

Youth Partnership

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and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI

CHAPTER VII: MONTENEGRO HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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7.1. General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

Young people see the promotion of healthy lifestyles as one of the most important areas of youth policy, as indicated by the results of the [Analysis of needs of young people](#) conducted by the Ministry of Sports and Youth and Centre for Democracy and Human Rights in June 2020. This is consistent with the legal framework as the [Law on youth](#) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 of 30 April 2019 and 4 027/191 of 17 May 2019) prescribes that it is a public interest in the field of youth policy to promote healthy lifestyles among youth.

In line with that, data on youth health are collected through different research and data collection mechanisms, both through participation in international research studies and studies conducted by the [Institute for Public Health](#) and other actors. The [National Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) recognises that it is especially important that the health condition of young people be monitored in all segments, following international indicators.

Insights into significant trends concerning the health risk behaviours of young people have been gathered via participation in the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs ([ESPAD](#)) on substance use among 15-16-year-old students in the period from 2008 to 2019. The results show that, in the period from 2008 to 2019, there was a slight increase in tobacco smoking among adolescents (last-30-day), from 7% in 2008 to 10% in 2019. Increasing rates from the 2008 prevalence of lifetime use of cannabis (from 3% in 2008 to 9% in 2019) and the prevalence of lifetime use of illicit drugs other than cannabis (from 3% in 2008 to 5% in 2019) were also observed. Prevalence of current (last-30-day) use of alcohol showed a continuous increase from 32% in 2008 to 38% in 2019. Moreover, adolescents perceived that the risk of tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption was lower than it is. Close to 50% of students believe that the risk in occasional smoking is small. Similarly, 42% of them believe that drinking one or two drinks every day is only slightly risky.

The ESPAD study also revealed that gambling has become popular among adolescents. Almost every third student had gambled for money in the previous 12 months and 35% of them engaged in excessive gambling activity, which is the highest percentage registered among countries that have participated in the survey.

When it comes to reproductive health, a recent research study indicates that the level of awareness of the importance of contraception among young people is low – more than half of the respondents did not use contraception, or only used it sometimes ([Youth Study 2018/19](#)). According to the data from the same study, in total, 13.9% of young people said they did not know much about contraception.

Youth mental health has recently been recognised as an important topic. A survey concerning

the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the needs of young people conducted in the period April-May 2020 ([Izveštaj o brzoi proceni socijalnog uticaja epidemije COVID-19 u Crnoj Gori](#)) showed that young people believe that paying attention to mental health is essential (26% young people surveyed in June 2020 said that this was a priority) but that they lack access to sufficient psychological support.

Main concepts

The [Institute for Public Health](#) defines health following the World Health Organization definition as a state of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. A similar definition is applied in the education materials used for teaching the subject “[healthy lifestyles](#)” in the secondary education curriculum, where health is defined as physical, mental, social and economic well-being.

A healthcare system is defined by the Law on health protection ([Zakon o zdravstvenoj zaštiti](#)) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 03/2016, 39/2016, 2/2017, 44/2018, 24/2019, 82/2020 and 8/2021) as an organised and comprehensive activity of society to achieve the highest possible level of maintaining the health of citizens. It is a set of measures and activities to maintain, protect and improve the health of citizens, prevent and combat disease and injury, for early detection of disease and timely treatment and rehabilitation.

7.2. Administration and governance

Governance

The main governmental actors responsible for policy making concerning youth health and well-being include the [Ministry of Health](#), the [Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports](#) and the [Directorate of Sport and Youth](#).

The Ministry of Health has responsibilities related to creating health policy, preparing and monitoring relevant regulations, monitoring and analysing the most important indicators of the health status of the population, strategic planning of the healthcare system and organising healthcare for particularly sensitive and vulnerable population groups, including young people.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports is responsible for preparing drafts of laws and other regulations concerning sports and youth, for encouraging the development of sport and for creating and improving youth policy.

The Directorate of Sport and Youth’s duties include fostering and promoting the development of sports among students and raising awareness on the importance of playing sports at school age for health; creating and developing youth policies and preparing strategies, action plans and programmes for youth.

The Institute for Public Health also has responsibilities in the area of youth health – its tasks include monitoring, assessment and analysis of the health status of the population, monitoring

and analysing the achievement of health policy aims, planning and implementing measures for health improvement of citizens, and creating and implementing programmes and educational activities for the promotion of health.

Civil society organisations have the role of initiating policy measures regarding youth health and well-being and taking part in their implementation.

According to the [Law on youth](#) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, nos. 025/19 of 30 April 2019 and 4 027/191 of 17 May 2019), municipalities adopt a local youth action plan, which contains measures and activities of youth policy at the local level, to meet the interests and needs of young people. These action plans should be harmonised with the [Youth Strategy](#), which includes measures related to youth health and well-being.

Youth health policy is implemented by institutions and organisations that are responsible for the provision of health services outlined by the policies. Healthcare is provided at three levels: primary (health care centres), secondary (general and special hospitals) and tertiary (Clinical Centre of Montenegro). The promotion of healthy lifestyles and preventive healthcare for youth is organised through health centres in municipalities.

Cross-sectoral co-operation

The Directorate of Sport and Youth co-operates with the Ministry of Health and Institute for Public Health to achieve goals set by the National Youth Strategy and other strategies related to youth health. Non-governmental organisations also have a role in implementing measures for promoting healthy lifestyles among youth.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

In Montenegro, there is no specific strategy that only applies to the sport, fitness and physical activity of young people. However, there are currently two national strategies that include measures for promoting the role of sport for young people and encouraging youth physical activity: the National Youth Strategy 2017-2021 and the Sports Development Strategy 2018-2021 (more information on forthcoming policy developments are provided in Chapter 7.8).

The [National Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) (*Strategija za mlade 2017-2021*), adopted by the Government of Montenegro in September 2016, recognises that inadequate attention is being paid to the physical activity of youth. The strategy emphasises the importance of youth participation in sports activities through one of the key expected outcomes: “young people have good health, they are safe, have access to an adequate support system for transition to adulthood and self-realization, they are self-aware, innovative, showing initiative and accept diversity.” One of the measures for achieving this outcome is “supporting the development of young people’s psychological and physical health”.

Action plans for the implementation of the strategy were adopted and implemented for 2017, 2018 and 2019. At the time of writing this document, the two-year [Action Plan 2020-2021](#) for the implementation of the strategy is in force. Within this action plan, one of the planned activities is “affirming youth sport”. Implementation of this activity is planned to be monitored by the following indicators: “number of competitions held”, “number of young people participating in the competitions” and “number of built or reconstructed objects”.

Monitoring of the implementation of the youth strategy was conducted in the period 2017-2019. The main results in this area include support for development, reconstruction and adaptation of the sporting infrastructure in more than ten municipalities.

[The Sports Development Strategy 2018-2021](#) (*Strategija razvoja sporta u Crnoj Gori za period 2018-2021*), adopted in 2018, states one of its main objectives to be encouraging students to engage with sporting activities. The main activities planned to achieve this objective include informing students about the importance of engaging in sporting activities, providing support to national sporting associations that deal with students’ sports and enabling conditions for students to engage with sport and participate in competitions. One of the main principles of the Sports Development Strategy is related to providing support to young sportsmen and sportswomen who have achieved great results.

The monitoring of the implementation of the strategy was carried out in 2020. The results indicate that 12 out of 14 planned activities were carried out in 2020. The main results outlined in the [Report on Implementation of the Sports Development Strategy in 2020](#) directly concerning youth are related to financing reconstruction, adaptation and providing equipment for existing sports facilities and marking the European Week of Sport.

Until 2020, the Ministry of Sports and Youth was responsible for the implementation, co-ordination and monitoring of the National Youth Strategy and the Sports Development Strategy. In 2020, based on the Decree on the State Administration’s Organisation and Manner of Work ([Uredba o organizaciji i načinu rada državne uprave](#)) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 118/2020, 121/2020, 1/2021 and 2/2021) the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and the Directorate of Sport and Youth took over the responsibilities in the area of youth policy.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

There are various programmes, projects and initiatives promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people. The European Week of Sports has been carried out four times in Montenegro, starting in 2017. In 2020, 37 sports events aimed at the promotion of physical activity and healthy lifestyles were organised throughout Montenegro. Along with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, which was the national co-ordinator, local governments, national sports federations and sports clubs took part in the organisation of events ([Report on Implementation of the Sports Development Strategy in 2020](#)). In schools throughout

Montenegro, various sports events were held in the form of running races, handball tournaments, basketball, indoor soccer, volleyball and other sports activities.

There are also different projects and initiatives conducted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people, financially supported through public calls. For instance, in 2017, the Ministry of Sports supported the project Live Healthy, Walk Straight (*Živi zdravo, koračaj uspravno*) by the Association for Support of People with Disabilities through which a gym was provided with sports equipment for young people with disabilities so that they could exercise with their peers. Also, visits of young sportsmen and sportswomen to support them were organised. Recently, in 2020 a project called Be Healthy and Change Your Attitude (*Budi zdrav, promjeni stav*) was carried out by the [Scout Association of Montenegro](#), supported through the state budget, aiming to empower young people to have a healthy diet and get regular exercise. Through this project, a survey among young people about their physical activities was done and a mobile application was created through which young people could more easily choose a place for physical activity in their vicinity (including hiking trails, outdoor gyms, bike paths and other sports facilities) and receive recommendations for exercises.

Monitoring and evaluation of the projects are carried out by ministries supporting the projects. Information about the results of the projects is available in the reports on the implementation of the Youth Strategy and Sports Development Strategy.

Physical education in schools

Physical education is a compulsory subject in all secondary schools, in both general and vocational education. The number of required physical education classes varies slightly by grade. However, in all secondary school grades, students attend two compulsory physical education classes per week. Teaching is done mostly in schools, but teachers are advised to carry out some classes in recreational centres, pools, at the seaside, in skiing centres and other outdoor spaces. Schools can also organise optional extracurricular sports activities.

Physical education classes are taught by physical education teachers with a university degree. Programmes of continuous professional development are offered to physical education teachers by the [Bureau for Education Services](#) and they are provided with training programmes.

Students of the first and second year of general secondary education have an opportunity to choose the optional subject “healthy lifestyles” ([Zdravi stilovi života](#)) which, among other topics, includes learning content on physical activity (more information is provided in subsection 7.4).

In tertiary education, student organisations are encouraged to organise activities to meet the needs of students for physical recreation (Article 111 of the [Law on higher education](#) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 4/2014, 52/2014, 47/2015, 40/2016, 42/2017, 71/2017, 55/2018,

3/2019, 17/2019, 47/2019, 72/2019 and 74/2020).

Collaboration and partnerships

There are no specific policy initiatives nor programmes aiming to encourage partnerships between formal education providers, youth workers, health professionals and sporting organisations at the national level. However, the Law on gymnasium ([Zakon o gimnaziji](#)) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 64/02, 49/07, 45/10, 39/13 and 47/2017) encourages secondary schools to plan co-operation with sporting organisations within their yearly work programmes (Article 18). Moreover, non-governmental organisations that conduct projects supported by public funds aimed at promoting sport and physical activity among young people often implement activities in partnerships with schools, health professionals and sporting organisations.

7.4. Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

The [National Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#), adopted by the Government of Montenegro in 2016, introduces two measures directly related to promoting youth health and healthy lifestyles: “establishment of efficient inter-sectoral information and counselling services for young people and parents” and “supporting the development of young people’s psychological and physical health”. The Youth Strategy recognises that young people lack access to adequate support and guidance regarding their health and that particularly vulnerable groups of young people in this respect are the poor, young people from rural areas, Roma and Travellers¹, LGBT people, ethnic minorities and young people with disabilities.

In the latest [action plan](#) for the implementation of the Youth Strategy for the period 2020-2021, it is planned to conduct a set of activities to promote healthy lifestyles. These include raising capacities of counselling centres for youth through commissioning experts in the area of sex education, conducting research on trends of use of psychoactive substances and non-chemical addictions among adolescents and carrying out programmes and campaigns for the prevention of health risk behaviours (such as smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour and behaviours connected to obesity).

As yet, there have been three monitoring reports on the implementation of action plans for implementation of the Youth Strategy for 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively. The reports include information on monitoring the implementation of activities concerning youth health, healthy lifestyles, sexual health and fighting health risk behaviours.

1. The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2030 ([Nacionalna strategija održivog razvoja do 2030. godine](#)), adopted by the Government of Montenegro in December 2015, includes as one of its main strategic goals “improving the health of citizens of all ages and reducing inequality in health, with an emphasis on children”. The strategy defines a set of priority measures to achieve this goal: improving health protection of vulnerable groups and putting the focus on the promotion of healthy lifestyles, disease prevention and control.

Some of the targets set to be achieved by 2030 by this Strategy directly refer to the health of young people: “health education is carried out with preschool, school children and youth” and “strengthened capacity, improved efficiency, coverage and diversification of programs and services of youth counselling centres”. The Ministry of Health is responsible for the implementation of these measures together with other ministries and institutions and the NGO sector.

The Programme for Adapting the Health System to Climate Change in Montenegro for period 2020-2022 with an action plan for the period 2020-2021 ([Program adaptiranja zdravstvenog sistema na klimatske promjene u Crnoj Gori za period 2020-2022. godine sa Akcionim planom za period 2020-2021. godine](#)) has as one of its main goals “raising awareness on climate changes and their impact on health”. One of the measures is educating young people on protection from diseases that are related to climate change in every municipality in Montenegro. The Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and the Institute for Public Health are in charge of implementing this measure.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Youth counselling centres located in health care centres in municipalities conduct individual and group health education programmes aimed at promoting youth health and healthy lifestyle and preventing risky behaviour. The work of counselling centres is focused on raising knowledge of young people on healthy nutrition, the importance of physical activities, prevention of health risk behaviours (alcoholism, drug addiction, and smoking), sexual and reproductive health, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and prevention of unintended pregnancy. The youth counselling centres conduct their programmes through group activities, individual counselling, lectures and workshops in schools and events in the local community. Services are provided by nurses, paediatricians, hygiene specialists and, if necessary, gynaecologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, epidemiologists and social workers.

In 2019, a programme aimed to increase young people’s knowledge of the importance of healthy nutrition and the nutritional values of fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and milk products was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. The programme Fruit, Vegetables, Milk and Milk Products for Schools ([Program voće, povrće, mlijeko i mliječni proizvodi za škole](#)) aims to contribute to increasing students’ intake of fresh fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products and to reduce intake of foods that are high in fat,

sugar and salt. The programme has been piloted in elementary schools, with the plan to upscale it in the future. Moreover, in the vicinity of several schools, including one secondary vocational school, greenhouses have been placed to educate students and raise their level of knowledge about food production and the importance of healthy nutrition. It is planned that the programme also include other educational measures, such as visiting farms and cooking workshops.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Students of the first and second year of general secondary education have an opportunity to choose the optional subject “healthy lifestyles” ([*Zdravi stilovi života*](#)). This subject covers the following topics: health and healthy lifestyles; development in adolescence; diet and physical activity; mental health; body image and taking care of your body; the impact of psychoactive substances on health; sexual and reproductive health; HIV/AIDS; prevention of injuries and violence. Instruction time is 70 school hours in total, out of which 10 hours can be used for additional topics in line with the needs and interests of students.

The stated goal of the programme is to enable students to find and use relevant and reliable health information, to know how to critically evaluate the information they find and use it when making a health-related decision and to build basic competencies that contribute to the protection and improvement of health.

The specific goals of the subject for students are as follows:

- expand previous and acquire new functional knowledge in the field of health and healthy lifestyles;
- understand the causes and consequences of the most common health risks in adolescence, learn to assess risks and understand ways to reduce or avoid them;
- gain information about the available health services;
- develop existing and practice new skills, which are part of the necessary repertoire of life skills and skills for maintaining overall health;
- develop positive attitudes towards healthy lifestyles and take responsibility for one’s own health;
- understand one’s own role and responsibilities in creating and maintaining a healthy environment.

In general, it is advised that around 30% of class time should be devoted to the introduction of new concepts and 70% should be dedicated to interactive exercises and other forms of active involvement of young people. Teachers are provided with a training programme containing information on expected learning outcomes of the subject and a teaching manual with ideas on structure and content of classes.

Peer-to-peer education approaches

There are no top-level guidelines facilitating peer-to-peer education as a form of non-formal or informal learning about factors related to health and well-being. However, action plans for

implementing the youth strategy include activities for establishing and improving peer-to-peer education and they are often applied in projects and initiatives in this field. Many NGO projects dealing with healthy lifestyles and improving the health of young people supported by the state include peer-to-peer education approaches. The monitoring reports on the implementation of action plans for implementation of the youth strategy include information on initiatives in which students in secondary schools are trained as peer educators on topics such as reproductive health.

Collaboration and partnerships

One of the measures foreseen by the [Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) is “establishment of efficient inter-sectoral information and counselling services for young people and parents” since it was recognised that meeting the health needs of young people requires the collaboration of the health and other sectors, including non-governmental organisations and local government. One of the activities planned in the latest [action plan](#) for the implementation of the youth strategy is to establish regular co-operation between youth counselling centres in primary health care centres with non-governmental organisations, schools and universities.

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

The [Centre for Promotion of Health](#) within the Institute for Public Health is responsible for preparing national public health programmes and strategies for promotion and prevention in the area of public health. Campaigns for the promotion of health are conducted in line with the calendar of health, which contains dates of awareness-raising activities concerning healthy lifestyles and factors affecting health (such as Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness Day; the Month of Healthy Eating; Pink October – the latter raising awareness of breast cancer). In some of these activities, special attention is dedicated to raising awareness of young people on these topics. This centre regularly conducts lectures and workshops for youth in schools on reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, prevention of smoking and substance abuse and other relevant topics. It also produces publications and brochures for the promotion of healthy lifestyles among youth (for example on the [reproductive health of young people](#) and the [role of paediatricians](#) in preventing health risk behaviours among youth). Informational materials for students providing [guidance on topics related to the Covid-19 pandemic](#) have also been prepared.

Awareness-raising activities are also conducted by youth counselling centres in primary healthcare centres (more information is provided under the subsection 7.4 “Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people”). NGOs also conduct activities such as campaigns, lectures and workshops on the promotion of healthy lifestyles, negative consequences of substance abuse, smoking and alcoholism, promoting healthy eating habits and reproductive health.

7.5. Mental health

National strategy(ies)

In 2019, the Government of Montenegro adopted a Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro for 2019-2023 ([Strategija zaštite i unaprijeđenja mentalnog zdravlja u Crnoj Gori 2019-2023](#)), which forms the basis for the work in the area of mental health. The strategy is focused on four priority areas:

- 1) promotion of mental health and prevention of mental disorders;
- 2) improving capacities for early diagnosing, treatment and rehabilitation of persons with mental health disorders;
- 3) respecting and protecting the human rights of persons with mental health disorders;
- 4) mental health information systems and research studies in this area.

Young people are recognised as one of the main target groups by this strategy and it is specified that special attention should be given to the promotion of youth mental health, prevention and early detection of mental health disorders, improving capacities of existing mental health services for young people and establishing new ones and collecting data needed for monitoring of health protection of youth.

One of the strategic goals is to “intensify activities to promote mental health and prevent mental health disorders with special emphasis on the most vulnerable groups and those most at risk”. Implementation of this goal is monitored by indicators that specifically mention young people, such as “reduced incidence of mental health disorders in the general population, especially in children and youth”, “designed and implemented measures and programmes for mental health promotion and prevention of mental health and behavioural disorders in all sectors, with specific focus to strengthening youth counselling centres” and “the reduced suicide rate among the population as a whole and in subgroups related to age, gender and other vulnerable groups”.

The [report on monitoring of the implementation of the strategy in 2020](#) indicates that there have been no changes in indicators concerning the incidence of mental health disorders and suicide rates, which is attributed to barriers in the implementation of planned activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As mentioned in the previous section, the [National Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) introduces two measures: “establishment of efficient inter-sectoral information and counselling services for young people and parents” and “supporting the development of young people’s psychological and physical health”, which also directly address the mental health of young people.

The latest [action plan](#) for the implementation of the youth strategy for the period 2020-2021 contains a set of activities in the area of mental health of young people, including strengthening capacities of youth counselling centres by engaging experts in the area of mental

health and supporting the implementation of activities planned by the Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro for 2019-2023.

The reports on the implementation of action plans for implementation of the youth strategy for 2017, 2018 and 2019 include information on monitoring of the implementation of activities concerning the mental health of young people.

Improving the mental health of young people

One project that has recently been launched is the national campaign titled Call When You Are in Trouble ([Zovi kad si u sosu](#)), started in 2021 by the Ministry of Finance and Social Affairs and public children's home *Mladost Bijela* with the support of UNICEF, the Embassy of Norway in Belgrade and the NGO Group 484. The campaign aims to reach children and adolescents who need advice and to support them to speak freely and anonymously about problems, fears and doubts. The National SOS service has been established and trained professionals are available to talk with young people 24 hours a day.

Moreover, in 2021, the municipality of Podgorica, the capital city of Montenegro, established a new social service for citizens in need of psychosocial support – the House of Health ([Kuća zdravlja](#)). The aim is to provide support to citizens who have problems, with an emphasis on people from vulnerable groups. The services are provided by psychologists, social workers and doctors. Co-operation has been established with public institutions in the municipality and three non-governmental organisations – the Association of Psychologists of Montenegro, NGO CAZAS and the Centre for Children's Rights of Montenegro. Some of the activities are directly targeted to young people, such as conducting [workshops on the relation of food to mental health](#), and the [impact of the pandemic on mental health](#).

There are also various projects and initiatives conducted by NGOs for improving the mental health of young people, financially supported through public calls. One example is a project conducted by [NGO CAZAS](#) in 2018 aimed at strengthening the socio-emotional competencies of young people to successfully overcome the challenges of adolescence through workshops and by providing support to young people to create video materials on mental health and healthy lifestyles.

7.6. Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

Establishing early detection mechanisms and guiding the signposting of young people at risk is envisaged in strategic documents listed in the previous sections.

The Strategy for Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro for 2019-2023 specifies that it is necessary to develop existing services that can provide early detection and

diagnosis of the mental health disorders of youth (including psychologists in schools, centres for mental health in a community, youth counselling centres and others). Some of the planned measures for improvement of early detection of people with mental health disorders include education of primary health service staff, education of teaching staff in schools, education and counselling of family members, individual and group therapy for adolescents with behavioural disorders and mental health disorders. It is also recognised as important to improve the activities of youth counselling centres aimed at identifying young people at risk. The latest action plan for the implementation of the youth strategy for the period 2020-2021 includes measures identified in the Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro concerning early detection mechanisms.

The national strategy for sustainable development until 2030 defines, as a priority, measures to develop the efficiency of the health system and quality of healthcare and promotion of healthy lifestyles and disease prevention and control. To achieve this, a plan is to reorganise the healthcare system so that it is focused on preventive activities, to increase the budget for preventive activities, early detection of mental health disorders, prevention of misuse of psychoactive substances, early detection of non-communicable diseases and early detection of cancer.

The Law on General Education and Upbringing ([Opšti zakon o obrazovanju i vaspitanju](#)) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 64/2002, 31/2005, 49/2007, 4/2008, 21/2009, 45/2010, 40/2011, 45/2011, 36/2013, 39/2013, 44/2013 and 47/2017) stipulates in Article 15 that educational institutions should co-operate with health institutions regarding health protection of students, especially concerning conducting regular systematic health assessment.

Stakeholders

The policy framework does not specify how responsibilities for signposting young people at risk are assigned at the local level.

Guidance to stakeholders

Teaching staff in primary and secondary schools, psychologists and pedagogues have access to educational materials prepared in the process of implementing measures envisaged by the [Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health](#) in Montenegro to strengthen the capacity of teaching staff in the area of early detection and intervention in mental health disorders. The materials describe the characteristics, features, changes and challenges that occur within the developmental stages of puberty and adolescence in students. The manual “My values and virtues – development of socio-emotional skills of students” contains ideas for practical exercises and workshops with students.

In November 2019, guidelines for the health sector response to children and adolescents who are victims of violence were finalised, intending to increase detection and reporting

[\(Montenegro 2020 Report\)](#).

Target groups

The Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro for 2019-2023 recognises adolescents as a specific target group particularly at risk.

Funding

Financial support for the objectives set out by the policy framework is provided from the budget of responsible ministries and local communities (municipalities). Funds intended for the implementation of action plans are determined depending on the planned activities and available resources.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

There are no specific top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives to make health facilities more youth friendly.

There are some initiatives for the improvement of the work of youth counselling centres which could contribute to making them more youth friendly. Measures for the improvement of the involvement of young people in evaluation of the services of youth counselling centres was introduced in 2018 by the action plan for the implementation of the youth strategy. The latest action plan for the implementation of the youth strategy for the period 2020-2021 includes a measure for the promotion of services provided by youth counselling centres through social networks.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The programme on achieving public interest in the field of youth policy in 2022 is [planned to be adopted](#). The programme is a public policy document that elaborates key objectives and activities aimed at addressing youth priorities in the public interest, one of which is promoting healthy lifestyles among youth (more information in the [Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Montenegro](#)). The programme is to be based on the analysis of the needs of youth conducted by the Directorate of Sport and Youth.

Ongoing debates

There have been various initiatives from NGOs concerning youth health in the past, e.g. initiatives to [include sex education in schools](#) submitted by an NGO to the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports and an initiative to make the [subject “healthy lifestyles” mandatory](#) rather than optional in schools.

The topic related to youth health that is currently being widely discussed is related to

increasing vaccination coverage of young people. Representatives of the Institute for Public Health [invited young people to get vaccinated](#) on International Youth Day and recently published a statistic that all Covid-19-related deaths of people younger than 40 have been registered among unvaccinated people. There has also been an increasing awareness of the need of carrying out measures and initiatives regarding the mental health of young people, for instance NGOs' [appeals to increase the budget](#) and resources in this area.

References

Legal and other official policy documents

1. The Government of Montenegro, [Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#), (Strategija za mlade 2017-2021) (last accessed 18/11/2021)
2. The Government of Montenegro, [Sports Development Strategy 2018-2021](#) (Strategija razvoja sporta u Crnoj Gori za period 2018-2021) (last accessed 18/11/2021)
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