

Youth Partnership

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



CONTRIBUTION OF NON-PROGRAMME COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI CHAPTER IX: MONTENEGRO YOUTH WORK

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10.1 General context

Historical developments

The framework for contemporary youth work practice was established in the early 2000s although the strategic framework for youth policy (and indirectly youth work) was not adopted until 2006, when Montenegro gained its independence. Before that, the country was part of the Republic of Yugoslavia, which had a well-structured system of youth services established at the national and local level that helped to form the basis for the development of youth work in the post-transitional Montenegrin society. International organisations played an important role in re-establishing community youth work in the country, as mentioned in [“History of Youth Work in Montenegro”](#).

One of the most important of these was certainly the PRONI Institute for Social Education, which actively supported youth work development in areas badly affected by the conflict in South-East Europe (SEE) during the 1990s. Unlike other countries of the former Yugoslavia, Montenegro was fortunately not affected by the war directly, so the consequences of the conflict were less visible. On the other hand, as a multiconfessional and multi-ethnic society, Montenegro represented a fertile ground for the development of PRONI programmes, especially in the central and southern regions of the country. The PRONI model of social education comprised practical youth work, community development and reconciliation in conflict areas in the Western Balkans. The model consisted of four components, which were interrelated and were applied simultaneously:

- preparation through seminars aimed at introducing ideas of youth work and motivating for the education of youth workers;
- education of youth workers;
- start of youth activities and development of the organisation for youth work (as a basic element of the education, students organise activities for young people);
- legitimisation of youth service in the society on the municipal, regional and national levels (the aim is that the society should assume overall responsibility for the youth service) (SIDA 2003).¹

Reaching out to national ministries to offer counselling on various issues were also a part of the PRONI initiative. The PRONI Institute was represented on a Task Force on Education and Youth within the framework of the Stability Pact and the Council of Europe, which works on the national governmental level. This task force supported, among others, the formulation of national youth policies in the countries of SEE, including the development of the first National Youth Action Plan in Montenegro (NYAP 2006-2011).

The PRONI model was also dedicated to establishing legitimacy for youth activities in the society and to make such activities a matter for the authorities on all levels: local, municipal, county and national. This implied the promotion of understanding of the role of youth work among decision makers and preparedness to give concrete support. Nevertheless, in the framework of the NYAP (2006-2011), there was no explicit definition of youth work. It was mentioned only as one of the measures to gain better

1. SIDA (2003), Support to the PRONI Institute for Social Education projects in the Balkans – Evaluation, Department for Central and Eastern Europe, Stockholm.

youth participation. However, in July 2016 the Parliament of Montenegro adopted the first Law on Youth and in line with the first law, the Government of Montenegro adopted the National Youth Strategy 2017-2021 in September 2016 ensuring more efficient implementation of youth policy. The new Law on Youth was adopted on 4 April 2019 (Official Gazette of Montenegro Nos. 25/19 and 027/19) and both – the Law on Youth and the Youth Strategy – define youth work for the first time.

National definition or understanding of youth work

Youth work in Montenegro was defined, for the first time, in the framework of the first Law on Youth (2016, Article 5)² and the Youth Strategy 2017-2021,³ as “activities that are organised with youth and for youth, and are based on non-formal education, in accordance with their needs and possibilities”. However, the definition of youth work prescribed by the new Law on Youth (2019, Article 4)⁴ was more harmonised with the international standards in this field, defining youth work as “activities that are implemented in co-operation with youth and for the youth with a goal of helping them reach independence and transition to adulthood, educational, personal and social development, in line with their needs and abilities, which are based on the methods of non-formal education”.

The National Youth Strategy (2016) describes the role of youth work, that is to provide support to young people during a specific development period of becoming autonomous and their transition to adulthood, as well as to assist their personal and social development, and contribute to fulfilment of their potential, so that young people’s voices can be heard and they can have an influence and have their place within communities/society. Starting to live on their own has become extremely difficult for young people and they are quite often forced to start their families in multigenerational and quite frequently inadequate residential communities. Young people should be provided with direct support from institutions of the system through concrete and evenly available measures and incentives, which would enable them to start living independently and autonomously.

The strategy furthermore elaborates modalities of youth work implementation by stating that youth work is being implemented within extracurricular activities, within youth clubs, centres, institutions, schools, etc., and contributes to the development of young people into aware, responsible and active members of society, who contribute to the development of the community, show initiative and respect diversity. In close collaboration with the families and other professionals, youth work assists in efforts invested in decreasing youth unemployment, dropping out of school, social exclusion and structured leisure time. In order to fill the gap in the system of support for the development of young people and their transition to adulthood, it is highly important to recognise and professionalise youth work itself.

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

2. The Law on Youth, Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 42/16 of 11 July 2016).

3. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Sports and Youth, United Nations in Montenegro (2016), Youth Strategy 2017-2021, Podgorica (Ministarstvo prosvjete, Ministarstvo sporta, Ujedinjene nacije u Crnoj Gori, Strategija za mlade 2017-2021, Podgorica), available at www.un.org.me/Library/YouthEmpowerment/1a%20Youth%20Strategy%202017-2021.pdf.

4. The Law on Youth, Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 025/19 of 30 April 2019 and Revision of the Law on Youth No. 027/19 of 17 May 2019 (Zakon o mladima, “Službeni list Crne Gore, broj No. 025/19 od 30.04.2019”, i Ispravka zakona o mladima br. 027/19 od 17.05.2019).

Governance

Article 5 of the Law on Youth prescribes what is considered to be the public interest in the field of youth policy. According to this article, *inter alia*, the creation and improvement of conditions for the work of youth services is considered to be a public interest in this area.

Article 21 stipulates that youth services (that is, youth clubs and youth centres) are formed for the implementation of youth activities and youth work. “Youth club” (Article 22) is defined as a space adapted to the needs of young people in order to implement youth activities (office, etc.), while “youth centre” (Article 23) represents an equipped, multifunctional space designed to meet the needs of young people that is used to conduct youth activities and youth work. Regarding the establishment of youth services, the Ministry of Sports and Youth and the related municipalities provide conditions for the work of youth services within its competencies and possibilities (Article 24). The space for youth service is provided by the administrative body in charge of property affairs or municipalities at the request of the ministry. Exceptionally, the space for youth service can be provided by the ministry through a public call.

The ministry may fund or co-fund a construction, reconstruction, adaptation or furnishing of a youth service up to the amount of €30 000 (Article 25). Additionally, the ministry may, by previously obtained agreement of the government, fund or co-fund a construction, reconstruction, adaptation or furnishing of a youth service in an amount higher than €30 000. Correspondingly, in 2019 and 2020, in very close co-operation between the ministry and the local self-governments, 11 youth services were opened in 2019/2020 in 11 municipalities, adapted and designed to meet the needs of youth, especially taking into account the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Sports and Youth has allocated close to €236 000 for the reconstruction and adaptation of 11 youth services in Montenegro – Mojkovac, Plav, Petnjica, Danilovgrad, Nikšić, Šavnik, an adapted Youth Centre in Podgorica, Cetinje, Bar, Kotor and Plevlja. Besides the above-mentioned, youth clubs exist and are supported by the ministry in Berane, Tivat, Budva, Tuzi and Ulcinj.

Performance of administrative and technical work needed for regular functioning of youth services, as well as assignment of services for use of other subjects, shall be done by the ministry or the municipality (Article 26). According to the Rulebook on the method of functioning youth services and the performance of the administrative and technical jobs needed for their functioning (Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 009/20) adopted in accordance with the Law on Youth, the ministry performs administrative and technical tasks necessary for the regular functioning of youth services by engaging young persons (youth services administrators) through the public call. Youth services administrators were elected in the above-mentioned 11 youth services and engaged by the ministry according to the procedure.

Article 15 of the Law on Youth stipulates that the government, at the proposal of the ministry, adopts the Programme of Realisation of Public Interest in the Field of Youth Policy⁵ at least once every two

5. Montenegro Ministry of Sports and Youth PROGRAMME FOR REALISATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH POLICY FOR 2020 (Crna Gora Ministarstvo sporta i mladih, PROGRAM OSTVARIVANJA JAVNOG INTERESA U

years, which is implemented by the ministry. The first document of this type (2020) defines, among other things, specific goals and measures, in relation to each of the areas of public interest in the field of youth policy, including creation and improvement of conditions for the work of youth services. Some of the measures are focused on encouragement of young people to get involved in the work of youth services, and on strengthening the administrative capacity of young people who manage the service. However, measure 3.4 of the programme prescribes the obligation of the ministry, in co-operation with other relevant youth policy subjects, to strengthen the capacities of youth service administrators. In very close co-operation with the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) through the Western Balkan Youth Lab programme as well as with the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, the Ministry of Sports and Youth efficiently implements capacity-building trainings aimed at increasing capacities of youth services administrators and their networking with other relevant youth policy actors. These capacity-building trainings for youth services administrators strongly contribute to fulfilling normative and strategic priorities in the field of efficient implementation of sustainable functioning of the youth services.

Cross-sectoral co-operation

The Youth Strategy 2017-2021 clearly positions youth as a matter of interest to Montenegro and through a holistic approach it envisages, not only intersectoral co-operation (explained in other sections of this document) but also interministerial co-operation of youth policy actors. Therefore, the Ministry of Sports and Youth has established an interministerial co-ordinating body for monitoring the Youth Strategy 2017-2021, whose task is to monitor the key outcomes and the activities of the strategy, discuss the adoption of action plans, inform them about the implemented activities, propose possible intersectoral projects, give opinions and recommendations when drafting strategic documents in the field of youth policy and follow the recommendations of international bodies in this field. This approach enables better implementation of youth policy, better planning of youth activities and, with the joint effort of all relevant stakeholders, it will help in improving the position of young people in Montenegro. Therefore, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, with the support of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, traditionally organises an annual two-day seminar gathering all relevant institutions, youth NGOs, international organisations, young people and other youth policy actors, with the aim of drafting an action plan for the following period of the National Youth Strategy implementation, ensuring in that way a wide and transparent consultation process.

10.3 Support for youth work

Policy/legal framework

See 10.1 and 10.2.

Funding

According to Article 25 of the Law on Youth, the ministry may fund or co-fund a construction, reconstruction, adaptation or furnishing of a youth service up to the amount of €30 000. Additionally, the ministry may, with previously obtained agreement of the government, fund or co-fund a

construction, reconstruction, adaptation or furnishing of a youth service in an amount higher than €30 000. Funds for the implementation of the programme (and measures relating to development of youth services), pursuant to Article 27 of the Law on Youth, are provided from the budget of Montenegro. The programme identifies entities for the implementation of specific measures, and depending on the type of entity, funds from the budget are allocated through a public call or in accordance with budget procedures. In accordance with the Law on Youth 2016 and Law on Non-Governmental Organisations, in 2018, 2019 and 2020 the Government of Montenegro/Ministry of Sports and Youth have allocated more than €800 000 for youth projects, which is triple the amount allocated in 2017. Through the open calls for youth organisations/NGOs that implement youth policy, approximately 150 projects for young people were supported, where over 20 000 young people were directly involved with the projects. Also, very important international funding sources for youth work in Montenegro are Erasmus+ and the European Youth Foundation, thus numerous NGOs in Montenegro use those sources to apply for funds.

Co-operation

See 10.2.

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Quality assurance

A quality assurance system for youth work currently does not exist in Montenegro. However, along with adoption of the new youth strategy,⁶ the UN System developed guidelines⁷ for establishment and management of youth centres and youth clubs in 2017, in co-operation with the Government of Montenegro. The quality criteria presented in these guidelines reflect both a necessity and a minimum, but also an aspiration to achieve the quality that every youth club/centre should strive for. The following criteria have been developed on the basis of the Quality Label for the Council of Europe Youth Centre: The youth club/centre should, as a primary mission, aim to serve the youth and the youth sector; to promote co-operation, including international co-operation in the youth sector; to have a clear status and support of the municipality; to have professional staff who can ensure the quality of youth work in the youth club/centre; to have adequate space to accommodate; to provide and create a safe atmosphere and respect for diversity and human dignity; to contribute to the development of the quality of youth work; to ensure the involvement of young people and youth organisations in the development of youth club/centre concepts and programmes.

Research and evidence supporting youth work

There is no systematic way of documenting, monitoring and evaluating youth work in Montenegro. Besides, not many studies or research on youth work have been done in the country (apart from regular data collection supporting youth policy development and implementation of the national youth

6. www.strategijazamlade.me.

7. UN Sistem i Vlada Crne Gore (2017), Smjernice za otvaranje i vođenje omladinskih klubova i omladinskih centara, available at www.un.org.me/Library/Youth-Empowerment/Smjernice%20za%20otvaranje%20i%20vo%C4%91enje%20omladinskih%20klubova%20i%20omladinskih%20centara%20-%202017.pdf.

strategy). However, considering the fact that youth work is based on the needs, rights and interests of young people, NGOs working with youth are engaged in providing a sound knowledge base for their activities and projects. Youth research is usually carried out in collaboration with organisations, institutions and agencies that can help in both identifying the needs and problems of young people, and finding adequate solutions.

Participative youth work

There is no record on how national authorities foster the participation of young people in the design of youth work programmes and initiatives, in particular. Consultations with young people on overall youth policy development (described in Chapter 1, Youth Policy Governance) apply to this area as well. In other words, there are no forms of consultation specific to youth work policy.

“Smart” youth work: youth work in the digital world

There is no record of smart youth work policy or practice at the country level. During the Covid-19 pandemic, NGOs have been encouraged to improve their digital skills and take part in the European open online courses (e.g. MOOC on The Essentials of Youth Work of the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership) or seminars (e.g. SALTO YOUTH seminar on digital tools in youth work).

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

The definition of youth worker is not given in the Law on Youth in Montenegro, although the Youth Strategy 2017-2021 provides a detailed explanation of the scope and role of youth work (see 10.1).

Education, training and skills recognition

The education of youth workers within the PRONI model took place from 2002 to 2007 and on different levels under a contract training programme provided by Jönköping University.

The first stage was a basic course, leading to a certificate in Leadership and Developmental Youth Work (Level A, 30 ECTS, European Credit Transfer System) from Jönköping University. This course was designed to be one year of part-time studies. The aim was to produce youth workers able to operate in areas of conflict, and to make young people of different nationalities meet and become reconciled. In the course document it was stressed that the tool of the professional youth worker is social education, which means that youth work is seen as a situation of learning. In different activities, the youth worker will emphasise dialogue to promote skills and values. Self-knowledge is another element in the education. In the residentials, students from different towns met to work together with reconciliation. Besides, the university programme aimed to educate and train professionals working with children and young people to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for individual and group work with young people on personal and social development, self-confidence, development of values and attitudes, communication, work on conflicts and active participation in building and development of the society.

The second stage (Level B, 30 ECTS) was also designed as a one-year, part-time training. The students received a certificate in Leadership and Developmental Youth Work, Level B, from Jönköping University. The focus of this education was preparation of youth workers as trainers of other voluntary youth

workers in conflict-ridden areas. The aim was to further develop skills and knowledge from the first level. The youth workers as trainers worked in the context of social education, which implies practice in facilitating and supporting young people to grow. Another element stressed in this course was conflict transformation, understood as bringing people together to challenge their prejudices and stereotypical attitudes. As a third stage, a Level B+ course was designed (five Swedish credits). The aim was to recruit local people as future trainers of youth workers. The participants were trained in lecturing and practise as mentors for students in Level B courses in group work and practical work.

The NGO Forum MNE,⁸ with the support of Forum Syd Balkan Programme, made an effort to localise this university programme in 2007 and to start its implementation in co-operation with the University of Montenegro. Initially, the education of youth workers was an extra-curricular programme implemented at the Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić (during the academic years 2007/08 and 2008/09) based on agreement between two universities (Jönköping and Montenegro), and soon after that between two faculties (Högskolan för Lärande och Kommunikation and the Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić), with the financial support of SIDA (Swedish International Development and Co-operation Agency).

The PRONI MODEL also aimed to motivate and educate teachers to conduct training of youth workers. The idea was to make this education a regular part of university education. Another aim was to stimulate the universities to work with youth issues through research work, in order to get a basis of knowledge about the situation of young people. The Bureau for Education Services and the Ministry of Education accredited this programme as a part of the professional training of teachers and the programme was included in the catalogue of professional training programmes for teachers for 2007 and 2008. Overall, 15 teachers finished level A of the training programme for youth workers in the community.

In addition, the Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić (University of Montenegro) and the NGO Forum MNE were working on establishing a Master's in Community Youth Work, within the framework of the TEMPUS IV project Introduction and Implementation of Academic Programme in Community Youth Work (CYW) through Enhancing Inter-regional Co-operation in the Countries of the Western Balkans. The memorandum of understanding on the TEMPUS IV project was signed by the former Directorate for Youth and Sports (now Ministry of Sports) and the project was implemented by Forum MNE and the Faculty of Philosophy. Even though the whole documentation for MA studies was developed and sent to the university, the programme was not accredited. Unfortunately, due to lack of interest from the university the project was finalised without the result.

Youth Activist Programme⁹

The NGO Forum MNE was the first organisation in Montenegro to conduct a licensed Youth Activist Vocational Programme (see 10.6). The curriculum for this training programme was adopted by the CVET

8. www.forum-mne.com/en/home/.

9. www.forum-mne.com/en/programmes/youth-work/.

and the National Education Council in 2017¹⁰ and it was financed by the Ministry of Sports/Directorate for Youth. The first generation of Youth Activists (15 participants) started in September 2017. Until 2020, there were seven generations of youth activists trained but only two by official CVET (Centre for Vocational Education and Training) curricula. In 2017 and 2019 there were two generations of youth activists trained by the official curriculum. The first examination was organised in November 2019 and 14 youth activists successfully finished the course after completing three modules of the training, three essays on relevant topics and 10 workshops implemented involving young people. At the final examination, participants had a written examination and practice which was evaluated by the examiners.

The programme consists of three trainings and three months of practice together with three exams, after which all the participants gain the Youth Activist occupation certificate.¹¹ This initiative was important in order to contribute to the professionalisation of youth work, and to give an opportunity to young people who do not have university education to deal with community youth work in a responsible and professional manner.

Forum MNE also offers training on setting up and running youth clubs, whereby future youth workers and activists, who will work in the club, are getting acquainted with the basic principles of youth work, as well as with the recommended standards and procedures in the management of youth clubs.

Mobility of youth workers

There is no record of youth worker mobility in the country.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

There is no occupational standard for youth work in Montenegro, since it is not a recognised profession by the Montenegrin Qualifications Framework. However, the vocation of Youth Activist (equivalent to Youth Leader at the European level) was accredited by the Ministry of Education in March 2017.

In co-operation with the Centre for Vocational Education (Ministry of Education),¹² the NGO Forum MNE¹³ has been working on the process of recognition of this vocation for three years. Recognition of this vocation should contribute to the professionalisation of youth work and enhance youth services at both national and local level.

Skills

10. See <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/hr/content/novi-programi-obrazovanja>.

11. More information is available upon request at montenegro@forum-mne.com.

12. Centar za strucno obrazovanje, Ministarstvo prosvjete, available at <https://cso.gov.me/centar>.

13. www.forum-mne.com/en/home/.

The professional competences of the youth activists¹⁴ recognised in the vocational standard are as follows:

- ensures quality in accordance with the standards in youth work;
- organises youth exchanges, festivals, events, campaigns, youth education camps, educational and entertainment programmes and leading info centres;
- designs and creates project proposals in line with international recommendations and charters on the participation of young people in accordance with the needs of the communities in which they work;
- provides support initiatives for young people and children;
- detects, directs and uses leadership potential in themselves and other young people and supports participation in their communities;
- ensures the protection of health and environment.

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

Information providers

There is no youth information system in place at the country level and therefore all relevant information, including those relating to youth services (youth clubs and youth centres) are disseminated either by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, or by local self-governments (youth offices), and NGOs (e.g. mladi!nfo Montenegro)¹⁵ or the international organisations (e.g. OSCE, UN).

Key initiatives

In close partnership with the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, the Ministry of Sports and Youth will conduct capacity-building training for youth services administrators engaged by the ministry as a follow-up of the training conducted in September with the support of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC). With the support of the RCC, the Western Balkan Youth Lab Programme was conducted in September 27-30 2020, with 25 participants. It was a three-day capacity-building training for strengthening the capacities of youth services administrators engaged by the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Thanks to the continuous support of international organisations, the OSCE Mission to Montenegro as well as very successful beginning of co-operation with RCC, it is expected that capacity-building trainings and programmes for youth services administrators and their networking with all relevant youth policy actors at national and local level will be developed and implemented continuously by the Ministry of Sports and Youth as well as by other relevant institutions in this field.

Ongoing debates

14. Basic guidance of the Youth activists programme is provided in following publication: www.forum-mne.com/mdocs-posts/omladinski-aktivisti-prirucnik.

15. <https://mladiinfo.me/biografija/>.

With the support of the RCC, the Western Balkan Youth Lab Programme was conducted in September 27-30 2020, with 25 participants. It was a three-day capacity-building training for strengthening the capacities of youth services administrators engaged by the Ministry of Sports and Youth. The capacities of youth services' administrators have been strengthened to efficiently manage and perform administrative duties in youth services, in very close co-operation with the Ministry of Sports and Youth and local self-governments. In the meantime, the work and functioning of youth services have been improved. Youth services administrators increased their capacity to access their rights and advocate for joint local initiatives in co-operation with local self-governments and other relevant local actors. Youth services administrators are educated on how to efficiently perform duties and tasks relating to the functioning of youth services, especially focusing on persons with disability human rights' protection based on highly promoted principles of anti-discrimination and social inclusion/cohesion. Key youth actors, including the Ministry of Sports and Youth, local self-governments, partner youth NGOs and youth services administrators are networked and the interest of young people to participate in creating and implementing youth activities in youth services has been increased.