been envisioned.<sup>131</sup>

“From Education to Employment (E2E)” program (01.01.2020 - 31.12.2023) directly supports the labour market measures in five areas in Serbia. This is done through Career Guidance and Counselling, an Opportunity Fund for companies and training providers targeting 12,000 young women and men, considering 20% of the groups as vulnerable. Through the Work Based Learning that will generate a minimum of 625 decent jobs for young people, the program will contribute to the re-design of inclusive and innovative youth employment measures and policies with a budget of 9,250,000 CHF (approx. 9,707,090 EUR).<sup>132</sup>

**The Swedish International Cooperation Agency (SIDA)** supports “the ECO SYSTEM programme” (2020 to 2024) that is implemented by Young Researchers of Serbia (MIS) and was created to support environmental reforms in Serbia by encouraging CSOs and other relevant actors in society to adopt and implement the EU environmental acquis. Through a wide range of activities, ECO-SYSTEM MIS strengthens the capacities of CSOs and encourages their long-term networking. At the same time, the programme focuses on raising awareness and changing attitudes about environmental protection among citizens, local authorities, and governmental institutions.

128 “Youth Exchanges in the Western Balkans.” 2023. Giz.de. September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

129 “Schools from Region Are Becoming Superschools: RYCO Announces Final List of First Superschools Open Call.” n.d. Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

130 “Private and Public Actors Working Together: Pilot Education Project in Serbia.” n.d. Admin.Ch. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

131 “Private Sector Development in South-West Serbia.” n.d. Admin.Ch. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

132 “From Education to Employment (E2E).” n.d. Admin.Ch. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).



The Swedish Embassy in Serbia supports the Belgrade Open School (BOS) which is implementing the program „Civil Society for Advancing Serbia’s Accession to the European Union – Europe ASAP“. The program aims to enhance the accession process of Serbia to the EU and promote the development of a democratic society by increasing the influence of investigative media and civil society. The program also offers financial and mentoring support for partner CSOs and media while recognizing youth as one of the target groups. The program commenced in June 2023 and will run until May 2026.<sup>133</sup>

The Embassy supports another BOS’ project under the name „Youth and Media for Democratic Development“, which aims to foster partnerships between media and youth-led and youth-oriented organizations foundations, and endowments dealing with youth issues to democratize society and uphold the rule of law and human rights at the local level. The project was initiated in June 2021 and will run until May 31, 2025, and envisions financial and mentoring support for seven youth organizations and seven media outlets supported to jointly implement their projects.<sup>134</sup>

**The OSCE Mission to Serbia** does not operate as a traditional donor. Instead, it collaborates with government and CSOs that act as Implementing Partners on OSCE activities. In the past, various programs have been carried out in different forms, such as assistance in developing the NYS and Action Plan, training related to public relations and outreach for the MoYS, support in drafting the LoY, and capacity building of national youth policy actors to promote an inclusive youth policy. Additionally, the mission has worked directly with municipalities that have significant minority populations and has supported local youth offices in improving their capacity to address the needs of all youth. The OSCE’s approach to working with young people is youth-centred, and youth are integrated into all programmatic areas, including democratization, rule of law, media, and security cooperation. Therefore, it is not possible to estimate the total budget invested in youth by the Mission. The open calls in the past three years related to youth, are:

- Consolidating the democratization process in the security sector in the Republic of Serbia (February 2021),<sup>135</sup>
- Support to civil society organizations for the promotion of inter-culturalism among youth from different ethnic backgrounds (April 2021),<sup>136</sup>
- Enhancing rule of law culture among youth (April 2021),<sup>137</sup>
- Consolidating the democratization process in the security sector in the Republic of Serbia – Phase 5 (January 2022),<sup>138</sup>
- Support To Civil Society Organizations for Promotion of Inter-Cultural Values and Principles Among Youth from Different Ethnic Backgrounds (February 2022),<sup>139</sup>

133 “Civilno Društvo Za Unapređenje Pristupanja Srbije Evropskoj Uniji – Europe ASAP” - Evropske Integracije.” n.d. Bos.Rs. Accessed October 27, 2023. [Link](#).

134 “Mladi i Mediji Za Demokratski Razvoj - Civilno Društvo.” n.d. Bos.Rs. Accessed October 27, 2023. [Link](#).

135 Public Call for Implementing Partners ‘Democratization, Security.’” n.d. Osce.org. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

136 “Public Call for Proposals for Implementing Partners ‘Support to Civil Society Organizations for Promotion of Inter-Culturalism among Youth from Different Ethnic Backgrounds.’” n.d. Osce.org. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#)

137 “Enhancing Rule of Law Culture among Youth.” n.d. Osce.org. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#)

138 “Public Call for Proposals for Implementing Partners ‘Consolidating the Democratization Process in the Security Sector in the Republic of Serbia.’” n.d. Osce.org. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

139 “Civil Society Organizations Promotion of Inter-Cultural Values.” n.d. Osce.org. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).



- Support to inclusive education for Roma students from substandard settlements in Belgrade (June 2022),<sup>140</sup>
- Consolidating The Democratization Process in The Security Sector in The Republic of Serbia – Phase 5 (January 2022).<sup>141</sup>

The total amount of these grants is estimated at 10,000 EUR and the OSCE Mission focuses primarily on the civic and political rights of youth (hate speech, and education about civil rights, amongst others). For changes in civic and political rights to be visible, work with youth must be sustainable, while small, short-term grants are merely sporadic interventions and do not provide for a harmonious effect in policies or the youth field. In Serbia, the support provided by the OSCE increased the levels of knowledge and skills of the youth organizations and of the ministry in charge of youth, on issues of vulnerable youth, and cooperation at the national and local levels (among themselves and with local authorities). RYCO LBO in Serbia's capacity to prepare and organize calls for proposals and to appraise the applications received was increased through OSCE support as well.

**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** also strays away from a traditional donor. Since 2020, UNICEF has worked with MLEVSA and NES, as well as representatives of MoTY, non-governmental and business sectors on the project "Improving Employability of Young People through Work Practices".<sup>142</sup> UNICEF has also supported the development of the NYS 2023-2030 through the engagement of consultants who, in cooperation with stakeholders, performed ex-post and ex-ante analyses of the NYS for the period 2015-2020, as well as alongside OSCE Mission to Serbia provided technical and expert support in performing an ex-post analysis of the Law on Volunteering.<sup>143</sup> UNICEF has also supported youth organizations such as KOMS, NAPOR, OPENS, Junior Achievements in Serbia, Connecting and others working on topics such as youth participation, climate change, mental health and employment.

UNICEF Serbia also directly involves the young in its work through its Youth Board. The Board is composed of twenty-five young activists aged 15-24 who represent UNICEF at national and international events, promote its values and goals, and contribute to the development of relevant programs for children and youth.<sup>144</sup>

With the support of the **US Agency for International Development (USAID)** Trag foundations and partner organizations CRTA, KOMS, BeFem, the Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation and the Serbian Philanthropic Forum, implement the project "Inspire2Action" (Snaga aktivizma) (2023-2028).<sup>145</sup> The project supports civic activism and creates opportunities for inclusive, diversified, meaningful citizen and youth engagement in decision-making and deliberative democracy. The project contributes to USAID's overall goal of a more prosperous and democratic Serbia, committed to European integration and self-reliance. The total value of the project is 9,999,508 USD (approx. 9,462,384 EUR) and aside

140 "Education for Roma Students in Belgrade." n.d. Osce.org. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

141 "Consolidating the Democratization Process/Security Sector-Serbia." n.d. Osce.org. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

142 "UNICEF Gathers Chamber of Commerce Leaders in Serbia to Jointly Enhance Employment Opportunities for Youth." n.d. Unicef.org. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

143 Obligation to conduct ex-ante impact analysis: Public policy documents are drawn up in accordance with the results of ex-ante impact analysis and ex-post impact analysis of valid policy documents and regulations in that area (Article 31 of the Law on the Planning System)

144 "Join UNICEF Serbia Youth Board!" n.d. Unicef.org. Accessed October 27, 2023. [Link](#).

145 "Snaga Aktivizma." n.d. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).



from other things, it envisions non-repayable funds to be allocated in approximately 500 cases to support various local initiatives, including 100 initiatives aimed at supporting women and youth as well as mobilization of over 250,000 USD (approx. 236,571 EUR) non-donor funds intended for the public good.

In general, USAID recognizes youth as beneficiaries in the following three programs and through them supports projects implemented by youth-led and youth-oriented organizations.

Table 14: Projects Implemented by Youth Organizations Supported by USAID

Programs	Project	Period	USD/approx. EUR
Democracy and Governance	Let's Come Out – Let's Work Together <sup>146</sup>	2022-2025	2,000,000/1,892,570
	Regional Youth Partnerships <sup>147</sup>	2022-2025	4,000,000/ 3,785,140
	Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities <sup>148</sup>	2022-2026	1,999,987/1,892,557
Economic Growth	Big Small Businesses <sup>149</sup>	2022-2027	18,221,339/17,242,579
	Venture an idea <sup>150</sup>	2021-2025	4,257,219/4,028,542
Environment	Together for the Environment <sup>151</sup>	2022-2027	5,000,000/4,731,425

**Regional Youth Cooperation Office's (RYCO)** work as a donor is currently based on its Strategy 2022-2024, which aims to enhance the quality of regional youth cooperation.<sup>152</sup> It focuses on promoting youth mobility and diversifying opportunities for active youth participation in activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation across various domains, including civic, social, educational, cultural, and sports. RYCO is also committed to addressing historical differences within the region and challenging inherited narratives alongside young people and their mentors, through its investment in the topic of dealing with the past. Furthermore, RYCO works to raise awareness among young people about the opportunities offered by European integration and intra-regional cooperation.

From 2018 to 2021 RYCO invested 3,000,000 EUR to support 110 regional projects throughout the region through four Open Calls targeting the needs of youth, CSOs and secondary schools in WB and Serbia.<sup>153</sup> In 2022, "Superschools" was the flagship project and RYCO successfully closed the first cycle with a budget of 336,000 EUR and opened the second one with a budget of 715,000 EUR, raising the number of high schools participating in mobility and exchanges to 100. In the first cycle, 18 schools from Serbia took part in the programme, while in the second cycle that number increased to 30.<sup>154</sup>

The first "Route WB6" project for regional volunteer exchanges was concluded in March 2022, by organizing a Caravan of 45+ young people travelling across the region. It is agreed to have a follow-up and establish volunteer exchanges as signature projects of RYCO. Lastly, "Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurship" (RISE) continued its work through the support of the second cohort of

146 "Let's Come Out -Let's Work Together Project." n.d. Usaid.gov. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

147 "REGIONAL YOUTH PARTNERSHIPS." n.d. Usaid.gov. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

148 "Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities." n.d. Usaid.gov. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

149 "Big Small Businesses." n.d. Usaid.gov. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

150 "VENTURE AN IDEA." n.d. Usaid.gov. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

151 "Together for the Environment project." n.d. Usaid.gov. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

152 Regional Youth Cooperation Office. n.d. "RYCO Strategic Plan 2022-2024." Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

153 *Ibid.*

154 "Schools from the Region Are Becoming Superschools: RYCO Announces Final List of the 2nd Superschools Open Call." n.d. Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).



young social entrepreneurs. It provided support to 12 youth social businesses. RYCO and partners organized the Regional SE Forum in September, gathering the most relevant stakeholders from the regional social entrepreneurship ecosystem. The new phase (follow-up project) started in November 2022.<sup>155</sup>

In July 2023, RYCO launched its 7th Call for project proposals for CSO, called “RYCOnnecting You(th)”.<sup>156</sup> Open Call had two main thematic areas: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation as well as Youth empowerment and engagement in society, with the general objective to support the civil society in the WB and foster reconciliation, peacebuilding, regional cooperation, and intercultural learning. The projects provided young people with opportunities that create space for dialogue, mutual learning, and increased understanding across the region. The overall budget for this call is 300,000 EUR, while the size of grants is between a minimum of 15,000 EUR and a maximum of 30,000 EUR.

During the open calls RYCO Local Branch Office in Serbia, with the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia, organized capacity-building trainings for CSOs on project proposal writing in the area of intercultural exchange and reconciliation. The training focused on practical application, equipping CSOs to confidently develop project proposals aligned with the guidelines and application form for RYCO Open Calls. With the support of trainers and mentors, participants worked on developing project ideas, covering different aspects of project writing, from justifying the idea to forming a realistic budget. Moreover, they gained valuable insights on addressing topics related to reconciliation and dealing with the past, through regional youth projects.

**The Western Balkans Fund (WBF)** aims to promote cooperation and the common values between citizens, civil society, and people-to-people contacts, by providing funding for small and medium projects. In 2021 and 2022 WBF opened the 4th and 5th Call for Proposal. The 4th Call for Proposals had a total budget of 400,000 EUR, with grants of up to 15,000 EUR for projects lasting 3-10 months.<sup>157</sup> Similarly, the 5th Call for Proposals had a total budget of 500,000 EUR available, with grants of up to 15,000 EUR for projects of the same duration.<sup>158</sup>

Both calls managed to provide funding for numerous youth-led and youth-oriented organizations from Serbia, acting both as lead applicants and project partners.

**The European Youth Foundation (EYF)** is a division of the Youth Department within the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Democratic Participation, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity. Its main objective is to offer financial and educational assistance for youth activities, youth work, and youth organizations from the 46 Council of Europe member countries, including Serbia.<sup>159</sup>

The EYF supports approximately 200 youth projects annually, by providing around 3.5 million EUR in grants to youth NGOs, through four different types of grants:

155 Regional Youth Cooperation Office. 2023. “Annual Report 2022.” [Link](#).

156 “RYCOnnecting You(Th): Open Call for Project Proposals for CSO.” n.d. Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

157 “4th Call for Proposals.” n.d. Westernbalkansfund.org. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

158 “5th Call for Proposals.” n.d. Westernbalkansfund.org. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).

159 “Funding and Grants Council of Europe EYF - European Youth Foundation - Www.coe.int.” n.d. European Youth Foundation. Accessed September 26, 2023. [Link](#).



1. Grants to local or national projects (pilot activities) that address the challenges young people face and their needs at the local level;
2. Grants to international activities. These are meetings of young people or youth leaders which have a clear European dimension;
3. Grants to international youth NGOs and networks in support of their annual work plans (sets of successive and interconnected activities over a period of one year);
4. Structural grants to international youth NGOs and networks to cover their general administrative costs.

The EYF also provides advice to youth NGOs to improve their project proposals submitted to the EYF; educational and capacity-building support to youth NGOs to strengthen the quality of their projects; and information sessions to update beneficiaries and partners on developments and tools to improve the quality of youth projects.

Serbian youth organizations can obtain funding from the EYF through pilot activity grants. These grants are designed to support initiatives that address the challenges and needs of young people within their local communities. The proposed activities must have a clear connection to the local context and align with the priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector while their duration cannot exceed 6 months. In 2023, the grant amount for each of the Pilot Activities was up to 15,000 EUR.

From 2021 to January 2023, 245,456 EUR was allocated to 19 projects implemented by youth organizations from Serbia.<sup>160</sup>

## 5.2. Donor Coordination

Generally speaking, donors in Serbia focus on youth issues, mostly because it is mostly considered a cross-sectorial topic, and it fits their priorities in different areas (especially employment). It seems that donors are not coordinating effectively, leading to program or thematic overlaps and repetition. In addition, youth-led, and youth-oriented organizations or CSOs in general are not involved in the development of programs, or priorities of open calls. Lastly, GIZ pointed out development intervention in close cooperation and consultations with the Government and relevant ministries.

In April and December 2021, within the WBYL project, two Informal Donor Coordination Meetings on the Youth Agenda in the Western Balkans were organized, to establish,<sup>161</sup> and strengthen the Broad Coalition on Youth, an informal donor coordination mechanism that prioritizes the youth in WB. The goal was to improve policy alignment with donor priorities, facilitate coordination, build synergies, and generate joint actions and follow-up mechanisms that involve both youth and relevant stakeholders in the policy and donor community.<sup>162</sup>

160 "2.2 Grant Decisions - European Youth Foundation - [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)." n.d. European Youth Foundation. Accessed September 25, 2023. [Link](#).

161 Regional Cooperation Council. n.d. "WBYL: First Informal Donor Coordination Meeting on Youth Agenda." Rcc.int. Accessed September 29, 2023. [Link](#).

162 Regional Cooperation Council. n.d. "Second Informal Donor Coordination Meeting on Western Balkans Youth Agenda Held in Sarajevo." Rcc.int. Accessed September 29, 2023a. [Link](#).





During the second meeting, WBYL introduced the Online Donor Database. This database acts as a central resource for youth-related programs, projects, funding, and opportunities. It is a valuable tool that improves communication and coordination among WB donors and their activities in the youth sector. It also facilitates open and constructive exchange between donors, policymakers, and youth.

### 5.3. Priority Areas for the Future in the Field of Youth

Various interventions described in this chapter are essential in addressing the gaps related to the implementation of SfY goals and needs of youth organizations. Several interventions are valuable as they focus on youth groups that are not prioritized through national interventions, such as institutionalized youth, rural youth, LGBTQ+, refugee and migrant youth, juvenile offenders, etc.

Topics addressing youth human rights and civic literacy are not in the focus of many donors, who are primarily focusing on youth employability and competence building and are perceived as a direct intervention in improving the status of young people in the long term.

So far it seems that the biggest focus of donors has been on employment, youth entrepreneurship or in general youth participation in the decision-making processes, however in the next period it is important to also focus on:

- Youth at-risk-of-poverty rate or social exclusion,
- Quality employment, especially NEET youth and youth from vulnerable groups,
- Labour rights, especially freelance youth, and their position in the job market,
- Youth Housing,
- Mental health and well-being and the right to the health of young people,
- Standardisation of youth work and youth spaces,
- Establishing/sustaining inclusive, functional, and transparent instruments of youth policy,
- Media and digital literacy of youth,
- Youth Peace and Security,
- Youth right to a healthy environment.

### 5.4. Critical Assessment

Project funding youth organizations and all their associations have received from MoTY, is still insufficient.<sup>163</sup> In order to sustain their work, youth organizations need to secure new sources of financing and improve their ability to explore alternative methods of ensuring sustainability. These methods may include business sector, membership, donations, social entrepreneurship, and other similar avenues, but mostly turning to EU and other international donors.

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163 See Chapter 4



In previous years donors were mostly focused on Belgrade,<sup>164</sup> however it seems that the trend is shifting, and they provide more support to youth organizations from different districts and local communities throughout Serbia. Despite many sources of funding are available and provide significant support for the youth sector, the impact is still far from having a sustainable ecosystem of youth organizations. There are a few plausible reasons for this:

Firstly, many donors define their objectives or areas of work in coordination with the Serbian Government. In case they involve CSOs, it seems that only the largest ones could discuss topics and priorities directly with the donors. This means that often the needs of less developed youth-led and youth-oriented organisations and their beneficiaries remain undetected.

Second, young people are often perceived as a horizontal and sector-crossing priority, and it is common for donors to make interventions that do not directly target young people. The calls for proposals do not address youth as the main target; instead, organizations submitting project proposals resort to creativity in their approaches and design of programs, tailoring them into programs for youth. It is important to note that donors do not often rely on crucial policy documents related to youth, such as the SfY or Action Plan. However, they do allocate resources to programs that align with their strategic priorities and programmatic areas, which ultimately helps to implement these policies.

Third, many big donor organizations have been working exclusively with their established strategic partners for project implementation. This has resulted in other youth-led and youth-oriented organizations being unaware of some funding sources or having access to them only through sub-granting schemes. Also, donors have started to directly fund certain activities instead of acting as traditional donors. They pay per diem to representatives of organizations engaged with youth work.

Related to this, it seems that only big organizations have access to “big” and sustainable funding. Small organizations do not have the human and structural capacities to absorb multi-annual grants or do not enjoy donors’ trust. Most youth organizations lack large annual turnovers or the capacity to apply to e.g. IPA funding. Larger organizations are then able to generate funding from donors such as USAID, SIDA, and GIZ and they further support youth organizations through sub-contracting and small grants.

Small organizations on the other hand can more easily secure small grants or sub-granted resources which do not provide enough resources or sustainability to the organization. This leaves them with grants amounting to 15,000 EUR on average. It is difficult to effect any long-term change in the community with such a modest budget. Thus, considering the impact of the above-mentioned situation on local organizations, as a solution, organizations try to modify or shift toward activities based on donors’ priorities rather than standing on what they believe in or at good at.

What seems to be missing is funding for the topic of youth human rights and civic literacy, since donors are primarily focusing on youth employability and competence building. Also, only a few donors provide funding to support the institutional development and core functioning of youth organizations (especially associations). Advocacy initiatives or the involvement of youth organizations in policy-making processes, usually lack funding opportunities, being the reason why many local or less developed youth organizations do not engage in such practices.

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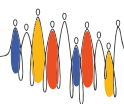




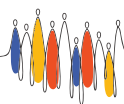
Table 15: Donor Interventions in the Field of Youth 2020-2023

Donor	2020 <sup>165</sup>	2023
<b>EU</b>	European Union Support to Active Youth Inclusion (IPA2014) IPA 2020: Support to youth employment European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and Civil Society Facility program	Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans under IPA III program INTERREG IPA and IPA CBC 2021-2027 open calls Regional Youth Dialogue for Europe (2023-2026) Human Rights, Democracy and Civil Society Facility Erasmus+ Program
<b>GIZ</b>	Encouraging Youth Employment Dialogue on Employment Creation, Initiative and Dual Education (2020-2022) German Information Centre for Migration, Training and Employment The main areas of support for youth: Youth employment and employability, status of youth from vulnerable social groups, e.g., Roma youth and returnees, and their reintegration into the system.	<i>Vocational education and training for better employability of young people in Serbia - Dialogue on Employment Creation, Initiative and Dual Education (2020 - 2023)</i> <i>Supporting young people in rural areas of Serbia - Prospects for Young People in Rural Areas in Serbia (2021-2024)</i> <i>The youth exchanges in the Western Balkans (2020-2024)</i> The main areas of support for youth: Youth employment and employability, status of youth from vulnerable social groups, e.g., rural youth and returnees and regional youth cooperation.
<b>SDC</b>	From Education to Employment (E2E) program (2020 - 2023)	<i>Private and public actors working together: pilot education project in Serbia (2014 - 2023)</i> <i>The Private Sector Development (PSD) South-West Serbia Programme (2017 - 2024)</i> <i>From Education to Employment (E2E) program (2020 - 2023)</i>
<b>SIDA</b>	SIDA implemented by UN agencies	<i>ECO SYSTEM programme (2020 to 2024)</i>
<b>OSCE</b>	Supports CSOs and the MoYS.	Supports youth-led and youth-organizations working on youth participation, inclusivity, multiculturalism and democratization of the security sector in Serbia. Supports different Ministries through engagement of consultants working on development of the youth policy documents.
<b>UNICEF</b>	Supports CSOs and the MoYS.	Supports youth-led and youth-organizations working on youth participation, youth employment and entrepreneurship, climate change and mental health. Supports different Ministries through engagement of consultants working on development of the youth policy documents.

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Donor	2020 <sup>165</sup>	2023
<b>USAID</b>	Active Citizens – Better Society: Advocating towards Cooperation and Democratic Development	<i>Inspire2Action (2023-2028)</i> <i>Let's Come Out – Let's Work Together (2022-2025)</i> <i>Regional Youth Partnerships (2022-2025)</i> <i>Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (2022-2026)</i> <i>Big Small Businesses (2022-2027)</i> <i>Venture an Idea (2021-2025)</i> <i>Together for the Environment (2022-2027)</i> Focuses on youth through three programs: Democracy and Governance, Economic Growth and Environment.
<b>RYCO</b>	From 2018 till 2021 RYCO has invested EUR 3,000,000 to support 110 regional projects throughout the region through four Open Calls targeting needs of youth, CSOs and secondary schools in WB and Serbia.	<i>Superschools</i> <i>Regional Incubator for Social Entrepreneurship (RISE)</i> <i>7th Call for project proposals for CSO, called „RYCOnnecting You(th)“</i>
<b>EYF</b>		From 2021 to January 2023, 245,456 EUR was allocated towards 19 projects implemented by youth organizations from Serbia.



# CHAPTER 6: GOOD PRACTICES AND GAP ANALYSIS

This chapter presents good practices in the field of youth policy and programs. It also provides a gap analysis in financing mechanisms following the same structure as the report itself. Lastly, it outlines some key recommendations for each key stakeholder group.

## 6.1. Good Practices

Youth Policies in Serbia are often recognized as an example of good practice in the Western Balkans and Europe when it comes to the existing legislation, structures, and instruments on the national and local levels, as well as the ecosystems developed in this regard. For that reason, this chapter further explores some of the best practices.

The budget for the implementation of SfY and youth programs is consequently allocated to MoTY through the annual Budget of Serbia. This ensures the implementation of general and specific goals the Strategy sets. Additionally, in 2023 contributions from other government structures are envisioned (different ministries, <sup>166</sup> the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth, etc.). Significant support is also provided by various international donors, both for actions related to the fulfilment of the NYS as well as for addressing other issues of relevance.

The Youth Advisory Council of the Government of Serbia is a great co-management mechanism that ensures youth involvement in the development, implementation and monitoring of youth policies while ensuring cross-sectoral cooperation and youth mainstreaming of different policies. Moreover, it is important to note that the LoY recognizes and defines six mechanisms to implement local youth policy, from financing to the establishment of youth centres.<sup>167</sup> This sets exact mechanisms that LSGU can utilize to ensure active youth participation so that youth voices are taken into consideration in the decision-making processes, and ultimately that youth needs are met.

Based on the same co-management mechanism, WBYL and RYCO Governing Board are also good examples of how youth representatives can be meaningfully involved in the policy and decision-making processes on the regional level.

One of the good examples that showcases the commitment of the youth sector to the EU integration process of Serbia, has been the implementation of EU Youth Dialogue as well as the establishment of the Permanent Expert Team for EU Youth Dialogue within the YAC.

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<sup>166</sup> See: [Chapter 3, 3.1 Youth Policy Funding, Table 7](#)

<sup>167</sup> See: [Chapter 4, 4.1 4.1 Youth Engagement and Participation in the Policy-Making: Key Mechanisms and Processes, 4.1.2 Participation at the Local Level, Table 9](#)



Moreover, Youth Dialogues with Decision-Makers implemented by KOMS have been a good way of providing space for young people to directly address policymakers, by offering concrete and evidence-based solutions to the challenges they face. Youth Dialogues have not only been recognized as a good practice by other youth organizations active on national and local level, but also by other NYC from the WB and EU, such as NYCs of North Macedonia, Slovakia, Latvia and Estonia, which eventually implemented a Youth Dialogue at the beginning of 2023.

A good practice has also been the involvement of KOMS and SIS as Umbrella Federation, as well as NAPOR, NaKZM and OPENS in the policy-making processes, ensuring the clear strategic development of a systematic youth care, respecting expert inputs from each of the key stakeholders involved.

Lastly, it is worth noting a positive shift in some donors' policies. It seems that some donors tend to recognize young people as a specific target group rather than as a horizontal and sector-crossing priority, as well as for their tendency to decentralize grant-making schemes in place.

## 6.2. Gaps

Although good practices exist and although there have been many improvements in youth policy since 2020, some gaps remain. To fully benefit from the resources and efforts directed at improving the position of young people in Serbia, it is important to understand and address these gaps.

One technical issue that needs to be addressed, is the inconsistency in defining youth across various laws and documents. It is crucial to align all laws with the definition provided in the LoY, to ensure that young people have access to their rights and are treated equally in legal matters.

It is important to highlight that there are also inconsistencies in the collection of statistical data on youth in Serbia. The Statistical Office of Serbia categorizes youth into three groups: 15-19, 20-24, and 24-29, excluding those aged 30. This incomplete data poses a challenge to the development of evidence-based policies and programs. For example, the Labor Force Survey defines youth employment as individuals aged 15-24, while the Social Protection Service collects data for people up to the age of 26.

Similarly, Serbia lacks data on issues such as internal and external youth migrations and the number of NEET youth. Overall, the insufficient data on the characteristics of external migrants makes it difficult to accurately calculate the total losses for the Serbian economy and development processes which are attributed to the impact of youth emigration. Additionally, the absence of regular data collection on NEET youth poses a significant challenge in developing evidence-based local youth policies.

The evidence-based approach is important for the creation of effective national youth policies. However, when it comes to local Youth Policy, it is crucial to consider the unique challenges faced by young people in that area. Unfortunately, due to limited funding, there is often a lack of research conducted at the local level, resulting in plans that rely solely on national data. Shortage of funding also impacts the quality of annual research conducted by the MoTY. Independent research conducted by CSOs is not given enough recognition nor used in policy formulation.<sup>168</sup>

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In the previous section, good practices of local youth policy instruments and their recognition under the LoY have been discussed. However, many LSGUs do not invest in or have only a few instruments due to the lack of legal obligation. Therefore, these instruments must be legally binding for the LSGUs, in addition to being recognized. Among other things, each LSGU should also allocate resources for the implementation of youth policy, like the way MoTY does.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government has authority over local self-government units. However, when it comes to implementing youth policy at the local level, the LoY can only provide recommendations for establishing youth offices, developing Local Youth Action Plans, and allocating a budget for their implementation. This can create a gap in achieving the goals of the SfY, as many actors involved are not under the jurisdiction of the MoTY.<sup>169</sup>

Despite the repeated statements that decision-makers claim: „Youth is a resource, not a problem“, and „Young people are not our future, but our present“; one of the main challenges of Youth Policy in Serbia remains the insufficient prioritization of the youth sector as a catalyst for positive social, economic, and political changes. This issue is further accelerated by the lack of funding. According to Mr Tobias Flessenkemper: The indicator of how much an economy prioritizes a particular topic is most visible when looking at budget allocations.<sup>170</sup>

The sustainability of youth organizations is a major concern, due to the lack of reliable and continuous funding from national, regional, or local governments. The budget for implementing the AP is projected for three years and is allocated through annual open calls. However, this fragmented approach leads to short-term, project-based activities that cannot achieve sustainability or create an environment that encourages ongoing work towards SfY goals. The same funding mechanisms are used at the local level, and there are no administrative grants provided, which could potentially have affected the sustainability of key youth policy actors at the national and local levels.

Similarly, the time MoTY takes to launch public competition and all other administrative issues, often results in several months, jeopardizing the rest of the competition process.

International donors tend to prioritize large organizations, while some of their funds reach smaller organizations through sub-granting schemes. However, core granting is rarely provided, and few donors offer resources for the maintenance and funding of networks, leaving the core mandates of Umbrella Federations and Organizations uncovered. Also, a gap pointed out in the external reports is related to the overlapping of priorities (among the donor community and in relation to government structures), which may lead to the uneven distribution of the fulfilment of NYS's goals.<sup>171</sup>

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169 *Ibid.*

170 *Ibid.*

171 *Ibid.*



## 6.3. Recommendations

### Policy and Government Recommendations:

1. LoY is currently under the revision and aside from envisioned key changes, the Law should also stipulate the legal obligation of LSGU to utilize/establish all the instruments of local Youth Policy.<sup>172</sup>
2. The Law on Local Self-Government needs amendments to ensure that LSGU have original jurisdiction over care for young people and budget allocations for the implementation of Youth Policy.
3. A comprehensive system should be developed for gathering data related to the funds for the implementation of the national Youth Policy, involving all relevant stakeholders such as government entities and external donor-funded projects.
4. The MoTY should further strengthen the quality of the implementation and incentive environment for continuous work on NYS goals by introducing long-term administrative and program-based grants for national and local Youth Policy actors.
5. MoTY public competitions should adhere to clear timelines each year and avoid delays.
6. Allow the initiation of the first-stage appeal process before the MoTY once the public competition results are announced.
7. Capacities of the Youth Sector within MoTY should be increased or ideally, a separate Agency or Ministry of Youth should be established.
8. It is essential to ensure cooperation and coordination among all partners involved in the implementation of SfY, due to its cross-sectoral nature and complex implementation involving several competent ministries.
9. The National Assembly and the Government of Serbia should allocate more funds for the implementation of the SfY and Action Plan and increase the budget for youth policy implementation.
10. The MoTY in addition to project-based funding, should also develop long-term programmatic financing to support activities over multiple years, ensuring that results are continuous and more purposeful.
11. Independent youth representation and participation in different co-management mechanism should be ensured.
12. Establish regular meetings of the YAC every two months and strengthen collaboration between youth representatives and institutional representatives within the Council. Enhance the Rules of Procedure of the YAC to regulate the regularity of meetings, the method of submitting initiatives by young people, the scope of work, and similar matters.

172 See: Chapter 2, 2.1 Legal Framework, 2.1.3 Law on Youth



**Youth Organizations:**

1. Well-established youth organizations and networks should provide peer-to-peer support, guidance, and mentorship to smaller, grassroots organizations and youth initiatives from rural and remote areas.
2. Youth organizations should further develop their capacities both in terms of fundraising and networking, advocacy and lobbying, digitalization, communication, and outreach.
3. Youth organizations should identify new streams of financial resources to become financially sustainable and break the cycle of donor dependency, potentially exploring different kinds of contributions from the business sector.

**Donor Community:**

1. Donor communities should prioritize and recognize youth as a key driver for positive social, economic and political changes, by significantly increasing the total budget for the implementation of youth policy.
2. In addition to project-based funding, donors should also develop long-term programmatic financing to support activities over multiple years, ensuring that results are continuous and more purposeful.
3. Donors should provide more institutional and core funding especially for the development of Umbrella Federations and associations of youth organizations.
4. The donor community should invest more funds towards the civic and political rights of the youth in Serbia.
5. The donor community should take a more coordinated approach to avoid overlapping priorities.



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## ANNEX 1: List of interviews

No	Inst/Org	Sector	Contact person	Position
1	Ministry of Tourism and Youth	Ministry in charge of youth/ Donor	Snežana Klašnja	Minister advisor
2	National Youth Council of Serbia - KOMS	NYC/UYO	Milica Borjanić	Programme Manager
3	Scout Movement of Serbia - SIS	NYC/UYO	Marko Petrović	Secretary General
4	National Association of Youth Workers – NAPOR	CSO	Jelena Stojanović	Executive Director
5	National Association of Youth Offices	CSO	Marija Đoković	Member of Presidency
6	OPENS	CSO	Vukašin Grozdanović	Director
7	Bečej Youth Association	Local CSO	Gordana Adamov	Executive Director
8	Naš svet naša pravila	Local CSO	Đorđe Stojanović	CEO
9	Forca Požega	Local CSO	Ivan Bjelić	
10	Belgrade Open School	CSO/Donor	Vladimir Pavlović	Program Director
11	GIZ	Donor	Marija Radovanović	Senior Project Manager
12	Tempus Foundation	Donor	Vedrana Markovic	Coordinator Youth, Information and Sports Unit
13	EU Delegation	Donor	Irena Radinović	Project Manager – Education
14	RYCO	Donor	Marija Bulat	Head of LBO
15	Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung	Donor	Dagmar Konstantinović	Head of the Belgrade Office
			Jelena Đurović	Deputy Head of the Belgrade Office



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