Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth

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DRAFT PAPER

Snapshot on the situation of youth, challenges to social inclusion and youth policies in South East Europe: information paper for the Seminar Beyond Barriers

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1. Introduction

The Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EC 2010) sets a common target to lift 20 million people out of risk of poverty by 2020. These efforts are supported by the flagship initiative *European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion.* Improving situation of young people is among the topics present in the core European policy documents and youth inclusion is recognized as one of the top priorities of the European youth policy (*An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering* 2009): employment, education, social inclusion, youth and the world, volunteering, health and sport, participation, creativity and entrepreneurship. The major goals of this strategy can be closely linked to the Renewed Social Agenda and its priorities: I) creating more opportunities for youth in education and employment; II) improving access and full participation of all young people in society and III) fostering mutual solidarity between society and young people.

According to the UNESCO paper, an inclusive society is defined "as a society for everyone, in whom every individual has an active role to play. That society is built on the fundamental values of fairness, equality, social justice, human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and recognition of the diversity." There is a common understanding of the importance of social inclusion at the European level, although there is no overall agreement over a definition of this concept. One of definitions of the social inclusion that can be found in the European documents defines social inclusion as "a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Social inclusion also ensures that vulnerable groups and persons have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and that they can access their fundamental rights" (EC 2010).

Social exclusion is also a widely used term, and more than social exclusion, a contested term. There is a wide diversity of definitions of social exclusion and they rely to descriptions of situations and processes that may lead to social exclusion. Social exclusion is most frequently put into relation to poverty and lack of financial goods. However, social exclusion does not have to be related to poverty at all and it does not have to stand as a synonymous for inequality. Sometimes we can face social exclusion in society with high equality, whereas people can enjoy inclusion and participation even if there is no equal share of resources. People have multiple, intersecting identities, which are even more accentuated in vulnerable situations. It means that a single person at the same time can be disadvantaged due to their various identities, on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability status, residence, socio-professional status, religion and some other aspects. In other words, both inclusion and exclusion can be vertical and horizontal, and they are more resulting from a combination of a lack of personal resources and structural support than from equality itself.

The report produced by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency 2013 *Youth Social Exclusion and Lessons from Youth Work Evidence from literature and surveys* lists the main aspects of social exclusion: I) experiencing poor living conditions (in terms of housing, nutrition, clothing, physical safety); being unable to participate in the social and political life of one's community (not out of choice but as a result of obstacles encountered); II) being unable to enjoy cultural and recreational activities (as a result of obstacles encountered);III) suffering from health conditions deriving from poor living standards and experiencing obstacles to accessing health care and social services when needed. When trying to define the concept of social exclusion we also have to conceptualize vulnerability and marginalization. The publication of the European Commission *the European Social Fund and Social Inclusion* (2010: 5) defines groups in vulnerable situation as: "groups that experience a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the general population. Ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, the homeless, those struggling with substance abuse, isolated

elderly people and children all often face difficulties that can lead to further social exclusion, such as low levels of education and unemployment or underemployment". Marginalization can be seen as a consequence of long-term vulnerability and as a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities, which most often affects girls and women and hard-to-reach groups such as poor households, individuals with disabilities, people living in informal settlements, indigenous people and ethnic minorities, rural populations, nomadic populations, people affected by armed conflict, street and working children and people suffering from HIV and AIDS (*the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the marginalized* 2010).

A youth policy seminar on social inclusion of young people in vulnerable situations *in South East Europe* presents continuation of the efforts of the Council of Europe and the European Commission to recognise needs of young people and set them up a priority. *Resolution CM/Res*(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe emphasized social inclusion of young people in regard to: 1) supporting the integration of excluded young people; 2) ensuring young people's access to education, training and working life; 3) supporting young people's transition from education to the labour market; 4) supporting young people's autonomy and well-being, as well as their access to decent living conditions; 4) ensuring young people's equal access to cultural, sporting and creative activities and 5) encouraging intergenerational dialogue and solidarity. Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe has recognized the social inclusion as one of the priorities. Some of the recent Youth Partnership activities focused on youth inclusion encompassed a preparatory meeting on mapping of barriers to social inclusion of youth in vulnerable situations held in Strasbourg in March 2014, the conference on the role of youth work in supporting young people in vulnerable situations in Malta in November 2014 and the expert seminar related to the mapping of barriers to social inclusion for young people in vulnerable situations in Strasbourg in September and October 2015. Moreover, a comprehensive study on the mapping of barriers to social inclusion for young people in vulnerable situations titled *Finding a place in modern Europe* has been published under editorship of the Youth Partnership in 2015.

Economic crisis and recession that have started in 2008 affected all social groups, with young people among the hardest hit by the crisis. Nowadays, adolescence and youth period are less and less frequently related to carefree enjoying and predictable scenarios. Uncertainty of life prospects, especially when it comes to the educational and employment outcomes, influences all aspects of young people's lives, from health and wellbeing, to leisure time and political and cultural participation. Instead of following a linear path that includes completing a desired education and finding a job and independent housing, young people are often forced to leave the education in trying to provide for a living, or to simultaneously study and work long hours in precarious conditions. "Social exclusion can affect all age groups but it demands particular attention from the youth field because it produces deep and long-term damage to the living conditions, social and economic participation, emotional life, and health status of young people" (Salto-Youth Inclusion Resource Centre, 2014: 12).

South East Europe is one of the European regions affected by the economic crisis and recession and many young people in this area have been in unfavourable social conditions. This research paper, prepared in a background of the youth policy seminar, aims at gathering reflections upon the concept of youth vulnerability and inclusion in South East Europe. It will give a brief overview of the concept of social inclusion and present some research data on social position and attitudes of the youth in South East Europe. These presentations will be backed by an overview of youth policies targeting youth in states of concern (in an alphabetical order): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo[1], the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

2. Concept of social exclusion and inclusion in the context of youth policy

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[1] All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

According to _the EU Youth Report 2015_ „on average in the EU-28, the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for young people aged 15 to 29 (29,0 % in 2013) is higher than that for children under the age of 16 (27,3 %) or for the total population (24,5 %)" (p. 58). Such relatively high shares of young people under a risk of social exclusion present threat both to individual development and to a society in total. On an individual level youth marginalisation prolongs their social and economic dependence, which often poses additional burdens to families and social care systems. While caught in a status with insecure educational and/or employment outcomes, young people might lower their self-esteem and self-realisation, which, in turn, makes their position even scarcer. For young people disadvantaged social background is often related to hardships in transitions to independent living; fewer opportunities are mirrored into limited access to resources and weaker relationships with wider community. Data show that higher levels of perceived exclusion have been shown to correlate with greater risk of health issues like depression, disability, mental health problems, physical illness, and chronic disease. We should also not neglect an impact of interegenerational transmission of exclusion and a vicious cycle young people might enter if coming from a family with reduced access to financial, social and institutional resources and support.

As already stated, social exclusion is a multidimensional concept and young people in a situation of exclusion often face interlinked problems that accumulate and lead them toward blurred prospects. As Siyka Kovacheva stated in _the EU-CoE youth partnership policy sheet on Social Inclusion_ (2012), „[...]it is not only the low social capital of the disadvantaged young people that creates barriers to their social integration but more so the lack of bridging social capital in the community, the missing links between these groups and the majority population". These can contribute to young people's feelings of social exclusion, especially amongst the most vulnerable groups, such as financially deprived young people, members of ethnic minorities (e.g. young Roma) and disabled youth. A significant portion of young excluded people can be related to the "NEETs" (people not in education, training or employment and not registered as unemployed in the labour offices) or "status zero" group (Williamson 1997). Young people in this status often remain invisible for instruments of social care and educational and employment institutions, which can additionally weaken their social position.

The World Bank report _Inclusion Matters_ (2013) emphasizes that inclusion matters because it is too costly in terms of increased social, economic and political costs. Economic costs are especially evident; for instance, the World Bank report (de Laat 2010) estimates that the annual productivity losses caused by exclusion of the Roma, an ethnic minority in Europe, could range from €231 million in Serbia to €887 million in Romania. Moreover, it estimates that Roma who complete secondary education can expect to earn, for example, from 144% more in Romania to 52 % more in Serbia (p. 54). This is only a small portion of evidences that point to the importance of social inclusion. A greater portion is related to human values of social inclusion, which is recognised by Salto-Youth Inclusion Resource Centre (2014: 22):

> "Social inclusion is an on-going process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision-making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights".

Social inclusion rarely happens by virtue of significant events like graduation or employment. Instead, it consists of continuous efforts to make small steps on various fronts – in education, employment, participation, housing, improving health status, etc. This process is long-lasting and enables a young person building up self-esteem, self-realisation and resilience. Shortly, social inclusion enables young person to become an autonomous and productive member of society who can contribute to development of society as a whole.

The Youth Partnership study on barriers to social inclusion _Finding a Place in Modern Europe_ (2015) refers to **five areas of possible inclusion or exclusion: education, labour market, living, health and participation**. These five areas present a basis for social inclusion and can be referred to as

'safety nets' since they provide basic resources and prerequisites for fulfilment of everyday needs. The first of these "safety nets" is related to **education**, where South East Europe scores relatively well when it comes to finishing compulsory (primary) and secondary education. Good scores partly result from socialist past and efforts of state administration in reforms that would provide every person with a vocation. Nowadays these countries still have good results in terms of completion rate in primary and secondary education, although some analyses indicate that educational system, especially vocational schools, requires profound reforms in order to make their vocations marketable, i.e. to lower a mismatch between the labour market demand and supply.

Youth in South East Europe mainly experience financial barriers to completion of a desired education. Apart from financial reasons another important hindrance to rising of formal educational level of young people lies with enrolment and attendance barriers to young people who reside in distant or rural communities. These barriers are present in a form of a lack of information, financial scarcity, infrastructural inadequacies (e.g. no public transport to schools or lack of school dormitories) and a lack of career guidance at schools.

Higher education completion rates are somehow a different story and vary among these states, depending on enrolment success and barriers to completion of the study. A common trait is that many young people in South East Europe enrol to the higher education institutions in order to postpone their uncertain inclusion into the labour market. In this sense, education becomes 'a social category' and not a means of enhancing someone's capabilities and life prospects.

Countries of the South East Europe score relatively low in participation in non-formal education. Efforts in a field of non-formal education made by the European Commission, notably, the former Youth and Youth in Action programme, and currently Erasmus+ can be beneficial for social inclusion of young people. Still, their results in South East Europe must be reconsidered as they to a great extent serve young people in privileged situations. The critical point of difference between the aims of these programmes and their results in South East Europe relates to level of information for young people. Youth information centres in these countries are not geographically evenly spread and are very often placed only in large urban centres. It makes almost impossible for young people of disadvantaged background and/or from rural communities to access the information and to get engaged in some of these programmes.

Youth life quality chances and their prospects in accomplishing private and professional aspirations to a large extent depend on their **employment** position. This position consists of multiple components: possession of certain credentials and skills, a time period spent in search of a job, a type of job contract signed, engagement in atypical forms of work (shift work, work during weekend, temporary work and part-time work). Since the start of economic crisis in Europe in 2008 not only employment rates have decreased and unemployment rates increased, but the young people are more frequently engaged in atypical types of work, which makes their position more uncertain and life plans postponed. Number of young people in seriously difficult situation – the NEETs – is on rise and public measures call for their inclusion in education, training and on the labour market. The European Commission has recognised that an individually tailored approach is needed in order to effectively and successfully (re)integrate unemployed youth into the education or training system and the labour market. Individual approach is also important in a light of new group of NEETs – opportunity seekers, recognised in the Eurofound report *the Social Inclusion of Young People* (2015):

> "the 'least vulnerable' NEETs are the opportunity seekers coming from a more privileged background, as they voluntarily decide to remain outside the labour market and education system in order to hold out for opportunities, and the voluntary NEET who has decided to follow alternative trajectories and is constructively engaged in other non-formal activities" (p. 18).

Young people who belong to the NEET group and can be named as 'opportunity seekers' probably need different approach than the youth from disadvantaged background who have a history of exclusion or even marginalisation.

Strategic goals set by the Europe 2020 strategy aim at decreasing structural unemployment, acquiring new skills and developing highly trained labour force in order to match labour market supply and demand, with lifelong learning at the forefront of proposed guidelines. This aim reflects in establishing of [the Youth Employment Package](#) (2012) as an instrument for ensuring opportunities for young people. The Employment Package encompasses [the Youth Guarantee](#) (2013), [the European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#) (2013) and [the Quality Framework for Traineeships](#) (2014). The aims of the Youth Employment Package were backed up by [the Youth Employment Initiative](#) in 2013, when more detailed and tailor-made approach was proposed in order to accelerate measures of the previous strategies. Among the South East European countries only Croatia has been included in the Youth Employment Package, with some measures started in 2013.

Employment prospect and opportunity to earn is directly related to **living/housing**. The Youth Partnership study *Social inclusion and young people: breaking down the barriers* (2007) refers to a widespread strategy of staying longer in parental home that is employed by youth in South East Europe. Youth from South East Europe often stay in their parents' home until late thirties and do not establish independent living even if they start their own family, which has been even more pronounced since the start of economic crisis. An opposite strategy of staying in parental home – moving abroad – is more and more frequently employed strategy of young Europeans who face poor economic conditions and lack of access to jobs and adequate housing. Still, reallocation is not always a solution. Young people who emigrate often continue to face exclusion and poor socio-economic conditions as they are forced to do jobs under their educational level. This deteriorates their knowledge and skills and lowers their self-esteem, making them prone to further financial scarcity and to mental and health problems.

Health provision is one of the fundamental human rights, which is endangered in a situation of social exclusion or lack of economic resources. Countries of South East Europe provide basic health care to their citizens and it can be regarded as a good practice that is, like completion of primary and secondary education, a standard inherited from the socialist period. However, young people are vulnerable when it comes to health provision due to a lack of youth-friendly clinics (that are often placed only in large urban centres) and a lack of information and support to the youth in crisis. Nutrition and sexual health are especially fragile and young people may suffer from long-lasting consequences of malnutrition, obesity or untreated sexually transmitted infections. Another youth related concerns in the area of health care are mental health (especially depression and suicide risk) and addictive behaviours, where some data indicate decrease in age of depression sufferers and youth with addictions to alcohol or various substances.

A study *Finding a place in modern Europe* (2015) states that "**participation** is an essential element of citizenship in a democratic society and a democratic Europe. Meanwhile, participation is not an aim in itself, but an approach to becoming active citizens" (p. 71). Active citizenship has to be understood not only as political participation, but also as participation in civil society, culture and environmental activities. Contemporary youth have on disposal more diverse means of active citizenship than their parents, meaning they are users of information and communication technologies that can transform them from objects to subjects and creators of politics and policies.

3. A brief portrait of (disadvantaged) youth in South East Europe

The second half of year 2015 for the youth in South East Europe is marked by persistence of economic crisis, with youth unemployment rates exceeding 50% in some of observed countries, which means that at least more than half of young people in these countries are under a risk of social exclusion. *Information Template on Social Inclusion of Young People: Republic of Serbia* (2015: 3) provides a very good description of youth in vulnerable situation:

> " Young people facing poverty, young Roma, young disabled persons, young refugees and internally displaced persons, young returnees in the readmission process, vulnerable young

people in terms of gender, young parents, young people with unsolved housing issues, young people without parental care and young people from the street".

In order to understand position of young people in South East Europe and a degree of their vulnerability this section will present a range of research data. Data were selected on the basis of comparability and can be divided into two groups: I) data from publicly available databases (e.g. the World Bank and Eurostat) and II) data from national surveys conducted on representative samples of young people. The former are in all countries except in Montenegro and Serbia based on the Shell Youth Survey. Since 1953, the Shell company has been commissioning independent academics and institutes to carry out studies, which document the attitudes, opinions and expectations of young people. They have primarily been conducted in Germany, but the countries of the Council of Europe have also been included. The countries of the South East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia) have been part of the Shell study since 2011. The South East Europe Shell studies were coordinated and financed by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

No recent studies on Montenegrin youth were found available and we can only assume that youth results in Montenegro do not differ significantly to those of their peers in other presented countries. Similar has to be assumed for Serbian youth as the Shell survey was conducted in 2014 and the results are expected to be published soon. Also, national teams had a freedom to adapt a questionnaire to the national specificities, so most questions were answered by only a few countries encompassed by this survey.

The first data pointing to the status of young people in South East Europe is the Youth Development Index[2] (Table 1), which places Serbia on 55. position, Albania on 58., Croatia on 68., FYRoM on 83., Bosnia and Herzegovina on 99. and Montenegro on 151. position. Chart 1 with presentation of the GDP per capita in a five year period adds to understanding of a level of deprivation (and possible exclusion) of the youth in this region.
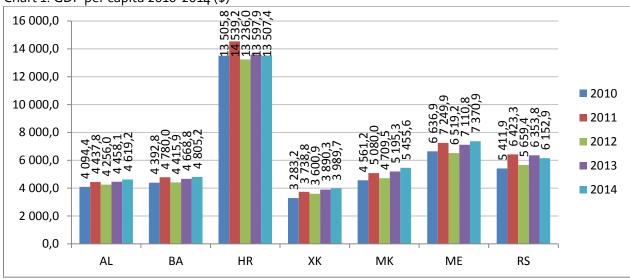
Chart 1: GDP per capita 2010-2014 ($)

*Source: World Bank: World Development Indicators

Chart 2 shows that the Albanian society is 'the youngest one' in observed countries, while Croatian and Serbian are the oldest and very close to the European average. It means that Albanian state and society have to be well aware of their potentials and needs of young people, who make up almost one third of a population. This statement does not downsize a need for improvement of youth social

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[2] It is a composite index based on 15 indicators under five key domains of education, health and wellbeing, employment, civic participation and political participation.

position and inclusion in other listed countries, especially in the light of increased emigration and depopulation that occurred with economic instability in all observed countries.
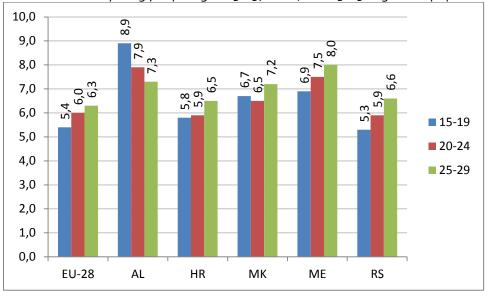
Chart 2: Share of young people aged 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29 in general population (%)[3]

Source: Eurostat [demo_pjanind]

Data on youth unemployment rate (Chart 3) vividly depicts a degree of social exclusion risk that threatens young people in this part of Europe.
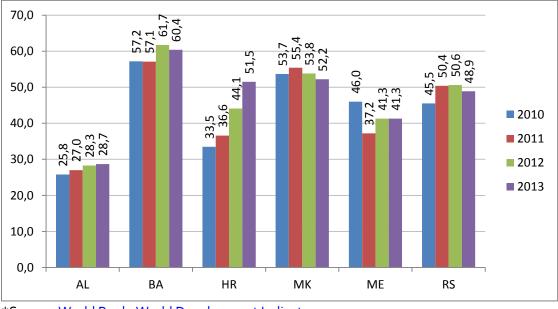
Chart 3: Unemployment rate of young people 2010-2013 (%)[4]

*Source: World Bank: World Development Indicators

While in most observed countries unemployment rate has been fluctuating in a four year period, Croatia, as the only EU-member state in this circle, notes a constant and very sharp rise of youth unemployment.

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[3] Data for Bosnia and Herzegovina were not available.
[4] Data for Kosovo were not available.

After showing some economic indicators we will present data gained by Shell national surveys, hoping to look at a profile of youth in South East Europe. The first in a range of Shell survey results regards a share of urban and rural youth (Chart 4), showing that the countries in this part of Europe have a significant proportion of young people residing in rural areas. Belonging to rural settlements in this part of Europe often contributes to exclusion due to inadequate infrastructure, resources and support. It is very strongly pronounced in distribution and organisation of youth centres as most of them are situated in or close to large urban centres. It leaves rural youth deprived of information, support and networking spots, which can lead to social exclusion and lower life prospects.
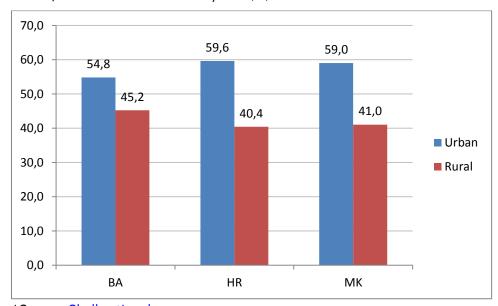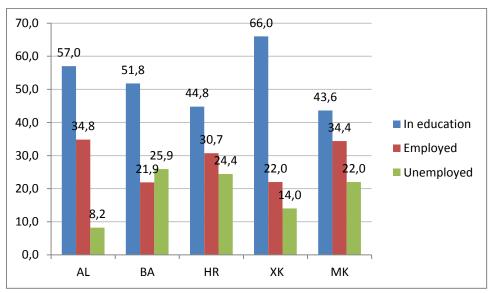
Chart 4: Share of urban and rural youth (%)[5]

*Source: Shell national surveys

Data on socio-professional status of youth (Chart 5) differ from data in publicly available databases (e.g. Eurostat) due to the sample age. Every country had a freedom to choose its own sample age range, respecting that the respondents are not younger than 12 and older than 27. On average sample age range in South East Europe was 14-27, which also means that young people in education were more represented than in standard calculations that take into consideration 15-29 years of age.

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[5]Albania and Kosovo study do not have clearly presented data on urban and rural population. Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.
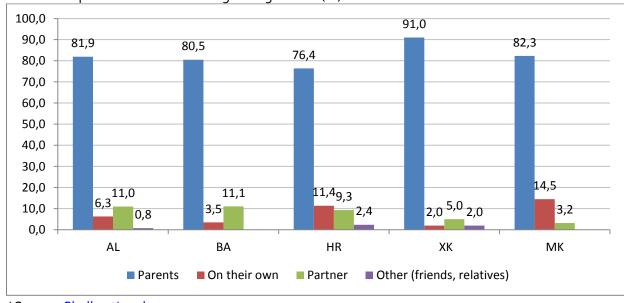
Chart 5: Socio-professional status of youth (%)[6]

*Source: Shell national surveys

Socio-professional status is often closely related to living arrangement of youth (Chart 6). As previously noted, youth in South East Europe traditionally stay longer in their parents' home, which is even more accentuated in times of financial crisis. Analysis of their responses about the reasons for living with parents brought no surprise; young people in this part of Europe mainly live with their parents due to the practical and financial reasons.

Chart 6: Proportion of different living arrangements (%)[7]
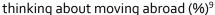

*Source: Shell national surveys

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[6] Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.
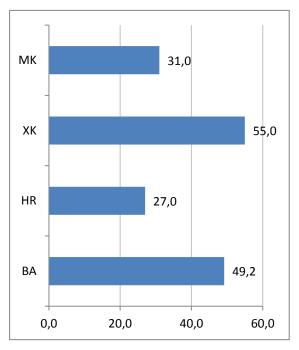[7] Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.

Willingness to move inside a country (Chart 7) and abroad (Chart 8) indicates Croatian youth as the least mobile, both in regard to in-country and emigration abroad. Asked about the main reasons for both relocation and emigration majority of young people in all observed countries listed reasons of economic nature: improvement of the standard of living and easier employment.

Chart 7: Young people willing to change a residence inside a country (%)[8] / Chart 8: Young people thinking about moving abroad (%)[9]

*Source: Shell national surveys

Researchers included in Shell national surveys recognised discrimination as one of the important issues, asking the youth what were the most frequent grounds of discrimination they had experienced. Table 2 shows the first five ranked grounds of discrimination experienced by the youth in five countries. The first five ranked grounds included economic status, political affiliation, residence, religion, ethnicity, gender, educational level and sexual orientation. It is interesting to note that economic status comes as the first or the second in all five countries, while sexual orientation is present only in one. It is a strong evidence of high importance of financial status for a beneficial social position.

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[8] Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.
[9] Preferences on moving abroad were not a part of the Albanian Shell survey. Data for Montenegro are not available as it has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.
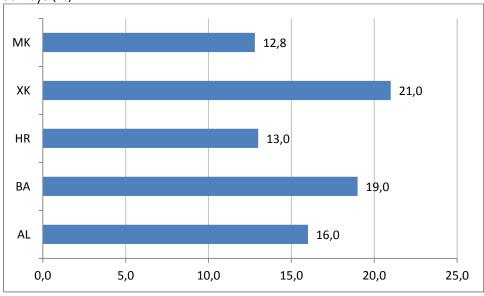
Table 2: Rank of the grounds of discrimination experienced by the youth (the first five ranked grounds)[10]

RANK	COUNTRIES				
	AL	BA	HR	XK	MK
1.	Political affiliation	Religion	Economic status	Gender	Political affiliation
2.	Economic status	Economic status	Religion	Economic status	Ethnicity
3.	Residence	Educational level	Ethnicity	Religion	Gender
4.	Ethnicity	Ethnicity	Political affiliation	Ethnicity	Residence
5.	Gender	Residence	Educational level	Educational level	Sexual orientation

*Source: Shell national surveys

In social sciences engagement in voluntary activities (Chart 9) often indicates a level of social capital and networking potential. The data shows that only in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina a share of young people who volunteered in past 12 months presents a relatively significant number and can be related to increased potential for social actions and participation.

Chart 9: Share of young people engaged in voluntary activities in past 12 months prior to the surveys (%)[11]

*Source: Shell national surveys

Chart 10, with data on shares of young people interested in different ranges of politics shows that only Kosovo reports somehow higher youth interest in politics.

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[10] Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.
[11] Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.
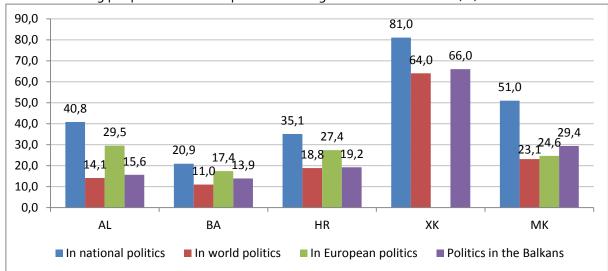
Chart 10: Young people interested in politics – strong or moderate interest (%)[12][13]

*Source: Shell national surveys

Institutions in which the youth in South East Europe places trust (Table 3) depict public sentiments towards institutional and civil framework and can be related to a level of social engagement and a sense of belonging. It is therefore interesting to note that in some countries an apparatus of state force (the police) goes hand in hand with religious institutions and that NGOs are not present at the first five positions in all four observed countries.

Table 3: Trust towards institutions – the first five ranked institutions[14]

RANK	COUNTRIES			
	BA	HR	XK	MK
1.	The police	The police	Religious leaders	NATO
2.	Religious institutions	Judiciary	The police	Judiciary
3.	Media	NGOs	Media	Army
4.	NGOs	Media	NGOs	The police
5.	Labour unions	Religious institutions	Judiciary	Banks

*Source: Shell national surveys

Answer to the question on personal inclination towards the EU accession (Chart 11) is another indicator that can help in identifying weak spots in national policy and promote certain value that could bring to more cohesion and trust towards the EU institutions. Bosnia and Herzegovina is certainly a country where more positive (political) experiences and economic upheaval are needed in order to increase trust into the idea of Europe.

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[12] Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.

[13] Kosovo youth were not offered 'European politics' as an option.

[14] A question on trust towards institutions was not a part of the Albanian study. Montenegro is not present as it has not been encompassed by the Shell survey, and Serbian study is expected to be published by the end of 2015.

Chart 11: Inclination towards joining the EU[15]

*Source: Shell national surveys

Croatia, as the only member country among the observed countries, had a field survey at the same time as it joined the EU. The responses of Croatian youth (Chart 12) to a question about (dis)approval of accession to the EU indicate there was a great proportion (one third) of young people who were completely indifferent toward the process, while only about 40% of young people gave a partial or full support. Here we can remember that at the Croatia's referendum on the EU accession turnout was only43%, which was the lowest score in a history of the European Union. It can explain why majority of young Croats do not support accession to the EU.
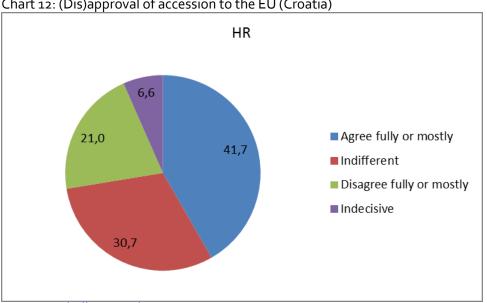
Chart 12: (Dis)approval of accession to the EU (Croatia)

*Source: Shell national surveys

Trust into institutions and support to transnational ideas, like the EU, partly result from recognition of major problems in the society (Table 4). Youth in all five countries placed unemployment and

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[15] A question on inclination towards joining the EU was present only in the questionnaires of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.

poverty as two most critical issues, followed by job insecurity and problems related to chronic diseases and environmental pollution.
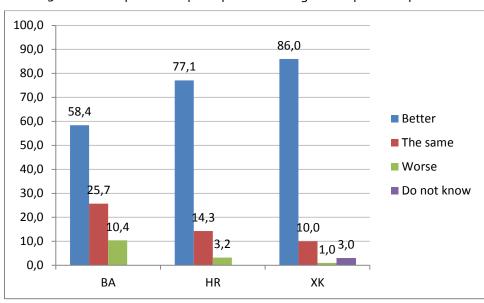
Table 4: The major problems in the society – the first five ranked problems[16]

RANK	AL	BA	HR	XK	MK
1.	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment
2.	Poverty	Poverty	Poverty	Poverty	Poverty
3.	Job insecurity	Job insecurity	Job insecurity	Kosovo territory	Increased incidence of chronic diseases
4.	Environmental pollution	Justice	Insufficient fight against corruption	Environmental pollution	Job insecurity
5.	Increased incidence of chronic diseases	Insufficient fight against corruption	Justice	Job insecurity	Environmental pollution

*Source: Shell national surveys

Perception of major problems in the society can influence a level of optimism placed in the future. The Shell survey researchers were interested in a level of personal optimism (Chart 13) and the results are interesting as Croatia and Kosovo can count on young people who see 'the light at the end of a tunnel'. At the same time, young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina urgently need some positive impetus in order to see some better prospects.

Chart 13: Personal optimism – perception of changes on a personal plan [17]

*Source: Shell national surveys

A brief profile of youth status and some attitudes can serve us as an indicator to the most burning issues in societies of the South East Europe. Youth issues are recognised to a bigger or lesser extent

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[16] Montenegro has not taken part in the Shell survey, and the study of Serbian youth is expected to be published by the end of 2015.
[17] A question on personal optimism was a part of the questionnaire only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo.

by national policies, although, as we will see, all observed countries do have a national youth policy framework and strategies directed at the improvement of youth status. These frameworks and strategies will be briefly presented in the following section.

4. Youth (inclusion) policy in South East Europe

Seven observed countries share a common tradition in youth policy development and implementation. After 1990 this tradition started to take on various forms, mostly in efforts to comply with the European policies. Seven countries have brought a number of governmental strategies regarding health, sport, education, career guidance, employment, economic development, sustainable development and human rights. However, due to economic instability of this region and political agendas that sometimes do not recognise youth as a priority young people are still facing many structural barriers to their social inclusion. These are mainly related to an inadequate distribution of youth centres and support structures targeting youth exclusively, a lack of vertical and horizontal coordination between different stakeholders and a lack of financial resources. Youth social welfare services are exercised in the field of social protection, protection of children and youth with disabilities, juvenile delinquency, protection of human rights, drug prevention and employment. The national employment centres have a long tradition of career counselling, but there is a evident lack of such support at the level of educational systems. Career guidance has been introduced in the national educational systems only recently and all South East European countries are still undergoing significant reforms in this field. Housing seems to be a weak point in the countries of concern as exact plans for decent housing for young people at risk of social exclusion does not exist. Instead, there are some housing and accommodation measures (e.g. for young people with disabilities and former users of foster homes) brought by the national laws on social welfare.

Countries of South East Europe employ different strategies and action plans in a field of youth policy, and the following section will briefly present main actors and policy documents in each country.

Albania

Albania, the first observed country, brought their *National Youth Strategy 2007-2013* in 2007. Currently 2014-2020 strategy is under development. The previous Youth Strategy has social protection and health as a joint unit, with no distinctive measures targeting social inclusion. The Ministry of Youth and Social Welfare has responsibility for youth affairs and focuses on the protection of constitutional rights, access to education, vocational training, employment, inclusion, participation and tolerance. In regard to specific measures targeting social inclusion, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is drafting some action plans on following vulnerable groups: Roma and Egyptians, LGBT persons and young people with disabilities.

The Albanian Youth Council (AYC) was established in 1994 to serve as a nation-wide platform representing the interests of national youth organisations towards the state. Also, we should mention Kosovar Youth Council, a youth non-governmental organisation established to activate young Kosovars to respond to their problems brought on by massive expulsion from their homes to Albania in 1999. In 2014 the Albanian Government approved the establishment of the National Youth Service as a budgetary structure under the Ministry responsible for the implementation of youth policies that will function through 12 Regional Youth Centres. Youth Regional Centres are planned to operate in every region of the country during the period 2014-2017 as units providing services to young people. Some efforts to improve communication in the youth sector have been

made by the Ministry of Social Welfare and by starting a portal Rini.al, which serves as an online communication space for youth organizations and young people.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina (2015) states that:

[...] Twenty years since Dayton Peace Agreement, the country still faces economic, social and political challenges. These challenges mostly relate to the difficulty of the society to find a common denominator for political and economic development of the country".
Bosnia and Herzegovina is a state constituted by two entities: Republic of Srpska (RS) and Federation of BiH (FBiH) which consists of 10 Cantons. There is also the self-governing district of Brčko. The FBiH has a youth law (2010) that outlines legal protections and provisions for youth rights, youth work and youth councils. The RS has a youth policy 2010-2015 focusing on employment, housing, education, society, information, youth work, leisure, participation and culture. Laws on Volunteering and Youth Organization also exist. Main governmental bodies responsible for youth policy are Federal Ministry for Culture and Sport, Federal Ministry of Education and Science, while in the RS the Department for Youth within the Ministry of Family, Youth & Sports has responsibility for youth. In 2004, the BiH Council of Ministers adopted the Decision establishing the 'Commission for Coordination of the Youth issues in BiH' (CCYI BiH), a standing body responsible of dealing with the problems of youth, which started its activities in 2006.

Croatia

The Department of Youth within the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth is responsible for youth in Croatia, previously belonging to the Ministry of Family, Veterans and Intergenerational Solidarity, the authors of the first national youth action programme in 2003. The deputy minister is also the deputy chair of the Youth Council of the Croatian Government, an interdepartmental advisory body on public policies for youth. It is comprised of 24 members, with 14 representing government departments, 7 from youth organisations and 3 from scientific and educational institutions.
The Ministry of Social Policy and Youth and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports are two main ministries in charge of youth in Croatia, while youth field has been regulated by *the National Plan for Youth 2014-2017*. The current *National Plan* has been brought by a widely consultative process, following a youth survey that served as a basis for evidence based policy. *The National Plan* recognizes following priorities: education, employment and entrepreneurship, social protection, health, active participation, culture, youth and the world and recommendations to the regional and local self-government. Croatia still does not have youth act or youth law, although the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth started consultative process in 2013.
Croatian Youth Network, an umbrella association of youth, takes part in consultative processes coordinated by the Ministry of youth since 2003.

Kosovo

The Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth (2009) outlines rights, responsibilities and obligations of governmental authorities and youth organisations. *The Youth Strategy 2013-2017 and the Action Plan 2013-2015* has a vision for young people: [...] to become active, healthy, educated citizens, who enjoy a good and qualitative life and prepare to face all challenges of life as responsible members of local, regional, European and world community. The Youth Department within the

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport has responsibility over youth affairs and policy in Kosovo. The department is mandated to implement *the Youth Strategy* and *Action Plan*, conduct analysis of the youth sector, develop programmes for identified groups of youth, coordinate with departments, municipalities and organisations to develop and implement policies, support the formation of clubs and associations for youth, encourage financial and other support for the youth sector, and provide information for youth about services and programs. The Kosovo Youth Network (KYN) is an independent body representing 127 youth organizations and youth centres throughout Kosovo. International organisations still present one of the major stakeholders in the youth field in Kosovo, including OSCE Kosovo helps KYN to develop the strategy for participation in decision-making.

Macedonia

The aim of Macedonia's *National Youth Strategy* (2005) is to "[…] improve general position and satisfy the needs and interests of the young people in the country". The strategy is valid for 19 years, and the Agency for Youth and Sports, as well as 'youth coordination of associations', are responsible for its implementation through actions plans. The National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM) is a nationwide youth umbrella organisation.
The National Steering Committee for implementation of *the National Youth Strategy*, that included representatives from both the government and the youth NGOs, was also established in 2005. However, the Policy Review states (2011: 16) there are 85 municipalities and only few of them have serious focus on youth, and support youth activities mainly by supporting youth information centres. In 2012 the Ministry for Labour and social care adopted the first action plan for employment of youth. Target group are 135.000 young people aged 15-29. Duration of the action plan is 2012-2015 and 27 million euros are located for implementation of the plan

Montenegro

Montenegro's *National Youth Action Plan* was adopted in 2006, initially for a five-year period. Montenegro's Directorate for Youth and Sports, an independent administrative body under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Sports, is responsible for youth affairs. The creation of the National Youth Council of Montenegro was initiated in October 2010, further supported in June 2011 and completed in 2012. National Youth Steering Committee is a co-management body consisted of members from NGO sector, ministries and other governmental institutions. The Committee was established by the Government, on 2 July 2007, in order to monitor, evaluate and advise for the improvement of National Youth Policy, and work on cross-sectoral cooperation.
The European Union's 2013 *Screening Report* states that "Montenegro's youth policy is already largely in line with the common objectives established at EU level" and that the planned "future adoption of the Law on youth is intended to lay a solid foundation for further developments in this field."

Serbia

Information Template on Social Inclusion of Young People: Republic of Serbia (2015: 3) states that: [...] according to the Survey on Income and Living Conditions, persons under the age of 18 are most at risk of poverty – 30,0%. For a group aged 18-24 the available data are for 2012 - 21,1% of them[18] are at risk of poverty. In this regard, *the National Youth Strategy* (2008) is, [...] the first step towards a

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[18] Publication *Monitoring the situation of social exclusion*, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit in cooperation with the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, August 2012 - http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/

systematic solution to the problem of youth status and... [supporting] young people in different spheres of social life, followed by *the Law on Youth* (2011). The strategy is supported by *the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2009-2014* and by the guidelines for implementation at the local level (2012). The Government of the Republic of Serbia has established the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit in 2009.

The Serbian Youth Umbrella Organisation (KOMS) is, [...] the highest representative body of the young people in Serbia whose mission is to represent the interests of young people by developing a partnership with the state, inter-agency and international cooperation, encouraging the active participation of young people and organizational development of its members.

5. Conclusions

When it comes to financial (in)stability and political consolidation, countries of South East Europe belong to one of the most vulnerable areas covered by the Council of Europe policy. Young citizens of these countries, faced with unstable prospects more and more often make a decision to leave the country in a search of better education and employment opportunities. It leaves the countries without valuable human resources and potential for recovery. While youth unemployment remains a clear emergency in the EU, evidence shows that many young Europeans are exposed to social exclusion much more broadly: in terms of access to education, access to housing, social and political participation. Therefore we can say that more attention is needed to the social exclusion of young people beyond the labour market. All national and supranational institutions have to ensure that all young people are considered as full members of society regardless of their age, class, cultural background, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, lifestyle, religious and political affiliations, residence and ethnicity, particularly Roma young people and their families.

Stakeholders at the national level have to be aware of a profound impact that social exclusion can leave on a young person. It can provoke a long-term harm to self-confidence, skills and knowledge acquisition and retaining, participation in decision making, financial stability and can marginalise a young person reducing their social networks. With an aim of assuring every young person's social inclusion, stakeholders on the governmental and non-governmental level have to encourage youth work, innovative methods, peer learning and outreach activities. These measures also have to be conceived in a way to include young person on a local level, in communities they belong to, as well as in a more global society. Local initiatives and social cohesion plans have to be developed in order to target young people in a vulnerable situation and to (re)integrate them in the local communities.

Especial attention should be paid to the young persons not in employment, education or training, as stated in *the Council conclusions on enhancing the social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training* (2013: 3), which call for wide action in providing safety nets to the young NEETs:

> "Prevention should be a priority in order to avoid increasing the number of young people getting into a NEET situation and to break the inter-generational cycle of social exclusion. A proactive approach involving family, early child educators, schools, especially secondary and vocational education, training and non-formal learning providers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), especially youth organisations, youth workers, parents and other stakeholders is needed to ensure early intervention to avoid young people getting into a NEET situation".

Furthermore, *the Council conclusions* reminds of a need to conceive personalised and flexible measures addressing young people in a NEET situation, with an aim to achieve sustainable positive outcomes in the long term in the labour market, as well as (re)integration into education or training and civic or social life.

A report on the Enter! project (2013: 49) emphasizes importance of monitoring and evaluation of the youth policy initiatives at the local, regional and national level. It also assumes that "partnerships with educational institutes, chambers of commerce, trade unions, health organisations and local authorities should allow youth workers and youth organisations to provide more holistic responses

to the problems faced by young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods". One more element crucial for efficient implementation of the youth policy actions should not be forgotten – financing. Youth policy initiatives very often come to an unhappy end due to cuts in public financing and last-minute changes of budgetary priorities. In this light, sustainability and continuity should be priorities in youth policy planning, as well as closer horizontal and vertical cooperation of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the youth field.