

Youth Partnership

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



CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI CHAPTER I: MONTENEGRO YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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December 2021

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1.1. TARGET POPULATION OF YOUTH POLICY

Legal definition of youth in Montenegro

Article 2 of the [Law on Youth](#) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 of 30.04.2019 and 027/19 of 17.05.2019) defines the lower and higher legal age limit for youth, stating that “Youth, as defined by this Law, are persons between 15 and 30 years of age”.

The [Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) includes the legal definitions based on age limit for children as “persons up to 18 years of age” and youth/young persons as persons “between 15 and 30 years of age”, in accordance with the Law on Youth (Article 2).

Youth population in Montenegro

In accordance with the legal definition of youth, we can get the approximate number of young people in Montenegro in 2011, the year when the latest census was completed, based on data from the Montenegrin Statistical Office (Uprava za statistiku, [MONSTAT](#)).

Of the total number of people living in Montenegro in 2011 (620 029), there were 132 702 young people aged 15 to 29, which makes 21.4% of the total population of Montenegro.

If we take into account the gender of young people (aged 15-29), in 2011 there were 68 198 (51.4%) young males and 64 504 (48.6%) young females living in Montenegro.

Of the total number of young people, 87 714 lived in urban environments, and 44 988 lived in rural environments. These numbers tell us about their place of residence, but it has to be taken into account that there is a constant internal (mostly educational) mobility of young people in Montenegro. During their education period, young people usually do not change their official place of residence, thus leading to the conclusion that the number of young people in urban environments is actually higher than MONSTAT’s report infers.

The statistics provided by MONSTAT do not, however, include young persons that were 30 years of age in 2011. Therefore, there are no estimates covering the entire youth population in Montenegro according to the law (15-30 years of age).

According to MONSTAT population estimates, in mid-2016 there were 622 303 inhabitants in Montenegro. The number of children aged 0 to 17 in Montenegro was 138 219, or 22.2% of the total population.

Electoral and voting rights based on age

Apart from other electoral rights, the formal rights and obligations of young people are regulated by the [Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro](#) (2007), which states that the right to elect and stand for elections shall be granted to every citizen of Montenegro of 18 years of age and above with at least a two-year residence in Montenegro (Article 45/3).

The voting right of young people is regulated by the [Law on election of councillors and members of Parliament](#) (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 4 of 8 February 1998, 5/98,

17/98, 14/00, 18/00, 9/01, 41/02, 46/02, 45/04, 48/06, 56/06, Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 46 of 16 September 2011, 14/14, 47/14, 12/16).

According to Article 11 of this law, “a voter who has turned 18 years of age, has legal capacity and permanent residence in Montenegro for no less than two years and permanent residence in a municipality or a borough which is an electoral district for no less than six months prior to the election day, shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate in election of councillors” (para 2).

1.2. NATIONAL YOUTH LAW

General youth policy governance reform in Montenegro was based on the joint effort of the governmental, non-governmental and international organisations to establish a normative legal framework for the implementation of **the first Law on Youth** (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 042/16 of 7 November 2016 and 013/18), adopted by the [Parliament of Montenegro](#).

Through this law, the joint approach to youth policy implementation was introduced in the country for the first time, aiming to support the implementation of the National Youth Action Plan (NYAP 2006-2011) and improve the position of young people and their involvement in all aspects of social life. The law represented a comprehensive and binding official document addressing the needs and rights of young people and regulating how youth issues are addressed in Montenegro.

Revision of the Law on Youth and preparation of by-laws

During the implementation of the first Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 042/16 and 013/18), the need for its revision was noticed. The UN System in Montenegro supported the government in the process of preparing the by-laws on the Law on Youth, under the Joint UN Youth Programme objective “Supporting enabling environment for youth development” (research, policy and legislation work). This participatory process was implemented in co-operation with the Governmental Working Group in charge of the preparation of the by-laws. The process was based on analysis of the law and youth policy context in Montenegro as well as the preparation of recommendations relating to the further improvement of the youth policy legal framework.

As a result, the Rulebook for financing projects of youth organisations relating to the implementation of the youth strategy annual action plans was drafted, based on Article 30 of the Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 042/16 and 013/18).

Furthermore, in order to assure the systematic improvement in the implementation of youth policy, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted **the new Law on Youth** (Official Gazette of

Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 from 30.04.2019 and 027/19 from 17.05.2019) on 4 April 2019. The improvements mainly aimed to:

- institutionalise and empower youth services (youth clubs and youth centres);
- create conditions for the constitution of the representative (umbrella) Association of NGOs and establishment of the Council for Youth as the governmental advisory body for implementation of youth policy;
- improve mechanisms for efficient implementation of youth policy at the local level and strengthen co-operation with local self-governments by supporting their capacity building in the field of youth policy implementation.

The Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, 025/19 and 027/19) regulates the manner of determining and implementing youth policy, as well as measures and activities undertaken in order to improve the social position of young people and create conditions for meeting the needs of young people in all areas of interest to young people (Article 1).

The new law defines **youth policy** as “a set of measures and activities that state bodies, state administration bodies, local self-government bodies, non-governmental organisations, student/pupil parliaments and other legal entities undertake to improve the position of young people, their personal and social development and inclusion in society” (Article 3). For the first time, this law provides a definition of **youth work** in Article 4.

It furthermore stipulates that “youth policy in Montenegro is based on the **principles** of equality, volunteerism, solidarity, active participation and information of young people” (Article 7).

The Law on Youth defines **mechanisms for determination and implementation of youth policy**, including: Youth Strategy (Article 13); Local youth action plan (Article 14); Programme of realisation of public interest in the field of youth policy (Article 15); Council for Youth (national and local level, Articles 16-18); Implementation of youth policy by non-governmental organisations (Article 19); and Alliance of non-governmental organisations, i.e. associations that implement youth policy (Article 20).

By-laws supporting the implementation of the Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 and 027/19) were adopted by the Ministry of Sports and Youth (the previous state administration body responsible for public policy in the field of sports and youth), during 2019-2020. These include:

- Rulebook on criteria and conditions for the selection of premises for youth service (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 074/19 of 30.12.2019);

- Rulebook on the manner of functioning of youth services and performance of administrative and technical tasks necessary for their functioning (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 009/20 of 21.02.2020);
- Rulebook on conditions, manner and procedure of election of members of the Youth Council (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, No. 058/20 of 19.06.2020).

The adoption of these by-laws completed the normative framework and created the conditions for the full implementation of the Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 and 027/19).

However, in January 2021, the Directorate for Sports and Youth, under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, initiated the drafting of technical amendments to the Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 and 027/19), bearing in mind that the **Regulation on the organisation and manner of work of the state administration** (“Official Gazette of Montenegro”, Nos. 118/20, 121/20, 001/21, 002/21, 029/21, 034/21 and 041/21) **changed the institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy in Montenegro.**

Other laws relevant to youth in Montenegro

Apart from the above-mentioned, there are various laws concerning promotion and protection of rights of young people in different fields of social life. Rights of youth in the field of education, youth participation and organisation are prescribed by the Law on Higher Education, the General Law on Education, the Law on Vocational Education, and the Law on National Vocational Qualifications. The Law on Social and Child Protection guarantees social protection of youth; rights of young people on family and parental care are prescribed by the Family Law of Montenegro. Protection of youth with disabilities and other vulnerable groups is guaranteed by the Law on Prohibition against Discrimination, the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, the Law on Travel Privileges of Persons with Disabilities and the Law on Juvenile Justice.

1.3. NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The National Youth Action Plan (NYAP)¹ 2006-2011 was adopted by the Government of Montenegro in October 2006, symbolising the re-establishment of the strategic framework for youth policy in the country for the first time. The NYAP envisaged social measures in nine areas (culture, education, employment, family, health, human rights, information and mobility, leisure time and participation). In order to monitor and evaluate NYAP implementation, a National Steering Committee on Youth was established in the same year.

1. Nacionalni plan akcije za mlade (NPAM).

[The Youth Strategy 2017-2021](#) (hereinafter the Strategy) was adopted by the Government of Montenegro on 29 September 2016. The scope of the Strategy is regulated by the Law on Youth (Article 13), stating that it defines the competencies of youth policy entities, long-term goals, measures and activities, as well as financial, administrative and other measures for their implementation. The main goal is to ensure that Montenegro receives the necessary support and resources, so that young people can have all the requirements to develop their competencies, values and characteristics necessary for quality of life and holistic social, emotional, psychological and physical development. The Strategy positions young people not only as subjects of youth policy, but also as actors that are responsible for its planning, realisation, monitoring and evaluation.

The Strategy defines **six key priorities** (outcomes) regarding Montenegrin youth:

- A. Young people achieve economic and social security through improved access to labour market and employment;
- B. Young people have access to quality education;
- C. Young people are active citizens, involved, motivated and proactive, and participate in decision-making and community development processes, in creation of policies and their implementation;
- D. Young people are healthy, they are safe, and have access to an adequate support system for transition to adulthood and self-realisation;
- E. Young people have access to quality cultural content as creators and consumers;
- F. Normative and institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy has been established.

Integral parts of the Strategy are:

- an **implementation plan** with general measures and sub-measures which should lead to fulfilment of key outcomes within the planned deadline, with identification of entities accountable for their implementation;
- a **monitoring and evaluation framework** of the implementation of the Strategy, containing 52 indicators (international and national indicators);
- an **action plan** which contains concrete activities that are going to be implemented within the first year of implementation (2017).

For the purpose of identifying measures and key activities to improve the position of young people in Montenegro, action plans for the implementation of the Strategy were adopted and implemented for 2017, 2018 and 2019. The former Ministry of Sports and Youth, within the support of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and in collaboration with all youth actors relevant in the field of youth policy, prepared a two-year Action Plan 2020-2021, which is

currently implemented by the newly established governing bodies. The implementation of activities relating to increasing youth participation in the decision-making process, promoting youth entrepreneurship and greater employability of young people, non-formal education of young people, strengthening their competencies and socio-emotional skills has been slightly delayed by the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of December 2020, local action plans for youth were adopted in all (23) Montenegrin municipalities, according to the Law on Youth (Article 14), which prescribes the obligation of the municipality to adopt a local action plan for youth for the period of validity of the action plan at the national level. This legal solution creates conditions for the improvement of youth policy at the local level, and introduces, for the first time, misdemeanour liability for responsible persons in the municipality in case of non-fulfilment of legal obligations.

Programme of realisation of public interest in the field of youth policy

Article 15 of the Law on Youth (Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 and 027/19) prescribes that the Government of Montenegro shall adopt the programme on achieving public interest in the field of youth policy at least once every two years.

The first programme of this type was adopted by the Government of Montenegro on 16 January 2020 (Conclusion No. 07-8055). The programme shall be implemented by the responsible authority in close co-operation with other institutions, state administration bodies and other administrative bodies competent for respective areas of importance for youth, local self-governments, capital and other legal entities.

1.4. YOUTH POLICY DECISION MAKING

The youth policy in Montenegro is implemented by the Government of Montenegro; state administration bodies and other administration bodies competent for areas of relevance to young people; municipalities, the Capital and the Old Royal Capital; non-governmental organisations; and other entities participating in planning, implementation and improvement of youth policy (Law on Youth, Article 3).

After the **Regulation on the organisation and manner of work of the state administration** ("Official Gazette of Montenegro", Nos. 118/20, 121/20, 001/21, 002/21, 029/21, 034/21, 041/21) came into force, state administration was reorganised whereby the previous Ministry of Sports and Youth ceased to exist and a new **Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports** (hereinafter the Ministry) was established. The **Directorate for Sports and Youth** (hereinafter the Directorate) was established as an administrative body within the new Ministry, which performs administrative and comprehensive supervision over the Directorate's work and functioning.

The Directorate and the Ministry will, in close co-operation with relevant stakeholders, prepare the evaluation of the Strategy and its action plans, as well as the Report on the implementation of the Youth Strategy 2017-2021 that will be submitted to the Government by the Ministry within three months from the date of expiry of the Strategy mandate.

The technical amendments to the Law on Youth and by-laws are also prepared with the aim of clearly defining the competencies of the Ministry and Directorate in fulfilling all administrative and technical conditions for announcement of the new public call for hiring administrators of youth services. This is of particular importance due to the fact that the contracts with the administrators of youth services at the local level expired in the first half of 2021, and there was no possibility for the contracts to be extended due to the new organisation of the state administration, which hinders implementation of youth policy and youth work at the local level.

The Montenegrin National Youth Council, called **Youth Network of Montenegro** (hereinafter Youth Network), was registered on 16 November 2020, pursuant to Article 20 of the Law on Youth, as an independent, representative (umbrella) Association of non-governmental organisations implementing youth policy in Montenegro. The representativeness of the Youth Network is determined by the Directorate for Sports and Youth for a period of one year by issuing a certificate of representativeness. Consultations and drafting of the organisation's first four-year Strategic plan were realised in June 2020 within the financial support of the Regional Co-operation Council through the Western Balkans Youth Lab programme. The four-year Strategy will also include a Communication Strategy of the Youth Network. The Network recently hired a Secretary General and established the General Secretariat which will, in accordance with the Statute of the organisation, be responsible for implementing activities defined by the Strategic Plan as well as other activities in accordance with the needs of the Youth Network. The application of the Youth Network for membership of the European Youth Forum should be officially submitted in the following period.

1.5. CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH WITH OTHER MINISTRIES

The first **National Youth Steering Committee (NYSC)** was appointed by the Ministry of Education and Science (Decision No. 01-3481) on 2 July 2007, according to the Decision of the Government with the mission to monitor and direct, implement, and promote the National Youth Action Plan (2006-2011).

During development of the new Youth Strategy 2017-2021, the principle of cross-sectoral co-operation was introduced through establishment of the inter-ministerial working group aiming to ensure a professional and efficient advisory cross-departmental and cross-sectoral collaboration of representatives of the Ministry of Education, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Science, Ministry of

Sustainable Development and Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, and representatives of the civil sector. The Strategy clearly positions youth as a matter of public interest to Montenegro and through a holistic approach it envisages not only inter-sectoral co-operation but also inter-ministerial co-operation of youth policy actors.

Therefore, in 2017, the Ministry of Sports and Youth has established an inter-ministerial **Co-ordination cross-sectoral body** for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. Its mandate is to regularly report on the activities of the respective ministries relating to the implementation of the Action Plan of the Strategy, suggest possible cross-sectoral projects and give recommendations on the strategic documents in the field of youth. This approach enables a better implementation of youth policy, better planning of youth activities and, with the joint effort of all relevant stakeholders, it strives to improve the position of young people in Montenegro. The intention is to give this body greater influence by being led by the Prime Minister himself in order to ensure greater visibility and impact of all governmental policies conducted in different areas of youth inclusion, to advance the synergy of cross-sectoral co-operation between institutions and their policies as well as to confirm that youth is a high priority of the Government of Montenegro.

The Council for Youth (heir of the previous NYSC) will be established in order to encourage the development of youth policy, as an expert and advisory body, in accordance with Article 16 of the Law on Youth. The competencies of the Council for Youth will be to give proposals for improvement of youth policy, give suggestions in the procedure of the Strategy implementation; take part in the revision of the law on youth; monitor the implementation of the Strategy and suggest measures for its improvement; give opinion on other matters of importance for youth etc.

1.6. EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICY

The political commitment to evidence-based youth policy has been clearly stated in the first Law on Youth in Montenegro, which stipulated that youth policy is created, implemented and promoted on the basis of real needs of young people, empirical and practical knowledge on the situation of young people, research and regular monitoring and evaluation of the situation of youth, with their active involvement in this process (Article 3). Furthermore, the law stated that youth policy is based on the principles of voluntariness, partnerships, skills, professional work and scientific knowledge (Article 7).

The evaluation of NYAP (2006-2011), however, showed that neither institutionalised mechanisms nor the budgetary allocations are developed in order to provide explicit support to an evidence-based approach to youth policy making and implementation in Montenegro. This also implied that there were no institutionalised mechanisms of co-operation with the

research community in the country, and therefore there was a need for the research area of youth policy to be additionally developed and systematically planned.²

The new Youth Strategy 2017-2021 therefore set an example of best practice in applying innovative, inclusive and participatory approaches to strategic planning focused on better outcomes for young people. In order to operationalise the Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy (defining baseline and target values for 52 indicators), initial consultations were conducted with MONSTAT – Official Statistical Agency on the introduction of those indicators that are not included in the official statistics, monitoring indicators for youth established by the EUROSTAT, as well as defining a methodology for monitoring indicators for which there is no developed methodology. As mentioned earlier, monitoring of the implementation of action plans of the Strategy is provided through a Co-ordination Cross-Sectoral Body composed of representatives of various relevant government departments, which is also responsible for preparing a draft of reports on the realisation of action plans. The Co-ordination Body meets at the annual seminar to evaluate the results achieved in the implementation of activities from the previous year and to propose activities for the development of a new action plan for the coming period. In order to improve statistical visibility of youth population in Montenegro, MONSTAT issues annual reports in accordance with the indicators of youth policy, accompanied by Eurostat.

Although the revised Law on Youth (2019) has no explicit references to an evidence-based youth policy principle, the development of youth policy and legal framework in Montenegro is clearly based on evidence, needs assessment, and youth research at both the national and local level. The Ministry of Sports and Youth has supported a great number of different researches and opinion polls on youth position and needs through the projects implemented by youth NGOs. One of the recent studies supported by the Ministry in 2019 is Research on Political and Civic Participation of Youth in Montenegro,³ conducted by the NGO CEDEM.

Recently, the former Directorate for Sports and Youth, in partnership with the UNDP Office in Podgorica, conducted mapping of priority areas for the development of new youth strategic documents (May 2021). This includes consultations and qualitative research with relevant stakeholders aiming to gather opinions on short-term and long-term priorities in the field of youth policy and youth work. The research, which was conducted through focus groups, consultative meetings and online questionnaires, involved 68 participants.

By the end of 2021, the UNDP Office in Podgorica will also conduct research and assessment of the local policies pertaining to youth and youth perceptions/needs in 15 local self-governments (LSGs) in the framework of the Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the

2. Directorate of Youth and Sports (DYS), Montenegro National report: First co-operation cycle of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012, Podgorica.

3. Study can be accessed at www.cedem.me/component/jdownloads/send/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1962-politicka-igradanska-participacija-mladih-u-crnoj-gori.

Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2). The ultimate goal of the research is to provide comprehensive bases for developing local youth policy that will keep the younger population in their hometowns and offer them better living conditions. The final report will aim to encompass the key findings and recommendations in the area of youth policy and youth needs/perceptions in each of the targeted local governments, including areas of education, employment, free time, youth services, youth participation, etc. Special emphasis will be laid on assessing needs of socially excluded youth, youth with disabilities, youth belonging to minority groups, dropouts from the education system, NEET (not in education, employment and training) youth while all data, analytics and recommendations should be gender disaggregated. These findings and recommendations will serve as a basis for implementation of the forthcoming project's activities that will be focusing on efficiently engaging and equipping youth with the knowledge and skills needed to become equal partners and change agents in the targeted local self-governments, while providing them with opportunities to apply for an internship programme that will provide professional training for gaining basic knowledge and skills in their communities.

1.7. FUNDING YOUTH POLICY

Funds for implementation of the Youth Strategy are obtained from the Montenegrin National Budget and other sources in accordance with the Law on Youth (Article 27). 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 (Article 25).

The budget of the municipality shall also be used to provide the resources for establishing and functioning of youth services at the local level and activities that are implemented by NGOs in line with the local youth action plan, in line with this Law (Article 27).

Funds for the implementation of the programme and measures relating to development of youth services, pursuant to the Law on You (2019), are also 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 (Article 27).

The budget for financing the projects and programmes of non-governmental organisations dealing with youth and implementing the youth policy at the national level **has trebled in 2018 compared with 2017**. Based on the public calls for financing projects of NGOs implementing the youth policy, according to the Law on Youth from 2016 and Law on non-governmental organisations, the Ministry allocated almost **€800 000 for around 150 projects of NGOs** aimed at the implementation of youth policy measures and activities within the six key priorities defined by the National Youth Strategy 2017-2021.

According to the new legal solutions prescribed by the Law on Youth from 2019, public budget has been allocated for:

- construction, reconstruction, adaptation and furnishing of youth services implemented by the Ministry of Sports and Youth in line with Article 25 of this Law. In 2019 **€170 000** was allocated for the reconstruction and adaptation of **six youth clubs** in Montenegro (municipalities: Mojkovac, Plav, Petnjica, Danilovgrad, Nikšić and Šavnik);
- the implementation of the *Programme on Achieving Public Interest in the field of Youth Policy* referred to Article 15 of this Law; more than €500 000 has been allocated for the implementation of the programme for 2020;
- functioning of youth services established by the Ministry of Sports and Youth;
- the activities implemented by the Ministry of Sports and Youth in line with the Strategy and Action plan referred to Article 13, paragraph 3 of this Law. In 2019 the amount of **€96 000** was allocated for the projects of **12 NGOs implementing youth policy** in line with the Strategy and its Action Plan for 2019.

Total budget funds spent for the implementation of the Action Plan of the Strategy for 2019 was over **€1 million** (regular budgetary funds). Some of the activities were realised through donations by international organisations (OSCE, UNDP, UNICEF etc.).

During 2019 the **Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro** allocated **€664 000** for development of youth entrepreneurship through the implementation of credit lines for young people and high-school students.

The Regional Youth Co-operation Office (RYCO) continuously provides financial support for implementing projects aimed at youth mobility, intercultural exchanges, youth participation and non-formal education targeting young people from six Western Balkan countries. Approximately €50 000 annually is allocated for the projects of Montenegrin organisations; the total fund for the projects from all Western Balkan countries is around **€1 million per year**.

The **Ministry of Science** stimulates scientific productivity and enhances the quality of scientific research through numerous public calls for supporting researchers and young scientists: competition for research projects, competition for innovative grants, call for PhD research fellowships and competition for co-financing of scientific research and innovation in 2019 as well as Annual Scientific Achievement Awards, one of the categories in which is “Most successful scientist/scientists up to 30 years old”.

The Ministry of Culture allocated around **€130 000 in 2019** for supporting youth cultural projects implemented by youth organisations or non-formal youth groups, which is a unique

opportunity for young people who do not belong to formal organisations to receive support for their ideas and projects.

The Ministry of Economy continuously works on implementing programmes to increase the competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, while providing support for young entrepreneurs through measures that foster innovation, a mentoring programme line, and the Programme for improving the competitiveness of the economy for 2019, within which 10 programme lines are defined.

The Ministry of Education, based on a public competition, through the Fund for students and teachers awarded 400 prizes to students and teachers for the results achieved in 2018/2019.

The Ministry of Agriculture has also provided support for the young in rural areas.

One of the current obstacles to the efficient use of available resources (including EU funds) is insufficient capacity of the Directorate for Youth and Sports to collect funds from foreign donors, local partners and other sources. Also, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the Directorate for Youth and Sports for the co-ordination of cross-sectoral projects.

1.8. CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION IN THE YOUTH FIELD

Montenegro has entered the long process of European integration and hopes to become a member of the EU at the earliest opportunity. While EU member states are not bound by the obligation to adopt *acquis communautaire* in the area of youth, there is nevertheless the expectation that the good practices of the EU, European co-operation, and international development, including the standards of the Council of Europe,⁴ will be taken on board in the development of the local youth sectors in candidate countries.

European and global standards for youth policy have been developed on the basis of tried and tested practice from around the world regarding how to implement effective youth policies. It is, therefore, in the interest of the Montenegrin authorities and the youth sector to consider such standards in the development and implementation of strategies and laws in

4. While no one universal standard for youth policy exists, there is a consensus on some principles, and these have most recently been expressed in the Baku Commitment on Youth Policies. This consensus has emerged over 30 years of European and global co-operation in the multilateral institutions and on the basis of extensive studies of the practice of youth policy development, evaluation and research. Key reference documents include: Peter Lauritzen and the European Youth Forum: 11 Indicators of a National Youth Policy; Lasse Siurala: A European Framework for Youth Policy, www.youthpolicy.org/wpcontent/uploads/library/2006_European_Framework_Youth_Policy_Eng.pdf; Howard Williamson, Supporting young people in Europe Vols. 1 and 2, www.youthpolicy.org/wpcontent/uploads/library/2002_supporting_young_people_Europe_Vol1_Eng.pdf and www.youthpolicy.org/wpcontent/uploads/library/2008_supporting_young_people_Europe_Vol2_Eng.pdf.

the field of youth, as well in the development of relevant accountability structures and evaluation and monitoring mechanisms (UN System Montenegro 2016).

The Youth Strategy 2017-2021 reveals that there is no precise data on the utilisation of the European and other international youth programmes to which Montenegro acceded. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the data on the utilisation of the programme and increase the promotion of the existing international funds and programmes targeting youth, such as Erasmus+. Furthermore, in order to conduct the youth policy in accordance with current international standards, and to increase the effectiveness of the opportunities provided by international co-operation, the limited human resources of the Directorate of Youth and Sports should be increased. It should work proactively to establish bilateral and regional co-operation and co-operation with international institutions in Montenegro, as well as participation in the work of international bodies in the field of youth policy (UN System Montenegro 2016).

Regional Office for Youth Co-operation (RYCO)

The Montenegrin Government took an active role in the process of establishing the [Regional Office for Youth Co-operation \(RYCO\)](#), which officially became a part of the Berlin process, by signing the “Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the Regional Office for the Western Balkan youth co-operation” at the Vienna Summit on 27 August 2015 (together with the Prime Ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Serbia), with the aim of strengthening co-operation in the region. Two years after fulfilling the conditions stipulated by the international agreement for opening a branch office, in the spirit of a key foreign policy priority – Montenegro’s accession to the European Union – the Government of Montenegro and the previous Ministry of Sports and Youth continued to work intensively to assure effective functioning of the local RYCO office. The Regional Office for Youth Co-operation has organised several national annual events across the region with the aim of presenting its achievements in 2020 and plans for the coming year. The events were organised within the regional campaign “A Better Region Starts with YOUth”, supported by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Western Balkans Youth Lab Project

Montenegro is actively engaged in implementing the Western Balkans Youth Lab project with the support of the [Regional Co-operation Council \(RCC\)](#). The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports has recently appointed two advisors (one from the Ministry, the other from the Directorate for Sports and Youth) as the contact person and the person in charge of communication within the project under RCC co-operation. The three-day capacity-building training for strengthening the capacities of youth services administrators engaged by the Ministry of Sports and Youth was also conducted on 27-30 September 2020, bringing together 25 participants. Capacities of youth services administrators have been strengthened for the efficient management of administrative tasks and duties, in close co-operation with the

(former) Ministry of Sports and Youth and local self-governments. Young 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. As the result of this project, networking of key actors in the field of youth, as well as motivation of young people to engage in creating and implementing youth activities in youth services, have been increased.

The European Youth Card (EYCA) programme in Montenegro

Since April 2018, the Government of Montenegro (former Ministry of Sports and Youth and since January 2021 the Directorate for Sports and Youth), in close co-operation with the Centre for Youth Education and the European Youth Cards Association – EYCA Brussels, is successfully implementing the European Youth Card programme in Montenegro. The European Youth Card (EYCA) programme is in itself socially responsible and represents one of the key mechanisms for increasing the level of social inclusion and cohesion of all young people in Montenegro. When it comes to providing the special benefits for marginalised youth, co-operation with the private and state companies which will provide various benefits for those who belong to vulnerable categories has been planned in the near future. Co-operation has also been established with youth organisations dealing with vulnerable groups (youth with disabilities, Roma youth organisations) as well as with organisations established in the north of Montenegro (Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Berane, Mojkovac) through the EYCA project. Statistics relating to the EYCA programme in Montenegro show that the youth card is becoming one of the key mechanisms in the field of increasing participation and mobility of young people as well as raising their interest in benefits but also in various educational programmes offered by the card: there have been more than 670 000 page views of the EYCA website; more than 18 000 card applications have been submitted and more than 13 000 cards have been distributed to young people throughout Montenegro.

1.9. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

Through qualitative research conducted by the Directorate for Sports and Youth, in partnership with the UNDP Office in Podgorica, in May 2021, the following priority areas for the future development of the strategic and legal framework in the field of youth have been identified:

- improving the institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy: Establishing the Council for Youth as an expert and advisory governmental body that

should ensure better inter-sectoral co-operation and connection with the Youth Network as Umbrella Youth Organisation;

- strengthening youth services and improving working conditions for their smooth functioning;
- encouraging proactive participation of young people in the process of creation and implementation of youth policy at the national and local level;
- encouraging employment and self-employment of young people;
- fostering the involvement of young people as the creators and consumers of cultural events;
- strengthening the mobility of young people emphasising educational mobility;
- empowering young people in the field of non-formal education;
- development, transition to adulthood and health protection of youth;
- promoting and encouraging young people to volunteer;
- professionalisation of youth work, ICT skills and digitalisation;
- gender equality;
- strengthening the resilience of young people through the development of their social and emotional competencies;
- social cohesion and social inclusion of vulnerable youth groups;
- improving the quality of education in the light of digitalisation of the education system and the epidemiological crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus;
- promotion of media literacy among youth and youth media development.

Plans for a more inclusive approach aimed at young people belonging to vulnerable categories relate to defining and implementing measures and activities that will be developed through new strategic documents in the field of youth policy, including:

- regular mapping of young people needs, especially those belonging to vulnerable groups in all regions of Montenegro;
- improvement of statistics on the position of young people with developed indicators relating to the EU indicators for monitoring and evaluating the results achieved in this field;
- encouraging the active participation and informing of young people with disabilities, including the structured dialogue mechanism which is mandatory in EU countries;
- development of psychosocial support programmes for adolescents and transition of young people to adulthood with a focus on marginalised categories exposed to discrimination;
- development and promotion of socially useful programmes for young people with the aim of improving their position in all areas of public interest;

- through the digitalisation of work with young people, special attention should be paid to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in education programmes, active employment measures, non-formal education, information, mobility, health and transition to adulthood;
- conducting training programmes for young people who are at risk of discrimination in order to increase their involvement in the various youth projects and activities;
- the new Youth Strategy will be developed based on the principles of social inclusion and cohesion – the most vulnerable groups of young people should be specifically targeted by youth policy measures and mechanisms;
- ensure greater representation of young people with disabilities, young people from minority groups, rural areas as well as the Roma population based on the mapped needs and results of the evaluation of programmes targeting these groups.

1.10. REFERENCES

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