PEER-LEARNING SEMINAR ON CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY APPROACHES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

BACKGROUND PAPER

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Abstract

In contemporary policy processes, cross-sectoral collaboration both within public administration systems as well as beyond the realm of public administration has been steadily increasing. Such collaboration is seen as a way forward because, through such co-operation, resources can be combined to address increasingly complex social challenges more effectively. Cross-sectoral youth policy (CSYP), which addresses challenges associated with youth in society, constitutes an important part of this development. In addition to addressing youth as a social category, involvement of young people as a stakeholder group is another defining feature of youth policy. Youth work and non-formal learning, formal education systems, the labour market, public order, health and social support are the main policy areas with important roles in cross-sectoral youth policy. At the local level, cross-sectoral youth policy means establishing permanent connections between different organisations which operate within, and outside, these policy areas.

The Western Balkan countries have already established the main institutions necessary for CSYP. Nevertheless, there is a potential for further development of CSYP in these countries at the local level. These countries face several very significant developmental challenges which could be effectively addressed by implementing CSYP: youth unemployment, youth poverty, low political trust among young people. Allocating more resources to support competence development through CSYP measures would contribute to the stable development of the countries in general, not only their young people.

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1. Cross-sectoral collaboration in public administration

In contemporary public administration systems, co-operation between different units – ministerial departments and semi-public agencies – is essential. Because of increasingly complex real-world challenges, expertise and competences contained in separated policy sectors are less capable of responding to demands. Independent public organisations, also described as "silos", have been gradually replaced by an alternative systems based on the understanding that success comes through co-operation between various, and relatively autonomous, actors.

The rise of policy processes that were more open to network approaches started some 30 to 40 years ago. New mechanisms, variously described as community engagement, multi-stakeholder consultation and partnering across stakeholder sectors were new ideas which began to gain ground then. Co-operation and partnership among governments, non-governmental organisations and business increased and became associated with promoting collaboration, joined-up services, and multiple networks linking stakeholders and sectors. However, this did not develop similarly in all policy sectors. This network approach is more common in settings where problems are perceived as highly complex, interlinked and transversal. Under such conditions, simple technical solutions from experts are unavailable or unworkable, and negotiated and relational approaches to problem solving are more likely to emerge.[1] Therefore, increased co-operation first started in areas which cut across various borders and policy fields by their very nature, for instance, environmental issues, gender, ageing and regional development. This led to configurations characterised by both formal and informal mechanisms of co-operation among the involved actors, integration of planning and implementation and multi-stakeholder approaches. This new governance mode shifted focus towards inter-organisational and inter-sectoral co-operation/collaboration, formal and informal agreements, involvement, negotiation and persuasion in the centre.[2]

1.1. Cross-sectoral youth policy

In the context of public administration, the period of youth and the group of young people in society are not limited to only one policy area. Youth, which is seen as a transition phase from childhood and dependency to (young) adulthood and autonomy, is linked to a range of policy areas. Different aspects of young people's lives are addressed by different policy fields, making youth a cross-sectoral issue by its very nature. This constitutes also the very core of youth policy: youth policy needs to address a range of areas in the life of a young person in a concerted manner. Youth policy is distinguished from other forms of policy co-operation by the target group – it has young people in the focus. The main objective of integration and co-operation is to provide possibly good conditions for young people both to transit successfully from childhood to adult life as well as to enjoy their youth. For a young generation to flourish so that the entire society is stable and develops, the lives of young people need be addressed in a complex way, and also in ways which are adequate for young people.

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1. Head, B.W. (2008). Three Lenses of Evidence-Based Policy, The Australian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 67, no. 1, pp. 1–11. pp. 2-4.
2. Steurer, R. (2007). From Government Strategies to Strategic Public Management: an Exploratory Outlook on the Pursuit of Cross-Sectoral Policy Integration, *European Environment*, 17, 201–214, (P.208).

Analysis of issues, challenges and potential issues young people are facing in European countries has identified a range of policy areas which are significant for young people:

- education;
- training and employment;
- health;
- values and religion, the Church;
- leisure and culture;
- military and alternative service;
- family policy and child welfare;
- housing;
- youth justice.

Each of these public policy areas is normally well established and functions effectively. These policy areas operate relatively independently from each other, having separate goals, resources for achieving the goals, steering structures and methods. However, many situations and developments in the lives of young people cut across these policy areas. A range of such cross-cutting themes has been identified:

- youth participation and citizenship;
- radicalisation/reaction versus conformity;
- social inclusion;
- youth information;
- multiculturalism and minorities, diasporas;
- gender and sexual orientation equal opportunities;
- local versus global, mobility and internationalism, new technologies;
- urban-rural, centre–periphery dimension.[3]

A single source of expertise or a single administrative unit would not be able to address all the emerging and current challenges. To do so the involvement of several ministries, ministerial departments, other public sector agencies and also organisations outside the public administration is necessary. Youth issues need be addressed in a cross-sectoral manner, through the collaboration of different actors in the public sector but also in NGOs and the business sector. Therefore, cross-sectoral youth policy is used to denote policy collaboration to address the needs of young people.

The whole CSYP process should be based on co-operation with stakeholders and partners. For that to be successful, stakeholders and organisations from different levels of decision making should have clear roles. Also, all actors and stakeholders should be prepared and trained to be effectively involved in CSYP processes.

For CSYP to be successful, appropriate partners need be involved in the process. This implies the identification of the right partners and building common understanding between them. In this respect, two dimensions can be distinguished:

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3. Williamson, H. (2012). Supporting young people in Europe Volume 2 Lessons from the 'second seven' Council of Europe international reviews of national youth policy, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, p. 22-37.

- the horizontal dimension referring to actors from the public and private sectors (businesses, NGOs);
- the vertical dimension, referring to co-operation with regional and local levels to ensure that the CSYP measures are implemented.

Vertical integration and collaboration is highly relevant from the point of view of implementing youth policy measures – while cross-sectoral youth policy measures are planned at the national level, their implementation involves NGOs, including youth NGOs, business sector organisations in addition to public organisations. Practical experience shows that it is important to avoid a gap between CSYP development and implementation. Since CSYP development happens at the national level and implementation of youth policy measures may take place at the local level, co-operation and contact between the central administration and local-level administrations are of utmost importance.[4]

In general, this view accords well with general trends in public administration as well as definitions proposed in policy documents of large international organisations and other states.[5] Cross-sectoral co-operation constitutes the very core of youth policy. It is important to note that co-operation should include public, business and not-for-profit sectors, and not just different public policy sectors, which makes it truly cross-sectoral.[6]

On a larger scale, the basis for CSYP should be a win-win situation, where every participant gains something. The need to establish a win-win situation stems from the fact that representatives of different policy fields and partners possess different interests, expectations, attitudes and needs. To make participation in the CSYP process attractive, partners' varying interests and backgrounds need be taken into account. Issues arising in this situation can be addressed when developing CSYP goals, strategies and action plans.

Collaboration requires the existence of institutional mechanisms to develop and implement cross-sectoral youth policy. The exact institutional format depends on a country's specific political and public administration system. However nearly all European Union countries[7] have established institutional mechanisms for ensuring a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy.

Another crucial aspect of cross-sectoral youth policy is a legal framework. Without a legal framework to outline the basis for collaboration, the co-ordination of different governmental units would be very hard, if not impossible. Practically all European Union countries have adopted one or several legislative acts which frame cross-sectoral youth policy and set certain boundaries to it. To develop and implement cross-sectoral youth policy, most countries have adopted strategic national

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4. Taru, M. (2016). PEER LEARNING EXERCISE ON CROSS SECTORIAL YOUTH POLICY 2 seminars in the frame of the European Union Work Plan for Youth (2014-2015). Luxembourg 15th - 18th June 2015, Riga 11th-12th November 2015. Report.
5. Nico, M. (2014). LIFE IS CROSS-SECTORAL WHY SHOULDN'T YOUTH POLICY BE? Overview of existing information on cross-sectoral youth policy in Europe.
6. See Forrer, J.J., Kee, J.E., Boyer, E. (2014). Governing cross-sector collaboration, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., p.3-29.
7. Only Denmark and Cyprus have not set up an institutional mechanism.

documents. Countries have also made budget allocations to carry out youth policy initiatives.[8] Public administration officials of 10 European countries, working in the field of cross-sectoral youth policy, considered an adequate legal framework to be one of the basic preconditions for it to function.

An indispensable feature of cross-sectoral youth policy is the involvement of young people in policy processes. Involvement of the target group is one of the underlying values both in contemporary participatory democracy as well as contemporary public administration. Therefore, in the case of youth policy, we naturally see that young people participate in cross-sectoral youth policy.[9] Participants in the peer-learning exercise mentioned that the participation of young people starts from the understanding that policy makers should consider young people as experts of their own lives.

For young people to maintain interest and motivation in participation, they need to know the policy processes in general as well as proceedings related to a concrete policy issue of their interest. There needs to be permanent contact between policy makers and young people. For that purpose, it would be necessary to develop methodologies to reach as many young people as possible, from diverse backgrounds, at all levels of CSYP processes. Youth NGOs and youth work stakeholders should be involved not only in consultations during planning but also in the implementation of CSYP. Participation of young people should be continuous and long term, and be an integral part of the implementation of CSYP.[10]

Youth participation in governance and in policy processes should be on collective and individual bases. On a collective basis, non-governmental youth organisations should play an important role. These organisations should be also supported by the government because, as civil society organisations, they involve a lot of young people. Therefore, they have a democratic right to be heard on issues that are of concern to young people. Most countries in Europe have a national youth council, which is an umbrella organisation for the non-governmental youth organisations in the country. These councils should play a privileged role as a government partner in the development of youth policy.[11] In addition to national youth councils, other youth organisations should be involved in policy processes, especially in specific sectors. For instance, a students' council umbrella organisation would be a natural partner in education policy, as would an organisation of handicapped youth in social policy discussions.

Many young people however are not involved in youth organisations or in other NGOs. To involve them in policy processes, appropriate methods need to be employed. These could be surveys, also online ones, youth days, open consultations or other methods that are deemed appropriate.

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8. European Union (2016). EU Youth Report, p. 21-32, http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/youth-report-2015_en.pdf.

9. Definition of youth and setting concrete age brackets is the right and responsibility of a country.

10. Taru, M. (2016). PEER LEARNING EXERCISE ON CROSS SECTORIAL YOUTH POLICY 2 seminars in the frame of the European Union Work Plan for Youth (2014-2015). Luxembourg 15th - 18th June 2015, Riga 11th-12th November 2015. Report.

11. See Denstad, F.Y. (2009). Youth Policy Manual How to develop a national youth strategy, p. 26-27.

CSYP should be comprehensive and wide-angled in the sense that it should include not only policy issues that are directly related to young people (youth policy issues) but also issues from other policy fields, which are more remotely linked to young people.

Realistic and achievable objectives for CSYP are an important success factor. In practical terms, action plans should not consist of too many items. The condition of coming up with realistic and achievable objectives obviously is linked to the availability of resources for CSYP. It is crucial that national strategies and actions plans have an adequate amount of different resources: time, people and funding.

Also, CSYP goals should be formulated in such a way that the implementation of policy measures and CSYP objectives are measurable.

In addition to the above points, developing and implementing cross-sectoral youth policy are smoother when there is trust between people and institutions. Trust evolves when structures, processes, decisions and outcomes are transparent to everyone, in all respects. In addition to formal aspects, personal relationships between participants need to be good. Also individual participants' motivation needs to be high. High personal motivation to support youth policy is how to create the sense of ownership of CSYP and develop participants' identification with the youth sector.[12]

1.2. Cross-sectoral youth policy at grass-roots level

Cross-sectoral youth policy means close co-operation between local offices of ministries, local governments, NGOs, including youth NGOs, and businesses. This co-operation has a practical meaning as these organisations are directly involved in the implementation of public policies to achieve the goals outlined in national strategic documents. Some aspects of youth policy interventions need to be carried out at the grass-roots level, in immediate contact with young people of different ages and from different social backgrounds. For these activities, specific expertise, trained personnel, specific premises, equipment and other resources are often necessary. Normally such youth-specific expertise is not present or not fully developed in ministries which are responsible for a particular field of public policy, be this (un)employment, education or public health. However, this expertise is present in organisations which focus on youth work and which have immediate contact with young people. While most young people are relatively "easy" to interact with, although they still require individualised approaches, some specific groups like NEETs and immigrant youth require even more specific expertise and resources. At the same time, these same young people also need field-specific support like job or health counselling, which facilitates their integration into society. Normally, all

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12. To aid the development of partnerships between different actors and the win-win situation, several activities can be undertaken. Concrete methods could include:
- a mapping exercise which would give an overview of partners' work plans, resources, restrictions and other specifics or
- development of information networks between ministries in different formats like expert groups, special conferences, seminars and/or round tables, or
- setting up smaller working groups with an aim to go deeper into a concrete topic. Also, setting up ad-hoc expert groups might be in place.
- For sharing best and next practices, experiences and knowledge, organisation of regional meetings was proposed.

these different kinds of expertise are not concentrated in one organisation, let alone in one specialist. This situation of expertise fragmentation can be overcome by combining and pooling resources and expertise of different organisations and experts. Implementing CSYP at local level entails the practical organisation of collaboration between different organisations and experts.

In this context, youth work is a field of practice which has the specific expertise on how to interact with young people effectively. Youth work has expertise in how to provide non-formal learning opportunities and environments in general as well as how to deal with specific groups of young people, like immigrant youth, NEETs and others. Because of its experience in communicating with young people, youth work can be useful for implementing public policy interventions in more concrete fields such as education, employment, health, inter-ethnic relations, and in other fields which have significance in society. Youth work has another virtue too as it has a potential to support youth participation in policy processes at municipal as well as at national level. As such it is not only "communication from policy makers to youth" but also "communication from young people to policy makers" in the sense of youth participation in policy processes. Through helping to make immediate encounters with policy makers happen, youth work contributes to the very idea of CSYP by involving young people as a CSYP stakeholder group.

In this context, the role of youth work practitioners cannot be underestimated. However, this does not mean establishing standardised and similar formats of youth work practice in all countries. Effective collaboration with young people is possible using different approaches and methods. Moreover, histories of youth work show that each country and also different sectors within countries have developed specific ways of interacting effectively with young people. The wide array of different youth work methods is a valuable resource for CSYP. These different youth work methods can be integrated into public policy addressing challenges and problematic issues associated with young people. As such they contribute to achieving youth policy objectives and also more general political and policy objectives.

As an example, there is the collaboration between organisations with different administrative backgrounds in Estonia with the aim of supporting youth labour market integration. At national level, one of the country's goals in the field of youth is to reduce unemployment among young people. To this end, a youth prop-up support programme has been initiated by Estonian Youth Work Centre,[13] which is a national centre for youth work under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education and Research.[14] The programme is designed to specifically target young people aged 15 to 26, and young people who are not currently involved in any kind of academic study or employment. The Youth Prop-up action plan is part of the wider Estonian Youth Guarantee National Action Plan[15] initiated by the European Union and implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The main aim of the programme is to support young people in need, who may have been made redundant or have not completed their education and are not currently studying. The programme attempts to assist them in realising their potential and return to being a productive member of society as quickly as possible, raising their confidence and self-esteem.

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13. https://entk.ee/eng.
14. www.hm.ee, www.hm.ee/en/activities/youth.
15. www.sm.ee/et/noortegarantii.

How is this achieved? Through co-operation between various organisations working to help young people searching for a job. Constant contact is maintained between various institutions – youth centres,[16] municipalities, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund,[17] counselling centres Rajaleidja (Pathfinder) run by Foundation Innove,[18] local and regional businesses, cultural and educational institutions and other similar organisations. They either directly help candidates to find a job (e.g. Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, counselling centres, businesses, municipalities) or support the development of competences that are useful in the labour market (e.g. activities, training and other youth work activities).

In this collaboration, each of the organisations and institutions has its own role. Youth centres identify young people through mobile youth work (e.g. outreach, internet, open youth work services) or networking. Each young person is approached on an individual basis so that a trusting relationship can be established to help them to come to terms with their wishes and ambitions. Using youth work methods, participants in the programme are empowered so that they are better prepared to enter the labour market. At this stage, youth centres that possess expertise, premises, networks and specifically trained staff to accomplish these activities have the main role. In later steps, the young person is encouraged to make contact with either local career or education counselling centres, local job counselling and training centres run by the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, with firms or municipalities which could employ a young person.

Therefore, the whole complex system of organisations with different administrative backgrounds is in co-ordination with an aim to support young people finding their way to the labour market. At the level of central public administration, two ministries are involved – the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Youth centres and other youth work structures are mostly supported by municipalities.

2. Young people in the Western Balkans – A comparative perspective

The shift of the focus from the idea of development and progress to the idea of purpose, in the context of multidimensional and fundamental contemporary social changes, raises the question of the place and the role of youth in the contemporary "risk society".[19]

Risks which make the social integration of young people more difficult are even more prominent in transitional societies, compared with the earlier socialist times and with more developed and stable democratic societies. Those growing up in post-socialist societies are burdened with a double transition, because they are passing through a universal transition period from childhood to adulthood in societies which are at the same time undergoing a fundamental transformation.

The socialisation of young people therefore takes place in unstable conditions, because institutions, processes and social norms, which in the past guided the transition into adulthood, are also

16. www.ank.ee, https://tugila.ee/support-program-youth-prop/.
17. https://www.tootukassa.ee/eng.
18. https://rajaleidja.innove.ee/, in Estonian or Russian only.
19. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2015), Mladi u Srbiji -Stanja, opažanja, verovanja I nadanja, Autori: Tomanović, S.,Stanojević, D., Beograd.

undergoing a more or less radical change facing significant political and socio-cultural transformation combined with the transformation of the socialist system into capitalist market democracies. However, transitional processes that of all the countries of the Western Balkans are going through seem to have one common goal – integration into the European Union.[20]

Analyses have so far indicated that young people in transition countries are facing (a series of) hurdles which make adequate integration into the adult world more difficult, such as an increase in social differences and unequal access to education opportunities, stronger competition on the labour market together with increased unemployment and precarious work, growing criminality and risky behaviour, diminished quality of health care and the collapse of former, and slow establishment of new, social values. In addition, the intergenerational transmission of values is weakening, while the socioeconomic importance of family resources is growing stronger.[21]

Recent comparative youth studies[22] provide detailed information on the situation in the Western Balkans countries on their path to modern democratic societies, analysing specific risks faced by young people in contemporary society, as well as the specifics of the strategies developed in dealing with these risks. The overall results show that the new generations react to growing insecurity in their socioeconomic environment by retreating into privacy, with a strong emphasis on family, as well as by becoming more reluctant with regard to social and political engagement.

A set of representative national youth studies conducted in South-East Europe (the Western Balkans) between 2011 and 2015 reveals an alarming distrust of political institutions among young people and their dissatisfaction with the state of democracy in their home countries.[23]

On average, only 17% of youth in the Western Balkans are satisfied with the state of democracy, and 38% are not satisfied. The remaining 45% are indifferent about this question. The gap between satisfaction and dissatisfaction is especially wide in Slovenia (8% v. 60%) and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (6% v. 44%). This gap is lower in Albania, Kosovo,[24] Serbia and Croatia.

This dissatisfaction is reflected in young people's very low levels of trust in the current democratic institutions (especially the political parties). On average, only 15% of youth trust parties. Concerning the young people's attitude towards their parliaments and governments, the picture is similar: only

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20. The first of the former Yugoslav republics to accede to the EU was Slovenia, in 2004; and Croatia in July 1, 2013, while Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have applied for membership.
21. First IDIZ – Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Youth Survey (2013): *Youth in a time of crisis*, Authors: Ilišin, V., Bouillet, D., Gvozdanović A., Potočnik D., Institute for Social Research, Zagreb, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Zagreb.
22. In order to find out more about development trends and future prospects in the respective societies, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung has initiated representative empirical studies on young people in the countries of the region. The countries of South-East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Serbia) have been part of the Shell study since 2011. The aim of the studies is to provide insights into the wishes, expectations, interests, attitudes and social behaviour of youth and young adults, so that conclusions can be drawn on development trends in those societies. Key findings of these studies have recently been published as "Youth in South East Europe. Lost in transition", available at: www.fes.rs.
23. Source: www.fes.rs.
24. All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

one fifth of young people trust in their national parliament or government. The trust in parliament is "highest" in Kosovo, with roughly one third. Confidence in government is lowest in Slovenia (12%) and highest in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (41%).

Overall, youth in the Western Balkans have greater trust in those institutions which perform a control function, especially in the media and the judiciary, than in those which perform an executive function. Besides the media and the judiciary, young people place the most trust in institutions such as religious leaders (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), the army and police (Serbia, and Croatia), the EU ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") and educational institutions (Slovenia).

Consequently, it seems that youth in the region choose different pathways to be socially active. The ones who are disappointed with politics are more likely to volunteer or to be active in civil society, since they trust these institutions more than they trust political parties, parliament and the government.

One reason for this lack of confidence might be that in the Western Balkans almost 70% of the young people think that their views and interests are not represented in politics (only 20% consider themselves to be appropriately represented). This gap is particularly alarming in Croatia, where only 11% of youth feel represented in politics, while 77% say that they are not represented. As a consequence, a very large percentage of youth in the Western Balkans is disengaged from politics.[25]

According to these figures, only a minority of the young people in the Western Balkans believe that they can influence the political institutions in their countries. On average, about a quarter of them believe they can influence the national governing institutions (although concerning local institutions, young people are slightly more optimistic). The political field is largely seen as a place for the exercise of personal interests, rather than as a place of debate about public interest. Interestingly, comparative analysis shows that it is the youth in the non-EU states (Albania and Kosovo) who seem to be most confident that they can influence the governing institutions, while youth in the EU member states of Croatia and Slovenia are mostly sceptical about that.

The similar finding about the desired impact of a nation's EU membership status on youth perceptions of democratisation and institutions is especially disturbing: young people in aspirant and candidate countries are more supportive of the EU than are those in EU member states. The corresponding figures are very high in Albania (88%), Kosovo (82%), "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (73%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (55%), but low in Croatia (42%), Slovenia (33%) and Serbia (25.5%).

Unemployment, poverty and job insecurity are the biggest concerns for youth across the Western Balkans.[26]

Comparative studies underline that the socioeconomic position of youth in the Western Balkans region is generally characterised by high financial dependence and dependence on resources of their family, which lead to significant differences in their financial positions (including place of residence).

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25. On average, only a quarter of young people across SEE said that they had voted in every election since they obtained the right to vote.
26. Source: www.fes.rs.

In this regard, it is important to point out and warn that there is still a percentage of young people who are exposed to extreme material deprivation. All of the findings indicate it's the transcending role of socioeconomic situation in reducing opportunities for social mobility of the young[27]

Disorders in the labour market have led to an uncertain and turbulent transition and some new forms of inequality in addition to the old ones.[28] Since low-skilled young people have fewer chances to improve their social position, inequality is perpetuated, while education – a key channel of social promotion – remains inaccessible to many young people from minority ethnic groups.

Recent analysis[29] shows that, for example in Montenegro, young women, the less educated, youth living in rural areas and young people with limited social networks are more likely to be exposed to the lack of decent work than other groups. Gender gaps in labour force participation, employment and wage levels persist, despite the higher educational levels of young women compared to their male peers.

Despite the progress in terms of economic transformation and poverty reduction achieved in the last decade, job creation in most of the countries of the region remains unsatisfactory. It is not surprising therefore that youth in six respective countries covered by this report have placed unemployment and poverty as the two most critical issues, followed by job insecurity and problems related to insufficient anti-corruption efforts, chronic diseases, environmental pollution and the position of youth in society.

27. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (2015), Mladi u Srbiji -Stanja, opažanja, verovanja i nadanja. Authors: Tomanović, S., Stanojević, D., Beograd.
28. First IDIZ – Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Youth Survey (2013): *Youth in a time of crisis*, Authors: Ilišin, V., Bouillet, D., Gvozdanović A., Potočnik D., Institute for Social Research, Zagreb, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Zagreb.
29. International Labour Organization (ILO 2016): *Policy options to promote youth employment in Montenegro: A white paper*, Podgorica.

The results are somewhat alarming, as young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, urgently need some positive inputs in order to see some better prospects, while youth in Kosovo and Serbia, despite the many constraints that they are facing, maintain optimistic perceptions of their future.[30]

Similarly, most young people living in aspirant and candidate countries have high expectations and think they stand to gain from EU membership. Their main expectations are connected to economic opportunities and free movement. At the same time, youth in member states agree that there have been some positive benefits from EU membership, but they also share disappointment regarding their living standards, employment and economic development which have not been improved as anticipated. Disillusionment with the EU has therefore lowered support for it among youth in member states.

Table 1: Ranking of social problems by youth in the six countries

	Unemployment	Increase in poverty	Job insecurity	Insufficient fight against corruption	Chronic disease	Improving the position of young people	Environmental pollution	Social justice and security	Laws not implemented	Risking health and life in the job place	Kosovo territory
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	2	3	5				4			
Croatia	1	2	3	4					5		
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	1	2	4		3			5			
Kosovo	1	2	5					4			3
Serbia	1	2		3		4		5			
Albania	2	1	3				4			5	

The greatest threat for the future of the Western Balkans is the very probable loss of human capital, due to high emigration intentions, which is the strongest threat to any potential youth contribution to a better future.

Young people in the Western Balkans are faced with constant work and professional challenges that require continuous education, creating new risks of deprivation and limiting opportunities. However,

30. Potocnik, D. (2015): *Snapshot on the situation of youth, challenges to social inclusion and youth policies in South East Europe: information paper for the Seminar 'Beyond Barriers'* Draft paper.

the main challenge of the education and training systems in the Western Balkans is to equip citizens, and in particular young people, with the competences that will prepare them for a demanding and rapidly changing labour market. In this challenging social and economic context, young people are confronted with rising levels of knowledge and multiple skills requirements, a need that cannot be satisfied by the formal education sector alone.[31]

Comparative analysis however reveals that emigration intentions are high across different countries, which diminishes the democratic potential of youth. When asked for the main reasons for leaving, most young people say that they want to improve their standard of living while gaining access to better employment possibilities and better education. They want to go to western Europe because it is more prosperous and has a better standard of living than east-central and eastern Europe.[32]

While one would have expected young people to be more progressive, the results of the youth studies demonstrate that youth in the region have a rather conservative outlook. For example, most of them place the greatest trust in their family and relatives, and they are more trusting of their friends and colleagues than of their neighbours. Additionally, most youth in the Western Balkans place considerably less trust in people whose religion and political beliefs differ from their own. At the same time, young people in the Western Balkans have difficulty accepting social or cultural diversity.

2.1. Youth policy and institutional framework for cross-sectoral co-operation in the Western Balkans

Despite the fact that the Western Balkans countries share a common tradition in youth policy development and implementation, young people are treated differently by sector-specific acts and policies across the region, such as education-related laws, juvenile justice and family law.

Moreover, the definition of youth is also diverse and mainly based on age, covering ranges from 15 to 24 (in Kosovo), 15 to 29 (in Albania, Croatia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
, and Slovenia) and 15 to 30 (in Serbia, Montenegro and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina). According to the youth policy briefing (2011), in Republika Srpska, this ranges from 16 to 30 years of age, while the third self-governed Brcko District in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a legal definition of youth.[33]

Table 2: Youth policy and institutional framework for cross-sectoral co-operation in the Western Balkans[34]

Country/ framework	Policy/Legislation	Public institutions	Cross-sectoral mechanisms
Albania	National Youth Action Plan 2015-	The Ministry of Social Welfare and	Department of

	2020 includes six general objectives and 29 specific objectives accompanied by detailed cost analysis for each activity; 76% of the costs are covered by the state budget.	Youth has responsibility for youth affairs and focuses on the protection of constitutional rights, access to education, vocational training, safe employment, inclusion, participation, interfaith understanding and tolerance.	Youth Policy Co-ordination at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Republika Srpska has a new youth policy 2016-2020 developed through a participatory process. Laws on Volunteering and Youth Organisations (2008) also exist. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a Youth Law (2010) that outlines legal protections and provisions for youth rights, youth work and youth councils.	The Department for Youth within the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports has responsibility for youth in Republika Srpska. The department is responsible for the implementation of the youth policy, youth participation, volunteering and co-operation between youth NGOs. The Division for Youth within the Ministry of Culture and Sports has responsibility for youth with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is responsible for the Youth Law (2010), co-ordination of federal and international youth programmes, participation, identifying youth needs and supporting the development of the federal youth strategy.	Youth Council of the Republika Srpska (RS). A cross-sectoral team for youth policy implementation will be also established.
Croatia	National Programme for Youth from 2014 -2017 (3rd strategic document on youth).	The Department of Youth within the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth.	The Advisory Board on Youth of the Government of the Republic of Croatia; Working group for analysis of youth work professionalisation possibilities.
Kosovo	The Law on Empowerment of Youth (2009) outlines rights, responsibilities and obligations of governmental authorities and youth organisations. The Youth Strategy 2013-17 and Action Plan 2013-2015 (KSYAP).	The Youth Department within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.	Not specified
Montenegro	The Law on Youth (2016), and the new Strategy on Youth (2017 -	Montenegro's Directorate for Youth and Sports, an independent	National Youth Steering

	2021) were created through an evidence-based and participatory approach.	administrative body under the supervision of the Ministry of Education is responsible for youth affairs.	Committee (2007-2012); Inter-ministerial working group will be established (2017-2021).
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	National Youth Strategy (2016-2025). Two laws related to youth work: Law on Volunteerism and Law on Associations and Foundations.	The Agency for Youth and Sports, and "youth co-ordination of associations", are responsible for the implementation through actions plans.	The National Steering Committee for implementation of the National Youth Strategy.
Serbia	National Youth Strategy 2015-2025; the Law on Youth.	The Department of Youth within the Ministry of Youth and Sport is responsible for youth affairs and policy in Serbia.	Inter-ministerial Working Group for the monitoring and implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2015-2025. The Youth Council,[35] underpinned by the Law on Youth. New mechanism of inter-ministerial co-operation is envisaged, "Agenda for young people".
Slovenia	The Youth Sector Act (2010); The National Youth Programme 2013 - 2022 is the thematic guide to policy and programmes.	The Office of the Republic Slovenia for Youth within the Ministry for Education, Science and Sport.	A Council of the Government for Youth advises the government and can suggest new initiatives or changes to policy.

ALBANIA

The National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020 reflects the Albanian Government's commitment to youth, and includes cross-cutting policies, budgeted objectives and activities, which, if realised and successfully implemented, will further affect the socioeconomic development of youth.

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35. The Youth Committee is also used for this body.

The National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020 is the first of its kind developed in extensive consultation with young people all over the country. It was prepared by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, in close co-operation with all ministries, written by experts of the field and supported throughout the whole process of drafting to publication and launching by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This action plan is budgeted to details and constitutes an effort to map all the resources available from the leading ministry, from line ministries and contributions by donors in support of youth in the next five years.

The vision of the National Youth Action Plan, which is in line with the Government Programme for Youth and the National Strategy for Development and Integration, is to create appropriate conditions and a safe social, health and political environment for active young people, who are equal in all areas of life and have an optimistic prospects for their future.

The Department of Youth Policy Co-ordination at the ministry has launched a national campaign in 12 districts of Albania on "youth involvement in the formulation and preparation of the strategy". The purpose of this campaign is to introduce and inform young people about key policies of the Albanian Government for the youth sector and their involvement in the community, such as employment, education, health and culture.

The development of the new youth strategy reflects a keen interest in **designing inter-sectorial policies** that take a long-term view on the issue of youth development" and seeks "**coordination** among governmental agencies on the national and local levels, civil society organizations, international institutions and the business community.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

There is no national youth policy due to the duality in administrative structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, jurisdiction for youth issues lies at the level of entities (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina/RS) and Brcko District. However, the youth briefing (2011) notes that guidelines for a state-level youth policy have been agreed, and according to the youth policy project report (2012), the process has been supported and co-ordinated by the European Union.[36]

In 2004, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers adopted the Decision establishing the Commission for Co-ordination of Youth issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a standing body responsible for dealing with the problems of youth, which started its activities in 2006. As a result, the document "Coordinated Youth Policy in BiH 2011-2015" was drafted to be effective at the national level. However, youth policy development and implementation at state level is facing obstacles and is more efficiently handled at entity level.

REPUBLIKA SRPSKA (RS)

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36. Source: www.youthpolicy.org.

New youth policy and an action plan were created in accordance with the Law on Youth Organisation of the Ministry, in co-operation with the Council for Youth of the RS, Youth Communication Centre Banja Luka and UNFPA, in line with an evidence-based and participatory approach, emphasising horizontal co-operation among all of the actors involved. The National Assembly of the RS adopted the draft youth policy of the RS in February 2016, which is supported by the Youth Council of the RS, as an advisory body of the government, and forwarded it to further parliamentary procedure.

The basic mechanism for cross-sectoral co-operation is the Youth Council of the Republika Srpska, founded by the Government of the RS on the proposal of the ministry, aiming to provide professional advice on issues related to youth policy development and implementation. Members of the Council are five ministers dealing with youth issues (the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Education and Culture; Ministry of Health and Social Protection; Ministry of Labour and Veterans Care; and Ministry of Finance) together with representatives of the youth-related working body of the Parliament of RS and three representatives of the Youth Council of RS.

In the youth policy document of the RS, a multi-sectoral approach is linked with policy implementation, defining a variety of state institutions, organisations, departments and agencies responsible for the implementation of the action plan. However, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports is the main co-ordinator for planning, implementation and oversight. Furthermore, an inter-sector team will be established to develop and carry out an action plan for the implementation of youth policy in order to ensure that, among other things, the efficient operation structure for implementation through centralised co-ordination and support is ensured, including the development of programmes, reports, analysis and organisation meetings.

FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The development of youth strategy in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is stipulated by the Law on Youth (2010), which states that "youth policy" covers the institutional mechanisms of government's care for young people, a document of government institutions with the programme approach to youth activities, including situation overview, strategic courses of action and objectives of the youth strategy.

Although there are no records of efficient implementation of the law in the area of youth policy development in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the government is currently in the process of developing the first strategic document for young people in the federation. The strategy development process is co-ordinated by the Federal Ministry of Culture and Sports. The Institute for Youth Development KULT is appointed, by the decision of the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to provide support in the process of developing the youth strategy in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The contribution of the institute refers to the professional consultancy support. The document was produced in the same period as the third Youth Policy of the Republic of Srpska, but is not yet adopted.

Overall, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the cross-sectoral policies are mainly aimed at youth health and prevention policies. In terms of regulations, attention is mainly devoted to offenders and addicts as well as improving the status of women with respect to reproductive health. With some exceptions,

the legislative treatment of vulnerable groups has been largely neglected. However, the dual entity structure of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina also affects these policies, with each entity coming up with its own regulations and strategies. Therefore, legislators and youth activists face the challenge of harmonising certain issues between entities for the development of effective national cross-sectoral strategies.[37]

CROATIA

It is important to emphasise that the new national programme in Croatia brings significant innovation compared to the previous one, both in terms of content and the process of its development.

According to Article 9 of the Law on Youth, The Advisory Board on Youth of the Government of the Republic of Croatia represents a national co-ordination mechanism for cross-sectoral development of youth policies. It is an advisory board of 27 members from different sectors: 14 representatives of relevant government bodies, members of the Association of Cities, the Association of Municipalities and the Croatian Union of Counties, three representatives of scientific and educational institutions, and seven representatives of youth organisations. Currently, the President of the Board is President of the National Youth Council and the Vice-President is Deputy Minister of Social Policy and Youth. The board primarily monitors the work of ministries and other state administration bodies in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policies within their jurisdictions and, in this context, provides opinions and recommendations. The board also monitors the development of youth organisations and provides recommendations for the improvement of their work and support systems; provides recommendations for the development of youth policies at the local, regional, national and European levels; monitors and reacts to phenomena in the society that are significant for youth.

Another cross-sectoral mechanism is the working group for analysis of youth work professionalisation possibilities, established by the Ministry of Social Policy and Youth in 2015 with the aim to analyse the possibilities for the professionalisation of youth work. Members of this working group are representatives of government bodies, academia and civil society. The working group is preparing the project "Support to the development and widening of youth work in Croatia", which is financed by the European Social Fund and which will result in, among other things, recommendations and guidelines for the professionalisation of youth work.

It also encourages the inclusion of a special Youth Council (established under the Law on Youth Councils, Official Gazette, 41/14) in the process of proposing and adopting local and regional youth policies and programmes.

KOSOVO

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37. EU-Council of Europe youth partnership (2012): *Reviews on youth policies and youth work in the countries of South East Europe, Eastern Europe & Caucasus*, SEE Summary Report, Şenyuva, O., available at: http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3087112/SEE_Summary_Report_Final.pdf/ef11b992-cddc-4083-965d-97e1c753a297.

The Youth Department within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport is, *inter alia*, mandated to co-ordinate implementation of the Youth Strategy 2013-2017 and Action Plan 2013-2015 (KSYAP) aiming to improve the situation of young people, as well as cooperation among all relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions, organisations and service providers. The strategy is based on a wide consensus of all stakeholders on strategic objectives on the basis of government priorities and youth needs as well as existing laws and documents which authorise the compilation of national government strategies.

The strategy emphasizes that youth issues are inter-sectoral and encourages co-operation between youth organisations and the government in assuring effective implementation of youth policies and programmes

However, The Law on Youth Organisation (No. 03/L- 145), of the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo, based on Article 65.1 of the constitution, does not consist of any explicit references to the cross-sectoral approach. Instead, Article 13 of this law defines "youth participation in sectoral policy" in areas of education; employment; public health; social protection; culture, sports and recreation; citizens education and democracy; spatial planning, environment and rural development. Thus, the mechanism for establishment of cross-sectoral co-operation is not explicitly defined.

MONTENEGRO

The European Union's 2013 Screening Report states that "Montenegro's youth policy is already largely in line with the common objectives established at EU level" and that the planned "future adoption of the **Law** on youth is intended to lay a solid foundation for further developments in this field".[38]

In accordance with the newly adopted Law on Youth (2016), youth policy and National Youth Strategy (2017-2021), clearly position youth as an issue of importance for Montenegro, and provides a holistic approach, inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration, which should be co-ordinated by the Directorate of Youth and Sport, as well as co-operation with different stakeholders, providing a strategic framework for the development of legislation and policies affecting young people.

The National Youth Strategy (2017-2021)[39] was created in co-operation with the Directorate of Youth and Sport (the Ministry of Education), and the United Nations in Montenegro, within the framework of the Joint UN Programme for Youth Empowerment in line with international standards and participatory and evidence-based approaches. The strategy points out that: "It is necessary to establish the question of youth as a **transversal issue"**, which is why the process of its creation included the horizontal co-operation and co-ordination of relevant ministries and institutions/NGOs (among other, through participation in the working group for drafting the strategy for youth).

The strategy stresses that the improvement of inter-agency co-operation is still necessary in order to consolidate activities and efforts of all government departments. In this sense, establishment of an

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38. Source: owww.yuthpolicy.org.
39. Strategy has adopted by the Government of Montenegro on the 29th September 2016.
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operational intergovernmental working team is envisaged with the aim of monitoring the implementation of the youth strategy, implementation of joint annual action plans and the design and implementation of priority projects concerning youth.

"THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA"

The Government of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" has adopted the National Youth Strategy for 2016-2025, developed by the Youth and Sports Agency in co-operation with UNDP in line with evidence-based and participatory approaches. The new strategy emphasises that young people are leaders of positive change, a resource of innovation and the future drivers of social and economic development. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance to ensure continuous and systematic investment not only in their development but also in the establishment of mechanisms for their active participation in the social change.

This can be done only by building true partnership between institutions, and ensuring that the policies are inclusive reflecting and addressing the real needs of youth and stimulating their social integration. As a "cross-sectoral policy document", the NYS entails the broad involvement of several ministries obliged to implement the strategy according to their jurisdictions, as well as of the stakeholders involved, directly or indirectly, in youth development in the country. The entire process must ensure horizontal and vertical linkage between local and national institutions, the private sector and young people as the final beneficiaries of this strategy. All stakeholders must assume responsibility for contributing to the implementation of the strategy, especially in light of the limited institutional capacities available. The roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder are clearly set out in the strategy. The National Steering Committee in charge of the NYS, has a representative from each ministry and they are heavily engaged in strategies related to their ministry, such as strategy on health and prevention, strategy for employment, etc.

SERBIA

Effective, efficient and reliable inter-sectoral co-ordination is the precondition for the successful implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2015-2025 and the Youth Action Plan in Serbia, due to the fact that the aims and goals invariably fall within the purview of several youth-related ministries (beyond the Ministry of Youth and Sports) that are responsible for education and employment.[40]

As the mechanism for formalised and institutionalised cross-sectoral co-operation in the 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). The last meeting of the working group (in January 2016) welcomed representatives of 15 ministries and national institutions, the representative of Provincial Secretariat for Youth and Sports, the representative of Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, five representatives of youth associations or federations as well as one independent expert/researcher in the youth field selected via open call. The total number of working group members is 25. The working group is chaired by the Ministry of Youth and Sports State Secretary in accordance with the mandate of the ministry to lead

40. Youth and Public Policy in Serbia, Youth Policy Review Series, prepared by Tanja Azanjac and group of authors, Youth Policy Press, 2012. p. 86.

and co-ordinate on youth policy within the government. The working group meets at least twice a year.

According to the recommendations from the first National Youth Strategy evaluation, further development and enhancing the role and functioning of the Working Group on the implementation of the strategy are certainly required, especially in terms of developing its mandate to go beyond the mere exchange of information with the aim of using it as a platform for the planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of inter-sectoral projects.[41]

Another important mechanism for cross-sectoral co-operation is the Youth Council,[42] called for by the Law on Youth (Article 16), and formally established in 2014 as an advisory board to the government on all issues related to the National Youth Strategy implementation, (according to the Government Decision, Official Gazette of RS, No. 8/14). The Youth Council is based on co-management principles, according to the law, and is chaired by the Minister of Youth and Sports. It proposes, among other things, the measures for harmonisation and co-ordination of activities in youth-related sectors of the government, but also of other stakeholders in the youth policy field.

The representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports have been appointed to many other inter-ministerial working groups on issues such as education, health, employment, entrepreneurship, safety (particularly trafficking on human beings), rural development, etc. In that manner, the formal co-operation among ministries responsible for issues concerning youth is established at many 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 the cross-sectoral co-operation in the youth field could be also recognised in the foreword by the Minister of Youth and Sports to the National Youth Strategy where the new mechanism of inter-ministerial co-operation is outlined: the Agenda for Young People. The agenda will be an operational planning document within the ministries, institutions and organisations to help define their youth-oriented activities, aligned with their mandates, roles and types of support provided to youth. The process of developing the Agenda for Young People is still in the inception phase, mostly driven by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS). In 2016 the advocacy campaign for cross-sectoral co-operation, called Think of Youth! with the hashtag #YouthOnGoverment, was launched, led by the KOMS and supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in order to directly target decision makers and advocate for inclusion of youth in their agendas.

SLOVENIA

The Youth Sector Act (2010) defines the youth sector, the status of youth organisations, national awards, the role of the National Programme for Youth and the activities of youth centres, while the

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41. 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, January 2015, published by United Nations Population Fund UNFPA, p. 101.
42. The Youth Committee is also used to describe this body.

National Youth Programme 2013-2022 is the current thematic guide to policy and programmes in Slovenia.

The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth within the Ministry for Education, Science and Sport "monitors the situation of the young people and implements the measures in the field of non-formal education, leisure time and participation of young people in society". In co-operation with other public authorities and local communities it monitors the situation of youth and the effects of measures targeting youth in order to ensure their needs and interests are considered in policy making. The Office for Youth prepares regulations and measures for the youth sector, promotes non-formal learning to increase the competences of young people during their transition from childhood to adulthood and develops suitable mechanisms for supporting youth lead organisations and organisations for youth.[43]

The Slovenian Government has an inter-ministerial working group on youth and an institutionalised mechanism for ensuring a cross-sectoral approach to youth policy which existed before the EU Youth Strategy came into force. A Council of the Government for Youth, established in 2009, advises the government and, *inter alia*, monitors and assesses the situation of young people in Slovenia, proposes measures, discusses and provides its opinion on legislation and other regulation proposals relating to young people, and promotes youth participation in decision making, facilitating better and timely provision of information to the key youth sector actors and raises decision makers' awareness of youth-related issues.[44]

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The review of youth policy frameworks and related cross-sectoral mechanisms reveals that there have been certain improvements in the approach to youth policy development and implementation in the Western Balkans. This is mainly reflected in the application of outcome-oriented, operational, evidence-based and participatory approaches to youth policy design and implementation (like in cases of Croatia, Montenegro and RS), as well as in creating specific and sometimes innovative approaches to cross-sectoral co-operation as in the case of Serbia.

Approaches to youth policy have become more resource oriented (as opposed to problem oriented), since young people are seen as a social category that holds a huge potential as a key resource for social change and development in the region. On the other hand, state youth policies are extending age ranges in defining youth (like in Kosovo, and Montenegro), since youth is also seen as a group that is highly vulnerable to social and economic trends and changes facing difficulties in integrating in the society.

Another similarity lies in the fact that, in most of the countries, the public institutions still rely on international support (mainly provided by the UN) in developing youth policies. Still, having in mind the commitments stated in most of the newly developed strategies the Western Balkans, it seems that the responsible governmental bodies remain open for further development of the existing, and initiation of innovative new, approaches and mechanisms for cross-sectoral co-operation.

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43. Country sheet on youth policy in Slovenia (p. 3-8): http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/slovenia
44. Ibid.

Reflecting on the "typology" and proposed "models" of cross-sectoral co-operation,[45] it is reasonable to conclude that most of the youth policy frameworks described above apply a transversal approach to youth policy as "an ambitious goal, implying that the central ministry/department/office primarily responsible for youth policy has a 'supervisory' role over youth-related issues from the policies in other sectors".

Furthermore, there are few attempts to establish an integrated approach to youth policy implying mutual and regular consultations with other sectors, where a similar commitment is demonstrated from all of the youth-related sectors in order to avoid overlapping or disconnected goals (mainly through the establishment of inter-ministerial working groups like in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia).

There are also examples of youth policy based on bilateral collaboration with relevant sectors for specific issues and topics involving fragmented processes of co-operation in which the information, competences, objectives and results are a shared product focused on resolving a burning issue such as youth employment (like in cases of Serbia, Montenegro, etc.).

Youth policy based on co-ordination where the central authority on youth is willing to scale up the collaboration at multiple levels and thus, to involve many other sectors, on different issues, for "leading the way on youth policy" is very rare in the Western Balkans. The same could be said for youth policy based on cross-cutting issues having in mind that this approach is grounded in the idea that each cross-cutting issue could demand a different approach and strategy (co-ordination, bilateral collaboration etc.). Thus, depending on the issue, the government may engage in different, less standardised approaches with other sectors.

Overall, the results of this short review speak to the fact that youth strategy implementation is a cross-sectoral endeavour, which requires not only the engagement of thematically defined sectors of government but also departments responsible for good governance, including finance, strategic planning, EU integration, international co-operation and foreign policy (and sometimes even the offices of the prime minister and the president). Therefore, it is worth reflecting on two interesting approaches practised in European countries, such as the idea of "government commitments" and the one of "inter-sectoral projects".[46]

Government commitments

Acknowledging that government strategy cannot reasonably be expected to address all the issues and concerns of youth in a given country, it is most important for a government to prioritise what it can and does do in service of its youth strategy objectives at any given time, and to be accountable for actually implementing those priorities. A good example is the Irish National Youth Strategy which presents its action plan as a series of government commitments with specific sectors taking the lead on implementing the measures under the strategy, committing not only to implement but to report

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45. Nico, M. (2014), *Life is cross-sectoral. Why shouldn't youth policy be? Overview of existing information on cross-sectoral youth policy in Europe*. Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth: Strasbourg).

46. Ohana, Y. (2016), *Report on contemporary international standards and developments in youth policy & their relevance for youth policy development in Montenegro*, Frankly Speaking, Training, Research & Development (internal doc.), Podgorica.

on that implementation to the Department for Children and Youth Affairs, which is the specific department responsible for youth.

Inter-sectoral projects

In a similar vein, inter-sectoral projects are an opportunity for different departments to work on specific, new and commonly developed projects that leverage the specific expertise of different departments (at the local and national levels), and to match them with the both the objectives of the new strategy and of partners with available resources. For example, in Serbia, several local and regional governmental authorities (employment offices, municipal administrations, etc.) are working with the financial and technical support available from GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and the Ministry of Youth and Sport to address the career counselling needs of young people in some regions of the country, in pilot project format. It is reasonable to say that this approach will not solve the employability issues of the many Serbian youth that are unemployed, but it will develop a stock of good practice that in time can be brought to scale as more resources and technical assistance comes on stream.

3. Evidence-based cross-sectoral youth policy

Evidence-based policy in general refers to the incorporation of rigorous research evidence into public policy debates, policy advising, processes for public policy evaluation and actions to improve programmes. Better use of rigorous and relevant evidence is essential for making well-informed choices among alternative policy settings and programme designs. Hence, the goal of using evidence in policy processes is to improve the accuracy and reliability of policy advice in relation to the efficiency and effectiveness of current policies and programmes, and to consider possible alternatives.

Participants of the peer-learning exercise in 2015 emphasised that CSYP should be based on comprehensive knowledge gathering (scientific and experiential) both in the planning and implementing phases. The implementing of policy measures needs be monitored and outcomes need to be evaluated. The evidence used in CSYP can be scientific, collected by researchers and academic circles, but it can also be collected from different practitioners and young people, based on their daily life experiences. Scientific research can contribute to the evidence-based policy processes in two specific ways:

- research on living conditions and the situation of young people in society, changes and developments in the situation, and
- evaluation of policy measures, programmes, projects and interventions.

3.1. Information and research on the situation of young people in society

Obtaining an adequate and up-to-date overview of the situation of young people is one of the main priorities of cross-sectoral youth policy. This means obtaining statistics describing youth in numbers, for example the number of young people of a certain age, gender, youth unemployment rate, youth income, youth poverty rate. Very often comparison helps to contextualise a situation and understand how much and in what direction it has changed, also how it looks in comparison to other countries. Getting a grip with reasons for change as well as with differences with other countries is a bonus in

itself, not only in instrumental meaning. These three goals – getting a high-quality and up-to-date overview of the situation of young people, tracking changes and comparing the situation of youth in a country to other countries – lead to establishing an indicator system which would provide useful data.

3.1.1. Dashboard of youth indicators

The goal of getting an overview of young people's lives is, by definition, linked with a country's goals in the field of youth. Ideally, the selection of indicators which describe the situation of young people is based on goals described in main youth policy documents. However, if there is no such document, a list of indicators developed on a different basis will be fine.

For instance, in the Netherlands the youth monitoring system consists of indicators divided into five large areas:
- young people and families,
- health and welfare,
- education,
- labour,
- safety and justice.

The monitor contains data from several years so that it is possible to monitor change over time. In addition to the indicators, the monitoring system also contains publications giving a somewhat deeper look into the figures and changes in the situation of young people.[47]

The Catalan Youth Observatory in Spain provides a system of indicators on the situation of young people.[48] The observatory also features a specific survey of young people which gives an insight into their lives.[49] A similar youth survey is conducted in Finland where Youth Barometer, a representative survey of opinions of young people, is carried out on a yearly basis.[50]

Such surveys of youth people are a highly desirable part of the youth monitoring system as they give insight into feelings and thoughts of young people – the target group of cross-sectional youth policy. As such, they are an appropriate addition to statistical data describing the situation of young people in society.

The European Commission has established a dashboard of youth indicators which enables us to both follow changes over time as well as compare young people in different countries. The main goal of the dashboard is to follow implementation of the European Youth Strategy 2009-2018. The dashboard features indicators in the following policy fields:
- education and training,
- employment and entrepreneurship,
- health and well-being,

47. Youth monitor, http://jeugdmonitor.cbs.nl/en-gb/, http://jeugdmonitor.cbs.nl/en-gb/information/.
48. Statistics, Catalan Youth Observatory
http://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits_tematics/joventut/observatori_catala_de_la_joventut/estadistiques/statistics/.
49. Catalan Youth Survey
http://treballiaferssocials.gencat.cat/ca/ambits_tematics/joventut/observatori_catala_de_la_joventut/enquesta/catalan-youth-survey/.
50. Youth Barometer, http://www.youthresearch.fi/research/youth-barometer.

- social inclusion,
- culture and creativity,
- youth participation,
- voluntary activities,
- youth and the world.[51]

The dashboard can be accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth/data/eu-dashboard.

Academic and applied research offers very valuable insight into the social processes behind the indicators. A lot of research is being carried out on young people – in fact, research on young people constitutes a large share of all social research – which can be used also for policy purposes. As an example of this, a compilation of some European Commission funded research projects was published in 2009.[52] Similarly, individual countries publish policy-relevant research. For instance, the Finnish Youth Research Society publishes several series of publications on young people and an interdisciplinary journal of youth research, *Young*.[53] A quite common format of publishing policy-relevant research on youth is a youth yearbook or youth report.

3.1.2. Impact evaluation

To improve living conditions, which is the main goal of cross-sectoral youth policy, and meet specific challenges within this pursuit, general and specific policy measures are developed and implemented. With an aim to contribute to understanding whether a particular policy measure "walks the talk" and actually achieves the planned outcomes, and delivers sought-after results, rigorous impact-evaluation research projects are increasingly carried out. Ideally such analysis would return estimates of impact at individual as well as at aggregate level (organisation, community, country) and would also provide cost–benefit analysis. When done properly, such analysis provides policy makers and practitioners with quality information on effects, the duration period of the effects, impact on the target group, economic feasibility of a programme and other valuable information that is crucial for discussions on the past, present and future of a concrete policy intervention. Establishing the impact of a policy measure is a highly complex undertaking.

In the context of evaluation of policy measures, the concept of hierarchy of evidence has been used. The concept of hierarchy of evidence starts from the fact that evaluation research itself differs and that different research methods and designs return different quality of evidence which describe the impact of a policy measure. The hierarchy of evidence is important because research has shown that impact-evaluation research findings depend on the quality of the research itself – more thorough, competent research tends to return less positive results than superficial research, which tends to return more positive results.[54] This means that for the purposes of acquiring an adequate overview of

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51. European Commission (2011). COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT On EU indicators in the field of youth, SEC(2011) 401 final, http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/publications/indicator-dashboard_en.pdf.
52. European Commission (2009). European Research on Youth Supporting young people to participate fully in society The contribution of European Research,
https://cordis.europa.eu/citizens/docs/ssh_european_research_on_youth_en.pdf.
53. Publications of the Finnish Youth Research Society, http://www.youthresearch.fi/publications.
54. Betcherman, G., Godfrey, M., Puerto, S., Rother F., Stavreska, A. 2007. A review of interventions to support young workers: findings of the youth employment inventory, The World Bank, Social Protection Discussion Paper no. 0715.

the effects of a policy measure, which could be used in policy and political debates, more complex research should be preferred over less complex research, where resources permit.

Hierarchy of evidence

At the level of a single research project, contemporary impact research recognises experimental design as the type of research which returns the most objective information about effects of a policy intervention, project or programme. The defining feature of experimental design is random selection of research subjects into an experimental group[55] and a control group[56] which allows for the attribution of significant differences, if they occur, to the intervention which was carried out. High-quality research features also use tested and validated scales and proper execution of measurement.

Systematic review or meta-analysis is a form of research which collects the best-quality impact evaluations on a certain programme and synthesises already existing results, providing an even higher degree of objectivity.[57] As such, it is positioned on top of the hierarchy of evidence.

In the bottom of such hierarchies one finds self-reported opinions on effects of a programme, which have not been repeated and where validity of indicators is questionable.

When designing public policy measures, countries often learn from other countries and adopt policy measures that have been used elsewhere already. In the context of policy diffusion processes, the quality of practices and interventions has a significant role as policy makers of one country or in one policy area want to adopt high-quality practices which deliver the results they are expected to deliver. Impact-evaluation results serve here as an important point of reference when determining the quality of each individual policy intervention. The relationship between quality of evaluation and the rank of a policy measure is depicted in the figure below.

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55. people, organisations or other research objects or subjects who get some sort of treatment. For instance, it may be a group of 15-24-year-old people who go through a 2 month long labor market preparation program, administered by National Labor Market Board.
56. people, organisations or other research objects or subjects who are similar to the experimental group in all significant respects, with the only difference being that they do not go through the program administered to the experimental group.
57. The Campbell Collaboration homepage, http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/what_is_a_systematic_review/index.php.
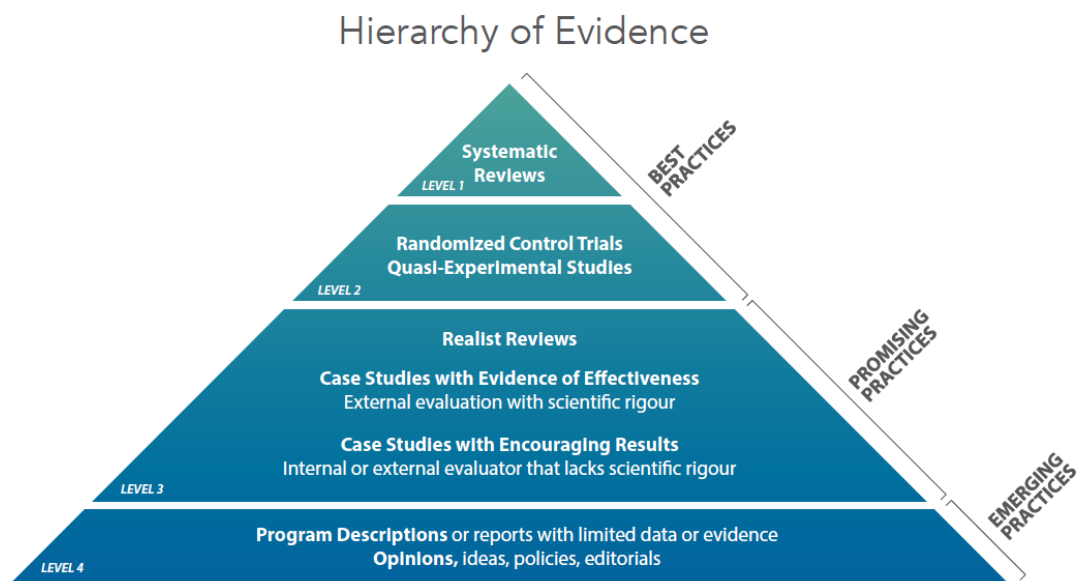
Figure 1. The relationship between hierarchy of evidence and quality of a practice[58]

While evidence found at the top levels of this type of hierarchy is useful for differentiating between the quality of research, this does not take into account policy making and implementation contexts and environments. Therefore, the usefulness of such information *per se* might be minimal. To be useful, contextual factors need be taken into account. This is not to say high-quality research is useless – on the contrary, it is to emphasise that need for a more nuanced approach which would enable us to give this knowledge appropriate place in policy processes.[59][60]

While high-quality evidence of the impact of a programme is very useful in public policy debates, obtaining such evaluation results is a difficult challenge which is rarely undertaken and completed. More often programme monitoring is carried out instead of programme-impact evaluation. Programme monitoring provides descriptive data on how a programme is being implemented, whether it follows the plans that were made or diverges from the plans. Monitoring-returns data are useful for assessing whether a programme meets the goals in terms of activities, participants and financing. Programme monitoring cannot be equated with impact evaluation, they have different goals, use different data and provide different information to decision makers.

Qualitative research has also made its way into policy evaluations. Unlike experimental research, qualitative research does not seek to give objective information on a particular policy intervention. Instead, it seeks to provide an insight into the effectiveness of a policy measure through the lenses of carefully and purposefully selected stakeholders and other experts, also participants.

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58. Source: http://homelesshub.ca/gallery/hierarchy-evidence.
59. Nutley, S., Powell, A., Davies, H. (2013). *What counts as good evidence? PROVOCATION PAPER FOR THE ALLIANCE FOR USEFUL EVIDENCE*, Research Unit for Research Utilisation (RURU), School of Management, University of St Andrews.
60. See Pakhurst, J.O., Abeysinghe, S. (2016). What Constitutes "Good" Evidence for Public Health and Social Policy-making? From Hierarchies to Appropriateness, *Social Epistemology*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2016.1172365.

3.2. Institutionalisation of connections between research, policy and practice

Monitoring and understanding the situation of youth in society, as well as evaluating the impact of a policy intervention are highly complex and challenging enterprises. Though some of the tasks can be completed by analysis departments in ministries, usually the full range of capacity necessary for policy-relevant research is not available in public administration institutions. It can be found at universities and professional social research firms, which may need to collaborate. Good co-operation between policy makers and researchers is an integral part of evidence-based policy making. In addition to this pragmatic reason, there is also another reason for setting up connections with external research bodies: the need to obtain an objective evaluation of the situation. Participants in the peer-learning exercise emphasised the need to have a neutral and impartial overview of the situation of youth but more importantly also of the impact of policy measures. For these two main reasons, ministries should not rely only on their analysis departments but make use of outside expertise and research.

To make the best use of the expertise in universities and in research companies, think tanks that are permanent connections between policy makers, practitioners and researchers, are established. Regular meetings, the exchange of information and common events are organised under these settings which contribute to continuous evidence-based cross-sectoral youth policy. Institutionalised connections contribute to the accumulation of research expertise on young people. Also, permanent connections between research, policy and practice would follow a general model of cross-sectoral youth policy. However, in this collaboration, researchers retain their independence from policy and practice. An independent view of the situation of young people is one of the contributions made by researchers as it brings important issues to the discussion.

Permanent collaboration is contrasted to ad hoc involvement of research in policy making and practice. Such involvement occurs when researchers are commissioned by policy makers or practitioners only for the purposes of carrying out a certain research project. In contemporary market-based practices and the new public management driven environment, research partners are often selected on the basis of the cost of a research project. Such selection of research partners does not contribute to the accumulation of expertise on young people.

Different countries have established different forms of collaboration between research and policy. In some countries, independent youth research institutes have been developed. A good example is the German Youth Institute. As perhaps one of the largest in the world, the institute carries out research on children and youth, and is involved in developing policies influencing youth.[61] In Finland, the Youth Research Network is a community of researchers which works together with universities, research institutes and various professionals in the field of youth work and youth policy. Importantly, the network operates in close co-operation with the Finnish Ministry of Education, which is responsible for developing, implementing and evaluating cross-sectoral youth policy in Finland. In the Ministry of

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61. www.dji.de.

Education and Culture, Nuora – The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs is responsible for co-operation between research and policy making.[62]

4. Summary

This seminar background paper deals with the theme of cross-sectoral youth policy. CSYP essentially builds on the active integration of various policy sectors as well as young people themselves in the planning, implementation and evaluation of public policy measures. Together with horizontal integration, the vertical integration of organisations and administrative units has an important role in CSYP. In the countries of the Western Balkan region, appropriate structures have been put in place and are functioning. Public policy addressing youth in general is not in a starting phase but rather established and evolving. At the present stage, development towards a greater integration at local level could be a step forward in the region.

The Western Balkans are facing challenges which need an adequate policy response. Youth unemployment, job insecurity and poverty are the three top challenges as ranked by young people of the region. The youth studies revealed weaknesses with regard to the future role of youth in the Western Balkans. Prolonged democratic deficiencies, an increase in political polarisation and frequent political deadlocks have lowered young people's trust in political institutions so that youth has become unwilling to support democratisation.

One opportunity for meeting the challenges is further development of cross-sectoral youth policy as this has the potential to prepare young people for the future. CSYP potentially contributes in several ways:

- by combining non-formal learning sites and activities with formal education and training so that young people in general will obtain a more complete set of competences and life skills;
- addressing specific groups among young people (NEETs, young immigrants, other vulnerable groups) and linking them with already existing public policy measures (e.g. active labour market interventions);
- pooling and combining the resources of different public administration organisations to address developmental challenges;
- advancing participatory governance and stakeholder involvement through integrating young people in policy processes as a group of competent citizens.

Pursuing the principles and goals of cross-sectoral youth policy can positively influence the entire governance system of a country, not only young people. However, there is no "one size fits all" approach and concrete solutions will depend on specifics of a country – on the situation of young people, on the most pressing social issues, on the state of economy and on features of public administration and the political system.

It is this context, steps could be taken to increase co-operation between different public policy sectors and also with organisations outside the public administration system. Importantly, CSYP bypasses the limits of public administration when involving various organisations in implementing policy interventions. Youth work and youth work specialists, in this sense, are an important resource for cross-sectoral youth policy in general.

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62. Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture,
http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisoasiain_neuvottelukunta/index.html?lang=en.

It is worth noting that the European Union shares the Western Balkans' ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with a view to delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Investing in human and social capital is an essential condition to achieving those growth targets. Such investments can yield even better returns when they are focused on the young generation, which has to be equipped with the skills it needs to succeed in an increasingly complex and fast-changing social and economic reality and which needs the opportunity to share a feeling of appropriation and belonging to a common project.