

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 I - SERBIA: YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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Published: February 2017

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At the proposal of the European Commission, the EU-CoE youth partnership network of country correspondents in EKCYP (European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy) is contributing to EU Youth Wiki with knowledge and information on a number of Erasmus + non-programme countries from South East Europe and Eastern Europe and Caucasus. The contributors use the guidelines of EU Youth Wiki when drafting their country contributions, but due to limited resources and support, present lighter versions of the required information. This chapter is part of piloting the EU Youth Wiki “Light” contributions for Serbia.

1.1 TARGET POPULATION OF YOUTH POLICY

In the Republic of Serbia, [the Law on Youth](#) is the national document that defines youth age. According to Article 3, youth or young people shall mean persons from 15 to 30 years of age.

As stated by the Population Survey ([the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia 2011](#)), people aged 15-30 numbered 1 419 328 or 19.74% of the population. In line with the same data, the share of the population aged 15-30 dropped by 1.8% between 2002 and 2011.

Although the Law on Youth does not recognise subcategories of youth as specific age groups, for statistical purposes young people are usually classified more precisely into three subgroups: from 15 to 19 years, from 20 to 24 years and from 25 to 30 years of age.

The Republic of Serbia does not recognise young people within its constitution, which means that no article of the constitution explicitly refers to youth. By the constitution, the age limit for both voting as well as for candidacy is 18 years of age. When it comes to minimum age for criminal responsibility, also known as juvenile delinquency, the national law defines it as 14 years of age.

Based on different policy settings and context, the definition of “youth” may be sector- or programme-dependent. For example, in the field of agriculture, specific measures extend the definition of youth up to 40 years of age, allowing these young people to benefit from programmes and initiatives aimed to support young farmers through the agricultural subsidies. Also, defining the youth age may be influenced by international standards and statistical demands, which is evident when determining youth unemployment (usually referring to persons between the age of 15 and 24, in line with Eurostat standards).

1.2 NATIONAL YOUTH LAW

On 5 July 2011, for the first time in Serbian history, the National Assembly adopted the [Law on Youth](#) (*Zakon o mladima*, “Official Gazette of RS” No 50/11), which started to be implemented as of February 2012.

Adoption of the Law on Youth represents the continuation of positive public policy and the government’s attitude towards youth, which started with the establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) in 2007, adoption of the first National Youth Strategy (NYS) in 2008 and the Action Plan for its implementation in 2009. The Law on Youth was adopted in

line with the recommendations from the NYS and its Action Plan. By the adoption of this law, youth affairs have certainly been highly prioritised on the policy agenda bearing in mind that youth are often considered as one of the vulnerable groups, strongly affected by the transitional processes, poverty and uncertainty.

Bearing in mind the size of the act, the Law on Youth is a relatively short document comprising 29 articles. By its normative status, it is a framework law¹ since implementation of youth activities has already been regulated by other relevant laws. The main approach of the legislator was that sectoral laws (e.g. educational laws, health laws, labour laws, social protection laws, etc.) were simply not enough and that institutionalisation of public interest in the youth sector required a specific law, *lex specialis*, referring to youth.²

According to the Law, in December 2011, the Minister of Youth and Sports adopted the two rule books: namely, the Rule book on financing and co-financing of programmes and projects of public interest in the youth sector (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 8/12 and 11/13) and the Rule book on the content and manner of keeping uniform records of associations of young people, associations for young people and their federations (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 50/11).

According to Article 1, the Law regulates measures and activities undertaken by the Republic of Serbia, autonomous area and local self-governments, aimed at improving the social status and position of youth and creating conditions for addressing young people’s needs and interests in all areas of interest for young people.

The purpose of the Law is to create conditions for supporting young people in organising themselves, social activism, development and fulfilment of their potential for their own benefit and for the benefit of society.

The Law on Youth consists of seven chapters:

- Chapter 1, Basic provisions: this chapter defines the objectives of the youth policy, gives definitions of relevant terms, and outlines the principles of the youth policy.
- Chapter 2, National Youth Strategy: this chapter defines the Youth Strategy and provides the rules for its adoption and financing.
- Chapter 3, Associations implementing youth activities: this chapter identifies the youth civil society organisations that are important stakeholders in the process of implementation of the Law on Youth and the Youth Strategy, and establishes the rules for their functioning and co-operation within the associations.
- Chapter 4, Youth councils, offices and an agency: this chapter defines the rules for the establishment of the National Youth Council, as well as for the mandatory incorporation of the Provincial and Local Youth Councils and potential incorporation of local youth offices and the Agencies for Youth.
- Chapter 5, Funding of programmes and projects of public interest in the youth sector: this chapter sets the rules on financing of programmes and projects in the youth sector.
- Chapter 6, Monitoring: this chapter declares that the Ministry of Youth is responsible for its monitoring.

1. The law that widely regulates youth issues.

2. Dejan Milenkovic, Comment of the Law on Youth, Ministry of Youth and Sports and Belgrade Open School, published in 2012, Belgrade, p. 9.

- Chapter 7, Transitional and final provisions.

This Law defines the main terms within the youth field, such as youth policy and youth sector, youth policy actors, youth activity, youth work, non-formal education of young people, as well as a definition of youth or young people. The Law on Youth recognises five main youth support principles, namely: the Equality and Non-Discrimination Principle, the Equal Opportunity Principle, the Principle of Raising Awareness on the Importance of Youth and their Social Role, the Active Youth Participation Principle and the Principle of Youth Responsibility and Solidarity.

For the first time, the associations implementing youth activities have been recognised by the law, providing a clear distinction between associations of young people and associations for young people. Among other novelties, the Law introduces establishment of Youth Council as an advisory body of the government in the field of youth. The Youth Agency may be established for the purpose of implementing youth programmes and projects in accordance with the EU framework in youth field.

The main shift towards systematic youth policy development was made by providing a legal basis for financing programmes and projects of public interest in the youth sector. Thus, those provisions (Articles 20-26) have enormous significance for the sustainability of the youth sector and contributed directly to achieving the goals laid out by the Law.

As with the NYS, the Law was designed in consultation with young people from across the country, including young people representing a wide variety of youth organisations and local institutions. From January 2010, when the first phase of drafting the law had started, 45 meetings were held in co-operation with local youth offices (a total of 1 492 young people were involved). At the very beginning of that comprehensive process, young people were asked what issues and areas the law should regulate as far as they were concerned. During the second phase, 29 round-tables were organised across Serbia, with more than a thousand participants. After a draft of the law was prepared, six additional round-tables were held, further encouraging the national public debate. In line with all the aforementioned, the process leading up to the adoption of the Serbian Law on Youth has been widely heralded as one the most participatory and representative to date. By many stakeholders, it is perceived as a hallmark of best practices for future collaboration between the Serbian civil sector and policy-making communities.³

Up to the end of 2016, the Law on Youth has not undergone revisions, but it is expected that during 2017 it will be amended according to the MoYS plan of action.

1.3 NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The foundations of the Serbian youth policy are embedded in three core documents: the [National Youth Strategy](#) (*Nacionalna strategija za mlade*, “Official Gazette of RS” No. 22/15), the [Action Plan for its implementation](#) and the [Law on Youth](#). The NYS is a key mechanism for implementation, co-ordination and promotion of youth policy that creates a supportive environment where youth initiatives are encouraged and appreciated. The NYS is a sort of “guarantee to youth” on behalf of the state, but it is also a “guarantee to the state” on behalf of youth, that they will work together on achieving the goals, while respecting the

3. Tanja Azanjac, Donatela Bradic, Djordje Krivokapic, Tatjana Stojic, Marlene Spoerri, *Youth and Public Policy in Serbia*, a publication of Demokratie and Dialog e.V. 2012, p. 15.

agreed principles and fostering partnership. The NYS is a guide for working with and for young people, intended for all youth policy actors, and it is also a platform for action at local, provincial, national and international level.⁴

According to the Law on Youth, Article 10, NYS should be a document adopted by the government, on the proposal of the MoYS, for a period of 10 years. Young people, the MoYS, ministries responsible for particular areas in the youth sector and all other youth policy actors participate in the development and implementation of the NYS.

The NYS lays down the basic principles of action, directions of activity and expected results of the activities of all youth policy actors towards the improvement in social position of young people and creation of the conditions for full achievement of their rights and interests in all areas. The NYS is based on the government's strategic orientation to work with and for young people. Starting from the goals set in the Law on Youth, it seeks to ensure conditions for enabling young people to reach their full potential, participate actively in society, while contributing not only to their own development, but also to the development of society. The NYS is a key mechanism for implementation, co-ordination and promotion of youth policy that creates a supportive environment where youth initiatives are encouraged and appreciated.⁵

Upon the establishment of the MoYS in 2007, one of the first tasks was development and adoption of the NYS. That process was highly consultative and inclusive, involving a variety of stakeholders in the youth field, including young people themselves. In the period leading up to the NYS adoption, the MoYS held 167 round-tables in 166 municipalities. A total of 4 077 participants were included and 47 citizens' associations were actively involved. Overall, more than 16 000 young people participated in different stages of development of the NYS. The ministry invited youth organisations to agree on a common statement, the so-called Youth Manifesto, which was then integrated into the NYS to serve as the voice of young people. The first NYS was officially adopted by the Serbian Government on 9 May 2008. On the basis of the NYS, an accompanying Action Plan for the Implementation of the NYS was adopted by the government eight months later, on 22 January 2009. As with the strategy, a wide range of consultations was held among and between state bodies, civil society representatives and young people.⁶

The adoption of the Serbian first National Youth Strategy in May 2008 was heralded by the MoYS as "the first step towards a systematic solution to the problem of youth status".⁷ It was designed as a means to clarify the state's attitude towards young people, the role of youth in society, and methods by which the partnership between youth and the government could be established. In other words, the strategy was the important first step in putting young people back on the government agenda. It is often said that the NYS paved the way for the adoption of the Serbian Law on Youth, but also set in motion the establishment of an umbrella organisation of youth associations, as well as local youth offices.

After the Action Plan of the first NYS had expired (2009-2014), the second National Youth Strategy was adopted in 2015. As with the previous one, the second strategy was also the product of lengthy and in-depth consultation with the numerous youth policy actors, including young people themselves. The government appointed a multi-sectoral Working Group with 53

4. The National Youth Strategy 2015-2025, p. 4.

5. Ibid, p. 4.

6. *Youth and Public Policy in Serbia*, p. 61.

7. Ibid, p. 63.

members. There were 15 round-tables with the aim of discussing the first draft of the strategy, as well as five debates during the public discussion in Serbia, with the participation of more than 2 000 young people. Both the recommendations from the [Evaluation of the Implementation of the National Youth Strategy for the period 2008-2014](#), and the recommendations from the [Youth Policy Review](#) in 2014, prepared by the experts of the Council of Europe, were included in the Strategy 2015-2025, because they represent a measure of success of previous work and also guidelines for effective implementation in the years to come.⁸

The main principles underlined by the NYS 2015-2025 are the following: support for personal and social empowerment of youth; respect for human and minority rights, equality and non-discrimination; equal opportunities for all; importance of young people and their social roles; active youth participation and co-operation, as well as social responsibility and solidarity.

The NYS defines nine strategic goals as desired changes to be achieved with respect to young people, in the areas of interest to young people. Successful implementation of the NYS in the next 10 years should result in the improvement of:

- employability and employment of young women and men;
- quality and opportunities for acquiring qualifications and development of competencies and innovation of young people;
- active participation of young women and men in society;
- health and well-being of young women and men;
- conditions for development of youth safety culture;
- support for social inclusion of young people at risk of social exclusion;
- mobility, scope of international youth co-operation and support for young migrants;
- system of informing young people and knowledge about young people;
- consumption of culture and participation of youth in the creation of cultural programmes.

The Action Plan for the NYS implementation specifies the indicators related to the level of performance of activities; implementation period (time required for the achievement of planned goals, results and activities); level of implementation (national, provincial or local); key implementers and participants in the process of implementation; and means of verifying the indicators of specific goals and activities. It also defines the overall resources required for the implementation.

In order to ensure the mechanism for monitoring and co-ordination and specifying the roles of each actor, the MoYS has established the Working Group for the NYS implementation. The Working Group's tasks are: to propose the measures to harmonise the NYS implementation activities with the adopted NYS Action Plan; to monitor the implementation of the NYS; and to take part in the evaluation and preparation of annual reports on the implementation of the

8. National Youth Strategy 2015-2025, p. 3.

NYS for the government. It is also the mechanism for structured dialogue between youth, associations performing youth activities, young researchers, national, provincial and local-level authorities and other youth policy actors. The MoYS provides professional, administrative and technical support to the working group.

The MoYS also directs and supervises the implementation of the strategy at the local level.

The funds for the implementation of the NYS are provided in the budget of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the budget of the autonomous provinces and local self-governments (LSGs), and from other sources, in accordance with applicable legislation, including the planned contribution of EU IPA funds, participation of the private sector, youth activity associations and other national and international programmes and donors. In accordance with the NYS, the autonomous provinces and LSGs should develop the action plans for implementation of the NYS in their respective territories, and secure funds for implementation of such plans in their budgets. The Action Plan for the implementation of the NYS contains the budget for 2015, along with projections of cost for 2016 and 2017.⁹

9. National Youth Strategy 2015-2025, p. 62.

1.4 YOUTH POLICY DECISION MAKING

The main public authority at the national level in charge of youth policy is the [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#). According to the Law on Ministries currently in force (“Official Gazette of RS” No. 96/15), the MoYS is responsible for the following: development, improvement and implementation of youth policy, strategy and programmes; encouraging youth participation; protecting youth interests and helping young people to achieve their goals; supporting youth employability and volunteering; stimulating non-formal education; co-operation with youth organisations; supporting youth groups and events, both at national and international level; monitoring the role of young people in Serbia; promoting development of youth policy; supporting the establishment and operation of local and regional youth offices, as well as other functions according to the Law.

Other ministries have certain responsibilities for youth issues. For example, the [Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development](#) is responsible for the area of formal education. The [Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs](#) is responsible for employment and social policy, while the [Ministry of Economy](#) has a mandate in the area of youth entrepreneurship. Other ministries involved in youth issues are the [Ministry of Justice](#) (juvenile delinquency) and the [Ministry of Interior](#) (youth safety), the [Ministry of Health](#) (youth health), the [Ministry of Culture and Information](#) and the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).

The Parliamentary Board in charge of youth issues is [the Committee on Education, Science, Technological Development and the Information Society](#).

By the [Law on Youth](#) (Article 19), National Agency for Youth may be established for the purpose of implementing youth programmes and projects in accordance with the EU framework in the youth field, pursuant to a separate Law. The MoYS, in close co-operation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, is undertaking all necessary steps and measures for establishing a national structure for implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme, which is a precondition for provisional closure of Negotiation Chapter 26 – Education and Culture within the EU accession process. It is expected that the National Agency for Youth will be established up to the end of 2018. Until then, the Tempus Foundation is appointed as the [National Erasmus+ Office](#) responsible for promoting and monitoring the implementation of this programme for projects in the field of youth.

The Republic of Serbia has two administrative divisions, the Autonomous Province (AP) of Vojvodina and AP Kosovo and Metohija. In the AP Vojvodina, the importance of youth and youth policy was recognised in 2002, with the establishment of the [Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth](#), which is the leading regional public authority with competencies in the youth field. In November 2012, the Youth Council of the AP Vojvodina was established on the initiative of the Secretariat for Sports and Youth, with the aim of encouraging and co-ordinating the activities related to development, realisation and implementation of youth policy and proposing measures for their improvement. With the establishment of such an inter-sectoral body at the highest level, the importance of this kind of co-operation and involvement of youth in policy making has been fully recognised. At the provincial level, it is also important to mention the Action Plan for Youth Policy in AP Vojvodina for the period 2015-2020, developed by the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth.

Towns and municipalities are the main administrative units within local self-government. Many towns and municipalities have recognised youth as one of their priorities and adopted a Local Youth Action Plan (LYAP) and/or established a Local Youth Office (LYO), which is the main local public authority with competencies in the youth field.

The Local Youth Office is part of the local government and it is the first link in a chain of stakeholders, marking the beginning of development of youth policy in Serbian municipalities and cities. Prior to the establishment of the MoYS, only five proactive local governments had recognised young people as a resource and understood the need to actively involve them in community life. The process of LYO establishment and development of strategic documents is considered as one of the most intensive and most inclusive processes of youth policy development in the recent history of Serbian public administration.¹⁰

The Law on Youth (Article 18) stipulates that local self-government units may opt to establish the LYO. These offices are mandated to initiate and administer development and implementation of local youth policy, as well as to co-ordinate the activities of local offices. In so doing, such offices often serve as a public space for young people dedicated exclusively to serving their needs, concerns and interests.¹¹ While each LYO may have its own community-specific goals, the responsibilities of these offices generally adhere to the following:

- plan, implement and monitor development of youth policy at the local level;
- initiate and monitor the implementation of the Local Action Plan for Youth;
- establish co-operation with all relevant partners and work on their networking, communication and co-ordination;
- inform young people on issues that are relevant for them;
- encourage youth activism, communicate with young people, youth and youth-oriented associations and ensure youth participation in decision-making processes;
- support initiatives of young people and youth and youth-oriented associations;
- support the implementation of programmes and projects for informal education of youth;
- support the work of the Youth Council and Youth Clubs;
- conduct research about youth needs, trends, vulnerable groups of youth and their inclusion; and
- keep a database on active youth and youth-oriented associations and informal youth groups.¹²

Up until September 2016, a total of 158 municipalities had established LYO, but only 132 of them are active. It should be noted that the capacity and structure of LYOs are not the same. Some of them have specified a position for the Local Youth Co-ordinator in the job classification of the municipality, while others do not have it, so Co-ordinators have to work on another contractual basis or as volunteers. The allocated budgets for local youth policy also vary, depending on the level of local development, as well as on political will.

Since the long-term objective of the MoYS is that every single local self-government in Serbia has established LYO, the Ministry has a significant role in building the capacities of the LYO, mainly through:

10. *Country Sheet Report – Serbia*, European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy, published in 2016, http://pip-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/9038134/Country_sheet_Serbia_2016.pdf/2eea9820-bdc6-4ac4-83e3-4f1314b7e12f, p. 9.

11. *Youth and Public Policy in Serbia*, p. 76.

12. *Country Sheet Report – Serbia*, p. 9.

- professional and technical support to local self-government units to establish an LYO, awareness raising on the significance and domain of LYO activities, and assistance in creating foundation acts and establishing Local Youth Councils;
- training of LYO Co-ordinators;
- assistance in preparation of LYAP;
- financing local self-government units' projects;
- establishing the system and quality of work of the LYO; and
- providing assistance to local self-government units and LYOs in establishing a joint representative body – the National Association of Local Youth Offices.¹³

1.5 CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH WITH OTHER MINISTRIES

Bearing in mind the cross-sectoral character of the NYS (involvement of several competent ministries) and the complexity of its implementation, it is essential to ensure co-operation and co-ordination among all partners. Effective, efficient and reliable cross-sectoral co-ordination is the precondition for successful implementation of the NYS and its Action Plan. This is because the aims and goals provided in these documents invariably fall within the purview of several ministries beyond the MoYS, primarily of those responsible for education and employment.¹⁴

As the mechanism for formalised and institutionalised cross-sectoral co-operation in youth field, the government adopted the Decision on establishment of the inter-ministerial Working Group for the monitoring and implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2015-2025 (Official Gazette of RS, No. 3/16). Since the adoption of the first NYS 2008-2014, several convocations of this Working Group have been in place due to changes in the government's composition. However, the task of this body has always remained the same: to co-ordinate the development of the NYS, propose measures in order to harmonise activities during the implementation of the strategy, monitor its implementation, as well as to participate in evaluation of the implementation and prepare annual reports for the government about that process. The last convocation of the Working Group, comprises representatives of 15 ministries and national institutions, a representative of the Provincial Secretariat for Youth and Sports, a representative of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, five representatives of youth associations and/or federations, as well as one independent expert/researcher in the youth field selected through open call. The total number of members of the Working Group is 25. The Working Group is chaired by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in accordance with the mandate of the ministry to lead and co-ordinate youth policy issues across the government. Usually, the Working Group meets at least three times a year.

According to the recommendations from the first NYS evaluation, further development and enhancement of the role and functioning of the Working Group on the Implementation of the NYS is certainly required, especially in terms of developing its mandate to go beyond the

13. Ibid, p. 10.

14. *Youth and Public Policy in Serbia*, p. 86.

mere exchange of information with the aim of using it as a platform for the planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of intersectoral projects.¹⁵

Another important mechanism of cross-sectoral co-operation is the Youth Council,¹⁶ underpinned by the Law on Youth, as an advisory board to the government on all issues related to the NYS. Under the Law on Youth, Article 16, on the proposal of the ministry and in accordance with the regulations governing the work of the government, the government shall form a Youth Council as an advisory body initiating and harmonising activities related to development and implementation of youth policy and proposing measures for its improvement.

Pursuant to the Government Decision (Official Gazette of RS, No. 8/14), the job of the Youth Council is to:

- encourage and co-ordinate the activities related to development, realisation and implementation of youth policy;
- propose measures to improve youth policy; and
- propose measures for the harmonisation of different activities of ministries and other bodies responsible for specific areas in the youth sector and all other stakeholders of youth policy.

The Youth Council consists of the following representatives: representatives of the MoYS, representatives of other ministries dealing with youth, the Autonomous Province Secretariat responsible for youth, relevant experts in the youth field, representatives of youth associations, representatives of LYO and representatives of national minorities. As a main step towards recognising the co-management concept and giving it a key role within the youth sector, the Law defines that young people comprise at least one third of the Youth Council and that the selection of the NGO members of the Youth Council happens through open call by the MoYS. In that way, the broader representation of young people's organisations and other stakeholders with relevant expertise was ensured by the Law. The application for youth representative within the Youth Council has to be supported with two recommendations from different individuals. Formally, the Youth Council was established for the first time in 2014. The Youth Council can be accompanied by regional or local Youth Councils. Due to the tasks, structure and composition of the Youth Council and Working Group, the overlapping in the personal nominations are common

Representatives of the MoYS have been appointed as members of many other inter-ministerial working groups on issues such as education, health, employment, entrepreneurship, safety (particularly trafficking of human beings), rural development etc. In that way, formal co-operation among ministries responsible for issues concerning youth is established at multiple levels.. It is usually devoted to the process of implementation of some strategic or other public policy document that recognises young people as a specific target group.

The significance given to cross-sectoral co-operation in the youth field can also be recognised in the foreword of the Minister of Youth and Sports to the NYS, where the new mechanism of inter-ministerial co-operation called "Agenda for young people" is proclaimed. The Agenda should be an operational planning document within the ministries and institutions and organisations, defining their youth-oriented activities and aligned with the mandate, role and

15. Evaluation of the National Youth Strategy (2008-2014) in the Republic of Serbia and Action Plan (2009-2014), prepared by Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, Commissioned by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations Population Fund in Serbia, January 2015, p. 101.

16. The Youth Committee is also the term that is used for this body.

type of support provided to young people. At the end of 2016, the process of development of the Agenda for young people is still in the inception phase, mostly driven by the MoYS and the [National Youth Council of Serbia](#) (Krovna organizacija mladih Srbije – KOMS). In 2016, the advocacy campaign for cross-sectoral co-operation, called “Think of Youth!”, with the hashtag #YouthOnGovernment, was launched, led by the KOMS and supported by the MoYS, in order to directly target decision makers to include youth on their agendas. Among different public events and meetings, the campaign involved the working breakfast for representatives of ministries at decision-maker level, asking for more steps towards a better realisation of the NYS on a cross-sectoral level.

1.6 EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICY

One of the main principles underlined by the first NYS was evidence-based policy making, which means that all strategic concepts, principles and activities that refer to young people should be based on firm and relevant data and on the results of studies on youth. The assessment of these achievements is available in external [Evaluation of the National Youth Strategy \(2008-2014\) in the Republic of Serbia and its Action Plan \(2009-2014\)](#). Also, the current strategy acknowledges a youth policy that is based on complete, systematic and comprehensive information on the status and trends of young people in all areas of society.

Aiming to provide resources and knowledge basis for the preparation of the NYS 2015-2025, the following reports, studies and researches were widely used:

- [Annual reports on the implementation of the National Youth Strategy and its Action Plan 2009-2014](#);
- Young people – our present, exploring the social biography of youth in Serbia;¹⁷
- [Youth and Public Policy in Serbia](#);¹⁸
- a study on indicators of youth policy in the Republic of Serbia;¹⁹
- analysis of the situation of young people in the strategies of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the recent sociological research;²⁰
- indicators for monitoring the population of young people in Serbia;²¹
- the situation in youth policy – a comparative analysis of the Republic of Serbia and the European Union;²²
- [Research: Situation and Needs of Youth in Serbia](#);

17. Smiljka Tomanovic, Dragan Stanojevic, Isidora Jaric, Dusan Mojic, Sladjana Dragisic Labas, Milana Ljubivic, Ivana Zivadinovic, “The Youth – our present, research on social biography of Serbian youth”, the Institute of Sociology and Social Research, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, 2012.

18. Tanja Azanjac, Donatela Bradic, Djordje Krivokapic, Tatjana Stojic, Marlene Spoerri, *Youth and Public Policy in Serbia*, A publication of Demokratie & Dialog e.V. 2012.

19. Jasmina Kuka, “A study on indicators of youth policy in the Republic of Serbia”, Belgrade, 2013.

20. Dusan Mojic and Slobodan Mrdja, “Analysis of the situation of young people in the strategies of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the recent sociological research”, Belgrade, 2013.

21. Dragan Stanojevic and Ivana Zivadinovic, “Indicators for monitoring the population of young people in Serbia”, Belgrade, 2013.

22. Ministry of Youth and Sports, “The state of youth policy – a comparative analysis of the Republic of Serbia and the European Union”, Belgrade, 2013.

- draft of the external [Evaluation of the National Youth Strategy \(2008-2014\) in the Republic of Serbia and its Action Plan \(2009-2014\)](#); and
- draft of the Youth Policy Review in the Republic of Serbia, prepared by the expert team of the Council of Europe.

However, the NYS underlined the shortage of comprehensive and continuous research on youth issues, since most of the available research and population tracking did not recognise the youth cohort in accordance with the Law on Youth (i.e. as persons from 15 to 30 years of age). In addition, there is a lack of recognition and support for development of systematic youth researchers, as well as the lack of regular surveys on the needs of youth and topics of interest to them. Thus, one of the Strategy's specific goals is knowledge of young people based on relevant data and used for planning in all areas and levels of government.

Since the adoption of the first NYS in 2008, the MoYS has been conducting annual research on the assessment of the current situation and needs of young people in Serbia. [Those studies](#) were one of the basic starting points for development and monitoring of implementation of all strategic documents in the field of youth policy, as well as for setting priorities for funding programmes and projects of public interest in youth sector. In line with the Law on Youth (Article 20), funds from the state budget shall be provided for conducting research about the position and needs of young people in the Republic of Serbia.

1.7 FUNDING YOUTH POLICY

Funds for the implementation of the NYS are provided in the budget of the Republic of Serbia, as well as in the budget of the autonomous provinces and local self-governments, including the contribution of EU IPA funds, participation of the private sector, youth activity associations and other national and international programmes and donors.²³ In accordance with the NYS, the autonomous provinces and local self-governments develop action plans for the implementation of the NYS in their respective territories, and secure funds for the implementation of such plans in their budgets.

The [Action Plan for the implementation of the NYS](#) contains the budget for 2015, along with projections of cost for 2016 and 2017. In line with this document, the total funds planned for the three-year period (2015-2017) amount to 6 034 369 460 Serbian dinars (RSD) (approx. €49 059 914) with RSD 3 865 064 460 (approx. €31 423 288) from budget funds and RSD 2 169 305 000 (approx. €17 636 626) from funds from other sources. This amount should be increased by part of the funds earmarked for the implementation of the active employment policy measures and promotion of employment of persons with disabilities to be used for youth and that cannot be expressed in its exact amount in advance, because it is earmarked in accordance with active policy measures, not age groups.

According to the [Law on Budget of the Republic of Serbia for 2016](#), total funds allocated to the Ministry of Youth and Sports for youth policy implementation amount to RSD 229 344 000 (approx. €1 864 585). Additionally, RSD 785 120 000 (approx. €6 383 090) is provided for the financing of the [Fund for Young Talents](#).²⁴ Compared with the

23. National Youth Strategy 2015-2025, p. 109.

24. The Fund for Young Talents of the Republic of Serbia was established by the Government of Republic of Serbia with the aim of supporting most successful university students and secondary school pupils. Since August 2008, the Fund has been working and operating within the MoYS and the president of the Fund is the Minister of Youth and Sports.

[budget in 2015](#), the funds allocated for both youth policy and the Fund for Young Talents are slightly reduced: for youth policy it used to be RSD 241 088 000 and for the Fund for Young Talents RSD 787 570 000.

The main percentage of funds dedicated to youth policy is spent on financing programmes and projects of public interest in the youth sector, in line with the Law on Youth – approx. 82%. The funding or co-funding of those programmes and projects is carried out on the basis of public calls for proposals, managed by the MoYS, which represents the regular mechanism for supporting youth associations and local self-governments (only those which have established the LYO). Bearing in mind that youth unemployment is still the burning issue in Serbia and the main priority on the youth policy agenda, in 2016, 49% of funds allocated for projects of public interest in the youth sector is going to be spent on those projects specifically oriented towards youth employability. Financing of programmes and projects of public interest in the youth sector is defined by the Law on Youth, chapter 5.

When it comes to the municipalities, they do not have a legal obligation to assign certain amounts of money for youth issues. In line with the Law on Youth (Article 26), the units of local self-government could allocate its budget funds for financing the needs and interests of young people, but it is up to local government to decide whether it should be done and set up the budget, respecting the right to autonomy of local self-government and its distinctive needs.

As a neighbouring partner country of the Erasmus+ programme, Serbia can take part in certain actions, although preparatory measures for full participation in the programme have officially started. However, bearing in mind the youth component of the programme, in 2015 Serbia was [the most successful](#) in the Western Balkans region with 35 international youth projects supported, with a total of €1 525 686. That number of projects funded in Serbia represents 53% of all approved projects in the region, which represents an indicator of the quality of project proposals sent from Serbia to Brussels (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency –EACEA).

1.8 CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION IN THE YOUTH FIELD

Bilateral co-operation in the youth field is carried out through the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences with institutions and organisations in the field of youth and sports, youth and sports exchange, the exchange of experts in various fields, realisation of joint projects in the areas of youth and sport, participation in meetings, seminars, conferences and other activities at the bilateral level. In order to give an additional incentive to the implementation of these activities, the Republic of Serbia has signed bilateral agreements on co-operation or memorandums of understanding in the field of youth. Those documents represent the institutional framework for the strengthening and concretisation of co-operation with a particular country. By September 2016, the MoYS had signed co-operation agreements and/or memorandums with the competent authorities of Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Portugal, Republika Srpska, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, the Netherlands, Montenegro, the Russian Federation and Indonesia. A number of agreements are in the process of preparation.

Based on the Memorandum on Co-operation in the field of youth between Serbia and Albania, supported by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Serbia, the youth exchange programme has been in place since 2015, aiming to encourage cultural exchange and youth mobility between Serbia and Albania. Until October 2016, three youth exchanges (summer and winter schools) were conducted, gathering more than 50 youngsters from these countries. [The last, five-day training course on use of digital skills to promote the OSCE values for young people from Albania and Serbia](#) concluded on 22 September 2016 in the Albanian city of Durrës. In general, the main goals of those exchanges are improving relations between young people from Serbia and Albania, the enhancement of knowledge on the current state of the youth sector and encouraging future co-operation and joint activities between the respective countries.

[The Regional Youth Co-operation Office of the Western Balkans \(RYCO\)](#) is the regional initiative aiming to “promote the spirit of reconciliation and co-operation between youth in the region” through exchange. A working group has developed a common proposal for its establishment, which was signed by the six prime ministers of the Western Balkans countries (Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Kosovo*) – on 4 July 2016 at the Western Balkans Summit in Paris. After the signature of the agreement, a period of implementation will follow, especially the nomination of the members of the Governing Board of the RYCO, the designation of the General Secretary, the hiring of the employees of the Secretariat, and the opening of the central office in Tirana and the local branches in five other countries. The aim is that the RYCO becomes operational at the beginning of 2017. Establishment of the RYCO was inspired by the experience of the Franco-German Youth Office, along with other successful European youth co-operation projects, giving higher importance to the concepts of friendship, tolerance, reconciliation and co-operation.

The MoYS is a member of various bodies of the Council of Europe in the field of youth. Serbia accessed to the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the European Youth Card of the Council of Europe, as well as to the North-South Centre Partial Agreement, where it supports activities aimed at encouraging the development of the process of global education. The Ministry is also encouraging young people to participate in the open calls of the European Youth Foundation and take part in different activities in the European Youth Centres in Budapest and Strasbourg. The representative of the MoYS is a member of the Council of Europe’s Steering Committee on Youth. The MoYS has also delegated its representative as the national correspondent in the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) and actively participates in other activities organised within the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.

Since the establishment of the MoYS, the OSCE Mission to Serbia has actively supported the youth sector, especially in relation to the process of creating the NYS and its Action Plan, social inclusion of vulnerable youth, building capacities of LYOs, and the youth exchange programme with Albania. For Serbia, 2015 was particularly important as the year of chairmanship of the OSCE. In that context, in December 2014, during the Serbian OSCE Chairmanship, Belgrade was the venue of the [OSCE/ODIHR Youth Conference](#), which was attended by more than 40 young activists from the OSCE region. The participants discussed the solutions for the strengthening and social inclusion of the Roma/Sinti community through the enhanced activism of young people and the participation of the Roma/Sinti community in

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

the political and democratic process, as well as other youth security issues. Moreover, in September 2015, the issue of radicalisation of youth and countering violent extremism was put high on the [OSCE Chairmanship Conference of Youth Ambassadors](#) agenda in Belgrade.

Regarding co-operation of Serbia with the United Nations, there is established co-operation in the field of youth with the number of programmes, funds and specialised agencies such as: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The recent co-operation has been reflected in the joint activities on development and implementation of strategic documents in the field of youth policy. The emphasis was also on co-operation programmes and projects aimed at creating conditions and fostering the employability of young people and self-employability; better social inclusion of young people; working with vulnerable groups; gender equality; healthy and safe lifestyles; providing integrated services at the local level and capacity building of youth organisations to actively participate in society, as well as activities oriented towards achieving sustainable development goals (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

1.9 CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

Bearing in mind changed circumstances in the youth sector in comparison to 2010, when the Law on Youth was drafted, in September 2016 the MoYS initiated a legislative procedure aiming to prepare amendments on this Law, especially in regard to the status of the Umbrella Federation of Associations of Young People and for Young People (Article 14), composition of the Youth Council (Article 16), and the purpose and scope of work of the Youth Agency (Article 19). The inter-sectoral ministerial working group will be established in order to prepare a draft of this Law. It is expected that the Law on the Amendments of the Law on Youth should be adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia by the end of 2017.

On the initiative of the civil society organisations, the ministry responsible for the labour and social policy established the working group in order to analyse the current Law on Volunteering (Official Gazette of RS No. 36/10) and recommend the proposals for improvement of the position of volunteers. Crucial shortcomings are recognised in the domain of demanding procedures and obligations for organisers of volunteering, keeping the records of the volunteering and insufficient protection of the volunteers' rights. The public debate on how future law provisions should be defined in order to promote the culture of volunteering has been very intense, especially within the youth sector and among youth associations.

Prior to parliamentary elections in 2016, the National Youth Council (KOMS) launched the advocacy campaign aiming to restore the existence of the Parliamentary Board in charge specifically of youth issues, as it used to be. Currently, the Parliamentary Board in charge of youth issues is [the Committee on Education, Science, Technological Development and the Information Society](#).

Bearing in mind that the Action Plan for the implementation of the NYS (2015-2025) covers the period from 2015 to 2017, in 2017 the MoYS is going to launch the process of the next Action Plan development. The document should consist of concrete activities that contribute to realisation of the NYS goals, planned for the period 2018-2020, with listed indicators, budget, responsible institutions and time framework.

Bearing in mind the strong political commitments for establishment of RYCO and enthusiasm among the youth sector within the WB-6, the predominant national debate and one of the major public consultation issues between the civil and governmental sector is about the process of selection of national youth representatives in the RYCO Governing Board, the adoption of national positions on RYCO-related issues and the scope of RYCO local branch activities.