

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: ALBANIA YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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1.1 TARGET POPULATION OF YOUTH POLICY

Albania has always been considered a country with a young population – amongst the youngest in Europe, together with Kosovo*. The country has a high share of youth in its overall population. The demographic picture, however, has changed recently due to migration and brain drain. As per the latest data from the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT), measurement as of January 2021, the demographic picture of Albania is as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Statistical data on youth population in Albania¹

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Total population (total number)	1 409 982	1 419 759	2 829 741
Youth population (15-29) (total number)	323 559	319 500	643 059
Youth population (15-29) as share of total population (%)	22.9%	22.5%	22.7%

The [National Youth Law](#), approved in 2019, defines that a “young person”² is considered an individual, female, or male, who has reached the age of 15 to 29 years.³ Voting rights in Albania are gained once a citizen turns 18 years,⁴ while the [Criminal Code](#) applies 14 years as the age when criminal liability is applied.

With regard to working and employment rights, based on the [State Inspectorate of Labour and Social Services](#), the employment age in Albania is 16 years, on condition that from 16 to 18 years old an employee works in a position that does not harm their health, nor their

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

1. INSTAT, data retrieved from www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/popullsia/#tab2, last accessed 13 August 2021.

2. Albanian is a gendered language and Point F of Article 3, Law 75/2019 includes the gender aspect in the definition. Translation and adaptations are the author’s.

3. Parliament of Albania, Law 75/2019, Article 3, Point F, available at www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20191107152923ligje%20nr.%2075,%20dt.%204.11.2019.pdf, last accessed 25 August 2021.

4. Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, available at <http://kqz.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Electoral-Code-of-Albania-english-2.pdf>, last accessed 30 August 2021.

education. The legislation in force also provides that teenagers from 14 to 16 years old can, however, participate in vocational and counselling practices. The Ministry of Education Sports and Youth manages the [National Traineeship Programme](#) for students and recent graduates.

1.2 NATIONAL YOUTH LAW

As a post-communist country, Albania went through a democratic transition in 1991 with the collapse of the former regime. Some cultural patterns of youth work were inherited by the former regime, where youth work was observed with a negative feeling as a superficial tool used by the totalitarian regime. However, with the democratic transition processes, the picture of youth work has faced many positive changes, with the youth sector being the main catalyst. Nevertheless, youth policy has also gone through relevant developments, such as the approval of the [National Youth Law](#).

The National Youth Law in Albania, a long-awaited and requested⁵ law, was passed in November 2019. The Law comprises 20 Articles and provides the main guiding principle of youth work in Albania, as well as youth policy both at central and local level: “The purpose of this law is to define the activities, mechanisms and authorities responsible for the protection and promotion of the rights of young people in the Republic of Albania and Albanian youth in the diaspora, as well as the financing of youth activities within the framework of the right of youth for special protection by the state.”⁶

Article 3 of the Law defines the main concepts and definitions, including the “structured dialogue” among all youth, youth actors and the central and local institutions. It continues with the definition of “Youth Non-Formal Education”, “Safe Youth Space”, “Youth Infrastructure”, “Youth Organisation”, “Organisations for Youth”, “Youth Policy”, “Subject of Youth Policy” and finally it defines the concept of “Youth”.

The role of definitions is important given that this law sets out the main principles and serves as a backbone for further recognition of youth work in the country, which until now has been led and advocated for by youth and civil society organisations. What is relevant to specify is the definition of Youth Policy as “the sustainable comprehensive activity undertaken by the central and local government, which aims to create favourable conditions for the personal development of young people and for their participation in public, social, economic and cultural life, at local and national level, through activities that encourage the development of young people in the country”.⁷ The current law specifies that it is based on a set of important “principles”⁸ such as:

1. the principle of equality and anti-discrimination

5. See www.crca.al/sq/news-youth-politics/rrjeti-kombetar-i-te-rinjve-ne-shqiperi-udheheq-perpjekjet-per-nje-ligj-per-te, last accessed 30 August 2021.

6. Law 75/2019, Article 2.

7. Ibid, Article 3.

8. Ibid, Article 4.

2. the principle of freedom of organisation for youth and organisations
3. the principle of subsidiarity.

It is applied not only to Albanian citizens but also to foreigners with Albanian residency in Albania, in compliance with the legislation in power for foreign citizens.

The main positive aspects of this Law relate to its recognition of youth work, not only through definitions and special articles, but also to the fact that it regulates the involvement of local governments as well in youth work. The Law establishes that the National Youth Council is a consultative body at the respective ministry. The National Youth Council can have from 14 to 16 members.

Until September 2021 the youth component fell under the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. However, with the newly formed government of Albania following elections of April 2021, since September 2021 the country has a state ministry dedicated to youth and children ([State Ministry of Education Sports and Youth](#)). Another relevant aspect of the law, based on its principle of subsidiarity, is the recognition and establishment of local youth councils as consultative bodies for local youth policy making and youth policy decisions.

Through Law 75/2019, the country now has a National Youth Agency, the only youth policy executive body in the country, established through Decision No. 681 dated 2.9.2020.⁹ Prior to the Agency, the National Youth Service was in place. The National Youth Agency is highly relevant and has a primary role in the promotion and funding of youth work. The National Youth Agency succeeded the former National Youth Service, established within NYAP. The latter had these main competences:

- “1. implementing youth policies and programmes drafted by the responsible ministries for youth policies;
2. monitoring and co-working with the regional youth centres.”¹⁰

The Youth Law also regulates youth data collection, which at national level falls under the responsible ministry, which currently is the [State Ministry of Education Sports and Youth](#). However, local authorities by this law are expected to gather youth-related data about their local context. Article 8 of the law specifies that the responsible ministry collects, administers and analysis these youth data.¹¹ Nevertheless, the Youth Law does not set any concrete youth policy priorities, it rather sets general principles.

9. <http://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Permbledhje-e-ligjit-dhe-akteve-n%c3%abnligjore-n%c3%ab-fush%c3%abn-e-rinis%c3%ab.pdf>, last accessed August 2021.

10. Loka K., Youth Wiki Chapter I on Albania (2017), available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262379/Youth-Wiki-Albania.pdf/f3355a46-9dc3-156b-95ab-3fab48f10964>, last accessed August 2021.

11. <http://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Permbledhje-e-ligjit-dhe-akteve-n%c3%abnligjore-n%c3%ab-fush%c3%abn-e-rinis%c3%ab.pdf>, last accessed August 2021.

1.3 NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The main document in the country with regard to youth policy and youth, despite Law 75/2019, remained the [National Youth Action Plan 2013-2020](#),¹² drafted through an inclusive process. This document is the third National Youth Strategy adopted by the Albanian Government. The first, adopted in 2003, was named the National Youth Strategy (Strategjia Kombëtare e Rinisë) and the second was the National Youth Strategy 2007-2013 (Strategjia Kombëtare e Rinisë 2007-2013).

The NAYP included six strategic objectives:

1. *Enhancement and participation of Youth in democratic decision-making processes*, intended not only for creation of appropriate infrastructure for youth support, youth centres, but for strengthening the structures and capacities of youth organisations and groups as well;
2. *Enhancement of youth employment through effective labour market policies*, improving staffing, legal support of “start-up” programmes to expand the courses offered by vocational schools and creating contests to promote innovative ideas;
3. *Health, Sport and Environment* have a strategic objective to preserve and protect the health of young people through integrated health policies, coupled with massive sports culture;
4. *Education of Youth*, aimed at improving the curricula related to life-long learning, improving and strengthening the education system;
5. *Social protection*: activities envisaged in this objective are aimed at strengthening the links of this social protection system starting from capacity building and community interaction;
6. *Culture and Volunteerism*, intended to improve the opportunities for young people to organise activities for their leisure time, in different fields and topics.

“The NYAP was developed in close co-operation with the Olof Palme Centre and supported by UNFPA Albania Country Office. Compared to its predecessor, the NYAP consists of concrete activities, each of them containing indicators, budget costs, responsible entities and time frames.”¹³

Officially there are no assessment or evaluation documents published yet with regard to the implementation of the National Youth Action Plan, nor of the [National Strategy for Development and Integration](#) (NSDI), an overarching strategy for the period 2015-2020. NSDI

12. For a detailed analysis of the National Youth Action Plan 2013-2020 please refer to Loka K., Youth Wiki Chapter I on Albania (2017), available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262379/Youth-Wiki-Albania.pdf/f3355a46-9dc3-156b-95ab-3fab48f10964>, last accessed August 2021.

13. Loka K., Youth Wiki Chapter I: Albania (2017), available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262379/Youth-Wiki-Albania.pdf/f3355a46-9dc3-156b-95ab-3fab48f10964>, last accessed 30 August 2021.

emphasizes “Youth Empowerment” as one of the main priorities. According to this strategy, challenges faced by youth in Albania relate to:¹⁴

- (1) the need for more youth economic power through employment promotion programmes, education, health and social protection;
- (2) the need to create public spaces serving young people;
- (3) strengthening the capacity of youth organisations;
- (4) creation of youth networks, local councils and national advisory commissions on youth issues;
- (5) the need to increase the active participation of young people in the community and inter-regional programmes.

Nevertheless, despite being compliant with many other sectoral and national strategies, based on the assessment reports done by some youth actors in the youth sector, the overarching criticisms remain in the fact that the monitoring process of the NYAP has not been very successful.¹⁵

1.4 YOUTH POLICY DECISION MAKING

The main body for youth policy making, until September 2021 was the [Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth](#) in Albania. The new government formed in September 2021 has appointed a State Minister for Children and Youth as the responsible body for youth policy making. Nevertheless, other ministries are responsible for the involvement of youth in sectoral strategies and policies, which will be detailed in the following section. With the approval of National Youth Law 75/2019, local government bodies are also acknowledged as important bodies in drafting and implementing youth policies. Article 7 encourages local government bodies to consult and co-operate with local organisations and local youth in the drafting of such policies.

Nevertheless, the establishment of the [National Youth Agency](#) is another step towards more structured youth policy making and implementation. The mission of the agency is:

1. to guarantee the protection and promotion of the rights of young people, through support for non-formal education
2. interaction and activation of youth
3. financing of youth activities
4. implementation of public policies in the field of youth.

The Youth Agency has the enhancement of youth policies as an embedded function in its core. However, its main functions rely on information, promotion of the structured dialogue

14. National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), p. 37.

15. Youth in Albania 2020, report by CRCA, available at www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%202019-2020_0.pdf, last accessed 30 August 2021.

among all youth and youth actors, as well the financing role on youth initiatives, through granting schemes. Currently the Agency has a structure of three main sectors focusing on (1) youth projects; (2) programmes, statistics and co-operation; and (3) finance and support services, led by a General Director.

Within the National Youth Agency a consultative body has been created, the [National Youth Council \(NYC\)](#), which will provide policy orientation to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. The first mandate of the council started in spring 2021. The NYC has 16 members, of which at least five must be selected respecting the gender quotas set out in point 2 of Decision 969 dated 02.12.2020 of the Council of Ministers “On determining the criteria and selection procedures of the members of the National Youth Council, as well as the manner of its organisation and functioning”, as follows:

- A. Minister responsible for Youth;
- B. Director of NYA;
- C. two representatives from the Agency for Support of Local Self-Government;
- D. eight representatives from youth organisations and/or for young people;
- E. four representatives, members of student councils.

1.5 CROSS-SECTORAL APPROACH WITH OTHER MINISTRIES

Youth policies in Albania are managed mainly by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, nevertheless main sectoral strategies and policies are managed by different responsible ministries, as set in each of the strategies. It is relevant to highlight that policies regarding employment and also vocational education, such as the [National Strategy on Skills and Employment](#) 2019-2022, are managed by the [Ministry of Finance and Economy](#) (MoFE), as well as the law on Promotion of Employment (in force since April 2019), and the Law of Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF 2010). For each of these sectoral strategies involving youth an Executive Agency has been created, namely:

- [National Agency on Skills and Employment](#) (NAES)
- [National Agency for Vocational Education Training and Qualification](#) (NAVETQ)
- [Agency for Social Business](#) (NBS).

Youth is also mentioned, but not specifically categorised, as a target group in other important strategies such as the National Action Plan for LGBTI 2016-2020 or the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptian people in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020.¹⁶

16. Loka K., Youth Wiki Chapter I on Albania (2017), available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262379/Youth-Wiki-Albania.pdf/f3355a46-9dc3-156b-95ab-3fab48f10964>, last accessed 30 September 2021.

1.6 EVIDENCE-BASED YOUTH POLICY

Evidence-based policy making in Albania is not practised generally, including the youth sector. Due to several factors, this remains a weak point in decision making in Albania. Nevertheless, one can point out positive steps taken in this regard within the youth sector. The process of drafting the National Youth Action Plan 2013-2020 has been quite inclusive and with several public consultations, inviting all important stakeholders.

The drafting process of the Youth Law was generally observed and assessed as an inclusive one.¹⁷ Nevertheless, its first approval as draft law in May 2019 did not pass without criticism. The National Youth Congress, a youth-led membership organisation, requested the revision of Articles 1, 2, 3, 9, 11 and 14, as well as the removal of Article 13 “on the establishment of a National Youth Organisation”.¹⁸ This stance was also supported by another youth organisation, Liburnetik.¹⁹

The [Albanian National Youth Network and Children’s Rights Centre Albania](#) also sent an open letter to the Parliament to revise the draft law. In September 2019 the draft law was again put on the Parliament’s agenda by the Education Committee. Nevertheless, November 2019 marked the closed consultation of the Parliament and Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth with the outcome that none of the recommendations would be considered, and the draft law was approved as such.

The [European Commission’s Progress Report 2020](#) assesses the role of youth law as relevant to enhance the role of youth organisations in decision making and ensure the efficiency of state institutions working on issues affecting young people. The Commission’s report echoes the fact that youth organisations expressed concerns about the new Law, especially on the representation issue of the structures which shall be created. Three youth centres were established in 2018 in Lac, Lushnja and Elbasan, but no further steps were taken during 2019 to establish the remaining youth centres. Regional youth centres should provide young people with services and develop cultural, social and sporting activities in line with policies and programmes approved by the ministry, but the Law on Youth makes no provisions for such structures.²⁰

1.7 FUNDING YOUTH POLICY

The main source of funding for youth policy with the approval of the Youth Law 75/2019 is the state budget, managed by the National Agency for Youth. Overall, the budget of the Ministry of

17. Statement of Beyond Barriers Albania, available at www.web4yes.eu/news/142/the-law-on-youth-in-albania-is-en-route.html, last accessed 30 September 2021.

18. Statement by National Youth Congress, available at <https://360grade.al/269932/njoftim-i-rendesishem-nga-kongresi-rinor-kombetar/>, last accessed August 2021.

19. See www.liburnetik.org/2019/07/08/qendrim-mbi-ligjin-e-rinise/?lang=sg, last accessed 30 August 2021.

20. European Commission “Albania Country Report 2020”, available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-10/albania_report_2020.pdf, p.104, last accessed October 2021.

Education, Sports and Youth in 2020 was 41.9 billion Albanian lek (ALL), while in 2021 it has a slight increase of 0.9% more than the previous year, with the total sum reaching ALL 42.2 billion.²¹ Based on Article 16, Law 75/2019, state “funding dedicated to youth, according to article 15, point 1, letter ‘a’ of this law is used only for:

a) financing the construction or reconstruction of public facilities and youth infrastructure.

b) financing of projects of youth or/and for youth organisations.

c) co-financing for participation in international programmes.”²²

On the other hand, the total budget of the call for proposals for organisations (youth and/or for youth) launched in July 2021 by the National Youth Agency reaches ALL 28 800 000. An innovative funding element introduced by the National Youth Agency is the financial support to local administrative units in Albania (municipalities et al.) through a similar grant scheme. The call for proposals for local government units to apply with their project ideas in support of local youth policies and projects was launched in June 2021. The total grant provided for the call is ALL 19 200 000.²³

International organisations supporting youth policy development in WB6 are active in Albania as well (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, OSCE). There have also been recent regional initiatives which support youth work and youth co-operation, such as the Regional Youth Co-operation Office in the Western Balkans (RYCO). RYCO is an initiative of the six countries of the Western Balkans (WB6), dedicated to the improvement of regional co-operation in the youth field through cross-regional mobility.

[The UNICEF Country Offices of Albania, Kosovo* and Montenegro](#) jointly launched U-Report Western Balkans – a digital platform aimed at youth activism. The goal of this platform is to establish direct communication with youth and collect their opinions on various topics in order to inform the decision makers on challenges that they face.

Moreover, the European Union and its programmes play an important role in youth work, especially through Erasmus+. The table below shows all relevant interventions. Initiatives rely heavily on the funding provided by different international donors. Without these resources, a decrease in quantity and quality of their international co-operation in the field of youth can be expected. Organisations are interested in participating in the process of formulating clearer youth policies but feel that awareness and motivation of other stakeholders, particularly the general public and decision makers, are not yet strong enough.

Also, [USAID](#)’s planning and local governance programme aims to strengthen the involvement of local civil society groups, businesses and citizens in local government processes through participation in local government outreach mechanisms, such as Citizens Advisory

21. Ministry of Education Sports and Youth, available at <http://arsimi.gov.al/buxheti-dhe-financat/>, last accessed 30 August 2021.

22. Law 75/2019, Article 16, available at <https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Permbledhje-e-ligjit-dhe-akteve-n%C3%ABnligjore-n%C3%AB-fush%C3%ABn-e-rinis%C3%AB.pdf>, last accessed September 2021.

23. National Agency for Youth, available at <http://rinia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Shtojca-6-Udhezuesi-1.pdf>, last accessed 30 August 2021.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Panels (CAPs). Currently there are 13 CAPs in Berat, Durrës, Elbasan, Fier, Kamza, Korça, Kuçova, Lushnja, Patos, Saranda, Vora, Vlora and Tirana, with each having youth members who are involved in discussions on municipal budgets, planning and community activities.

Table 2: List of Donor Programmes supporting (in)directly youth policies, or youth participation in policy making

Donor	Title of programme	Objective	Main activities	Targeted youth
European Union	Erasmus+ 2014-2020 (EUR 14.7 billion) 2021-2021 (EUR 26.2 billion)	Education Youth Work	Specific issues tackled by the programme include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Reducing unemployment, especially among young people</u> • Promoting adult learning, especially for new skills and skills required by the labour market • <u>Encouraging young people to take part in European democracy</u> • Supporting <u>innovation, co-operation and reform</u> • <u>Reducing early school leaving</u> • <u>Promoting co-operation and mobility with the EU's partner countries</u> 	15-29
USA	European Democracy Youth Network	Youth policy	Participants live with a host family, attend an American high school, acquire leadership skills, and engage in activities to learn about U.S. society and values; they also help educate Americans about their home country and culture.	Youth
OSCE PiA	Youth Advisory Group	Promotion and inclusion of Albanian youth perspective in OSCE work	Voluntarily bases and regular meetings	Youth 18-26
World Vision Albania and Kosovo*	Youth programme	Provide space for young people to	Community-based projects and interventions	Youth aged up to 18 years, mostly with vulnerabilities

		express themselves; to build competencies and skills; to help them advocate for and bring changes in the social and economic conditions of the most vulnerable		
WB6 governments and other diverse donors	RYCO	Youth regional reconciliation	Regional youth exchanges	WB Youth
European Union and WB6 governments	RCC Youth Lab (2020-2023 EUR 1.5 million)	Youth Employment Youth Policy	Youth-led projects	WB Youth

1.8 CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION IN THE YOUTH FIELD

The Western Balkans region has always been a vital region with regard to neighbourhood and cross-border relations. Nevertheless, within the process of the region's integration process to the European Union, many other regional co-operation initiatives have been boosted. Through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), the EU has boosted regional cross-border projects, including youth organisations. Besides the IPA III (2021-2027),²⁴ the [Berlin Process](#), launched in 2014, also marked an important process towards youth cross-border co-operation in the field. These developments amplified regional relations with boosting youth policies and youth in itself as drivers of reconciliation. The establishment of [Regional Youth Co-operation Office \(RYCO\)](#) is considered one of the main successes of the Berlin Process.

The European Union Platform of Western Balkans Ministerial Meetings has also resulted in a political commitment towards a "[Western Balkan Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport](#)". The agenda and its action plan build on three main pillars: Political, Thematic and Regional, and the youth component is highly relevant. This agenda also promotes evidence-informed policy making.

Bilateral cross-border co-operation is fostered through Memorandums of Understanding in the field of youth mainly focusing on education, training, exchanges and the economic status of youth. In 2020 Albania and Kosovo* signed 15 new agreements, of which five relate to education, culture and youth, as listed below.²⁵

1. Joint annual cultural calendar between the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania;
2. Film co-production agreement between the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania;
3. Memorandum of co-operation between the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania;
4. Memorandum of Co-operation between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth of the Republic of Albania for the Joint Digital Platform of Pre-University Education;

24. <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2019/03/19/council-agreed-position-draft-regulation-establishing-ipa-iii/>, last accessed September 2021.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

25. <http://ata.gov.al/2020/09/28/qeveria-e-kosoves-miraton-14-marreveshje-bashkepunimi-me-shqiperine-themelohet-edhe-zyra-per-luginen/>, last accessed August 2021.

5. Memorandum of Co-operation between the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Kosovo and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth of the Republic of Albania.

Another initiative was introduced in 2019 by the prime ministers of Albania and North Macedonia, as well the President of Serbia, named initially 'Mini-Schengen' and later in 2021 changed to 'Open Balkan'. Through this initiative, the regional ownership is being emphasized. The initiative aims to advocate for the creation of a mini-Schengen within Western Balkans countries, which shall impact the overall economic situation of the region, including youth mobility, employability, and education.²⁶

Another crucial political framework is the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP), within which the Regional Co-operation Council was founded in 2008.²⁷ In its [2020-2022 Strategy and Work Programme](#), the RCC commits to supporting youth policies and the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes.

A highly relevant youth policy programme was introduced by the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), an intergovernmental organisation operating in the Western Balkans. The programme is called "WB Youth Lab" and the main focus is youth policy participation.²⁸ Its fund reaches EUR 1.5 million and in Albania the National Youth Council is part of the consultative group. Cross-border co-operation has always been boosted by EU programmes and initiatives as well, such as Erasmus+. The Albanian youth sector is also working towards becoming part of international bodies and September 2019 marked the full [membership of Albania into the Erasmus Student Network](#). Such memberships can boost youth advocacy towards better policies and programmes targeting youth, for youth and by youth.

1.9 CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS

In April 2021, Albania held its national elections with the Socialist Party keeping its majority of seats in the Parliament.²⁹ The actual government is mandated until 9 September, therefore currently the main debate has been mainly shifted towards the establishment of the new government, which took place in mid-September 2021. Many of the national strategies that include youth policy have been terminated in 2020, therefore many debates are to be expected on the drafting of new strategic documents and action plans. Following an unstructured

26. <https://euronews.al/al/vendi/2020/11/09/minishengeni-serbia-dhe-shqiperia-firmosin-per-levizjen-e-tytetareve-vetem-me-id/>, last accessed August 2021.

27. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Dialog Sudosteuropa, "A NEW DEAL FOR YOUTH IN THE WESTERN BALKANS", available at https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47261647/FES+Non-paper+A+New+Deal+For+Youth+in+the+Western+Balkans.pdf/3af0bd99-ddba-d862-edbc-ffafc8d2e0c5_p.5, last accessed September 2021.

28. Regional Co-operation Council WBYL, available at www.rcc.int/priority_areas/48/western-balkans-youth-lab-project, last accessed 27 August 2021.

29. Central Election Committee, available at <http://kqz.gov.al/tag/zgjedhjet-25-prill-2021/>, last accessed August 2021.

informative interview with the EKCYP correspondent for Albania, the working group on the new National Youth Strategy (2022-2029) has been established and further steps will be taken in this regard.

Moreover, the Youth Law provides the establishment of local youth councils: “Currently ... 90% of municipalities’ youth policies and initiatives are included within the local planned activities for culture, education and sports initiatives. A lower percentage of young citizens, lack of human resources, low staff capacities and limited financial resources are the main reasons for not having youth policies.”³⁰ Therefore, pursuing the provisions of Law 75/2019, local youth councils are expected to be formed and functional too.

Finally, the National Youth Agency launched its first call for project proposals in July 2021, with a deadline of 12 August 2021, and currently many youth organisations and organisations working with and for youth, as well as local government units that applied for local policies and projects, are expecting the evaluation results. The implementation of such projects and their impact will be an interesting development to study in the future. This grant scheme is the most important public one for youth work in the country.

2022 marks a relevant year for the capital of Albania, Tirana, as it will host the title “[European Capital of Youth](#)”, managed by the municipality and youth NGOs. All these developments both at local and national levels are expected to make the youth policy in Albania more vivid, youth-inclusive and structured.

30. Partners Albania For Change and Development, “Youth Political Participation in Albania”, available at http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Youth_Political_Participation_Albania_2018.pdf, last accessed September 2021.

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