

# YOUTH STRATEGY 2023-2027



Ministry  
of Sports  
and Youth



Government  
of Montenegro

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## Publisher

Ministry of Sports and Youth

## Consultants who supported drafting of the document

Ajša Hadžibegović

Dimitrije Jovičević

Željko Vukčević

## Translation

Tamara Jurlina

## Design

BAAS // Bošković and Associates d.o.o.

Podgorica, October 2023

The strategy was developed with the support of UNDP, through the project *Socio-economic youth empowerment through efficient youth services*, financed by Ministry of Sports and Youth and UNDP, and project *Activate!*, financed by the Joint SDG Fund. UNICEF provided financial and programmatic support in the development of the document. The Strategy was developed with the programmatic and financial support of UNICEF.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>CIPS</b>	Centres for Professional Information and Counselling
<b>CMJ</b>	Joint Council on Youth
<b>VET Centre</b>	Centre for Vocational Education and Training
<b>Erasmus+</b>	EU youth mobility programme - Erasmus+
<b>ESC</b>	European Solidarity Initiative
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EYCA</b>	European Youth Card Association
<b>GSG</b>	General Secretariat of the Government
<b>EC</b>	Examination Centre
<b>LSGU</b>	Local self-government unit
<b>LEP</b>	Licensed Education Providers
<b>MEA</b>	Ministry of European Affairs
<b>MESPU</b>	Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism
<b>MEDT</b>	Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism
<b>MPA</b>	Ministry of Public Administration
<b>MCM</b>	Ministry of Culture and Media
<b>MHMR</b>	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights
<b>MONSTAT</b>	National Statistical Office
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>MAFWM</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
<b>MLSW</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
<b>MSY</b>	Ministry of Sports and Youth, primarily the Department of Youth
<b>MSY-sport</b>	Department of Sports in the Ministry of Sports and Youth
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisations, primarily youth organisations and other youth-focused organisations
<b>CE</b>	Chamber of Economy
<b>RKSOM</b>	Representative umbrella alliance of youth organisations
<b>RYCO</b>	Regional Office for Youth Cooperation
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>TO TOWN</b>	Global student exchange programme
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UoM</b>	Union of Municipalities
<b>EB</b>	Education Bureau
<b>NEO</b>	National Employment Office

## Executive summary

*Vision: Young people are acknowledged as a vital asset and influential force within our society, where their voices are valued, their contributions are esteemed, and their initiatives receive support. They shape the social landscape where they assert their rights and strive towards realizing their full potential.*

The Youth Strategy 2023–2027 constitutes a strategic response to the prevailing circumstances faced by young individuals in Montenegrin society. Although the formal commencement of the strategy's drafting occurred in 2022, initial consultations with stakeholders in youth policy transpired in 2021. These consultations aimed to gather insights into both short-term and long-term priorities pertaining to youth policy. In shaping the strategy, an extensive review of various research, studies, analyses, reports, and relevant publications from the past five years was undertaken, with a focus on Montenegro, the Balkans, and Europe. This scrutiny sought to identify the challenges confronting young people and the impediments in the execution of youth policy and development. Public consultations conducted by the Ministry of Sports and Youth were open to all interested citizens and stakeholders, and the Working Group meticulously analysed the results. Survey on the needs of young people involved a representative sample, along with additional focus groups representing diverse segments of the youth population. The design of the Strategy incorporated the active participation of young individuals, facilitated through their representatives in the Working Group and in direct consultations with members of the Working Group. Additionally, during the document's preparation, the Working Group engaged in further direct consultations with stakeholders in the field of youth policy, aiming to inclusively involve as many participants as possible in this crucial process.

Through a comprehensive analysis of gathered initiatives, evidence, information, and input during the extensive multi-month efforts of the Working Group, the challenges confronted by young people have been discerned. Simultaneously, measures and activities essential for addressing these challenges have been identified. The overarching goal of the Youth Strategy 2023–2027 is to provide appropriate support and incentives to empower young individuals as creators within a social environment where they can assert their rights and fulfil their full potential.

The strategy unequivocally acknowledges youth as a pivotal resource and influential force within our society. It envisions the establishment of mechanisms and approaches in youth policy that will facilitate the realization of their rights, respect for the experiences, attitudes, and voices of young people, appreciation for their contributions, and active support for their initiatives.

In response to the identified key problem, a strategic goal has been set: **By establishing a sustainable interdepartmental support system for young people, opportunities are created for the development of their full capacities fostering their active contribution to the societal development.**

Building upon the identified key problem, its causes, and consequences, and aligning with the recognized and prioritized challenges, this Strategy outlines four operational goals and accompanying measures that must be accomplished throughout its duration, as follows:

1. Establish a sustainable system of services to support young people in their transition to adulthood.
2. Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes.



3. Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration.
4. Improve the normative-institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy.

By taking action in the four specified areas and implementing developed measures and activities, the strategy will directly contribute to the accomplishment of the set goals.

OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood

Measure 1.1: Establish a quality assurance system for youth work

Measure 1.2: Establish a functional system of youth services in all municipalities

Measure 1.3: Develop and deliver inclusive youth work and non-formal education programmes

Measure 1.4: Establish a functional information system for young people and strengthen their competences in utilising available information

Measure 1.5: Develop youth mobility programmes inside and outside of Montenegro

OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes

Measure 2.1: Establish sustainable mechanisms to support youth initiatives, informal youth groups, and organisations

Measure 2.2: Create new and improve existing youth participation mechanisms, with a special focus on encouraging the participation of young women and marginalized groups

Measure 2.3: Enhance the capabilities of young individuals to participate in community development, democratic life and decision-making

Measure 2.4: Enhance the conditions for the development of volunteerism

OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

Measure 3.1: Create an interdepartmental set of activities to improve opportunities for the development and realization of the full potential of young people

Measure 3.2: Develop an interdepartmental set of activities to enhance the inclusion and resilience of young people

Measure 3.3: Develop an interdepartmental set of activities to enhance the health and well-being of young people

Measure 3.4: Develop an interdepartmental activity programme to encourage young people to spend quality free time and enhance their creativity

OO4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy

Measure 4.1: Establish clear mechanisms for the planning and execution of the youth policy

Measure 4.2: Develop an effective mechanism for interdepartmental cooperation in both the formulation and execution of youth policy

Measure 4.3: Create a comprehensive and efficient system for regular collection, monitoring and interdepartmental exchange of data on the situation of young people and the impact of youth policy

Measure 4.4: Strengthen human capacities for youth policy implementation

Measure 4.5: Improve existing and develop new mechanisms of international cooperation

The implementation of the Strategy envisions collaborative efforts from all identified stakeholders, encompassing the public, civil, and private sectors, as well as active involvement from young people themselves. In tandem with the Strategy, a two-year Action Plan for the period 2023-2024 is presented. Subsequently, a new plan is anticipated to be formulated, outlining key activities for the following period.

## Introduction

Youth policy in Montenegro emerged following the country's independence in 2006, marked by the adoption of the inaugural National Action Plan for Youth (NAPY) covering the period 2006-2011, which served as a strategic framework outlining priorities in this area. The initial NAPY encompassed measures across nine key domains, including education, employment, health, human rights, information, mobility, participation, and others. During this period, it became evident that youth policy in Montenegro was not solely shaped and executed by institutional bodies but rather by an entire ecosystem, now recognized as the youth sector. The development and implementation of youth policy priorities have, for years, relied on collective efforts from a diverse range of contributors, including non-governmental organisations, particularly youth organisations and organisations dedicated to the interests of young people, local self-government units, ministries, various institutions, and international actors. Additionally, a crucial role is played by young people, both those formally organised and those in informal groups, who actively contribute to realizing recognized priorities for the youth.

In Montenegro, the framework for youth policy was officially outlined through legislative means with the introduction of the Youth Law in 2016. Subsequent to its enactment, significant amendments and changes were incorporated into the law during 2019, notably influencing the establishment of youth services by both the state and other entities. Furthermore, they played a pivotal role in officially recognizing a representative youth union at the national level, and also led to the development of complementary strategic solutions at the local level, fostering a coordinated approach in the implementation of youth policy at both the national and local levels.

Youth policy is exceptionally dynamic and distinctive, characterized by its horizontal and vertical dimensions, specifically targeting an age group that is inherently heterogeneous and consistently **evolving**, along with its changing needs and aspirations. Young people constitute both the present and the future of Montenegro, underscoring the imperative for a meaningful and thoughtful approach in planning and implementing youth policy. Within this realm, the term "transition to adulthood" is frequently employed to highlight the pivotal phase in which young individuals move from childhood to adulthood. This period often represents a critical juncture in their lives, marked by significant life decisions and the formation of personal aspirations, exerting a profound influence on the overall development of the entire country. Hence, it is paramount for youth policy to continuously adjust to societal changes and closely align with the evolving needs and desires of young people in Montenegro.

Considering the fundamental principles and insights gained from past experiences, lessons learned, evaluation outcomes, and survey conducted among young people, coupled with the inputs highlighted by young individuals during the strategy design process – and in alignment with the latest evidence and information regarding the needs of young people – the new four-year document encompasses four operational areas. These areas are designed to be complementary and in harmony with the identified challenges faced by young people and their developmental requirements. They outline measures and activities aimed at facilitating the achievement of established goals related to the identified challenges, all in accordance with the strategic goal and operational objectives.

## Development of a new Youth Strategy

The formal initiation of the Youth Strategy drafting process took place in 2022. However, in anticipation of this undertaking, the first round of consultations<sup>1</sup> with stakeholders in youth policy was conducted in 2021 in order to gather perspectives on short-term and long-term priorities within the realm of youth policy. Utilizing a combination of consultative meetings and online questionnaires, a total of 68 participants engaged in the process, including: a) 24 representatives from youth and non-governmental organisations focused on youth matters; b) 10 representatives from state institutions; c) 21 representatives from local self-governments responsible for youth issues; d) four representatives from youth services; and e) nine representatives from international organisations and experts. The insights derived from these consultations provided valuable information regarding the areas of youth policy where progress had been achieved, areas where anticipated results fell short, as well as short-term and long-term priorities crucial for the development of youth in Montenegro.

At the inception of this document's preparation, an extensive analysis of the challenges faced by young people, as well as those encountered in the implementation of youth policy and the broader field of youth development, was conducted. This analysis drew upon the insights of 95 distinct researches, studies, analyses, reports, and other pertinent publications published within the last five years. The focus was not only on Montenegro but also extended to the Balkan region and Europe. This effort resulted in the creation of an in-depth Situation Analysis in the field of youth policy, comprising 26 areas, each providing an overview of the current state, a comparative assessment of European practices, identification of key challenges,

consultations with major stakeholders from the preceding period, and the formulation of key recommendations and priorities.

In June 2022, a dedicated Working Group was established, comprising representatives from various government departments, public institutions, and individuals from youth and non-governmental organisations actively engaged with young people. The selection of members was carried out through a public call facilitated by the then Youth Administration. The Working Group for the drafting of the Strategy consisted of 22 members, representing entities such as the Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Culture and Media, Ministry of Science and Technological Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Centre for Vocational Education, Union of Municipalities, Representative Alliance of Non-governmental Organisations Implementing Youth Policy "Youth Network," Youth Service Podgorica, Youth Service Bar, Youth Service Šavnik, NGO Prima, NGO ADP ZID, the UNICEF Office in Montenegro (as an observer), and the Parliament of Montenegro (also as an observer). The group collaborated intensively on the development of the new Youth Strategy, engaging in several one-day and multi-day meetings and consultations. In addition to government and institutional representatives, the Working Group featured two individuals from non-governmental organisations working with young people, a representative from an umbrella youth organisation that unites various youth organisations, and three administrators from youth services across the three regions. As part of the collaborative efforts, the Working Group, in conjunction with the Youth Network, organised

direct consultations with young people, which provided the Working Group with a more direct and comprehensive understanding of the needs and ideas of the youth demographic.

The Youth Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

**Rights-based:** The Strategy acknowledges human rights and the rights of young people as fundamental considerations guiding its measures and activities.

**Youth as a resource:** It perceives young people as active agents capable of instigating positive changes in society, emphasizing support rather than viewing them as a problem to be solved.

**Evidence-based:** The Strategy establishes a knowledge base about young people, mapping their needs and incorporating the results of available research, statistics, and sector practices.

**Holistic:** Recognizing interdepartmental and intersectoral cooperation as essential, the Strategy aims to create a stimulating environment for young people, enabling the development of their knowledge, skills, and values.

**Inclusive:** Viewing young people as a diverse population, the Strategy strives for equal access and opportunities, ensuring that different groups of young individuals can enjoy their rights and realize their aspirations through coordinated institutional efforts.

**Participatory:** Young people, as the end users and target group of the Strategy, were actively involved in its development through various elements of the drafting process.

**Organised response to the needs of young people:** The Strategy emphasizes vertical and horizontal cooperation at all levels, aiming to establish a supportive system facilitating the realization of young people's potential.

**Concrete:** The Strategy outlines clear measures, activities, competences, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, budget allocations, and responsibilities for implementation.

In accordance with Article 12 of the Decree on the Election of Representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations to the Working Bodies of State Administration Authorities and the Implementation of Public Consultations in the Preparation of Laws and Strategies



Consultations of members of the Working Group with young people, September 2022

<sup>1</sup> The report detailing the outcomes of the consultations is accessible at: [www.gov.me/cyr/dokumenta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/cyr/dokumenta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)



(Official Gazette of Montenegro, 41/18), the Ministry of Sports and Youth conducted public consultations open to all interested citizens and stakeholders. The results of these consultations were also analysed by the Working Group.

For the purpose of drafting this Strategy, and with the support of UNICEF, research was conducted on young people and their needs on a representative basis, the results of which significantly determined the priorities and measures contained in this Strategy. A total of 1,005 young people between the ages of 15 and 30, from all three regions, were surveyed using the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) data collection method. The data and findings of this research brought significant insight into the areas that this Strategy deals with: non-formal education, development of youth competencies and volunteering; youth work and youth services; participation and democratic values; informing; data protection and media literacy; free time; youth mobility; polarization in society; and health and growing up. Additionally, in November 2022, qualitative research was conducted among six focus groups that included young people active through the youth of political parties, young people active through school and student organisations, and young people from marginalized groups, which enabled the proposals of different groups of young people to be more directly included in the Strategy.

During November 2022, direct consultations involving members of the Working Group and key stakeholders in the field of youth policy were organised, aiming to engage as many actors as possible in this crucial process. These consultations included the participation of 14 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), seven municipalities, eight international organisations, and 10 institutions in proposing and formulating solutions within the strategic framework.

In the course of creating this strategic document, valuable support was extended by UNDP and UNICEF.

UNICEF, in particular, contributed to the Strategy's development by facilitating research on the needs and position of youth. Additionally, UNICEF played a crucial role in evaluating the previous Youth Strategy 2017-2021.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the execution of consultations with youth policy stakeholders in 2021, contributing to the preparation of the report on the 2017-2021 Youth Strategy's implementation. Additionally, they provided technical assistance in formulating the 2023-2027 Youth Strategy.

Key actors in youth policy, engaged as previously described, are anticipated to play a role in the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Youth Strategy. The subsequent graphs offer an overview of these key actors within the public, civil, and private sectors.



Chart 1: Key actors in the public sector

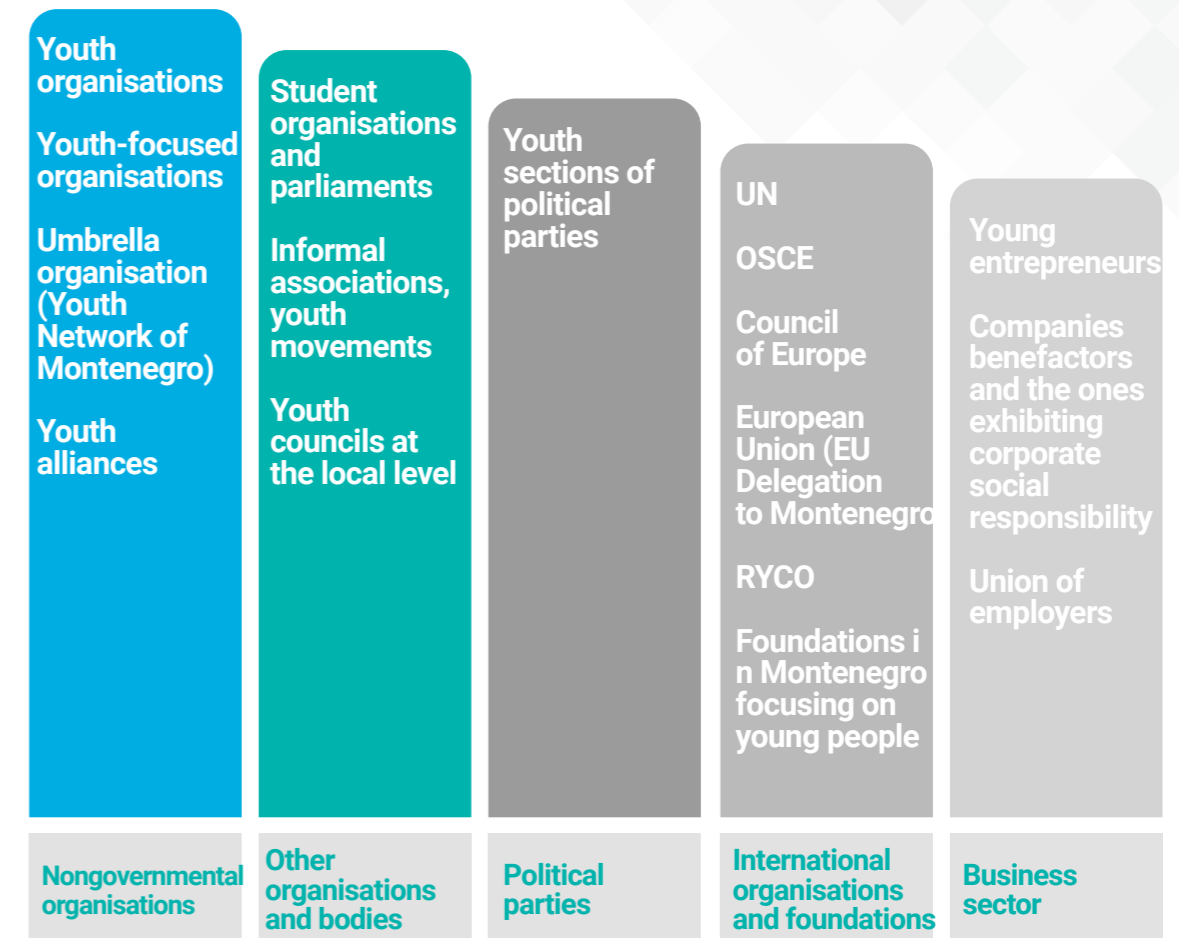


Chart 2: Key actors in the civil society

The primary stakeholders in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy are, foremost, all young women and men in Montenegro. Additionally, key participants extend beyond them to encompass figures from the public, civil, and private sectors, as well as actors at both the state and local levels.

Recognizing the need for heightened engagement, it is deemed essential to enhance the interest of the Government, all departments, and pivotal institutions within the system to collectively work towards improving the standing of all young people in Montenegro through coordinated, strategic actions, and proportionate investments.

Despite a considerable level of interest, it has been assessed that the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the key actor responsible for youth policy implementation, currently operates at a suboptimal level in terms of influence and strength. This suboptimal performance can be attributed to several factors, including the historical instability and frequent transfer of youth policy responsibilities between departments. Additionally, challenges arise from insufficient human capacities and a lack of harmonized legal solutions, which significantly hinder the effective implementation and coordination of youth policy by this department. In response to these assessments, the Strategy outlines specific measures and activities under Operational Objective 4, Improve the normative-institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy.

# Alignment with other strategic documents

When formulating this policy, an approach aligned with umbrella strategic documents and other sectoral strategies was employed, with particular emphasis on adherence to international youth policy frameworks. The Youth Strategy 2023–2027 is harmonized with the following documents:

## Overarching strategic documents

### 1.1 Documents setting key priorities:

#### - Medium-Term Work Programme of the Government of Montenegro 2022–2024

The Medium-Term Work Programme of the Government of Montenegro for the period 2022-2024 outlines key development priorities and objectives, crucial for advancing youth policy in Montenegro. The following objectives and indicators are noteworthy, aimed at aligning public policy implementation in the ensuing period:

Objective 2.5: Achieve stable and sustainable employment growth, fostering equal opportunities and dignified work, with enhancement of knowledge and skills alongside greater social inclusion, with a target to raise the youth employment rate (ages 15–29) to 34% by the end of 2024, as well as

Objective 4.3: Enhance the quality of services for young people and bolster their involvement in the formulation of public policies by expanding and developing youth services to ensure their availability across all local self-governments in Montenegro, and increasing the number of active youth administrators to 30 by the end of 2024.

Additionally, the document outlines plans to expand the number of organised events for young people under the auspices of youth services from 65 to 270 in 2024. The aforementioned changes are also expected to boost the number of young individuals actively participating in events designed to shape public policies.

The Youth Strategy aligns with the Medium-Term Work Programme of the Government of Montenegro, targeting recognised challenges faced by young people and aiming to contribute towards the anticipated outcomes. To enhance the employability of young individuals, especially those categories facing greater barriers to employment, the strategy plans appropriate measures and activities under OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration, particularly through Measure 2, which focuses on boosting young people's job prospects. Moreover, the Strategy acknowledges the need for activities that develop young people's competencies, making them more competitive in the job market. It also plays a key role in advancing services for young individuals, especially in terms of providing services outlined within the legal framework of youth policy, primarily through youth services as specified by OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood. Furthermore, the Strategy emphasizes empowering young individuals to be proactive agents of social change and to contribute to the development, implementation, and monitoring of public policies, as part of OO 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of

youth policy. Finally, the Youth Strategy envisages numerous activities across various sectors that directly contribute to enhancing the status of young people in Montenegro.

Medium-term Work Programme of the Government of Montenegro 2022–2024	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
Objective 2.5: Achieve stable and sustainable employment growth, fostering equal opportunities and dignified work, with enhancement of knowledge and skills alongside greater social inclusion, with a target to raise the youth employment rate (ages 15–29) to 34% by the end of 2024.	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
Objective 4.3: Enhance the quality of services for young people and bolster their involvement in the formulation of public policies by expanding and developing youth services to ensure their availability across all local self-governments in Montenegro, and increasing the number of active youth administrators to 30 by the end of 2024.	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood  OO 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy

#### - Work Programme of the 43rd Government of Montenegro/ Prime Minister-Designate's Inaugural Speech

In the Inaugural Speech outlining the composition of Montenegro's 43<sup>rd</sup> Government, it is highlighted that there will be an increase in funding for active employment initiatives aimed at reducing long-term unemployment, particularly among the youth, women, and vulnerable societal groups. The government plans to formulate a new Youth Strategy covering the years 2022 to 2026 and revise the Youth Law to set up an effective normative and institutional framework for executing youth policies. Public policies concerning youth will be strategically formulated and rely on accurate statistical data. For the first time, through legal and strategic measures, the Government will acknowledge adolescents as a distinct age group, recognising their unique characteristics and needs in health, education, culture, sports, and job market preparation. The inclusion of young individuals in advisory and other governmental and ministerial working groups will be promoted. To enhance young people's position in the labour market and tailor their professional skills to the modern business environment's demands, necessary support measures will be implemented. As part of the efforts to diminish youth unemployment, the government commits to the ongoing enhancement and implementation of programmes aimed at fostering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship.

The Youth Strategy is also harmonized with the Inaugural Speech of the Prime Minister-Designate for the Composition of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Government of Montenegro, specifically focusing on challenges in the field of youth employability and foreseeing measures and activities that contribute to the improvement of youth employability, especially for those categories traditionally facing greater employment difficulties, including young women and vulnerable young people (OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration, i.e., through measure 2, which refers to increasing the employability of young people). In addition, through the development of this Strategy and amendments to the Youth Law, efforts are underway to establish an effective normative and institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy (OO 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy), aligning with the

priorities outlined in the Prime Minister’s Inaugural Speech. The strategy also includes measures and activities to encourage the inclusion of young people in advisory and other working bodies of the Government and ministries, primarily through the establishment and activities of the Youth Council as part of OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes, as well as strengthening the capacity of public administration officials to involve young people in the development and implementation of various policies, through the measures provided in OO 4. Additionally, the Strategy acknowledges specific groups and categories of young people, including adolescent girls, recognizing their unique needs in the transition to adulthood. Moreover, the Youth Strategy envisages measures and activities that directly impact the building of young people’s competencies so they can be competitive in the labour market and adapt their professional profiles to the needs of the modern business world, but also to initiate their entrepreneurial and business ideas, in line with the Government’s objectives to reduce long-term unemployment and youth unemployment, as part of the measures foreseen in OO 3.

Medium-term Work Programme of the Government of Montenegro 2022–2024	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
Youth employability	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
Strategic and legal frameworks for youth policy	OO 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy
Engaging young individuals in decision-making processes	OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes  OO 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy

### 1.2 Strategic and planning documents outlining Montenegro’s overarching developmental directions:

#### - Montenegro’s European Union Accession Programme 2023–2024

Youth are acknowledged in this document under Chapter 26 - Education and Culture, where the Ministry of Sports and Youth’s responsibilities regarding the strategic and legislative framework are outlined. Additionally, young people are recognised in the section on multi-beneficiary priorities through IPA II Erasmus+, encompassing the youth dimension, and the enhanced integration of hard-to-employ groups into the labour market via innovative employment measures. This focus includes beneficiaries of social protection, women, young individuals, those with low skills, and persons with disabilities, along with increased social inclusion of vulnerable groups in the local community, such as children and youth, through the development of innovative local social services (grant scheme).

In the Accession Programme of Montenegro to the European Union for 2023-2024, the formulation of the Youth Strategy for 2023–2027 was acknowledged. Furthermore, the European Commission’s 2022 Report on Montenegro highlights the significance of adopting a new Strategy, noting that the expiration of the previous one affects further planning in the sector. This includes the operation of youth services, which are expected to align their programmes with the priorities identified in the Strategy.

The Youth Strategy in Montenegro facilitates the execution of the European Union Accession Programme, significantly through all its four operational objectives, notably by endorsing the principle of lifelong learning (OO 1) and aligning with the strategic framework for European cooperation in youth policy (OO 4). This strategy emphasises bolstering the non-formal education system in Montenegro to ensure access to quality education and training throughout life, with a particular focus on empowering the youth (OO 1, OO 2, OO 3). Additionally, mobility and intercultural education (OO 1) are explicitly acknowledged in this Strategy, which proposes measures to enhance inclusivity and mobility in youth policy, particularly by exploring opportunities for more active engagement in European Union programmes, such as Erasmus+.

EU Accession Programme	Youth Strategy 2023–2027.
Chapter 26: A) Education, training, youth and sport	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood  OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes  OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration  OO 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy

#### - National Sustainable Development Strategy by 2030

Policies pertaining to youth are a crucial aspect of the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS), underscoring the importance of highlighting that the Youth Strategy 2023–2027 is in alignment with the NSDS’s measures, activities, and indicators. The NSDS particularly emphasizes the continuous increase in the number of young people trained abroad who are subsequently employed in Montenegro. This focus aligns perfectly with the core priorities of the Youth Strategy, which are set within the context of enhancing mobility and employment opportunities for young Montenegrins, as well as addressing the phenomenon known as “brain circulation.” Key measures of the NSDS, which are intrinsically linked to the objectives of the new Youth Strategy, include the improvement of the educational and scientific aspects of higher education. This is achieved through aligning the higher education system with societal and labour market needs, and fostering entrepreneurship among young people, thereby consistently reducing youth unemployment. These measures directly support the goals of increasing youth employability (SG 1.3 Provide inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, SG 2.5 Stimulate employability and social inclusion, SG 2.8 Ensure more balanced socio-economic development across all local self-government units based on competitiveness, innovation, and employment, particularly focusing on the northern region’s development, SG 4.4 Enable sustainable management of coastal resources and promote the blue economy). Furthermore, the NSDS highlights the importance of recognizing competences gained through non-formal education, a priority echoed in the Youth Strategy through the commitment to ensuring access to high-quality non-formal education programmes for all young people across Montenegro (SG 1.3 Provide inclusive and high-quality education, and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.). The Youth Strategy adopts a holistic approach to



the transition from childhood to adulthood, emphasizing support for young people in sustainable future planning and the achievement of personal goals, contributing to the country's sustainable development. A measure within the NSDS advocates for the articulation of citizen interests and increased youth participation (SG 2.1 Encourage a proactive stance among key actors towards sustainable development), aligning with the Youth Strategy's action priorities. The significance of engaging young people through NGOs and informal groups in the public policy-making process at both state and local levels, a key objective of the Youth Strategy, is highlighted. Moreover, the NSDS acknowledges the role of young individuals across various sectoral policies, including education, employment, environmental protection, poverty reduction, and welfare enhancement. Developed on these same principles, the Youth Strategy recognises the importance of interdepartmental cooperation, showcasing the role of youth and youth policy in sectoral agendas. Overall, the Youth Strategy aims to contribute to the realization of the vision and goals set by the National Sustainable Development Strategy.

National Sustainable Development Strategy by 2030	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
SG 1.3 Provide inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, SG 2.5 Stimulate employability and social inclusion, SG 2.8 Ensure more balanced socio-economic development across all local self-government units based on competitiveness, innovation, and employment, particularly focusing on the northern region's development, SG 4.4 Enable sustainable management of coastal resources and promote the blue economy  Plus various sectoral policies that envisage the involvement of young people.	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration  OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes
SC 1.3 Provide inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood  OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
SG 2.1 Encourage a proactive stance among key actors towards sustainable development	OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes

### 1.3 Financial strategy documents

#### - Fiscal Strategy of Montenegro 2021–2024

The primary objective of the fiscal policy under the 42<sup>nd</sup> Government of Montenegro is to stabilize public finances in the post-COVID era and establish conditions for their long-term sustainability. The aim is to ensure that robust public finances serve as the foundation for dynamic and sustainable economic growth, ultimately enhancing the standards of living for all Montenegrin citizens. Grounded in principles of sustainable growth and development, the rule of law, equal opportunities, healthy finances, economic development, health, environmental wellbeing, education, knowledge-based and digital society, the fiscal policy embraces a comprehensive approach. One key measure involves reducing smoking prevalence, particularly among younger demographics and lower-

income households, through an increase in excise duty on tobacco and tobacco products (Revenue-boosting measures: Increased excise duty on tobacco and tobacco products). This not only curtails cigarette consumption, especially among youths, but also bolsters budget revenues. Furthermore, amendments to the Law on Social and Child Protection introduce a child allowance for all children up to 18 years old, (Expenditures-related measure: Universal child allowance) significantly improving the situation for adolescents as the group which stands to gain the most from this measure. Non-governmental organisations are pivotal partners in youth policies development and implementation according to the Youth Strategy. By the Fiscal Policy document, the government commits to funding projects and programmes in areas of public interest, implemented by NGOs, with a minimum allocation of 0.3% of the current annual budget. Additionally, special funds are earmarked for financing projects and programmes of NGOs focusing on the protection of persons with disabilities, amounting to 0.1% of the current annual budget.

#### - Macroeconomic and Fiscal Policy Guidelines for the period 2023–2026

Based on the identified challenges in ensuring sustainable growth and development, Montenegro's economic policy strategically aims to achieve smart, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth, thereby enhancing the quality of life for all its citizens. Policies pertaining to youth are formulated in alignment with these strategic guidelines, primarily within the Main Programme 19 – Education, Science, and Sports. Within this framework, funds are allocated for various purposes, including:

- Providing general support for primary and secondary school students to ensure equitable access to education
- Participation in the EURYDICE network and involvement in EUROGUIDANCE projects
- Development and implementation of youth policies.

The strategy aligns with the aforementioned Guidelines primarily through the implementation of OO 3 (Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration) and OO 1 (Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood) by supporting the activities of informal and formal education. Additionally, it promotes education and lifelong learning through youth services.

Moreover, within Main Programme 15 – Economy and Tourism, one of the measures focuses on promoting entrepreneurship among young people. The Youth Strategy will contribute to achieving this goal through OO 3 (Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration), within the measure aimed at increasing youth employability.

Macroeconomic and Fiscal Policy Guidelines for the period 2023–2026	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
Main Programme 19 – Education, Science, and Sport	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood  OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
Main Programme 15 – Economy and Tourism	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- Montenegro's Economic Reform Programme for the period 2023–2025**

One of the key priorities outlined in this document, to which the Youth Strategy is aligned, focuses on increasing social inclusion through reform measures aimed at enhancing the employability of young people and women, while addressing long-term unemployment (Reform measures in response to challenge 1: Increasing employment, particularly among women and young people, and addressing long-term unemployment). These measures include the implementation of the Youth Guarantee programme in Montenegro (**Reform measure 2: Introduction of the Youth Guarantee programme in Montenegro**), which involves matching the supply and demand for work and providing young people with information about the labour market. Additionally, the introduction of new Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) programmes intended for young people, as identified in the Youth Strategy within OO3, measure 2, is also part of these efforts. Within Reform measure 4: Digitization of education and development of digital skills, activities aimed at enhancing the information literacy of both young people and adults will be implemented. This aligns with the measures and activities outlined in the new Youth Strategy (a cross-cutting theme, particularly connected with OO 1 and OO 3).

Montenegro's Economic Reforms Programme for the period 2023–2025	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
Reform measures in response to challenge 1: Increasing employment, particularly among women and young people, and addressing long-term unemployment	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood  OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- Montenegro's Rural Development Strategy 2023–2027**

The Regional Development Strategy of Montenegro envisions contributing to a more balanced regional development for a human-scale life, based on competitiveness, innovation, the enhancement of human capital, digitization, decarbonisation, and social inclusion. The Strategy encompasses three strategic goals, with SG 2 focusing on achieving sustainable economic development of the region by strengthening human resources and promoting employment to enhance the quality of life. Within the regional development strategy, OO 2.2 is outlined to increase the employment rate and reduce informal employment, with a specific recognition of young people as a special category requiring tailored sets of measures and activities. Similarly, the Youth Strategy, through OO for achieving interdepartmental contributions to improving the situation of young people, also underscores the necessity of creating activities aimed at boosting the employability of young individuals. Moreover, OO 2.3 emphasises increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the population policy, which aligns with the priorities of the Youth Strategy, particularly through the imperative to create activities fostering so-called brain circulation.

Montenegro's Rural Development Strategy 2023–2027	Youth Strategy 2023–2027.
OO 2.2: Increase the employment rate and reduce informal employment  OO 2.3: Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the population policy	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**2. Sectoral strategy documents:**

**- National Employment Strategy 2021–2025**

In efforts to bolster the level of youth employment in Montenegro, the strategic document underscores the primary priority of enhancing competitiveness and social cohesion, particularly by fostering the development of knowledge and skills across all educational levels to create more favourable opportunities for young individuals. Consequently, special emphasis is placed on the imperative to cultivate knowledge and competences relevant to the labour market in the digital age, encapsulated as a distinct operational goal (OO 2: Creating knowledge and competences for the labour market in the digital age). This entails creating conditions to enhance the supply of work and qualifications, while addressing structural weaknesses in the education and training system, with a specific focus on tackling youth unemployment and long-term unemployment. Significantly important is the alignment of the new Youth Strategy with performance indicators outlined in the strategic document, particularly those pertaining to reducing the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) population in Montenegro to 15% by the end of 2025. Additionally, there is an emphasis on augmenting lending opportunities for young entrepreneurs and defining novel youth employment programmes (OO 1: Achieving employment growth, investing in quality and safe workplaces, through improving the business environment). Furthermore, within OO 3: Improving the position of unemployed individuals in the labour market through the efficiency of labour market services and active labour market policy measures, as well as strengthening social inclusion and reducing poverty, this Strategy envisions measures directly tailored to young people. This includes the provision of individualised access through various services, notably through the potential development of the Youth Guarantee.

Montenegro's Youth Strategy complements the activities outlined in the Employment Strategy, particularly through interdepartmental cooperation, aimed at supporting the implementation of measures and activities within the youth sector. Primarily, this support is channelled through youth services, followed by youth organisations and their partners. Within the Youth Strategy, enhancing youth employability stands out as a primary area of focus through interdepartmental collaboration, especially given that unemployment remains one of the most significant challenges confronting young people in Montenegro. Alongside support provided through youth services, the Strategy recognises the importance of aiding youth associations in promoting entrepreneurship and employment within the private sector, as well as fostering the development of digital and soft skills.

National Employment Strategy 2021–2025	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 1: Achieve employment growth, investing in quality and safe workplaces, through improving the business environment	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood
OO 2: Create knowledge and competences for the labour market in the digital age	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
OO 3: Improve the position of unemployed individuals in the labour market through the efficiency of labour market services and ALMP measures, as well as strengthening social inclusion and reducing poverty	

**- Strategy for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning 2020–2024**

The strategy outlines the following key strategic goals essential for youth policy: enhancing the development of entrepreneurial competences across all levels of formal education, integrating entrepreneurial learning into non-formal education, and enhancing the effectiveness of the entrepreneurial learning system. These objectives will be achieved through specific measures aimed at facilitating policy implementation and fostering entrepreneurial learning as a predominant trend throughout society, which also represents a significant aspect of the Youth Strategy. The Youth Strategy is notably aligned with the objectives of the Strategy for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning, particularly in improving skills and entrepreneurial competencies among young people.

Strategy for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning 2020–2024	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 1: Achieve employment growth, investing in quality and safe workplaces, through improving the business environment	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood
OO 2: Create knowledge and competences for the labour market in the digital age	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
OO 3: Improve the position of unemployed individuals in the labour market through the efficiency of labour market services and ALMP measures, as well as strengthening social inclusion and reducing poverty	

**- National Action Plan for Implementing the Open Government Partnership Initiative in Montenegro 2023-2024**

One of the operational goals outlined in Montenegro’s Open Government Partnership for 2023-2024 concerns “better information and education of the public about the possibilities of partaking in policy-making” (OG 3). Additionally, there is a desire to “encourage the participation of young people in the implementation of green policies” (OG 4), within thematic area I – Civic Participation. In this document, young people are identified as a target group in various communication strategies. Regarding informing young individuals about opportunities for education and training, the Ministry of Education plays a primary role, alongside other institutions such as universities (including their career centres and offices for international cooperation), the national Erasmus+ office, and others.

The Youth Strategy will play a significant role in supporting the planned initiatives outlined in this National Plan. Facilitating the involvement of young individuals in societal affairs, particularly in the development, implementation, and monitoring of public policies, including those related to environmental sustainability, stands as a strategic priority within the Youth Strategy. Accordingly, activities aimed at promoting youth participation in policy development and broader societal engagement are envisaged for the implementation of this Strategy. These efforts align with and contribute to the objectives set forth in the OGP National Action Plan.

OGP National Action Plan 2023-2024	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
Thematic Area I – Civic Participation OG 3: Better information and education of the public about the possibilities of partaking in policy-making OG 4: Encourage the participation of young people in the implementation of green policies	OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes

**- Montenegro’s Digital Transformation Strategy 2022–2026**

The strategic document aims to enhance the employability of young people, primarily by establishing a support system for acquiring digital knowledge and skills. It is noteworthy that activities are being developed to implement a one-stop-shop model for youth employability, with a particular focus on enhancing digital skills. This initiative aligns with the vision outlined in the Youth Strategy regarding digitization. Additionally, the Digital Transformation Strategy seeks to introduce and promote an increasing number of e-services to facilitate the digitization of access and usage of public services, with young people being a recognized beneficiary group. Moreover, the Strategy emphasises investing in the younger generation, particularly those acquiring formal education in the IT field. In this regard, the Youth Strategy prioritises digitization as one of two cross-cutting issues spanning all strategic and operational areas. Through its endeavours, particularly in non-formal education, the Youth Strategy will contribute to promoting the values and vision set forth in the Digital Transformation Strategy.

Digital Transformation Strategy 2022–2026	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 1.4: Development and enhancement of digital knowledge and skills across Montenegrin society OO 2.1: Raising awareness among citizens and businesses about the importance of digital development	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- Montenegro’s Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2025**

The strategy acknowledges that the degree of gender equality remains unsatisfactory, noting that despite existing legal norms, the institutions have yet to provide efficient and effective protection against discrimination targeting women and individuals of diverse sexual and gender identities, especially those belonging to vulnerable social groups. Operational objective 2 aims to enhance education, culture, and media to diminish stereotypes and prejudices towards women and individuals with different sexual and gender identities. Young people are identified as a target group for implementing gender equality policies within this objective. Furthermore, the strategy highlights that action plans for young people rarely consider the interests and positions of young women, particularly those from marginalized groups, and those subjected to multiple forms of discrimination—such as women with disabilities, women in rural areas, the unemployed women, women from ethnic minority communities, and women from sexual minorities.

Considering the aforementioned challenges, the Youth Strategy acknowledges gender equality as one of its two transversal priorities, indicating that gender equality is a pervasive concern across all strategic domains. Consequently, the Strategy will dedicate special attention to incorporating measures and activities geared towards promoting gender equality. Moreover, it will allocate additional resources to bolster efforts aimed at advancing gender equality within the youth sector.



Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2025	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 2: Enhance education, culture, and media to diminish stereotypes and prejudices towards women and individuals with different sexual and gender identities	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood  OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes  OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- National Plan for Culture Development 2023–2027**

The programme outlines measures and activities aimed at fostering the cultural and artistic creativity of young individuals (measure 1.4.1). This includes launching a programme specifically tailored to children and young people, with a particular focus on primary and secondary school students. Additionally, measure 1.4.2 aims to promote the development of creative industries and modern educational practices targeted at children and young people, with a fresh approach to promoting culture, audience development, and enhancing the general knowledge of young individuals. Through measure 2.1.2, efforts will be made to enhance audience development in Montenegro’s cultural landscape. This involves establishing connections between cultural and educational institutions and creating a dedicated communication channel with young people, such as a digital portal, a YouTube channel, or other formats. Furthermore, the measure supporting young creators of culture and media content encompasses sub-measures aimed at providing spaces for cultural activities for young people in all municipalities, facilitated by local self-governments (e.g., youth clubs/centres, cultural centres, etc.). Additionally, the Strategy envisages activities for audience development through measure 2.4.2. The Youth Strategy will contribute to realizing the priorities outlined in the National Plan for Culture Development by empowering and supporting young individuals to engage in cultural activities within youth services and the broader youth sector.

National Plan for Culture Development 2023–2027	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 1.4: Enhance the system and investments in modern production.  OO 2.2: Enhance cooperation with other departments.  OO 2.4: Foster the development of citizens’ cultural needs and habits, and promote audience development.	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood  OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- Strategy for the Advancement of Women’s Entrepreneurship**

The goal of the Strategy for the Advancement of Women’s Entrepreneurship is to enhance human and institutional capacities in the realm of female entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on augmenting the specific knowledge and skills of potential and existing women entrepreneurs. The vision of the Strategy is to establish a conducive business environment and provide systematic, programmatic, and institutional support for the growth, sustainability, and competitiveness of women’s entrepreneurship in Montenegro. This, in turn, will generate new business opportunities,

create jobs, and contribute to the country’s economic prosperity. This strategy is implemented through three strategic goals, while the Youth Strategy recognises the significance of empowering young women through various programmes aimed at cultivating both soft and technical skills. It aims to empower and connect young women to realise their personal and professional aspirations, particularly by supporting those who aspire to launch their own businesses. Additionally, gender sensitivity is identified as a cross-cutting priority within the Youth Strategy, ensuring a gender perspective is integrated into the programmes and measures implemented through this Strategy.

Strategy for the Advancement of Women’s Entrepreneurship	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 2.2: Enhance the availability and accessibility of advisory services and programme support aimed at fostering the growth of enterprises owned by women entrepreneurs.	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- Minority Policy Strategy**

The Minority Policy Strategy for the period from 2019 to 2023 serves as a comprehensive strategic framework aimed at enhancing the position of minority nations, particularly in domains such as culture, information, education, employment, preservation of minority languages and scripts, and political engagement. Through diverse strategic avenues, the Youth Strategy acknowledges the significance of improving multicultural and multiethnic curricula in education, fostering the engagement of youth from minority communities in community life and public policymaking, especially among multiply discriminated groups (e.g., young Roma women), and spearheading anti-discrimination campaigns. In this regard, the Youth Strategy outlines measures and activities that complement and reinforce the principles and initiatives outlined in the Minority Policy Strategy. This is achieved through planned endeavours in non-formal education and the youth sector, encompassing non-formal education curricula and the implementation of both external and internal mobility programmes. These efforts aim to foster greater societal cohesion and promote anti-discrimination and intercultural learning.

Minority Policy Strategy	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
SC 1: Enhanced adherence to the principles of multiculturalism and multiethnicity within Montenegro’s educational system, aligning with international and national standards, through bolstering the capacity of educational institutions and the application of affirmative action principles.	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood

**- Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians**

The Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro aims to enhance the socio-economic and legal standing of these minority communities within the country, while promoting equality, combating discrimination, anti-Gypsyism, and poverty. Within the Strategy, ten operational goals have been established, including combating discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, reducing poverty and the socio-economic disparity, increasing political participation and representation in policy-making processes, enhancing the availability and quality of education, and facilitating

access to quality and sustainable employment. The overarching objective of these priorities is to enhance the quality of life for Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, particularly young members of these communities. The Youth Strategy will play a crucial role in realising these efforts, particularly through the implementation of campaigns focusing on anti-discrimination and inclusion, as well as by providing training and capacity-building for youth services across Montenegro. Additionally, the Youth Strategy will work towards sensitising access and promoting active participation of Roma and Egyptians in programmes implemented by youth services and the broader youth sector. Moreover, the rights of young Roma and Egyptians will be further advanced through the rights-based approach component, which constitutes an integral part of the Youth Strategy.

Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 1: Enhance institutional and societal efforts to combat all forms of discrimination and anti-Gypsyism experienced by the Roma and Egyptian communities.	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood
OO 3: Enhance the level of political participation and representation of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the formulation, implementation, and oversight of public policies.	OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes
	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
	OO 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy

**- Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities Against Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality**

The Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities against Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality aims to ensure equal opportunities and active participation of individuals with disabilities across all aspects of social life by enhancing the legal, institutional, social, and economic framework for protection against discrimination. Grounded in a human rights-based approach to disability, the strategy outlines operational goals such as improving the status of women and girls with disabilities, eradicating discrimination and social exclusion of children with disabilities, fostering equal inclusion within the inclusive education system, enhancing access to political and public life, cultural activities, and community engagement for people with disabilities. The Youth Strategy will play a pivotal role in advancing these objectives by engaging in youth policy initiatives, enhancing the effectiveness of youth services, and advocating for the rights of young individuals with disabilities, aiming to empower youth with disabilities to fully realise their rights.

Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities Against Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 7: Ensure equality and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to be included in the inclusive education system without discrimination.	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood
OO 10: Enhance conditions for equal participation and access of persons with disabilities in political and public life.	OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes
OO 11: Guarantee equal participation, media representation, and access of persons with disabilities to cultural life, sports, and recreational activities.	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- Strategy for Enhancing the Quality of Life of LGBTI Persons**

The Strategy for Enhancing the Quality of Life of LGBTI People in Montenegro for the period 2019–2023 sets forth goals and measures aimed at significantly enhancing the social acceptance of LGBTI individuals, bolstering their safety, and fostering an environment of complete equality for all LGBTI persons. The overarching strategic goal of the Strategy is to “Enhance social acceptance of LGBTI individuals through greater citizen support in exercising their rights, reinforcing the non-discriminatory nature of the education system, and eliminating discrimination against the right of LGBTI individuals to their own culture.” The youth strategy will play an essential role in advancing the operational goal pertaining to the enhancement of the quality and non-discriminatory character of education in Montenegro. This will be achieved primarily through capacity-building initiatives targeted at youth service providers and providers of non-formal education to effectively include, acknowledge the needs, and engage with young LGBTI individuals, alongside with promoting the rights of LGBTI individuals within the youth sector.

Strategy for Enhancing the Quality of Life of LGBTI Persons	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
SG 1: Enhance social acceptance of LGBTI individuals through greater citizen support in exercising their rights, reinforcing the non-discriminatory nature of the education system, and eliminating discrimination against the right of LGBTI individuals to their own culture.	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood
	OO 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes
	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

**- Strategy for the Prevention and Suppression of Radicalization and Violent Extremism**

The Strategy for the Prevention and Suppression of Radicalization and Violent Extremism for the period from 2020 to 2024 is aligned with Montenegro’s communication priority as a just and safe state. The goals of the Strategy are in harmony with the country’s integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic community, fostering partnerships with influential nations to ensure security, and attaining high international standards to contribute to regional and global peace, stability, and prosperity. The primary objective of the Strategy is to prevent and suppress radicalization and violent extremism in Montenegro. The Youth Strategy will be most conducive to achieving these goals and principles through its focus on prevention. Planned activities, particularly those aimed at promoting and enhancing media literacy, fostering the employability of young people, implementing programmes within youth services, and encouraging youth activism to address and report instances of such behaviour among peers, will significantly contribute to the Strategy’s objectives.

Strategy for the Prevention and Suppression of Radicalization and Violent Extremism	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
OO 1: Enhancing Montenegrin society’s resilience to radicalism and violent extremism.	OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood
	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

### National Strategy on Climate Change until 2030

The National Strategy on Climate Change until 2030 aims to coordinate efforts across all sectors in Montenegro to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% by 2035 compared to the baseline year of 1990. This strategy aligns activities and measures with other relevant strategies, such as those concerning energy, water management, and forestry, to significantly contribute to these mitigation efforts. Similarly, the Youth Strategy recognises climate change mitigation and youth action as a priority. Accordingly, the Youth Strategy will empower young people to actively engage with this issue and contribute to realising a long-term vision of climate neutrality for Montenegro, while also raising awareness about individual and collective contributions to mitigating climate change.

National Strategy on Climate Change until 2030	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
Chapter 5: Mitigation	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

### - Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro - Programme to Combat HIV/AIDS

In the realm of health, the Youth Strategy will primarily contribute to achieving the objectives outlined in the Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro. This strategy aims to comprehensively safeguard and enhance the mental well-being of the population by promoting mental health, preventing mental disorders, ensuring accessible and secure mental health care services, safeguarding the human rights of individuals with mental health issues, and developing and delivering services based on quality information and evidence. Given the heightened relevance of mental health in the pandemic and post-pandemic era, the Youth Strategy has identified this issue as a primary focus area. Through collaboration with professional services, activities will be organised and measures implemented to directly support the preservation of mental health and hygiene among young people, aligning with the principles and priorities of the Strategy. Additionally, within the realm of health, the Youth Strategy will contribute to advancing the implementation of the Programme to Combat HIV/AIDS. This includes organising information campaigns and educational initiatives within youth services to raise awareness about preventive measures, diagnostics, and reduce discrimination against individuals living with HIV/AIDS.

Youth Strategy has carefully considered other relevant strategies, as well as their priorities, with the intention of aligning measures and activities according to the most current needs of young people in various areas. In addition, this strategy provides deeper insight into those needs, encouraging all readers to carefully review other sections of the Strategy to obtain all relevant information.

Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health in Montenegro	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
GOAL 1: Step up efforts to promote mental health and prevent mental disorders, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable groups and those at highest risk.	OO 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
Programme to Combat HIV/AIDS	Youth Strategy 2023–2027
Area 2: Prevention	OO 3 Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration
OO 1: Increase rates of HIV testing.	
OO 2: Enhance the level of condom usage.	

### 3. Youth policy on the international level

#### - Chapter 26 “Education and Culture” and Chapter 19 “Social Policy and Employment”

Chapter 26, titled “Education and Culture,” encompasses the fields of education and training, youth and sport, culture, access to education, programmes, and other EU instruments. Currently, this chapter is provisionally closed and does not contain any benchmarks that must be met. However, the emphasis lies on creating equal opportunities for education and participation in the labour market for young people in Montenegro, alongside encouraging their active citizenship within society. Achieving these goals is among the key priorities for the forthcoming period. Therefore, it is imperative to foster extensive cooperation with EU member states in the realm of youth policy. This collaboration will primarily involve structured dialogue, mobility initiatives, youth work, and the promotion of proactive youth participation across all structures of European society.

Furthermore, Chapter 19, titled “Social Policy and Employment,” underscores the goal of ensuring equitable and fair access to fundamental social services, enhancing the social protection system, and attaining a high level of employment, favourable working conditions, and social cohesion. Special attention is directed towards groups with lower representation in the labour market, including young people, particularly those classified as NEET. Under this chapter, the relevant Ministry has initiated the development of the Youth Guarantee. This strategy also acknowledges the significance of this initiative and outlines activities aimed at facilitating its implementation.

To align the national Youth Strategy with the values and principles promoted by the European Union in youth-related areas, the 2023-2027 Youth Strategy recognises their significance and aligns with the EU’s youth policy. During the formulation of the Youth Strategy, consideration was given to the European Union Youth Strategy and the Youth Action Plan for EU external action. The development process also involved consulting specific EU policies and their strategic orientations, along with various analyses conducted by the European Commission and the Council of Europe pertaining to youth-related issues, specifically youth policy.

#### Youth policy of the European Union

##### - EU Youth Strategy from 2019 to 2027

The EU Youth Strategy prioritizes the inclusion of young people in democratic processes and encourages their social and civic engagement, aiming to provide them with the resources necessary for participation across various domains. This commitment is also reflected in the strategic documents spanning a seven-year period. The strategy revolves around three core areas encapsulated by three key words: Engage, Connect, and Empower. It outlines the mechanisms employed by the EU in collaboration with young people, including joint learning activities, future national activity planners, the EU Youth Dialogue, the EU Youth Strategy Platform, and other evidence-based tools.



The objectives of the EU Youth Strategy are as follows:

- Enable young people to be creators of their lives, supporting their personal growth and development towards autonomy, resilience-building, and equipping them with life skills to navigate a changing world;
- Encourage and equip young people with the necessary resources to become active citizens, agents of solidarity, and positive change, inspired by EU values and European identity;
- Improve political decisions concerning their impact on young people across all sectors, especially in areas such as employment, education, health, and social inclusion; and
- Contribute to the eradication of youth poverty and all forms of discrimination, while promoting the social inclusion of youth.

The Youth Strategy for the period 2023–2027 aligns closely with the objectives outlined in the EU Youth Strategy, integrating all four of its objectives into its content. Moreover, the Strategy includes measures and activities aimed at fostering the (further) development of specific EU mechanisms within Montenegro, with the overarching goal of enhancing the situation of young people in the country.

During the preparation of the EU Youth Strategy, the EU Youth Dialogue played a key role, particularly in its sixth cycle titled “Youth in Europe: What’s next?” held in 2017/2018. This cycle aimed to capture diverse perspectives of young people, which subsequently informed the development of the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027. Through this process, eleven European goals for young people were formulated. Structured dialogue, facilitated during the presidency of the Council of the EU, served as the framework for developing the Strategy. It brought together representative umbrella associations of youth organisations and government representatives. This approach was piloted in Montenegro over the past year, leading to the formulation of recommendations for the development of Youth Guarantee. Emulating the EU’s example, engaging in dialogue with young people should become standard practice in Montenegro, guiding the future development of youth policies and other initiatives for young people in the country.

#### **- Youth Action Plan (YAP) for EU external action covering the period 2022–2027**

The EU’s Youth Action Plan is underpinned by three primary partnerships, the principles of which are reflected in the new Youth Strategy:

- Partnership for PARTICIPATION: This entails encouraging meaningful engagement of young people in EU external action, enhancing their involvement at regional and multilateral levels, and contributing to the implementation of the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda.
- Partnership for EMPOWERMENT: The objective here is to bolster educational transformation, enhance young people’s access to economic opportunities, build their capacity to contribute to sustainable development, and empower them to lead green and digital transformations.
- Partnership for CONNECTION: This partnership focuses on supporting mobility in education, training, and employment, as well as fostering connections among young people.

Indeed, all three components of this plan underscore the support of young people in their growth and societal contribution, along with the creation of opportunities for their active engagement. Drawing from these principles, the Youth Strategy is aligned with the same values, aiming to enhance the standing of young people and assist them in realizing their ambitions, thereby fostering societal development.

The Youth Action Plan is anchored in the Youth Strategy of the European Union, proposing complementary operational practices and rooted in the values and principles of EU youth policy. Hence, it is crucial to underscore the logical connection between these two documents, highlighting that the alignment of the Montenegrin Youth Strategy in this context resonates with both. Furthermore, the regional actors acknowledged by the European Union in its Youth Action Plan for external action find recognition within the Montenegrin Youth Strategy as well.

#### **United Nations Youth Policy**

The core focus of the United Nations lies in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), encapsulated in Agenda 2030. These goals serve as a universal rallying call to eliminate poverty, safeguard the planet, enhance livelihoods, and foster equal opportunities worldwide. Unanimously adopted by all UN member states in 2015, the 17 SDGs outline a comprehensive roadmap towards achieving sustainable development. Comprising 169 associated targets, this agenda signifies an ambitious strategic framework aimed at advancing the well-being of people, preserving the planet, and fostering prosperity for all.

In order to facilitate the active participation of young people in the realization of the Sustainable Development Agenda, the United Nations has formulated a Youth Strategy. This strategy is designed to orchestrate a spectrum of activities at global, regional, and national levels, catering to the diverse needs of young individuals and championing their rights across all nations. Additionally, it seeks to engender the engagement of youth in both the implementation and monitoring phases of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, alongside other pivotal global agendas and frameworks.

The vision of the UN Youth Strategy – “A world in which the human rights of every young person are realized; that ensures every young person is empowered to achieve their full potential; and that recognizes young people’s agency, resilience and their positive contributions as agents of change” – is realized through the following five priority areas: Engagement, Participation and Advocacy - Amplify youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world; Informed and Healthy Foundations - Support young people’s greater access to quality education and health services; Economic Empowerment through Decent Work - Support young people’s greater access to decent work and productive employment; Youth and Human Rights – Protect and promote the rights of young people and support their civic and political engagement; Peace and Resilience Building – Support young people as catalysts for Peace and Security & Humanitarian Action.

In addition to the Youth Strategy, the UN General Assembly also adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth. This programme represents strategic guidelines for member countries for the development of youth policies at the national, regional, and international levels. It takes into account 15 thematic priorities at the global level. These 15 thematic priorities are also recognized through the Youth Strategy, and they are united by the thematic units acknowledged by this Strategy.

In the preparation of the Youth Strategy, various UN resources were consulted, including the UN Youth Strategy itself, for the development of youth policies at the national level. Additionally, specific agendas such as “Youth, Peace, and Security” and “Youth and Climate Change” also guided the development of measures and activities outlined in this strategy. Consequently, this strategy envisions measures and activities that contribute to the active participation of young people in the development of a peaceful and prosperous society (OO 2 and OO 3), as well as initiatives aimed at mitigating climate change.

### - United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



To ensure the inclusion of young people in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda, the UN has developed a Youth Strategy. This strategy aims to provide more global, regional, and state-level activities to respond to the needs and advance the rights of young people in all countries around the world. Additionally, it aims to ensure that young people are involved in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other important global agendas and frameworks.

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

4.4. By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

4.7. By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

8.5. By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

8.6. By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

8.b By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organisation.

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

10.1. By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.

10.2. By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

13.3. Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

16.7. Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

The Youth Strategy is aligned with the principles of the Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those mentioned earlier. In this regard, activities aimed at promoting these standards and principles, as well as contributing to Montenegro's efforts to achieve sustainable development goals across various areas, are envisaged, especially through cooperation with the UN System in Montenegro. Serving as an overarching national strategic document, the Youth Strategy is in alignment with the principles outlined in the United Nations Youth Strategy.



## Youth policy of the Council of Europe

### - Council of Europe Youth Strategy 2020–2030<sup>2</sup>

The Council of Europe, through all its statutory bodies including the Council of Ministers, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and Parliamentary Assembly, actively engages in youth issues and the development of guidelines. It is often lauded as a pioneer in setting standards and developing best practices for working with and for young people. Within the Department for Youth, the Secretariat of the Council of Europe actively addresses new issues and trends in youth-related areas. The Council of Europe is particularly noted for its structures in youth-related domains, primarily bodies that bring together youth representatives and representatives of member country institutions to jointly decide and recommend actions in youth-related areas through a co-management system. In 2020, the Council of Europe presented a new Youth Strategy for a ten-year period, which comprises four thematic priorities:

Thematic priority 1: Revitalizing pluralistic democracy

- Thematic priority 2: Access to rights
- Thematic priority 3: Living together in peaceful and inclusive societies
- Thematic priority 4: Youth work

The Youth Strategy for the period 2023–2027 relies on the thematic priorities defined within the new Youth Strategy of the Council of Europe. Additionally, its creation is grounded in the principles and practices that the Council of Europe has developed over the past 50 years through the work of its Directorate for Youth. In drafting the Strategy, various resolutions and policies targeting youth issues, developed by various bodies of the Council of Europe in previous periods, were taken into consideration. These include resolutions, recommendations, and reports adopted by the Council of Ministers, the Assembly, and the Congress of local and regional authorities. Moreover, the Strategy references the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, which underscores the significance of meaningful youth participation. This strategy is rooted in the principles of that charter, particularly the Rights, Means, Support, Opportunities, and Space model, which outlines the necessary conditions for the development of youth participation.

<sup>2</sup> Youth Policy Development Strategy, 2019, Council of Europe, accessed on 5 October 2022 at: <https://rm.coe.int/background-document-youth-sector-strategy-2030-english/1680a0bb33>

# Analysis of the situation of young people and development of youth policy

## Who are the young people in Montenegro?

According to the current Youth Law of 2019, young people in Montenegro are defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 30. Official estimates suggest that **the number of young people in Montenegro is consistently declining, as is the proportion of young women within the total population of young people**. For instance, based on the most recent census conducted in 2011, there were 141,869 young people aged 15 to 30, constituting approximately 22.88% of the total population of Montenegro, which was 620,029 at that time.<sup>3</sup> The proportion of this age group in Montenegro, encompassing 132,702 young individuals aged 15 to 29, stands at 21.4%, which is higher than in the European Union. In the EU, young people aged 15 to 29 constitute 17% of the population as of 2019.<sup>4</sup> Of the total population of Montenegro, 85,464 individuals, or 13.78%, are adolescents aged 10 to 19. Within this, older adolescents aged 15 to 19, who also fall into the youth category, number 44,093, or 7.11%. The count of young women in this demographic is 69,070, accounting for 48.68%. According to MONSTAT's annual population estimates for 2022, for the age group of 15-29 years (excluding individuals over the age of 30), there are 116,011 young people<sup>5</sup> out of a total estimated population of 617,863. According to estimates, the total population is

experiencing a slight decline (-0.35%), with a significant decrease in the category of young people aged 15–29, showing a reduction of 12.57% compared to 2011, when the number of young individuals in this age group was 132,702. As of January 2022, the number of young women is 55,864, representing 48.15% of this demographic. There is a noticeable trend of a decreasing proportion of young women, primarily attributed to a two-decade trend where births average 110 boys for every 100 girls annually, compared to the natural ratio of 102 or 103 boys per 100 girls.<sup>6</sup>

According to the 2011 census, **two-thirds of young people reside in urban areas**. The census recorded 141,869 individuals aged 15–30, with 93,885 living in urban areas (47,329 men and 46,556 women), while the remaining 47,984 reside in other areas (25,470 men and 22,514 women). Slightly more than a fifth of young people in Montenegro study or work in a city different from where they spent their childhood. This is most prevalent among young people from the northern region (43.9%), followed by those from the southern region (29%) and the central region (27.1%) as of 2022.<sup>7</sup> Considering the internal mobility of young people, primarily for educational reasons, and the fact that they often do not

<sup>3</sup> The population census in Montenegro for 2011, specifically "Table 10. Population by Individual Years of Age and Sex," MONSTAT, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=534&pageid=322>  
<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, accessed on October 5, 2022, at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being\\_young\\_in\\_Europe\\_today\\_-\\_demographic\\_trends](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_demographic_trends)  
<sup>5</sup> Population estimates, Population estimates as of January 1, MONSTAT, accessed on October 5, 2022 at <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=273&pageid=48>  
<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Report for Montenegro for 2021, US Embassy in Montenegro, data accessed on May 29, 2023 at <https://me.usembassy.gov/me/izvjestaj-o-ljudskim-pravima-za-crnu-goru-za-2021-godinu/>  
<sup>7</sup> DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /



update their official address during this period, it can be inferred that the actual number of young people residing in urban areas is even higher than what official data suggest.

As of 2022, **every second young person expresses an interest in participating in decision-making on social issues**,<sup>8</sup> and an equal proportion of young individuals have participated in educational and volunteer activities designed for the youth.<sup>9</sup> In the period of 2018/19, almost two-thirds of young people reported a lack of interest in politics generally<sup>10</sup>, though they showed slightly more interest in local and regional politics compared to national and international levels. Young men demonstrate a marginally higher interest in politics and engage in political discussions more frequently than young women.<sup>11</sup> In terms of voting, young people report a significantly lower regular voting rate of 48.9%, in contrast to 81.9% among those over 55, with 17.3% stating they did not have the right to vote in 2019.<sup>12</sup> Three-quarters of young individuals in Montenegro believe that Civic Education and Media Literacy should be mandatory subjects in schools as of 2022.<sup>13</sup> Young people predominantly access information through social networks (93.9%) and internet portals (90.3%), expressing a preference to continue receiving news primarily through social networks. Only 16% of young people are interested in obtaining information through a specialised mobile application dedicated to

youth information. In terms of the reliability of online news, every third young person from the northern region is indifferent to the credibility of the information found online, compared to every fourth from the central region and every sixth from the southern region.<sup>14</sup>

Young people generally hold a **pessimistic view of the society they live in**, describing young people as apathetic and insufficiently motivated. However, they attribute this attitude to the “failings” of the entire environment and the limited opportunities available to them, as observed in 2020.<sup>15</sup> A quarter of young individuals believe that the outcomes in their lives are determined by a higher power, as noted in 2022<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, these young people are less inclined to pursue education beyond the traditional school and university framework, opting more frequently for employment within the public sector. Trust in institutions among young people is notably low, with the highest confidence placed in religious organisations (22.6%) in 2022, significantly more so than in other institutions, with the judiciary receiving the lowest trust at 0.3%.<sup>17</sup> Young men exhibit even less faith in institutions and the electoral process and are more pessimistic about Montenegro’s future.<sup>18</sup> Institutional representatives perceive young people as passive and disinterested, a view contradicted by the young people themselves, who argue they are simply uninformed about available engagement opportunities.

8 Ibid.  
9 Ibid.  
10 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>  
11 Ibid.  
12 Research on attitudes and perceptions of young people towards politics in Montenegro, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019, accessed on October 5, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3CCOC5J>  
13 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /  
14 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /  
15 Young People in the 2020 Parliamentary Elections, MAPPS i WFD, <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Mladi-na-parlamentarnim-izborima-verzija-2-2.pdf>  
16 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /  
17 Ibid.  
18 Ibid.

Furthermore, they feel the programmes offered do not adequately cater to their needs.<sup>19</sup>

Young people’s dissatisfaction primarily stems from the poor overall quality of life, prompting many to consider leaving certain municipalities due to pronounced social tensions<sup>20</sup>

Generally, young individuals rate their **financial situation as average**<sup>21</sup> (2018/19), with only 18.9% perceiving no issue in their financial circumstances and believing they can afford a good standard of living.

On a daily basis, they encounter numerous challenges, with the most prevalent being unemployment and economic instability, affecting 91.3% of the young, alongside issues related to corruption and crime, impacting 88.8% of them.<sup>22</sup> Notably, the highest unemployment rates occur within the age bracket of 15 to 24 years, with figures reaching 32.7% for women and 40.0% for men.<sup>23</sup> It is observable that young individuals, particularly young women, exhibit a predilection towards employment within the public sector, constituting 48.6% of the workforce (with young women at 51.9% and young men at 45.1%), in contrast to the private sector, which attracts 41.6% of respondents.<sup>24</sup> Analysis of occupational distribution reveals a gendered pattern, with men predominantly occupying roles in sectors such as traffic and transport, construction/craftsmanship, industry and processing, and agriculture/fishing/forestry, while women are more prevalent in sectors

including health and social care, banking/finance/legal services, and trade and services. This inclination towards employment within the public sector and specific economic spheres may stem from entrenched gender roles perpetuated by a patriarchal societal framework, where women are often expected to assume primary responsibility for childcare, household management, and the care of elderly family members, while they frequently encounter numerous impediments to economic empowerment and career advancement. Conversely, young individuals aspiring to work in the private sector predominantly express a desire to establish their own businesses (79%).<sup>25</sup> Particularly disadvantaged and facing greater challenges than their peers are young people with disabilities, young Roma and Egyptians, those from rural areas, individuals affected by poverty, those without parental care, young LGBTIQ+ individuals, and young single parents. These groups often encounter multiple forms of discrimination, particularly young women, while young LGBTIQ+ men face heightened levels of stigma and violence. According to Eurostat data, the average age at which young people in Montenegro achieve independence is 33.1, significantly higher than the EU average of 26.5.<sup>26</sup>

19 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>  
20 Ibid.  
21 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>  
22 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /  
23 Monstat Gore (2022), “Women and Men in Montenegro”, <http://monstat.org/uploads/files/infografici/Monstat%20ZM2022%20video.mp4>.  
24 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /  
25 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /  
26 Eurostat, accessed on October 5, 2022, at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Age\\_of\\_young\\_people\\_leaving\\_their\\_parental\\_household](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Age_of_young_people_leaving_their_parental_household)

## Transversal themes

During the analysis of the situation, the topics of Digitization and Gender Equality, recognized as cross-cutting themes, have been identified. Those two topics should be taken into account in each segment of the Strategy - operational goals, measures, activities, and performance indicators.

Although **digitization** is a transversal and cross-sectoral issue, the Ministry of Public Administration primarily oversees its planning and implementation in Montenegro. The country has a Digital Transformation Strategy for 2022-2026, which outlines measures for digitizing formal education, supporting digital transformation among various actors (such as NGOs), and investing in developing digital skills through both formal and non-formal education channels. These measures directly impact young people and their preparedness for the contemporary job market. Key missing skills include understanding internet safety, online behaviour, protection of private data, and fundamental technology usage guidelines.<sup>27</sup>

The primary challenge lies in **adopting a systemic approach to digitization while ensuring its inclusivity, particularly by fostering functional digital and media literacy among young people**. Notably, an overwhelming majority of young individuals in Montenegro, comprising 99.6% of those aged 16 to 24 and 96.3% of those aged 25 to 34, utilize the Internet.<sup>28</sup> Personal characteristics

also influence their online activities, with young women often using the Internet for work and education, as well as for sharing photos, videos and music, while young men frequently engage in downloading films and videos and playing video games.<sup>29</sup> Nearly all respondents categorised as NEET youth report owning a smartphone, and over a half of them also a computer,<sup>30</sup> yet approximately one in five NEET youth cannot afford a computer or deem it unnecessary.<sup>31</sup> The majority of young Montenegrins spend between one and four hours online daily, with a quarter exceeding four hours.<sup>32</sup> The majority of young respondents, with a slightly higher proportion of young women, opt to use smartphones for watching and listening to entertainment content, whereas computer usage for this purpose is less common. Similarly, young people exhibit a preference for smartphones when accessing educational content, with young women slightly outnumbering young men in this regard.<sup>33</sup> Intriguingly, younger respondents are increasingly likely to spend more than two hours a day online, while conversely, the more educated they are, the less likely they are to exceed four hours daily. There is a lack of national-level data on the digitization of the youth sector. Over two-thirds (70.4%) of youth and youth organisations across Europe report using digital tools in their work on a daily basis. They anticipate a further expansion in the use of digital tools in working with young people in the future (71.7%), notwithstanding hopes for

27 Research On Current Offer and Needs of the Market in Relation to Digital skills, UNDP, 2022 /

28 Digital AgenDa Observatory Baseline research of the state of e-government development & digital literacy in the targeted Western Balkan countries, ICEDA, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CKT7fA>

29 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>,

30 National survey: My career on the road to heroism, Forum MNE, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3RNq4TJ>

31 Ibid.

32 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /

33 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Sex-segregated data, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/Analiza%20po%20polu.pdf>, str. 35.

the pandemic's resolution.<sup>34</sup> Concerns persist among more than half of organisations (55.3%) regarding the motivation of young people to engage in online activities. Additionally, almost one quarter (23.3%) regularly encounter challenges in applying digital skills in their daily work.

The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights assumes direct responsibility for addressing gender equality within the public administration system in Montenegro. The legislative framework for the implementation of gender equality and the protection of women's and persons of different sexual and gender identities' human rights is provided by the Constitution (2007), Gender Equality Law (Official Gazette of the Republic of Montenegro 046/07, Official Gazette of Montenegro 073/10, 040/11 and 035/15), Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro (Official Gazette of Montenegro 042/11, 032/14 and 021/17), Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of Montenegro 046/10, 040/11, 018/14 and 042/17). Despite the existence of these legal norms, the National Strategy for Gender Equality in Montenegro 2021–2025 acknowledges that gender equality remains at an unsatisfactory level. Institutions within the system still struggle to provide efficient and effective protection against discrimination, particularly for individuals belonging to sensitive social groups. Operational Objective 2 of the strategy, aimed at improving education, culture, and media to combat stereotypes and prejudices against women and persons of different sexual and gender identities, only partially addresses the needs of young people. Furthermore, action plans for young people often neglect the interests and positions of young women, particularly those from marginalized groups and those subjected to

multiple forms of discrimination. These groups include women with disabilities, rural residents, the unemployed, members of ethnic minority communities, and sexual minorities. The gender equality index<sup>35</sup> highlights significant disparities between men and women in Montenegro, particularly in the domain related to power, followed by time, knowledge, money, and work. The report reveals deep-rooted inequalities, which are sometimes hidden behind average values. For instance, while the education sector in Montenegro predominantly comprises female employees, accounting for 76.6% of the workforce, a significant gender disparity persists in managerial roles, where 63% of school and kindergarten directors are men. Furthermore, women in Montenegro grapple with the "double burden" of managing both paid employment and unpaid domestic responsibilities on a daily basis, further exacerbated by an uneven distribution of family and household chores.

*I know that it will be more difficult for me when I am employed because I am a woman. We all know that, and it is not talked about nearly as much as it should be in Montenegro. That's terrible.*

Focus group participant

It is recognized as a significant challenge that **patriarchal norms persist even among young people in Montenegro**. Alarming, more than 60% of young individuals in the country do not believe that household chores should be shared equally between women and men.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, approximately 70% of young people exhibit highly negative attitudes

34 Do (Not) Digitalize Me, CONNECT International, 2021, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3effSiv>

35 Accessed on October 5, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3T3nyCU>

36 Research on attitudes and perceptions of young people towards politics in Montenegro, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019, accessed on October 5, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3CCOC5J>



towards the LGBTIQ+ population. Notably, young men tend to display more authoritarian and ethnocentric tendencies, along with more negative attitudes towards the LGBTIQ+ community, compared to young women.<sup>37</sup> There is also a notable regional disparity, with young people from the southern region showing greater support for gender equality (43% exhibit attitudes indicating inequality) compared to their counterparts from the northern (46%) and central regions (49%).<sup>38</sup> Additionally, the same survey indicates that socially and politically informed and active young individuals are more likely to support gender equality and hold significantly less negative attitudes towards the LGBTIQ+ population compared to those who are less engaged in political matters.

To ensure the utmost gender specificity of this strategy, it has been aligned with relevant strategies and laws in this domain, incorporating gender-sensitive analysis of the position of young people, as well as gender-disaggregated data and language. The strategy encompasses measures and activities aimed at fostering gender equality and addressing barriers to its realization. Several measures focus on enhancing young people's understanding of gender equality, combating gender-based hate speech and violence, with particular attention to the disparities in the positions of young individuals concerning sex and gender. This includes addressing issues such as the differential treatment of young women and men in employment and career choices. Recognized challenges regarding the unequal status of young women and men are tackled through measures feasible within the scope of this strategy, alongside the delineation of responsibilities for other sectors and strategies. Despite limitations stemming from data scarcity, efforts have been made to develop gender-sensitive performance and activity indicators to the fullest extent possible. Furthermore, the strategic document has been crafted using gender-sensitive language.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

## Swot analysis

The following table briefly identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the field of support for youth development, youth policy and the youth sector in Montenegro.

Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active engagement of young people</li> <li>• Presence of a dedicated line ministry responsible for youth affairs</li> <li>• A robust NGO sector actively involved in youth-related issues</li> <li>• Previous strategic frameworks for youth</li> <li>• Established youth services and offices across different municipalities</li> <li>• Legal framework that recognizes young people</li> <li>• Local youth policies acknowledging and addressing local specificities.</li> <li>• Various departments offering permanent services for young people, including financial support (tuition fees, research, etc.)</li> <li>• Integration of youth measures into sectoral policies like the Youth Employment Programme</li> <li>• Provision of youth-centric services in institutions such as counselling centres in health facilities</li> <li>• Inclusion of youth programmes in local institutions such as business centres</li> <li>• Specialized programmes for youth, such as the European Youth Card</li> <li>• Access to EU youth programmes like Erasmus+.</li> <li>• Participation in international and regional organisations providing opportunities for youth (e.g., Council of Europe, RYCO, RCC).</li> <li>• Support to youth policy development and implementation from international organisations operating in Montenegro, such as UNDP, OSCE, and the EU delegation.</li> <li>• Systemic recognition of the specific needs of the youth sector, including licensing of programmes for youth activists.</li> <li>• Ongoing digitization efforts</li> <li>• Presence of a representative umbrella association advocating for youth interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favouring sports over youth-related issues in the competent ministry</li> <li>• Lack of mechanisms for implementing youth policies at both national and local levels.</li> <li>• Inadequate and underutilized financing mechanisms for youth policies and activities.</li> <li>• Limited financial resources and unsustainable funding for youth policy initiatives.</li> <li>• Insufficient knowledge of youth policy among relevant public officers at national and local levels</li> <li>• Lack of motivation among employees for addressing youth issues exists both at the national and local levels, as well as among officials in other institutions involved in youth policies and programmes</li> <li>• Deficiency in expertise and competence in working with and for young people</li> <li>• Weak networking of the youth sector with other stakeholders (other departments, international actors, local level, business sector, NGOs)</li> <li>• Inadequate communication between ministries and civil society organisations.</li> <li>• Absence of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for youth policy implementation and data collection to assess the current situation of youth and emerging trends</li> <li>• Insufficient data and monitoring mechanisms exist regarding the situation of young people, compounded by inconsistent methodologies and inadequate data exchange</li> <li>• Absence of data or estimates regarding the benefits of preventive and development programmes for young people, including the economic savings derived from investment in prevention measures.</li> <li>• Unpreparedness of the system to respond to unforeseen challenges and crises (e.g. covid-19 pandemic, political changes, cyber attacks, etc.)</li> <li>• Slow responsiveness of the system to dynamic challenges and developments</li> <li>• Strategic and programme documents are not fully implemented, both at the national and local levels</li> <li>• Non-compliance of legal frameworks, such as discrepancies between prescribed obligations and penalties of local self-governments outlined in the Youth Law, which are not aligned with the provisions stipulated in the Law on Local Self-Government</li> <li>• Under-recognition of youth policy in local government activities (as stipulated by the Law on Local Self-Governments)</li> <li>• Management and operation of youth services established by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, local self-governments, schools, and NGOs are insufficiently developed; the purpose, required staff, management method, operational procedures, and financing of these services are not precisely defined, including the employment status of individuals engaged in these services</li> <li>• Limited cooperation among various youth services established by different entities.</li> <li>• Inconsistent and unsustainable implementation of programmes and services for young people</li> <li>• Weak media coverage of youth-related issues</li> <li>• Lack of quality mechanisms for informing young people, resulting in relevant information often not reaching them in a timely manner</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient support and promotion of positive examples among young people</li> <li>• Mechanisms for youth involvement are underdeveloped, leading to a sense of mistrust and a lack of motivation among young people to engage in decision-making and public policy processes</li> <li>• Limited involvement of marginalized groups in youth policy implementation</li> <li>• Low visibility of youth policy and its outcomes, resulting in inadequate information dissemination among young people.</li> <li>• Uneven implementation of local youth policies.</li> <li>• Discriminatory treatment of students with lower educational achievements and marginalized youth.</li> </ul>
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth as a resource, embodying creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• Utilization of existing resources and expertise within the civil sector.</li> <li>• Establishment of networking platforms for stakeholders in youth policy at the local level to foster collaboration and joint programme development (e.g., youth clubs, youth offices, youth NGOs).</li> <li>• Co-financing of non-governmental organisations through public tenders for youth programme implementation.</li> <li>• Competitions by line ministries in areas such as culture, science, and education to engage young people.</li> <li>• Strengthened capacities of current youth service administrators.</li> <li>• Officials at the Ministry of Sports and Youth with comprehensive knowledge of youth policy, as well as skills and experience from various sectors</li> <li>• Availability of diverse funds and business centers catering to youth interests, particularly in areas like entrepreneurship</li> <li>• A certified programme tailored for youth activists</li> <li>• Inclusive and proactive engagement in the development of new Youth Strategy and Youth Law</li> <li>• Other programmes and policies targeting young people (e.g. Internship Programme conducive to youth emancipation, Youth Guarantee, and initiatives like the Programme to Stop Gray Economy and other programmes of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Employment Agency that offer employment and self-employment opportunities for young people)</li> <li>• Various subsidies, such as those for employing young people with disabilities or young farmers, and facilitating their inclusion in local action groups.</li> <li>• Classification of statistical data on young people collected by MONSTAT according to various parameters like age, gender, and education.</li> <li>• Knowledge and experience gained by young people through education abroad and mobility programmes (e.g., Erasmus+, European Solidarity Corps, RYCO, European Youth Card programmes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of political will to effectively implement youth policy initiatives</li> <li>• Persistent political instability and frequent reorganisations within the state apparatus,</li> <li>• Quality implementation of youth policy compromised by frequent changes in management structures and organisational setups</li> <li>• Rigidity within the system</li> <li>• Inadequate penal provisions and suboptimal enforcement of existing legal solutions</li> <li>• Rapid global challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturns, and the aftermath of conflicts impacting Montenegro, leading to adverse material conditions, mental health issues, and limited opportunities for and motivation among young people</li> <li>• Brain drain, loss of skilled personnel and external migration</li> <li>• Limited societal openness to change and acceptance of ideas proposed by young people</li> <li>• Insufficient representation of young people in the development and implementation of public policies</li> <li>• Underrepresentation of young people in employment policies and a lack of robust strategic responses to youth unemployment, hindering their ability to achieve autonomy</li> <li>• Inadequate focus on addressing parental disengagement and lack of awareness in supporting young people</li> <li>• Failure to recognize adolescents as a distinct category within youth in legal and strategic documents, resulting in inadequate treatment in practice.</li> </ul>

## Overview of the previous Youth Strategy's results

The 2017-2021 Youth Strategy had clearly set priorities and key outcomes in seven areas. Before the preparation of the new Youth Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2027, which will serve as the new strategic framework in this area, a comprehensive evaluation process was undertaken, developing a Report on the implementation of the previous Youth Strategy, as well as an external evaluation. The reports aimed to offer clear guidelines for the development of the new Strategy, and to create opportunities for learning and enhancing accountability in work pertaining to and involving young people.

The Final Report and Evaluation encompass the entire validity period of the strategic document, including three accompanying action plans, which were devised to detail implementation activities. This comprehensive report addresses the period until the conclusion of 2021. In reference to the defined outcomes of the previous Youth Strategy (2017–2021), the Report highlights the following findings:

- Regarding Outcome 1, which focuses on enhancing the economic and social security of young people through improved access to the labour market and employment opportunities, the report highlights that from 2017 to the beginning of 2020, there was a steady decline in youth unemployment rates in Montenegro. However, the period from 2020 to 2021 saw a significant rise in youth unemployment, alongside a general economic slowdown and negative trends attributed to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Montenegrin economy.

- Regarding Outcome 2, which focuses on ensuring access to quality education for young people, the report underscores that despite educational attainment, many young individuals encounter difficulties in applying their knowledge practically. Data from the 2018 PISA test indicate concerning standings for Montenegro, ranking 52nd out of 79 participating countries in mathematics, science, and reading. This highlights a pressing need to address challenges in aligning educational curricula with the demands of the labour market.

- Regarding Outcome 3, which aims to foster active, motivated, and proactive participation of young people in decision-making processes, community development, and policy creation and implementation, the report highlights insufficient youth involvement in critical decision-making processes vital for community development, notwithstanding that approximately one-third of young individuals engage in internships, volunteering, or other forms of social involvement. However, strides were made in the previous period to support young people, notably through the funding of projects by non-governmental organisations focusing on democracy, youth participation culture, human rights, and non-formal education. Additionally, the establishment of youth services in 11 municipalities, including youth clubs and a youth centre in Podgorica, underpins these efforts in accordance with the Youth Law.

- Regarding Outcome 4, which focuses on ensuring the health and safety of young people and providing them with access to an adequate support system for the transition to adulthood, efforts have been made in Montenegro to enhance the health status of young individuals, supported by financial backing from institutional bodies. During the previous period, initiatives such as peer education and peer support projects were executed in areas of public interest for young people, which helped empower a significant number of young adolescents as they navigate the process of transitioning to adulthood.
- Regarding Outcome 5, which aims to improve young people's access to quality cultural content as both creators and consumers, it was observed that young individuals in Montenegro encounter challenges in accessing quality cultural content and are not adequately engaged in cultural activities. Limited quantitative data on youth participation in cultural activities complicates the analysis of this situation. Moreover, cultural institutions struggle to effectively communicate with young people, necessitating comprehensive social engagement to address this issue.
- Regarding Outcome 6, which focuses on establishing an effective normative and institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy, it was found that the previous period revealed deficiencies in the legal and institutional framework for youth policy. These shortcomings were primarily manifested in frequent reorganisations of the institutional framework, resulting in a lack of continuity and insufficient cooperation among entities involved in policy implementation. The report highlights that youth issues often take a back seat on the daily agenda, and analysis of the legal framework determined

that the implementation of the Youth Law did not yield the desired results in enhancing the position of young people.

In general, the Final Report on the implementation of the previous Strategy for the period 2020–2021 underscored that the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected the life satisfaction and mental well-being of young people compared to older demographic groups. Consequently, the new Youth Strategy was developed with updated priorities to address the challenges that emerged during this period, prioritizing issues highlighted by young people themselves. While the Youth Strategy for 2023–2027 will primarily focus on young people in the post-pandemic era, its overarching goal is to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic.

Furthermore, the Report on the implementation of the previous Strategy highlighted that despite a decline, the trust of young people in institutions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, remained comparatively higher than that of other social groups in Montenegro. Consequently, this Strategy seeks to sustain and bolster the level of trust young people have in the system over the long term. This will be achieved through meticulous planning of tailored measures, activities, and actions, aligned with the data and priorities identified by young people themselves.

The Evaluation of the previous Strategy yielded several recommendations aimed at enhancing strategic planning. These recommendations include:

1. Ensure institutional stability and focus on bolstering the capacity of all institutions responsible for implementing youth policies, along with fostering interdepartmental coordination and cooperation.

2. Conduct a financial assessment to support necessary research on the status and needs of young people, and develop methodologies for such research.
3. Strengthen the alignment between planned activities and corresponding output indicators in the 2023–2027 Youth Strategy.
4. Enhance coordination and collaboration among relevant institutions and organisations to improve the quality and efficiency of data collection.
5. Enhance the monitoring and evaluation process of the strategic document by developing precise and measurable indicators that consider both baseline and target values.
6. Remove indicators lacking a clearly defined methodology and those not aligned with Montenegro's statistical system.
7. Implement solutions for mandatory periodic reporting from all institutions responsible for youth policies.
8. Establish high-quality reporting mechanisms for all institutions involved in the implementation of the Strategy.

In this context, the new Youth Strategy incorporates an operational area specifically aimed at directly addressing recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8. Furthermore, the development of the Strategy itself encompasses the implementation of recommendations 3 and 6. Consequently, for the majority of these recommendations, measures and activities are outlined for achieving long-term solutions to challenges that have persisted within this sector for an extended period. However, such solutions necessitate additional financial allocations and the engagement of the entire system. Crucially, their successful implementation hinges on clear and unequivocal political support so that the system could begin to function in a sustainable and long-term manner.

Finally, it is noteworthy that certain aspects of strategic planning in youth-related areas were acknowledged as examples of good practice in the previous period, even by international entities. This recognition primarily pertained to the inclusion of young people in the drafting of the strategic document itself, which has persisted as a practice throughout the development of the new Youth Strategy.

## Key Issues and Strategic Areas

Following a comprehensive analysis of the status of young people and the landscape of youth policy, several significant challenges have been identified and prioritized, with particular attention given to issues not adequately addressed by current strategies and sectoral policies.

The process of prioritisation adhered to the guidelines outlined in the Regulation on the Method and Procedure of Drafting, Harmonizing, and Monitoring the Implementation of Strategic Documents (Official Gazette of Montenegro 54/2018).

The following was identified as a key problem that the Strategy should address:

*The prevailing sentiment among young people in Montenegro is one of dissatisfaction with their current standing. They lack the requisite conditions to nurture their capabilities, achieve independence, foster personal growth, contribute meaningfully to societal progress, and actively engage in community affairs. Moreover, their fundamental rights and freedoms are not fully upheld.*

(3) Facilitating effective interdepartmental collaboration to bolster the position of young people;

(4) Improving the normative and institutional framework.

Additionally, gender equality and digitization are established as cross-cutting themes that permeate all aspects of the strategy, guiding the formulation of measures and activities across all sectors.

Aligned with the identified challenge, a strategic goal has been outlined:

*By establishing a sustainable interdepartmental support system for young people, opportunities are created for the development of their full capacities fostering their active contribution to the societal development.*

Based on the identified key problem, causes, and consequences, and in accordance with the identified and prioritized challenges, this Strategy defines four operational objectives that need to be achieved during the period of the Strategy:

To tackle this issue comprehensively, strategic action is warranted in four key areas:

- (1) Develop youth services to facilitate the transition into adulthood;
- (2) Enhancing youth activism and fostering greater youth participation in decision-making processes;

1. Establish a sustainable system of services to support young people in their transition to adulthood.
2. Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes.
3. Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration.

4. Improve the normative-institutional framework for the implementation of youth policy.



The implementation of the strategic document aims to realize the following vision for the position of young people in Montenegro:

*Young people are acknowledged as a vital asset and influential force within our society, where their voices are valued, their contributions are esteemed, and their initiatives receive support. They shape the social landscape where they assert their rights and strive towards realizing their full potential.*



## Building a sustainable support service system for youth transition into adulthood

### Situation analysis

Youth work is a key mechanism for the implementation of youth policy, and recently it is increasingly being treated as a separate area, in accordance with the Recommendation on youth work. This recommendation calls on members of the Council of Europe to renew their support for youth work through a youth policy that proactively provides support for the development of quality youth work (including through legislation, sustainable structures and resources, effective coordination with other sectors). The EU Youth Strategy states that youth work in all its forms can serve as a catalyst for youth empowerment and that it brings unique benefits to young people during the transition to adulthood, providing them with a safe environment as they gain confidence and learn through non-formal education. Youth work develops personal, professional and entrepreneurial competencies among young people, and in some cases serves as a bridge to education, training and retraining or employment, thus ensuring that young people are not excluded. Together with young people, youth workers articulate learning outcomes that they consider important for their social and personal development, and document and make visible to young people the results achieved in the development of competences (in knowledge, skills, attitudes, values). Youth workers should have access to information, education, training, additional qualifications and adequate support adapted to their needs in order to stimulate the continuous development of their competencies.

The Youth Law (2019) in Article 4 defines youth work as “activities that are carried out in cooperation with and for young people with the aim of their independence and transition to adulthood, learning, personal and social development, in accordance with their needs and capabilities, and they are based on non-formal education methods”. However, in Montenegro, the occupation/profession of youth worker is not recognized as a professional staff that provides support for the development of young people. Youth work activities in Montenegro are mostly carried out by non-governmental organisations, which makes the situation in the sector unsustainable and dependent on the project funds they manage to provide. Nevertheless, almost half of the youth participated in some youth activities.<sup>39</sup> They most often participated in educational activities (59.5%) and volunteering (43.2%), and young people are also very present when some events take place in the community (37.1%). Young men largely answered that they do not follow any form of non-formal education because they mostly believe that they do not need additional education, and that they have enough knowledge and skills, as well as because they are convinced that additional education will not significantly help them in further professional development.<sup>40</sup> Merely 8.8% of young people say that they are members of a youth club or youth organisation. Almost every fourth young person (23.9%) says that they used to be members but are no longer part of such organisations.

<sup>39</sup> DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /

<sup>40</sup> Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Sex-segregated data, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/Analiza%20po%20polu.pdf>, str. 26.

In addition to non-governmental organisations, there are youth offices and youth services, as well as initiatives to open youth clubs in schools and institutions where young people live, as important actors in the implementation of youth work activities.<sup>41</sup>



From the meeting of the Working Group responsible for drafting the Youth Strategy, September 2022

However, youth services (YS) are not uniformly available in all municipalities, leading to disparities in support for young people and often facing interruptions in their operations since their establishment. Currently,<sup>42</sup> there are youth centres in the Capital City of Podgorica, youth clubs in the Old Royal Capital Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Niksic, Savnik, Bar, Kotor, Mojkovac, Petnjica, Plav, and Pljevlja. Therefore, they were not established in all municipalities, and of the 11 that were established, at one point almost none of them were operational. The current legal framework centralizes youth services, which further complicates their operation and contributes to discontinuity, especially due to limited terms for administrators. The definition of administrator of youth services is also restrictive. Moreover, the current legal solution has created a kind of dichotomy between youth services established by the Ministry of Sports and Youth and those founded by municipalities, public institutions, non-governmental organisations, and other actors. This state of affairs on the ground creates additional confusion and unevenness in the approach to young people, and the lack of continuity and stability has an additional negative impact on young people who are the ultimate beneficiaries. The 2022 analysis of the Youth Law<sup>43</sup> showed that youth services (regardless of

<sup>41</sup> The Ministry of Sports and Youth acknowledges only those services it establishes as youth services; thus, the subsequent text pertains exclusively to these services..

<sup>42</sup> Accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://www.gov.me/clanak/omladinski-servisi>

<sup>43</sup> Youth Law Review, Ministry of Sports and Youth, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/43878238-cdf6-4741-8981-04c1c5303cd5>

whether founded by the Ministry or some other entity) should be recognized, linked, and set up as the main tool for implementing the Youth Strategy, bringing youth work closer to all young people, stressing concurrently the need to decentralize. The deficiency in youth work capacity and the absence of effective oversight over its execution further exacerbate the situation. Personnel engaged in these services typically lack the necessary competencies and training to develop programmes tailored to the needs and interests of local youth adequately. Youth services often fail to align with the specific needs of young people at the local level, nor do they integrate with broader strategies involving youth (such as Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians, which call for accessible youth services tailored to their needs). Additionally, there is a general lack of awareness among young people about the existence of these services, particularly among those with disabilities who may not have access to them.<sup>44</sup> While a significant number of adolescents remain active in youth clubs, participation drops notably among older youth. In fact, over 80% of young people across 15 municipalities do not engage with youth clubs or participate in activities organised by local NGOs.<sup>45</sup>

***Non-formal education is considered one of the basic methods for the realization of youth activities and youth work. According to the Adult Education Law, “Non-formal education or learning is achieved through organised and planned goals and support, aimed at acquiring and enhancing knowledge, skills, and competencies, which can be validated and justified in the process of obtaining a national professional qualification or key skill”.***

In Montenegro, the significance of **non-formal education** programmes for young people remains underappreciated. At the local level, a substantial proportion of youth express dissatisfaction due to the lack of access to non-formal education. In fact, around 68% of young individuals from 15 municipalities report never having participated in any form of non-formal education, and among those who have, young women show greater engagement in non-formal educational activities compared to young men, who constitute a larger percentage of those who have never attended any such programmes.<sup>46</sup> Overall, 70% of unemployed youth believe that additional education could not enhance their employability, indicating a perception that job opportunities are often secured through personal connections rather than qualifications. Furthermore, in smaller municipalities in northern Montenegro, there is a general lack of opportunities for young people to participate in non-formal education programmes locally.<sup>47</sup> Young people in Montenegro are divided in their opinion regarding the importance of knowledge and education acquired in formal institutions versus those obtained elsewhere. Roughly half of

***The youth centre in our municipality is beautifully equipped, everything is nice, but it is always empty. Nothing happens there.***

**Focus group participant**

44 Consultation Report on Priorities in Youth Policy, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at [www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)

45 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

46 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

47 Ibid

the youth prioritize knowledge and education acquired at school or university (49.6%), while the other half considers knowledge gained elsewhere to be more significant (50.4%). More young women (53.6%) and a significant majority of adolescent girls (63.8%) value knowledge acquired through formal education.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, girls aged 15-29 are slightly overrepresented among those who are not employed, not in education, and not engaged in training or educational programmes (NEET), the group that accounts for over one fourth of the whole youth population.<sup>49</sup> A considerable proportion of young people, around one-fourth, attribute the events in their lives to a higher power (2022)<sup>50</sup>, leading them to be less prone to seek knowledge outside of traditional academic settings and often opt for employment in the public sector. Nevertheless, there is a perceived lack of diverse non-formal education opportunities, highlighting the need for more emphasis on practical knowledge, skills development, and competencies for independent living. Despite these challenges, a majority of young individuals (57%) report acquiring new knowledge or skills outside of formal education in the previous year, with communication and IT skills, various crafts, and language proficiency being the most sought-after areas of learning.<sup>51</sup> However, the efficacy of existing non-formal education (NFE) programmes is hindered by the lack of information and motivation among young people, particularly those from marginalized groups, to participate in such initiatives. NFE programmes are predominantly carried out by non-governmental organisations, often without proper accreditation or licenses, leading to significant disparities in the quality of programme content and the absence of a robust

quality assurance system.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, there is minimal support for organising non-formal education activities in smaller and rural areas, leaving young people with limited avenues for personal development after completing secondary school. Additionally, the scarcity of extracurricular offerings deprives many children and youth of additional opportunities for growth. Schools and educators, who typically serve as the primary source of information about NFE opportunities, tend to select participants themselves, often repeatedly involving the same individuals and neglecting to disseminate information about these opportunities to all students. This lack of inclusive access impedes equal access to personal development opportunities for all youth. Furthermore, the surge in digitization of educational content prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic has largely overlooked the NFE sector.

The institutions involved in the survey<sup>53</sup> predominantly perceive young people as passive and uninterested, often noting their absence from organised activities and their reluctance to engage. Conversely, young people express that they lack sufficient information about available opportunities for participation in activities and decision-making processes. Additionally, they feel they lack the opportunity to contribute to the design of cultural and other activities organised for them.

**Informing young people** in Montenegro involves various actors operating at multiple levels, each with distinct areas of focus. For instance, disseminating information to all citizens, including youth, about government services and activities falls under the coordination of the Ministry of

48 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /

49 Montenegro’s Youth Participation Index, PRIMA, 2021, accessed on February 1, 2023 at <https://bit.ly/40tTepV>

50 Study on the Status of Young People: Contributing to the Development of the Youth Strategy, UNICEF, 2022 /

51 Ibid.

52 Consultation Report on Priorities in Youth Policy, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at [www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)

53 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>



*During their transition to adulthood, young people encounter pivotal decisions that will shape their futures. The European Youth Information and Counseling Agencyf (ERYICA) underscores that equal access to high-quality, freely available information is essential for young individuals to exercise their rights, make informed decisions, and actively engage in society across its social, economic, and political dimensions. Consequently, the right to information enjoys broad recognition in key legal and political frameworks at national, European, and international levels, highlighting the crucial role of youth information services throughout Europe.*

Public Administration. The National Action Plan for Implementing the Open Government Partnership Initiative in Montenegro for 2023-2024 prioritizes goals such as “Better information and education of the public about the possibilities of partaking in policy development” (OO 3), along with efforts to “Encourage the participation of young people in the implementation of green policies” (OO 4). Beyond these initiatives, all institutions engage in communication strategies that specifically target young people. However, regarding information related to educational opportunities and training, the Ministry of Education takes on a primary role, complemented by other entities such as universities, their career centres, offices for international cooperation, and the national Erasmus+ office. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of the Internet and social networks for accessing information, a trend that has been further amplified during the covid-19 pandemic. Despite earlier proposals to establish information centres within schools and

54 Consultations in preparation of drafting the UN Common Country Assessment for Montenegro (UN CCA)

55 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

youth services, this initiative has not been uniformly adopted across all municipalities. While there is no comprehensive overview of the presence of information centres by municipality, consultations with young people suggest that they are largely absent in most areas. Consequently, many young individuals remain uninformed about opportunities for personal development and engagement in societal affairs. However, certain youth services, such as the Budva Youth Club, have implemented information services like Viber communities, which are utilized by young people beyond Budva to access information about additional training and education opportunities. Additionally, initiatives like the Info point within the school youth club at Cetinje Grammar School, facilitated by students themselves, provide a platform for sharing and receiving information specifically tailored to secondary school students. At the national level, there is currently no centralized system or standardized approach for informing young people in Montenegro, resulting in a lack of guidelines or quality standards for information dissemination, even within public institutions. Communication from institutions often fails to employ a language that resonates with young people, posing an additional barrier for them to fully comprehend the shared information.<sup>54</sup> As a result, young people primarily rely on social networks (93.9%) and internet portals (90.3%) for information. Interestingly, a majority express a preference to continue receiving information through social networks, with only 16% indicating a desire for a dedicated mobile application for youth-focused information. Notably, young people from northern municipalities demonstrate a higher reliance on print media for information compared to their counterparts in other regions, particularly among young men in this area.<sup>55</sup> Three-quarters of young people believe

they know how to assess the credibility and reliability of information found online, with slightly less than half trusting news shared by friends on social networks. Interestingly, every third young person in the northern region shows indifference towards the reliability of online news, compared to every fourth in the central region and every sixth in the southern region.<sup>56</sup> However, despite varying levels of scepticism, over three-quarters of young people in Montenegro recognize the necessity of media literacy education in schools, highlighting the importance of improving these skills.<sup>57</sup> It is worth noting that a significant portion of the population, particularly young people, are frequently targeted by campaigns disseminating false or misleading information.

Young people are often targeted by paid advertising on social networks, where companies and other entities leverage user data to directly reach specific demographics with tailored content. This practice has raised concerns at the Council of Europe regarding the use of algorithms and its potential negative impact on critical thinking and democracy.<sup>58</sup> Reports from the European Union<sup>59</sup> on Montenegro’s progress highlight a growing polarization of the media landscape and public discourse, coupled with an increase in disinformation campaigns. These campaigns often aim to exacerbate ethnic tensions, disrupt electoral processes, and undermine support for Euro-Atlantic integration. Improving mechanisms to counteract false information, particularly its influence on young people, is deemed necessary.

56 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /

57 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /

58 Council of Europe on Artificial Intelligence (AI), accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/2VUUUqK>

59 European Parliament, Montenegro Report 2019/20, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ysADhj>

60 OFAJ / FGYO, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://www.fgyo.org/the-institution.html>

61 Learning Mobility in the Field of Youth, Council of Europe, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3Tbg9SI>

62 Accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://eyca.org/>

63 Accessed on October 5, 2022, at [https://youth.europa.eu/discovereu\\_en](https://youth.europa.eu/discovereu_en)

*“Youth mobility” refers to the movement of young people, both within and outside countries, in formal and informal learning contexts. Originating largely in Europe after World War II, youth exchange programmes were initiated by major European countries to foster reconciliation among citizens of participating nations.<sup>60</sup> Over time, mobility programmes expanded their focus to include the development of personal and professional competencies, as well as soft and intercultural skills, while promoting active citizenship among youth.<sup>61</sup>*

**Youth mobility** encompasses various activities including work camps, volunteer activities, university and youth exchanges, school exchanges, individual mobility programmes such as internships, as well as initiatives like the EYCA card<sup>62</sup> and DiscoverEU programme<sup>63</sup>, which offer discounts or free travel for young people. Organisers of youth mobility programmes in Montenegro, through participation in international initiatives, provide numerous young people with opportunities for organised individual or group mobility. However, a significant limitation in the Montenegrin context is the insufficient information available to parents/guardians about the benefits and value of youth mobility within and outside of Montenegro.

In the youth sector, Montenegro holds the status of a third country in EU youth programmes like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Initiative, resulting in very limited



access for young people from Montenegro to international mobility opportunities and participation in international youth projects. However, the establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)<sup>64</sup> in 2017 provided a framework for youth mobility in the Western Balkans region, enabling young people from Montenegro to engage in exchanges and projects across neighbouring countries. RYCO supports various youth exchange programmes and also finances exchanges for secondary school students. Data from RYCO exchanges in 2020-2021 indicate that youth mobility promotes knowledge and skill acquisition (86%) and enhances understanding of different perspectives (81%).<sup>65</sup> However, there is a lack of precise information regarding the extent of youth mobility utilization outside Montenegro and its effects on Montenegrin youth. This is particularly evident given the limited number of projects realized in Montenegro and the low participation of Montenegrin youth in regional projects. The covid-19 pandemic significantly reduced youth mobility, although some young people engaged in digital youth exchanges. The long-term impact of online exchanges remains uncertain.

Statistics indicate that approximately 1,200 young people from Montenegro participate in the *Summer Work and Travel Programme* annually (data from 2017 to 2019).<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, from 2015 to 2019, about 2,000 students, teaching, and administrative staff engaged in outgoing mobility as part of the Erasmus programme, staying at faculties abroad.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, both male and female students in Montenegro utilize other exchange programmes such as CEEPUS<sup>68</sup> or UGRAD<sup>69</sup>,

with a noticeable increase in the number of individuals going abroad for training. According to estimates from the Organisation of Montenegrin Students Abroad, there has been a consistent upward trend in the number of Montenegrin students studying abroad. In 2020, approximately 1,400 Montenegrin students were actively studying globally, excluding those in regional countries. For the countries within the region, it is estimated that over 2,800 Montenegrin students are active annually.<sup>70</sup> However, there is a lack of clear records regarding the return of graduates to Montenegro, and there is currently no established support policy to that effect.

The mobility of young people within Montenegro is relatively limited, with insufficient statistical data and trend indicators, except concerning educational purposes. Approximately a fifth of young people in Montenegro study or work in a city different from where they spent their childhood, with the majority originating from the northern region (43.9%), followed by 27.1% from the central region and 29% from the southern region.<sup>71</sup> There are currently no formal programmes for financing internal youth exchanges within the formal education system, leading to dependence on donor funding. Moreover, there is a lack of formal cooperation or support programmes between schools for facilitating this type of mobility. While secondary school students often participate in trips and excursions organised by schools, there is limited publicly available data on the content and learning outcomes of such programmes. Additionally, these activities were temporarily halted during the COVID-19

64 Regional Youth Cooperation Office, accessed on October 5, 2022, at [www.rycowb.org](http://www.rycowb.org)  
 65 Regional Youth Cooperation Office, REL Library, accessed on February 1, 2023 at [https://www.rycowb.org/?page\\_id=13759](https://www.rycowb.org/?page_id=13759)  
 66 Center for immigration studies: U.S. Department of State's statistics, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3RHnFD7>  
 67 Newspaper article on student mobility, Pobjeda, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3rHibOi>  
 68 Accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://acro.ceu.edu/ceepus-mobility-grant>  
 69 Accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://me.usembassy.gov/education-culture/education-exchange/global-ugrad/>  
 70 CSI Assessment, OCSI/OMSA, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3EupFfi>  
 71 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /

pandemic. The European Youth Card (EYCA) is utilized in Montenegro to promote individual mobility among young people, contributing to enhancing social cohesion. As of March 2023, there are over 21,000 young users of the youth cards, with over 41,000 cards issued since

2018 in Montenegro. Data from the European Youth Card Programme indicates that 18,422 users are male, and 23,493 female, constituting 56% of the total issued cards.

## Supporting the transition of young people to adulthood: Key problem, causes, and measures

**Absence of a sustainable, quality and inclusive system of services and programmes to support young people in the transition to adulthood** is recognized as a key problem in this area.

The following have been identified as the CAUSES and the CONSEQUENCES of the problem:

CAUSES	CONSEQUENCES
<p>There is a lack of data or estimates regarding the benefits of preventive and development programmes for young people.</p> <p>Quality standards for youth work, applicable to all implementing entities such as youth services, NGOs, and others, are non-existent.</p> <p>There is no quality monitoring associated with the implementation of youth work.</p> <p>The profession of youth worker remains unrecognized.</p> <p>There is insufficient capacity within the youth services system to address youth work effectively.</p>	<p>Inadequate investment in preventive and developmental programmes for young people, coupled with a lack of timely support for their potential and development.</p> <p>Young people are unable to fully access quality services and programmes, leading to dissatisfaction with the work of youth services.</p>
<p>The legal provision governing youth services exhibits deficiencies concerning the establishment and implementation of programmes.</p> <p>There is a lack of standardisation in the operations of youth services, compounded by the absence of a quality assurance mechanism.</p> <p>The interconnection among various youth services, encompassing those established by the Ministry, LSGU, NGOs, schools, other ministries, CIPS, Counselling Centres at PHCCs, cultural centres, and social work centres, remains inadequate.</p> <p>Insufficient promotion of youth services among young people, particularly those with disabilities.</p> <p>Youth services are not available in all municipalities.</p> <p>Youth services predominantly cater to adolescent demographics, with less involvement from other age groups.</p>	<p>Young people are unable to exercise their entitlement to high-quality services and programmes in youth work and non-formal education.</p> <p>Young people, particularly those from marginalized groups encounter barriers to accessing information about youth services and non-formal education programmes.</p> <p>Availability of services and programmes for young people remains limited across diverse demographics and geographical locations.</p> <p>There is insufficient awareness among young people regarding the significance and benefits of youth work and non-formal education for their personal development.</p>

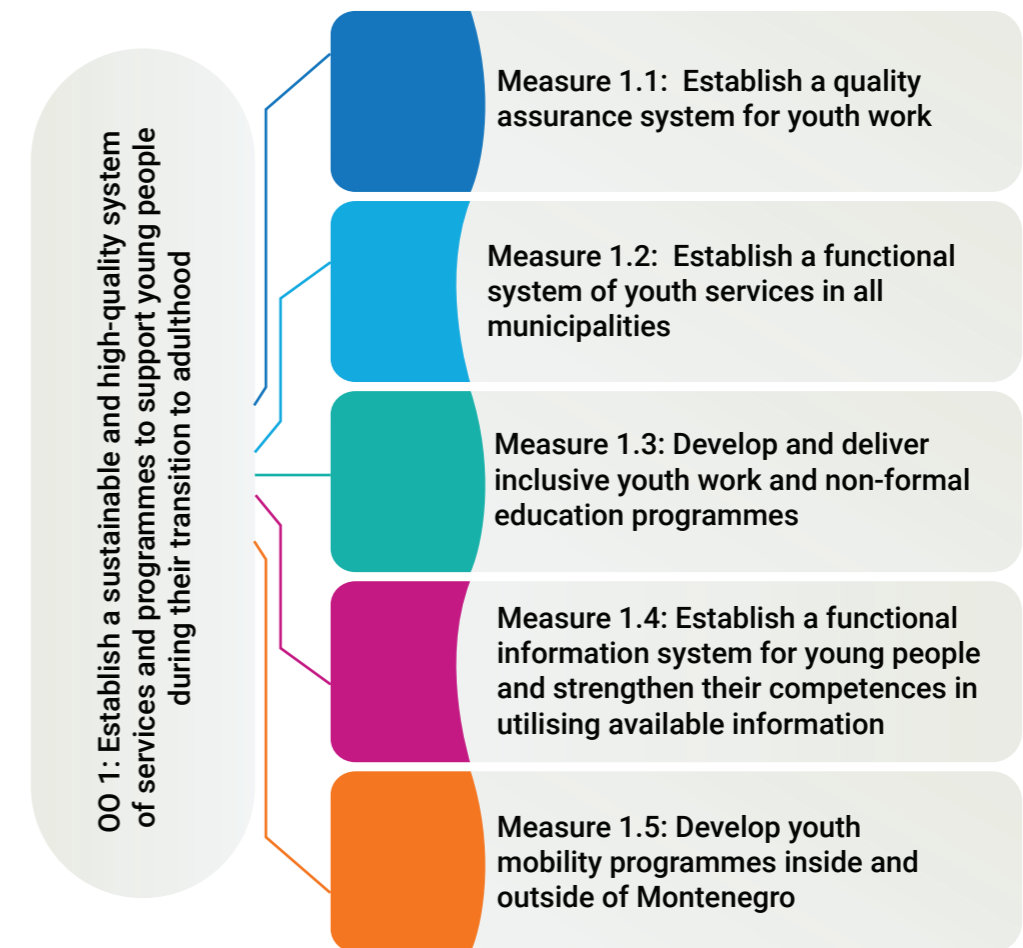
<p>The significance of non-formal education programmes for young people remains under-recognized.</p> <p>Existing youth work and non-formal education services and programmes are fragmented, lacking sustainability, and not consistently accessible to all young people across municipalities, especially in northern regions and rural areas.</p> <p>Non-formal education offerings lack diversity and fail to prioritize practical skills and competencies for independent living.</p> <p>Non-formal education programmes are inadequately promoted, with information dissemination failing to reach all young people, particularly within school settings where not all students are encouraged to participate.</p> <p>Quality standards for non-formal education programmes are inconsistent, and a formal quality assurance system is absent.</p> <p>Opportunities for digitizing non-formal education have been overlooked.</p> <p>Young men are minimally engaged in non-formal education activities.</p> <p>Parents and guardians lack sufficient information about the value of youth work, non-formal education, and youth mobility.</p>	<p>Young people, particularly those in older age groups and young men, lack motivation to engage with youth services and non-formal education programmes.</p> <p>There is a lack of recognition among parents and guardians regarding the importance and value of youth work, non-formal education, and youth mobility.</p> <p>Young people express scepticism about the effectiveness and significance of participating in non-formal education programmes, as they perceive advancement to be primarily influenced by personal connections rather than merit.</p>
<p>There is a lack of a standardized and accessible system for informing young people about opportunities for their personal and social development.</p> <p>Quality standards for information targeting young people are absent.</p> <p>Many young individuals lack the necessary skills to navigate and find information concerning opportunities for realizing their potential and transitioning into adulthood successfully.</p> <p>There is a significant gap in knowledge regarding the identification of unreliable information, fake news, and misinformation among young people.</p> <p>Social networks serve as the primary source of information for most young individuals.</p> <p>The language used by institutions for communication and information dissemination often fails to be relatable and comprehensible to the youth.</p>	<p>Young people lack access to vital information crucial for their personal and social development.</p> <p>The integrity of critical thinking and the democratic potential of young individuals faces threats from the detrimental effects of misinformation, polarizing narratives, and commercial content.</p> <p>There is a widespread lack of complete understanding among young people regarding the information disseminated.</p> <p>The level of trust young individuals place in information sources and the institutions providing them, along with concerns about data protection on the Internet, remains unsatisfactory.</p>
<p>The mobility of young people within Montenegro is constrained by the absence of mechanisms for financing and organising youth exchanges within the country through the education system.</p> <p>There is a lack of awareness among parents/guardians regarding the significance and value of youth mobility.</p> <p>There is inadequate data available on the utilisation and advantages of the existing youth mobility programmes.</p>	<p>Youth mobility is not achieving its full potential in enhancing social cohesion.</p> <p>Young people lack parental/guardian support for their mobility endeavours.</p>

The key problem identified in this domain is addressed by the Operational Objective 1:

**OO 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood**



To actualize this operational objective, a set of measures has been delineated, grounded in the identified causes of the issue:



### MEASURE 1.1: Establish a quality assurance system for youth work

Description: To ensure the efficacy of youth work and non-formal education services provided by public institutions, local self-governments, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders, the implementation of a robust quality assurance system is imperative. This entails the establishment of comprehensive quality standards or guidelines encompassing infrastructural requirements, programme content, safety protocols for young individuals, professional capacity of personnel (including youth workers, activists, and public service managers for youth), all while adhering to principles of equality, inclusivity, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of young men and women, including those with fewer opportunities.

Under no circumstances should these standards be developed with a restrictive intent; rather, they should serve as a supportive framework aimed at enhancing capacities and elevating the quality of programmes designed for young individuals. Following the establishment of quality guidelines, it becomes imperative to bolster the capabilities of all stakeholders in this domain to ensure their effective implementation. This entails the deployment of existing accredited training programmes for youth activists, alongside the creation of novel training initiatives such as occupational standards and training programmes tailored specifically for youth workers. These occupational standards and training programmes must align with the principles of youth work as outlined in the Recommendation on Youth Work CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the member states of the Council of Europe<sup>72</sup> which advocate for the voluntary and active engagement of young people, equitable access

<sup>72</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work, accessed on May 29, 2023 at [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680717e78](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680717e78)

to youth work activities, the openness and adaptability of youth work programmes, and a rights-based and inclusive approach that prioritizes the needs, skills, and opportunities of young men and women.

Introducing new legal provisions is essential to facilitate the formal recognition of youth work and to provide requisite support for its balanced advancement across Montenegro, putting in place the assumptions for enhancing the quality of youth work and non-formal education opportunities for young individuals.

These endeavours encompass all services, institutions, and organisations that administer programmes catering to young people outside the formal education system, such as the youth services under the Ministry of Sports and Youth, youth clubs, NGOs, as well as public services operating at both local and national levels.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Education

Partners: NGOs, other institutions

### MEASURE 1.2: Establish a functional system of youth services in all municipalities

Description: To ensure the consistent and continuous operation of youth services across all municipalities and foster effective collaboration with other relevant services to be able to respond to specific needs of young individuals, it is imperative to establish a functional youth services system rooted in principles of quality, accessibility, cooperation, youth participation, equality, diversity, and inclusivity, while being attuned to the distinct needs of young men and women. Achieving this objective necessitates several key steps. Firstly, it is essential to formulate new legal

provisions that outline the establishment, sustainable financing, minimum quality standards, and management protocols for youth services to facilitate the unification and expansion of the youth services system, irrespective of the specific establishment model. Furthermore, the development of quality standards and a code of ethics for youth services is paramount, coupled with the provision of relevant training programmes for youth activists and youth service administrators.

Youth services should be established in all municipalities. Youth work, non-formal education and information programmes need to be implemented tailored to the diverse needs of youth, prioritizing gender equality and inclusivity in line with adopted standards. A vital component of enhancing youth services is the development of a communication strategy, which should clearly articulate the purpose, functions, and content of youth services to young people, parents, and other stakeholders at local and state levels. Furthermore, fostering collaboration between youth services and other community services is essential to provide integrated support for young people. This includes establishing youth services within university units and student dormitories, as well as implementing mobile services (“youth work on wheels”) to reach young people in all areas.

While youth services inherently involve young people in programme creation, special attention should be given to strengthening their involvement, particularly for those with fewer opportunities, such as young people from socially disadvantaged families.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth

Partners: NGOs, local self-government units

### MEASURE 1.3: Develop and deliver inclusive youth work and non-formal education programmes

Description: To ensure the availability of quality non-formal education (NFE) for young people across Montenegro and to enhance their satisfaction with participating in various programmes, it is imperative to establish and implement inclusive programmes of youth work and non-formal education. Achieving this necessitates firstly recognizing youth work through new legal solutions and enabling its balanced development. It is of utmost importance to design and implement comprehensive and diversified programmes of youth work and non-formal education tailored to the needs of young people in all municipalities.

In addition to the regular implementation of youth work and non-formal education programmes in youth services across all municipalities (in accordance with measures 1.1 and 1.2), it is crucial to launch regular calls for the implementation of NFE activities in remote and rural areas in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (part of activity 1.5.2.3). Furthermore, fostering collaboration between teaching staff and NGOs is essential for planning an open curriculum in schools, in cooperation with NGOs. Continuous dissemination of information about the significance of non-formal education to young people and their parents is imperative, alongside efforts to motivate NFE providers to obtain licensing for their programmes. Additionally, it is essential to develop mechanisms for the recognition and verification of non-formal education through EUROPASS, as well as the creation of instruments for the recognition and evaluation of NFE (e.g., YouthPass).



In alignment with identified needs, there is potential to digitize specific non-formal education programmes and implement capacity-building activities within youth services. This would enable the provision of high-quality and diverse programmes of youth work and non-formal education, fostering collaboration with other stakeholders and facilitating the digitization of NFE programmes.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Education

Partners: NGOs, local self-government units

#### **MEASURE 1.4: Establish a functional information system for young people and strengthen their competences in utilising available information**

Description: To ensure that young people are well-informed and equipped with digital and media literacy skills, it is essential to establish a functional youth information system that is easily accessible to them, both at the local and state levels. The provision of information to young people and the enhancement of their competency in utilising available information should be seamlessly integrated into the system of youth services (measure 1.2). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to establish standards for quality information targeted at young people and to conduct training sessions for information providers catering to this demographic. Additionally, the creation of a comprehensive guide for young people to access information and support services is imperative in facilitating their engagement with available resources.

Supplementing the regular programme of youth services (as per measure 1.2), informing young people should be enhanced by establishing (digital) info points for young people in educational institutions and other accessible locations. These info points will facilitate easier access to relevant information for all

young people, particularly those marginalized. Within youth services, activities aimed at strengthening young people's capacity for information literacy should be incorporated alongside information dissemination. Additionally, launching regular calls for the implementation of activities to enhance media literacy among young people in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (part of activity 1.5.2.3) is essential.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Education

Partners: NVO, local self-government units, educational establishments, cultural institutions

#### **MEASURE 1.5: Develop youth mobility programmes inside and outside of Montenegro**

Description: To foster internal cohesion and promote regional cooperation and European integration, it is imperative to develop individual and group youth mobility programmes both within and outside Montenegro, thereby increasing the participation of young people in these initiatives. To achieve this goal, it is essential to design appropriate programmes for youth mobility within Montenegro, in collaboration with the education and culture sectors. This involves enhancing the organisation of educational, intercultural, sports, and cultural exchanges among young people from different regions. Additionally, improving the dissemination of information to young people and parents regarding existing mobility programmes (such as the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, Erasmus+, and the EYCA card), as well as highlighting the benefits and opportunities offered by these programmes, should be prioritized. This effort should primarily be integrated into the framework of youth services programmes (as outlined in measures 1.2 and 1.4).

Continuous monitoring of youth mobility is crucial for identifying trends and designing relevant activities. Therefore, it is necessary to establish mechanisms for monitoring the participation of young people in mobility programmes and assessing the impacts of such programmes. Additionally, developing a tool for recording and supporting young people who study abroad is essential for facilitating their reintegration into the labour market and other aspects of life upon their return to Montenegro. Moreover, in line with identified needs, launching a regular call for intercultural

learning and youth mobility programmes within Montenegro (as part of activity 1.5.2.3) is also feasible. This competition could involve partner projects from different regions, cities, or linguistic areas.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture

Partners: NVO, local self-government units

## **Expected results and performance indicators**

The expected effects, or results, of the implementation of the stated objective and measures are as follows:

- 1) The quality of youth work and support for young people during the transition to adulthood has been improved.
- 2) Youth work is carried out by motivated youth workers, who acquire the necessary competencies for youth work and have the opportunity for career development.
- 3) The quality and continuity of work of youth services in all municipalities is ensured.
- 4) Quality and sustainable non-formal education programmes are available to all young people throughout Montenegro.
- 5) Young people are motivated to use the services of youth services and programmes are created in accordance with the needs of young people.
- 6) Young people participate in various non-formal education programmes and are more satisfied with the offer and quality, as well as the opportunities offered to them.
- 7) Young people, parents, institutions, teachers, media, employers, etc., recognize the importance of non-formal education.
- 8) Information, support and services are easily available to young people through networked youth services, according to the "one-stop-shop" system, both in the services themselves and on the Internet.
- 9) Young people successfully find the desired, valid and verified information.
- 10) Young people are digitally and media literate.

The table below outlines performance indicators for operational objective 1: Establish a sustainable, quality, and inclusive system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood.

Performance indicator	2023 Baseline	2025 Mid-target	2027 Target
No. of established and operational youth services in local self-government units <i>Source of data: MSY's Activity Report</i>	Youth Services established and operational in 11 municipalities; 3 more will be established by the end of 2023	Youth Services established and operational in 19 municipalities in Montenegro	Youth Services established and operational in 19 municipalities in Montenegro
No. of Youth Administrators	Currently 13 youth administrators	Increase to 20 youth administrators Youth administrators possess knowledge and skills in human rights and gender equality	Increase to 27 youth administrators Youth administrators possess knowledge and skills in human rights and gender equality
Establish a functional mechanism for financing youth services	A functional mechanism for financing youth services does not exist.	The Youth Law stipulates a clear mechanism for financing youth services	The mechanism established and applied in all Youth Services across Montenegro
Number of events for young people organised by Youth Services	Currently 150 events	Number of events for young people organised by Youth Services increased to 270 (Youth Services organise at least 20% of events each year conducive promotion of gender equality)	Number of events for young people organised by Youth Services increased to 500 (Youth Services organise at least 30% of events each year conducive promotion of gender equality)
No. of young women and men who actively partake in activities/events organised by Youth Services	Currently 1900 young individuals	Increased to 3600, and methodology established for tracking gender segregated data on the number of YS beneficiaries	Increased to 5000, methodology for tracking gender segregated data on the number of YS beneficiaries successfully applied and utilised for balanced involvement of girls and boys and development of gender-sensitised YS programmes

High-quality and sustainable non-formal education programmes accessible by all young individuals across Montenegro <i>Source of data: MoEd Activity Report</i>	Currently NFE programmes are primarily delivered by NGOs	NFE programmes delivered by NGOs and Youth Services in 16 Montenegrin municipalities (methodology for tracking gender segregated data on the number of NFE trainees established)	NFE programmes delivered by NGOs and Youth Services in 25 Montenegrin municipalities (methodology for tracking gender segregated data on the number of YS beneficiaries successfully applied and utilised for balanced involvement of girls and boys and development of gender-sensitised YS programmes)
A functional youth information system has been established in Montenegro <i>Source of data: MSY's Activity Report</i>	Current youth information efforts rely on NGO-implemented project activities	A youth information system to compile all sources of information in Montenegro defined	An operational high-quality information system accessible by young individuals across Montenegro.
Develop new internal youth exchange programmes within the formal education system in Montenegro <i>Source of data: MoEd Activity Report</i>	Internal youth exchange programmes do not exist within the formal education system in Montenegro	Cooperation programmes between formal education institutions developed and defined in order to strengthen the internal exchange of young people within Montenegro	The implementation of the internal youth exchange programme has influenced the increase in the internal mobility of young people in Montenegro



## Youth participation in democratic life

### Situation analysis

In Montenegro, the Ministry of Public Administration primarily oversees citizen participation, including that of young people, in the formulation of public policies. The National Action Plan for the implementation of the Open Government Partnership Initiative for 2023-2024 sets forth an operational goal aimed at enhancing public awareness and education regarding opportunities for participation in policy-making processes (OC3). Additionally, it seeks to promote the involvement of young people in the advancement of green policies (OC4). Moreover, the National Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 includes Measure 2.1.7, which focuses on supporting citizens' expression of interests through the activities of non-governmental organisations and informal groups. This measure targets young people specifically, aiming to facilitate their engagement in the policymaking processes at both the state and local levels. Furthermore, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights addresses the participation of marginalized groups, including through initiatives such as the National Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025, the Strategy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality for the period 2022-2027, and the Strategy for Social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2021-2025. However, there are gaps in the educational programme under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education concerning these strategic directions. Specifically, the development of a participatory culture in schools through civic education programmes is limited to an optional subject only offered in secondary school. Comparative assessments suggest that this approach

is insufficient in both scope and timing to cultivate a culture of participation and activism among young people.

The participation of young people is primarily manifested through their **involvement in youth organisations**, which play a crucial role in shaping, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating youth policies. However, Montenegrin legislation does not formally recognize youth organisations as distinct entities, thereby limiting their establishment and operation. Furthermore, there is a lack of accurate data on the number of youth organisations, as competent authorities do not maintain records of such entities. The absence of specific recognition and definition hampers youth associations, hindering their ability to attain sustainability, autonomy, and access to financial and other forms of support for their initiatives and encounter difficulties in connecting with the organisations from other social domains. Despite these challenges, progress has been made in recent years. In 2020, the Network for the Youth of Montenegro was established, serving as the sole representative umbrella alliance of youth organisations, entities working with and for young people, as well as youth associations and unions in Montenegro. However, there remains a need for structural support to enhance the network's functionality and effectiveness, including its recognition as an umbrella organisation and a key partner to state administration, facilitating its role as a bridge between the government and young people.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, there exists a significant number of informal youth groups and initiatives that actively contribute to the youth sector.

<sup>73</sup> Consultation Report on Priorities in Youth Policy, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at [www.gov.me/dokumenta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/dokumenta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)

Unfortunately, these groups receive minimal support, whether technical, programmatic, or financial, with only sporadic assistance provided through ad-hoc programmes of specific non-governmental organisations and foundations.

**“ It would be beneficial to have some digital form of participation. But only if someone is genuinely to listen to that and act upon what we decide. If it will be left ignored, then there's no need to set it up in the first place. ”**

Focus group participant

Survey<sup>74</sup> indicates that a mere 12.9% of young individuals have organised activities for their peers, with adolescents being the most active, constituting 17.1% of youth club or organisation members in the 15-17 age group. However, a significant finding reveals a sharp decline in youth activism post-secondary school, as only 8.4% of those aged 18-24 and 5.1% of those aged 25-30 remain involved in youth clubs or organisations. Furthermore, a quarter of previously engaged individuals in these age brackets have since disengaged. Despite nearly half of young people expressing interest in **participating in social decision-making**, they often feel their opinions and experiences go unnoticed, leading to disenchantment with traditional citizen participation models at local and national levels. Young people's involvement in the development of sectoral strategies and significant political processes, such as EU integration, remains notably low, despite their substantial demographic presence. Moreover, their **trust in systemic institutions is quite low**, with religious organisations being the most

<sup>74</sup> DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

trusted (22.6%). Educational and health institutions follow, with 16.4% and 12.5% trust, respectively, while governmental bodies, parliament, judiciary, and prosecution garner minimal trust, each registering 1% or less. Trust levels vary among generational groups, with only adolescents exhibiting higher confidence in the education system, while religious organisations maintain the highest trust across other categories among young people.<sup>75</sup>

Survey<sup>76</sup> indicates that institutions often perceive young people as passive and disinterested in activities organised for them, showing reluctance to engage. Conversely, young people express a lack of information about available participation opportunities and decision-making processes. Furthermore, they highlight a scarcity of opportunities to contribute to the design of cultural and other activities tailored to their needs and interests. Notably, the support they acknowledge primarily comes from individuals rather than institutions.

**“ Young people are completely passive. I think the current political situation has 'killed' our motivation to stand up for anything. ”**

Focus group participant

Only one in four young people expresses general satisfaction with the state of democracy, with every sixth young person feeling very dissatisfied. Additionally, slightly over half of young people perceive a weakening of democracy during the pandemic. Nearly two-thirds of young individuals exhibit disinterest in politics,

regardless of factors like gender, family social capital, educational attainment, or age. Merely half of young people participate in voting regularly, and generally have pessimistic outlook on society and their peers, whom they perceive as uninterested and unmotivated, attributing this to the “failings” of the broader society and a result of limited opportunities available to them.<sup>77</sup> Compared to older citizens (55+ years old) in Montenegro, young people (aged 16-28) are less engaged in politics, with lower rates of following political affairs (28.6% vs. 53.0%) and understanding key societal issues (41.6% vs. 60.0%).<sup>78</sup> Only 8.4% of respondents believe that national policies adequately address young people’s concerns. Moreover, 57.1% report a lack of trust in politicians, and 48.6% feel that politicians fail to communicate with them effectively.<sup>79</sup> Some focus group participants from studies on young people in Montenegro note an observed increase in youth activism, particularly among young women who, while often operating behind the scenes, contribute to societal changes, notably within the NGO sector. Participants advocate for providing more opportunities for young women within political parties to increase their visibility and voice, which could serve as inspiration for other young women to become active led by the example of successful women in the public arena.<sup>80</sup> Women are more inclined to advocate for improving the position of women in society.<sup>81</sup>



Workshop of the Working Group for drafting the Youth Strategy - a session dedicated to consultations with young people, September 2022

77 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>  
78 Research on attitudes and perceptions of young people towards politics in Montenegro, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CCOC5J>  
79 Ibid  
80 Westminster Foundation for Democracy & DeFacto Consultancy (2021), Women’s Political Activism in Montenegro: Public opinion poll, accessed on May 29, 2023 at <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/WFD-brosura-mne.pdf>.  
81 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>, str. 42.

**“ You know of the rule for every candidate list to include 30% women. The same should be done for young people with a 20% share.**

Focus group participant

At the local level, many young people in most municipalities lack familiarity with the legislative and strategic frameworks that primarily concern them, and they are often unaware of the available mechanisms for participating in decision-making processes. Their experiences with such participation are predominantly negative, characterized by formal involvement that seldom results in the adoption of young people’s proposals. Additionally, there’s identified insufficient information and, to some extent, disinterest among young people in participating.<sup>82</sup> While nearly half (49.7%) express interest in engaging in decision-making on social issues, the other half (50.3%) shows disinterest. In Montenegro, young people mainly express their activism through actions like signing petitions (29.7%) or participating in peaceful protests (25.3%).<sup>83</sup> The lack of civic and media literacy among young people hinders the full realization of their civil and social rights. The concept of “youth rights” remains underdeveloped in Montenegro, despite advocacy at the European level for recognizing the specificity of young people’s rights. The non-realization of rights also impacts the perception of the importance of democracy. Young people recommend the digitization of political participation, believing it could encourage more involvement. However, they emphasize that digital participation

82 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>  
83 Ibid  
84 Research on attitudes and perceptions of young people towards politics in Montenegro, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CCOC5J>

must be respected, recognized, and extend beyond mere activity on social networks to have tangible consequences in political life. Worryingly, approximately half of young people in Montenegro believe it is favourable to have military power in the country, while over a third consider it advantageous to have a powerful leader who bypasses parliament and elections. Those two attitudes show, on the one hand, clear authoritarian tendencies, and on the other, insufficient information about these types of government or about life in countries that have this kind of political system. Lack of information and education are likely causes of such attitudes, as is further supported by the fact that as many as 70.3% of respondents somewhat or fully agree that democracy is superior to all other forms of governance. This suggests that almost one third of young people harbour authoritarian tendencies. Conversely, nearly 70% of young people view democracy as either very good or good as a political system. While the majority of young people in Montenegro lean towards democratic values, it is noteworthy that approximately one in every four respondents, or one in every four young individuals, could be classified as autocratic based on this index. This underscores the necessity for additional education and the adoption of democratic values. The education system serves as an essential cornerstone in the process of fostering democratic ideals among young people. Respondents widely support subjects like Civic Education and Media Literacy, recognizing their potential significance in this regard. Many young people advocate for the inclusion of these subjects in school curricula.<sup>84</sup>



**Young people engage in volunteering** in small numbers and inconsistently, which contributes to the underdevelopment of values such as empathy, solidarity, cooperation, and concern for the common good. National legislation poses challenges to the promotion of volunteerism among young people by framing it as free work rather than an opportunity to contribute to societal development. Moreover, it imposes financial obligations on organisers of volunteer work, dissuading many actors in the youth sector from organising such initiatives, gathering volunteers, enhancing community development through volunteering. Consequently, this negatively impacts the development of the value system among young people. Recent statistics reveal that only 3.9% of young people currently volunteer, with a staggering 68% having never volunteered<sup>85</sup>. In line with global trends, albeit on a smaller scale in Montenegro, an increasing number of young people are turning to alternative forms of participation, including community volunteering, online activism, or involvement in youth social movements like climate activism. The relatively limited volunteering opportunities for young people both in and from Montenegro contribute to this trend. However, it is concerning that a significant portion of young people hold a pessimistic view of society and feel uncertain about avenues for change. Additionally, there is a notable lack of interest among young people in political events within the European Union, with only one in nine expressing complete trust, while one in four harbours complete distrust in the EU.<sup>86</sup>

Consequently, young people are disheartened from engaging and contributing to societal development due to the lack of support from relevant institutions. With insufficient encouragement and backing for **youth initiatives**, they rarely come to fruition. Furthermore, the perspectives of young

people are often overlooked or disregarded in various realms of public policy where their representation and consultation would be crucial. Their involvement in politics and Montenegro's pre-accession negotiations with the European Union is limited, compounded by inadequate knowledge of civil rights and underdeveloped capacities for democratic participation. Nonetheless, past programmes aimed at fostering leadership skills have served as effective models, aiding in the enhancement of young people's leadership capabilities and digital competencies, thereby empowering them to engage meaningfully in their communities.

**“ I know many young people, me included, who launched various initiatives, trying to move things from a standstill, but we always hit a wall. Why bother when it does not amount to anything The older ones, who call the shots now, will have to start to listen to young people. ”**

**Focus group participant**

85 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth  
86 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

## Youth Participation: Key problems, causes and measures

The central issue in this domain is the **lack of conditions for young people to actualize their full potential as active citizens and contribute effectively to societal progress.**

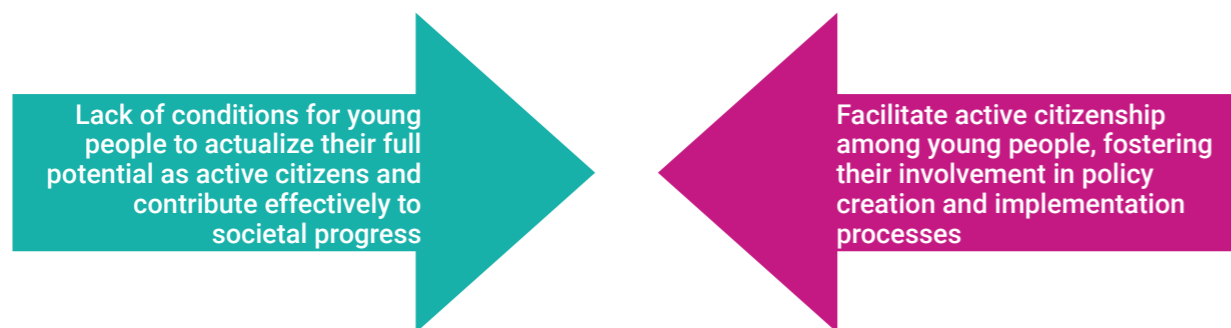
The following have been identified as the CAUSES and the CONSEQUENCES of the problem:

CAUSES	CONSEQUENCES
Concrete support for youth initiatives, particularly informal youth groups, is lacking.	Young people hold a pessimistic view of the society they inhabit.
Youth organising remains unrecognized and unsupported.	Only 24% of young people express satisfaction with the state of democracy.
Youth organisations suffer from insufficient recognition, compounded by the absence of formal registration under the current Youth Law, they struggle to attain sustainability and autonomy, face challenges in securing financial and other forms of support for their initiatives, and encounter difficulty in establishing connections with organisations from other social domains.	Participation in youth organisations is infrequent among young people.
Youth participation mechanisms are inadequately established.	Young people generally feel that their opinions and experiences are not considered, leading to discouragement from participating in local and national levels of governance, especially through traditional citizen participation models.
Young people lack familiarity with available participation mechanisms.	Their views are often overlooked or disregarded in various domains of public policy where their representation and consultation would be crucial.
Their involvement in decision-making processes, sector strategies development, and significant political processes is insufficient.	A smaller proportion of young people engage in politics and pre-accession negotiations for Montenegro's EU membership.
Participation mechanisms are not tailored adequately to young people, including the utilization of digital technologies.	Discouragement prevails among young people, hindering their participation and contribution to societal development.
Programmes targeting young people are often created without their involvement in the design phase. .	They show disinterest in activities and programmes that do not align with their interests and needs.
Youth activism is currently at a low level, with a significant decline observed after high school.	Trust in institutional systems among young people is notably low..
Continuous and coherent support for enhancing young people's capacity to engage in democratic life, including fostering democratic political culture, knowledge of civil rights and the political system, as well as digital and media literacy, is lacking.	The capacities of young people to participate in democratic life are not adequately developed.
Participation is not adequately supported and promoted within the education system.	A portion of young people hold authoritarian attitudes, and approximately half of them lack motivation to engage in societal development.
There is a need for more support and space for young women to participate actively.	

<p>Opportunities for volunteering are limited, and there is a lack of recognition for youth volunteering efforts.</p> <p>The system for promoting values such as empathy, solidarity, cooperation, and concern for the common good is underdeveloped.</p> <p>National legislation also presents obstacles to the recognition and promotion of volunteerism among young people.</p>	<p>Few young people volunteer.</p> <p>Underdeveloped values such as empathy, solidarity, cooperation and concern for the common good.</p> <p>Current legal solutions in this area discourage actors in the youth sector from organising volunteering actions projects.</p>
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The key problem identified in this domain is addressed by the Operational Objective 2:

**OC2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes**



To actualize this operational objective, a set of measures has been delineated, grounded in the identified causes of the issue:



**MEASURE 2.1: Establish sustainable mechanisms to support youth initiatives, informal youth groups, and organisations.**

Description: To facilitate quality and ongoing support for young people to organise and actively participate in various social processes, it is imperative to establish sustainable mechanisms that bolster youth initiatives, informal groups, and youth organisations. This entails the implementation of new legal frameworks and other supportive mechanisms to regulate the promotion of positions, establish records, provide financing, and ensure the sustainability of youth organisations. Moreover, it is essential to institute regular annual institutional support for the representative umbrella alliance of youth organisations. This alliance serves as a crucial social partner, advocating for the interests of youth and spearheading activities aimed at enhancing the youth’s position and advancing youth policy in Montenegro.

Recognizing the unique nature of youth organising, which often entails voluntary and short-term commitments compared to other forms of civic engagement, such as non-governmental organisations, it is crucial to offer youth organisations opportunities for networking and capacity building, primarily focusing on equipping them with skills for organisational management, project implementation, and fundraising. Additionally, special attention should be directed towards supporting activist initiatives led by young women, as well as informal associations dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowering women in fields where their representation is lacking, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Furthermore, there is a need to conduct an analysis and assessment to determine the requirements for establishing a youth fund. This fund would facilitate the

provision of institutional, programmatic, and project-based grants to youth organisations, informal youth groups, and youth initiatives. It is essential to ensure that the distribution of funds is gender-responsive, aiming for an equitable allocation of resources to address the needs and initiatives of both young men and young women effectively.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth

Partners: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of European Affairs, local self-government units, NVO

**MEASURE 2.2: Create new and improve existing youth participation mechanisms, with a special focus on encouraging the participation of young women and marginalized groups**

Description: To ensure the active participation of young people in society, where their perspectives, needs, and ideas are valued and integrated into the planning and execution of public policies, it is essential to establish new and enhance existing participation mechanisms. In order to achieve this, it is necessary, first of all, to establish and regularly conduct a dialogue with young people (EU mechanism) on all topics of public policies that concern them, and to prepare a summarized version of the Youth Strategy that is understandable and usable for different groups of young people to activate and participate. A prerequisite for youth participation is ensuring adequate accessibility to facilities and services for all young people, especially those from marginalized groups, and increasing the number of inclusive opportunities for young people that encourage participation, equal access to opportunities for everyone, especially for young people from marginalized groups (e.g. young people with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian youth, youth from rural areas,



youth affected by poverty, youth without parental care, LGBTIQ+ youth, young single parents, NEET, etc.). Also, for the inclusion of young people, it is extremely important to provide them with information, opportunities for participation, provide them with support and adequately promote public invitations for consultation and dialogue with young people in the development of sectoral policies at the central and local levels. It is also necessary to increase the participation of young women in decision-making processes and policy creation, considering that they are less represented in decision-making positions. That is why it is necessary to develop standards for dialogue with young people, i.e. for consultations with young people when developing sectoral policies and analyses, and create guidelines for public officials in charge of developing strategic documents and contact persons for young people at the state and local level. The topics should include the following: information and communication with young people, young people's participation in policy- and decision-making, support for youth initiatives and the design of programmes and services tailored to young people (or youth mainstreaming).

To ensure the effective implementation of this measure, it is crucial to roll out a comprehensive training programme on utilizing available (including digital) mechanisms for youth participation, and enhance the capacity of officials to adhere to established standards for engaging with young people, along with guidelines for effective youth policy implementation.

Drawing from successful European models of youth participation, support must be extended to young people to actively engage in processes relevant to them, including European integration and democratic initiatives. In line with what young people singled out, their involvement in European youth initiatives through collaboration with civil society and local governments needs to be secured.

Following the execution of these activities, it is imperative to conduct an analysis of the utilization of existing (coupled with the new digital) participation mechanisms and assess the need for developing new ones.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth

Partners: Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of European Affairs, Government of Montenegro, local self-government units, NVO

### **MEASURE 2.3: Enhance the capabilities of young individuals to participate in community development, democratic life and decision-making**

Description: To foster a culture of participation and activism among young individuals, ensuring they comprehend their civil rights and are content with their societal and peer perceptions, it is imperative to bolster their abilities to engage in community development, democratic processes, and decision-making. This necessitates, primarily, the promotion of participatory values, highlighting positive exemplars, and fostering youth involvement both within educational settings and through collaboration with student organisations.

It is essential to systematically cultivate a culture of participation, primarily by integrating civic education across all levels of formal schooling. This systemic approach also entails enhancing awareness of social rights and fostering civic, media, and political literacy, alongside cultivating critical thinking and freedom of expression among youth. Moreover, there is a need to deepen young people's understanding of human rights and gender equality, given the survey findings indicating their more conservative views on gender issues compared to their elders. Additionally, within youth services (as outlined in measures 1.2 and 1.3), it is crucial to design and consistently implement civic education programmes while building capacities for e-participation.

Adequate support for initiatives aimed at enhancing (digital) competencies for youth participation and activism, particularly among marginalized groups, should be provided through project assistance and collaboration with NGOs (as part of activity 1.5.2.3).

Capacity building commences with the provision of relevant information; thus it is imperative to educate young people about the opportunities available and empower them to participate at various levels. For instance, they can represent the voice of young people in bodies within European institutions, such as the Council of Europe, youth delegates in the congress of local and regional authorities, or youth representatives in the Advisory Council for Youth. In addition to information, young people require practical experience in participation, which must be facilitated within the family, institutional settings (such as student parliaments and youth councils), and at the local level (for instance, through initiatives like "The day when young people take over" through the Free Chairs in the Municipal Assembly). Furthermore, at the state level, it is essential to broaden the involvement of adolescents through programmes like democratic workshops and enhance the engagement of young people through regular activities of the Youth Parliament (Parliament of Montenegro).

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Education

Partners: Parliament of Montenegro, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, local self-government units, NVO

### **MEASURE 2.4: Enhance the conditions for the development of volunteerism**

Description: To cultivate values such as empathy, solidarity, cooperation, and concern for the common good among young people, it is imperative to enhance the conditions for the advancement of volunteerism and actively encourage and support youth involvement in volunteering endeavours. Firstly, there is a pressing need to refine legal frameworks concerning volunteering, addressing challenges promptly, and fostering a culture of volunteering among young people.

The cultivation of volunteerism should commence during adolescence, necessitating the incorporation of volunteering programmes into secondary school and university curricula. Adequate support must be extended to youth initiatives to facilitate the execution of volunteer activities within local communities (as part of activity 1.5.2.3). Additionally, promoting a culture of volunteerism entails organising youth-friendly information campaigns to showcase volunteering opportunities in Montenegro and abroad. Collaboration with the Erasmus+ office and the contact point for Montenegro can aid in promoting volunteering opportunities, exchanges, and other EU youth programmes. Furthermore, considering the analysis and identified needs, incentivizing youth volunteering can be achieved by introducing a range of privileges for registered volunteers.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

Partners: NGOs, local self-government units

## Expected results and performance indicators

The expected effects, or results, of the implementation of the measures are as follows:

- (1) Young people, alongside youth organisations and informal youth groups, play an active role in various social processes, receiving encouragement and support from institutions.
- (2) The perspectives, needs, and suggestions of young people are acknowledged and inform the development and execution of diverse policies.
- (3) Young people maintain an optimistic view of their society and peers. Many express satisfaction with the state of democracy and actively exercise their civil and political rights. Moreover, they actively engage in Montenegro's EU integration.
- (4) Young people demonstrate high levels of digital and media literacy, possessing a strong understanding of their civil rights and equipped with the skills necessary for participation in democratic processes.
- (5) A significant number of young people volunteer, demonstrating values such as empathy, solidarity, cooperation, and concern for the common good. They have also acquired and enhanced various competencies.

The table below outlines performance indicators for operational objective 2: Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes

Performance indicator	2023 Baseline	2025 Mid-target	2027 Target
omen and men (of different age groups) who actively participate in the work of youth clubs and organisations  <i>Source of data: "Analysis of Youth Needs: Aiding the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023–2027"</i>	17.1% of young people aged 15–17 are members of youth clubs or organisation	18% of young people aged 15–17 are members of a youth club or organisation	20% of young people aged 15-17 are members of a youth club or organisation
	(19.8% boys / 13.2% girls)	A minimum of 15% of girls aged 15 - 17 are members of a youth club or organisation)	20% of boys and 20% of girls aged 15-17 are members of youth clubs or organisations
	8.4% of young people aged 18-24 are members of a youth club or organisation	11% of young people aged 18 - 24 are members of a youth club or organisation	15% of young people aged 18-24 are members of a youth club or organisation
	(8.1% of young men / 8.7% of young women)	11% of young men and 11% of young women aged 18-24 are members of youth clubs or organisations	15% of young men and 15% of young women aged 18-24 are members of a youth club or organisation
	5.1% of young people aged 25-30 are members of a youth club or organisation	8% of young people aged 25-30 are members of a youth club or organisation	10% of young people aged 25-30 are members of a youth club or organisation
	(6.1% young men / 4.1% young women)	9% of young men and 7% of young women aged 25-30 are members of youth clubs or organisations	10% of young men and 10% of young women aged 25-30 are members of youth clubs or organisations
Percentage of young girls and young men in Montenegro who actively volunteer  <i>Source of data: "Analysis of Youth Needs: Aiding the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023–2027"</i>	3.9% of young people are currently volunteering, while 68% of young people have never volunteered (2022)  (4.1% young men / 3.9% young women)	10% increase compared to the current figure	20% increase compared to the current figure

## Enhancing the overall standing of young individuals through an interdepartmental approach

### Situation analysis

The disadvantaged status of young people in Montenegro is evident primarily in the unequal opportunities for their development and the fulfilment of their potential. They face discrimination and inequality in accessing basic needs and exercising their rights. Additionally, their mental health and well-being are often at risk or compromised. Furthermore, there is a lack of opportunities for quality leisure time and the nurturing of creativity among young people.

Effective implementation of youth policy hinges upon **robust cooperation among various governmental departments**. Youth policy is inherently multidisciplinary, requiring horizontal and vertical alignment among diverse stakeholders. Coordination stands out as a fundamental principle and challenge in ensuring the successful execution of youth policy. Interdepartmental collaboration, guided by principles of good governance, enhances efficiency, democracy, transparency, and fosters internal control mechanisms, thereby promoting a heightened sense of social responsibility.

The areas mentioned fall under the main responsibilities of various government departments, each with its own set of measures targeting young people. However, it is crucial to involve young people in their design to ensure that these measures are specifically tailored to address the challenges young people face. This means coordinating efforts across departments to synchronize activities and ensure they directly tackle the issues at hand. The goal of analysing these challenges is not just to identify them but also to pinpoint those that existing strategies and sectoral policies overlook. By implementing solutions through interdepartmental cooperation, we can directly enhance the position of young people.

Below is a brief overview of the most important areas and priority issues that the Youth Strategy can act on, in synergy with sector strategies and competent departments, to help enhance the situation of young people.



*No single department can handle everything alone. Having a youth ministry is important, but it needs to collaborate with others. For instance, teaming up with the economy folks to address youth employment, and maybe even connecting with agriculture since some young folks are into farming. Also, working alongside the Tourism Ministry could help showcase our country's offerings. Then there's the Education Ministry; they need to understand the needs of young people too. And, of course, we should engage with Foreign Affairs to see how our young people studying abroad can contribute and vice versa. It's all about collaboration, you know? Nothing like how things are done now..*

Focus group participant



## Lack of sufficient opportunities for young people to develop and become independent

### Mandates and existing strategic documents:

*The Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism includes "Improvement of Human Resource Status and Strengthening Social Inclusion" in the National Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030. The Ministry of Public Administration focuses on enhancing capacities and competencies within the public administration system. Similarly, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Technological Development, Ministry of Sports and Youth also oversee the enhancement of human capital. The overarching strategic framework addressing these issues is the National Sustainable Development Strategy. Employment-related policies primarily fall under the remit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism, with a significant portion of employment programmes implemented by the National Employment Office. MLSW, among other responsibilities, is tasked with regulating legislation regarding labour relations, occupational health and safety. On the other hand, the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism (MEDT) primarily focuses on enhancing competitiveness, improving the investment environment, and fostering collaboration with the business community. Additionally, the ministry is tasked with supporting the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises and creating favourable conditions for the development of the modern industrial sector. To achieve these objectives, MEDT is responsible for coordinating the implementation of several key strategies, including the Economic Recovery Platform, National Employment Strategy, Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy, and Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning Strategy. MLSW works on the preparation and development of the Youth Guarantee programme, which, through IPA instruments, aims to ensure that young people are covered by education, apprenticeships, or employment, following the rules of the Youth Guarantee. The proposed Economic Reforms Programme for Montenegro for the period 2023–2025 includes measures to address long-term unemployment, women unemployment, and youth unemployment. Additionally, the Ministry of Economic Development has developed the National Employment Strategy, which recognizes young people as a special group, with a focus on employment post-pandemic and economic crisis. Formal education for young people in Montenegro falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. This includes, among other things, the adoption and approval of educational programmes, publication of textbooks and other educational materials, awarding prizes to students and teachers from the Quality and Talent Fund, development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, and planning and implementation of international educational cooperation. The quality of education is ensured by the Education Bureau at the preschool, primary, and secondary education levels, the Vocational Education Centre at the vocational education level (secondary, tertiary), while the Agency for Control and Assurance of Quality of Higher Education is responsible for higher education. The Examination Centre of Montenegro conducts external assessment of students' knowledge and skills, including international testing and organising national student competitions. The Ministry of Education also prepares strategies for the development of general secondary and vocational, as well as higher education, and strategies for lifelong career guidance, including the Strategy for Inclusive Education and Programme for the Development and Support of Talented Students.*





**Youth unemployment is the biggest problem, and it is even more difficult for us from marginalized groups. There is not enough additional training for us, because we, say from the association of paraplegics, cannot do every job.**

Focus group participant



According to the Report of the Western Balkans Youth Lab (2019),<sup>87</sup> there has been a significant decline in the number of young people in Montenegro over the past decade. Specifically, there are almost 14,500 fewer young individuals compared to 2010, representing a decrease of 10.73% within just 9 years. Moreover, there has been a drop of nearly 2.5% in the share of young people in the total population over the last 10 years. One of the most pressing issues identified is the **high percentage of young people considering leaving Montenegro** in search of better opportunities elsewhere. Alarming, 50% of young individuals express a desire to depart from Montenegro for a better future<sup>88</sup>, with a staggering 70% contemplating leaving the country altogether.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, every other young person does not envision their future within Montenegro, with preferences leaning towards destinations such as the USA (18.2%), other unspecified locations (11.6%), countries within the region (8.9%), EU member states (6.3%), and Russia (2.4%).<sup>90</sup> Additionally, it is notable that young men are more inclined to leave compared to young women.<sup>91</sup>

Many young individuals holding higher education degrees who have migrated abroad for professional opportunities express reluctance to return to Montenegro. However, despite their physical absence, they feel a strong desire to contribute to the growth and development of their homeland. Interestingly, when analysing their motivations for leaving, it is noteworthy that the standard of living ranks only third among their concerns. Instead, primary factors include the overall socio-political environment in Montenegro, access to the labour market, and the prevailing work culture (or lack thereof). Moreover, young people often cite societal resistance to positive changes as a significant reason for their departure, which tends to suppress the emergence of positive examples, experiences, and success stories.

Young people in Montenegro face **limited opportunities for independence**. Eurostat data reveals that, on average, they achieve independence at the age of 33.1, with 71.8% residing with their parents. Even among 25 to 29-year-olds, the figure remains high at 62.19%.<sup>92</sup> Financial independence, a crucial aspect of autonomy, is challenging to attain. **Youth unemployment** remains a significant concern. According to MONSTAT, in the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate for the 15-24 age group was 40.5%, with men at 40.4% and women at 40.6%. Comparatively, in the first quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate stood at 47.1%, with men at 46.4% and women at 48.2%.<sup>93</sup> Women are disproportionately affected by unemployment due to occupational gender segregation, despite their academic achievements.<sup>94</sup>

Patriarchal norms further complicate the situation, as evidenced by the belief of a third of women in Montenegro that men should be primary breadwinners, while women are expected to shoulder most, if not all, of the housework burden.<sup>95</sup> Young people's attempts to integrate into the labour market, where opportunities are scarce, are marred by issues of discrimination, nepotism, and corruption. Many report negative experiences in private companies, indicating that a **significant portion of young workers operate in informal economy**. Among the most vulnerable are those from families receiving social security benefits, who are often exposed to the risks associated with informal employment, including workplace injuries. The Roadmap for the Social Protection Reform<sup>96</sup> outlines plans to develop community-based services for adolescents and young people transitioning from education to the labour market, aiming to facilitate their transition to sustainable employment. Additionally, it includes initiatives to train and deploy an adequate number of social workers in municipalities, tasked with providing social services to empower vulnerable groups, including youth. Women encounter greater challenges in the labour market, stemming from gender inequality issues in Montenegro. Apart from facing discrimination, women often confront violations of legal provisions designed to safeguard their rights. For instance, the overrepresentation of women in lower-paid positions and under fixed-term contracts makes them vulnerable to exploitation, as employers can easily terminate their contracts, especially in cases of taking paid maternity leave and subsequent return to work. Furthermore, there are concerns<sup>97</sup> about the inefficiency of labour inspection institutions in addressing these issues, as highlighted in various reports.<sup>98</sup>



Meeting of the Working Group responsible for drafting the Youth Strategy, September 2022

87 Western Balkans Youth Lab, Mapping of Youth Policies and Identification of Existing Support and Gaps in Financing of Youth Actions in the Western Balkans, RCC, 2021, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3rFke5x>  
88 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>  
89 Research on attitudes and perceptions of young people towards politics in Montenegro, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CCOC5J>  
90 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth  
91 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth  
92 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>  
93 MONSTAT, LFS, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=1989&pageid=22>  
94 Women's Entrepreneurship in Montenegro, IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2011).

95 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Sex-disaggregated data <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/Analiza%20po%20polu.pdf>, str. 12.  
96 Roadmap for Social Protection Reform, Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare & UNICEF, 2021 <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/20781/file/Web%20-%20Roadmap%20ENG.pdf>  
97 Women's Entrepreneurship in Montenegro, IPSOS Strategic Marketing (2011)  
98 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Sex-disaggregated data, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/Analiza%20po%20polu.pdf>, str. 11.



Young people also **lack verified information about the labour market and skills to work on career development**. They especially need support and capacity development programmes, particularly those from marginalized groups, to develop additional competencies, which will enhance their chances of employment on the labour market.

**Occupational health and safety** is not at a satisfactory level, particularly when considering that in Europe, young people are 40% more exposed to the risk of workplace injuries than adults.<sup>99</sup> The **COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on youth employment**, exacerbating issues such as informal employment and the heightened **risk of poverty among young adults aged 18 to 24**.

<sup>100</sup> During the pandemic, the number of long-term unemployed women increased, from 57.6% in 2019 to 58.2% in 2020.<sup>101</sup> Many young people rate their financial position as average (42.5%).<sup>102</sup> Poverty is notably prevalent in northern Montenegro, where the child poverty rate (45%) is significantly higher than in central (15%) and southern (12%) regions.<sup>103</sup> Although there are no clear statistics on poverty among young people in Montenegro, alarming figures reveal that 49.1% of children aged 5-17 face deprivation in multiple dimensions,<sup>104</sup> and one-third of children in Montenegro (33.7%) experience income poverty, rendering this age group particularly vulnerable.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, there exists a **disparity between employers'**

**expectations of young candidates and the skills young people acquire or perceive they have mastered**.<sup>106</sup> The connection between the labour market and education remains inadequate, and active labour market policy measures aimed at youth employment, especially for marginalized groups, often fail to yield the desired outcomes. Many young people highlight a lack of practical experience and connection with potential employers, already during their schooling years.<sup>107</sup>

Entrepreneurship among young people is not sufficiently promoted or adequately supported. **Almost three quarters of NEET young people want to work in the public sector**,<sup>108</sup> indicating a lack of awareness about alternative career paths. Among all young women in Montenegro, a significant portion (51.9%) express a preference for working in the public sector due to perceived greater job security.<sup>109</sup> Differences in perspectives are evident between two groups of young people in Montenegro who hold varying views on their life and agency. Those who perceive external forces as having a greater influence on their lives tend to prefer working in the public sector.<sup>110</sup> There is a noticeable trend, particularly among women, in recognizing the challenge of unemployment, especially in smaller municipalities. Men commonly cite the general lack of job opportunities (42.4%) and employment through personal connections (21.7%) as primary issues, while women list the three main issues

as follows: lack of job opportunities in general (35.5%), poor working conditions (26.6%) and employment through personal connections (29%).<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately, young people and youth organisations are not actively involved in the development of strategies and programmes to address these employment challenges.

Despite the publication or revision of several strategies aimed at enhancing the education system and the enactment of laws to improve education quality and accessibility from preschool to secondary levels, Montenegro still faces challenges in meeting Sustainable Development Goal no. 4 concerning education. The quality of education remains low, with student performance in terms of access and successful completion not aligning with learning outcomes achieved by Montenegrin students.<sup>112</sup> Specifically, students in Montenegro lag behind the European average in reading, mathematics, and science,<sup>113</sup> with 15-year-olds trailing almost two academic years behind their OECD counterparts. According to the World Bank's Human Capital Index, **a child born in Montenegro will only achieve 62% of their potential productivity due to inadequate quality of education and healthcare**. Disparities persist among young people living in rural areas and other marginalized groups, who lack equal opportunities for learning and development, particularly in extracurricular activities and optional content. While certain schools may offer more diverse programmes through community partnerships, not all young people have access to such opportunities, such as travel and practical experiences during secondary school. This discrepancy impacts the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies crucial for future integration

into the labour market. Achieving inclusion and equal access to educational services for young people from marginalized backgrounds remains a significant challenge. Schools encounter challenges in catering to the needs of students with special educational requirements, including those who are gifted. Conversely, tertiary education fails to adequately equip students with practical skills and experiences, despite the implementation of mandatory internship programmes. Additionally, there is a lack of innovation in faculty programmes and curricula updates. The concept of lifelong learning is not sufficiently promoted among young people, resulting in a small percentage continuing education through training or courses post-formal education. Satisfaction levels with the educational offerings vary, with 55% expressing satisfaction, 22.5% indicating high satisfaction, and 22.5% expressing dissatisfaction.<sup>114</sup> Various stakeholders raise concerns about the criteria and quality assurance of teaching staff, despite Montenegro having developed mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation of education quality across all levels. A primary issue highlighted by young people in education is the lack of acquisition of life competencies. This deficiency encompasses areas such as career development and employment, management, entrepreneurship, labour rights, dialogue culture, interculturalism, inclusivity, solidarity, tolerance, empathy, diversity acceptance, human and minority rights, culture, creativity, sports, recreation, climate change, environmental protection, sustainable agriculture, traffic etiquette, internet safety, civil rights and responsibilities, digital and media literacy, financial literacy, activism, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, healthy lifestyles, risk behaviours, adverse

99 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, accessed on February 1, 2023 at <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/e-fact-8-statistical-portrait-health-and-safety-work-young-workers>

100 Report on the Rapid Social Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 outbreak in Montenegro, April-June 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3uNJCHm>

101 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

102 Ibid

103 Press release, UNICEF Montenegro, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://uni.cf/3S0SS8M>

104 Multidimensional Child Poverty in Montenegro, 2020, Unicef, accessed on February 1, 2023 <https://uni.cf/3xL685r>

105 Position paper, UNICEF, 2021, UNICEF, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://uni.cf/3S0yvbQ>

106 National survey: My career on the road to heroism, Forum MNE, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3RNg4TJ>

107 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

108 National survey: My career on the road to heroism, Forum MNE, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3RNg4TJ>

109 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

110 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

111 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

112 Education Sector Analysis 2015-2020, Unicef, accessed on February 1, 2023 at <https://uni.cf/3kdDbw8>

113 PISA Results - Montenegro, accessed on October 5, 2022, at [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018\\_CN\\_MNE.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_MNE.pdf)

114 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>



effects of excessive screen time and media exposure, non-violence culture, responsible traffic participation, online safety, and more. Among the skills they need but did not have the opportunity to learn at school or university, young people emphasize that communication and IT skills are the most crucial for their jobs, ranging from basic computer proficiency to more advanced skills like programming. Additionally, many young people express the need for various craft skills or machine operation skills at work, which they never had the chance to learn in formal education settings. Lastly, there's a common complaint among young people about the need to enhance their foreign language proficiency, as they feel it was not adequately taught in school.<sup>115</sup>

More than a quarter of young people, specifically 26.6% of them,<sup>116</sup> believe that their life depends on a higher power rather than being primarily influenced by their own efforts and work. Consequently, they may prioritize avenues outside of formal education, seeking knowledge elsewhere, and displaying a preference for working in the public sector. University students often leave Montenegro due to opportunities for professional engagement abroad, citing dissatisfaction (the responses are given in descending order of priority)<sup>117</sup> with the socio-political situation in the country, limited access to the labour market and work culture, and low living standards and incomes. There is currently no official record of those who have emigrated, nor is there a conducive environment for the return of young people studying abroad who wish to live and work in Montenegro. When comparing findings between genders, it is observed that men tend to leave their workplace to a greater extent.<sup>118</sup>

115 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

116 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

117 (De)Registration from Montenegro, OCSI, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022 at <https://bit.ly/3T7YhHM>

118 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

119 European Commission's Report on Montenegro, 2021, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3RMALPx>

120 "Inter-Ethnic Relations and Ethnic Distancing", CEDEM, 2019, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ysddbT>

121 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

## Discrimination and inequality in the exercise of rights and achieving potential

The EU report on the progress of Montenegro (2021)<sup>119</sup> identifies high political and media polarization, and consequently, high social polarization in Montenegro. This has led to an increase in incidents and attacks based on ethnic or racial affiliation, hate crimes, and hate speech. The report also highlights a concerning trend with recent cases of hate speech, attacks, and discrimination against national minorities. The highest degree of overall ethnic distancing is towards Roma, followed by other minority peoples.<sup>120</sup>

The majority of young people in Montenegro have no issue living in a community where others may not share their political views to a lesser extent or socializing with friends who have differing views. However, one in four young people consider it very important to reside in a place where most individuals share their political views. Interestingly, adolescents tend to be more liberal on this matter compared to other young people. Nearly a third of young people (30.2%) who identify with a political party express reluctance to enter into romantic relationships with sympathizers or members of the party furthest from their own beliefs. This sentiment is particularly prevalent among young men, whereas it is notably less pronounced among young women, which can be attributed, to some extent, to the greater societal pressure on female partners to conform to cultural, customary, and even political expectations within romantic relationships in Montenegro.<sup>121</sup>

### Mandates and existing strategic documents:

*Currently, Montenegro lacks a dedicated state policy specifically aimed at promoting social cohesion. Social cohesion involves a society's ability to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimize inequality, and prevent divisions. Primarily, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and the Ministry of Culture and Media can be regarded as responsible for fostering social cohesion. The National Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 recognizes the importance of supporting values, norms, and behavioural patterns crucial for societal sustainability. The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights is directly involved in formulating and implementing policies related to anti-discrimination, minority rights, gender equality, and the social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians. The protection of basic human rights and freedoms in Montenegro is enshrined within a legal framework that includes laws such as the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, the Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, the Gender Equality Law, the Law on the Prohibition of Abuse at Work, and the Criminal Code. Notably, the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro provides an additional mechanism for protecting against all forms of discrimination. The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights is tasked with coordinating the implementation of various strategic documents, including those related to the social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians, gender equality, minority policy, the protection of persons with disabilities from discrimination and the promotion of equality, and for enhancing the quality of life of LGBTI individuals. In the existing strategic documents in this area, the primary emphasis is placed on the fight against all forms of discrimination based on national, religious, sexual or gender affiliation, disability, sexual orientation, social or marital status. (Note: the list of grounds for discrimination is not final according to our legal provisions.) Also, special importance is given to increasing the participation of all minority groups in public and political life, representation in state institutions, increasing the level of employment and equal opportunities in the field of education, which is particularly relevant to members of the Roma and Egyptian communities.*

The percentage of young people (18.3% among men, 17.6% among women) in Montenegro who reported that they were exposed to discrimination based on political affiliation or ethnicity, or hate speech, in the past 12 months, is slightly higher in Montenegro than in other countries of the Western Balkans.<sup>122</sup> Young people (64%) notice hate speech, with more frequent observations among those aged 18-30 than adolescents. It is worrying that a large number of young people consider hate speech acceptable - 42% of them (44%

of boys, 40% of girls).<sup>123</sup> The Protector of Human Rights<sup>124</sup> detects the presence of hate speech, especially in the online world. Young people with university education are more sensitive to notice hate speech, while this percentage generally decreases with the lower education level of the respondent. Only every tenth young person in Montenegro, upon noticing hate speech on the Internet, would report the profile or respond to that profile and indicate that it is hate speech.<sup>125</sup> Media practice also negatively affects the presence of hate

122 Shared Futures: Youth perceptions on peace in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2021, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3Mi5eE6>

123 Ibid.

124 Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, 2020, Press Statement, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3fRWtEG>

125 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

**“We are a small country, and everything is politicized, and that hasn’t escaped us young people either.”**

Focus group participant

speech in public discourse - established online media generally transmit announcements, statements or information that often include narratives that contain inflammatory speech or misinformation, and the inadequate moderation of readers’ comments, where offensive words often appear in the form of speech against various ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, personal insults against political or ideological opponents of anonymous commentators is especially problematic.<sup>126</sup> The culture of dialogue, the development of interculturalism, inclusivity, and solidarity are generally not systematically represented in educational programmes, nor are they socially valued.

**Youth from marginalized groups (youth with disabilities, young Roma and Egyptians, youth from rural areas, youth affected by poverty, youth without parental care, LGBTIQ+ youth, young single parents, and others) suffer multiple discrimination and are at increased risk of poverty.** At the level of Montenegro, there is no strategic response to the fight against poverty and food waste. The poverty risk rate in 2019 was 24.5%, meaning almost every fourth resident of Montenegro was at risk of poverty. After unemployment and economic insecurity, young people see poverty as the biggest problem they will face in the future.<sup>127</sup>

**More than half of young people, or 55.3% of them, believe that human rights and individual freedoms are not respected in Montenegro**

<sup>126</sup> Bogdanović, Milica, “Analysis of narratives containing hate speech and misinformation”, Media Institute, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3Mi5seq>

<sup>127</sup> Research on attitudes and perceptions of young people towards politics in Montenegro, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2019, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CCOC5J>

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

<sup>130</sup> Survey among social assistance service providers and beneficiaries, UNDP, 2021.

**today**, with every fifth young person thinking that they are not respected at all.<sup>128</sup> At the local level, young people from 15 municipalities indicate that diversity is often not appreciated among young people, and there is a lot of prejudice against people with disabilities and those who live in less favourable socio-economic conditions.<sup>129</sup> The experiences, attitudes, and perspectives of young people from marginalized groups are not visible or represented in the public sphere. Measures to improve the position of marginalized young people are often not expedient; they are short-lived (while a certain project lasts) and do not achieve the desired result in terms of impact.

**Young people from marginalized groups are at a higher risk of social exclusion than other young people, and they encounter violence more often.**

Young beneficiaries of social security benefits<sup>130</sup> generally describe the living conditions in which they live as bad, but they manage to fulfil at least the basic needs of life - often with the additional support of their immediate environment and family, which also in a significant number of cases provides them with accommodation.

**“Young people generally face a lot of discrimination, especially those of us who come from minority communities. Here, we Roma are discriminated against politically; we don’t have our own representatives, and we face discrimination at all other steps in society.”**

Focus group participant

The problem of young single mothers, who rely almost entirely on social security benefits, is particularly recognized.

It is essential to enhance the inclusivity of the youth strategy to address the needs of all marginalized groups in society, including youth with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian youth, youth from rural areas, youth affected by poverty, youth without parental care, LGBTIQ+ youth, single youth parents, and others.

## Improving the health and well-being of young people

### Mandates and existing strategic documents:

*The Health Policy of Montenegro is primarily formulated within the Ministry of Health (MoH), serving as the overarching strategy for the nation’s health framework. Aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDG3) “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” and Montenegro’s national Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 (goal 1.2) on improving citizens’ health and reducing health disparities, particularly among children. The Ministry also assumes responsibility for promoting healthy lifestyles, combating addiction, and providing healthcare services for women and children. Among the strategic documents overseen by the Ministry are the Strategy for Improving the Quality of Health Care and Patient Safety, the Strategy for the Protection and Enhancement of Mental Health in Montenegro, the Programme for Combatting HIV/AIDS, and the Programme for Adapting the Health System to Climate Change, among others.*

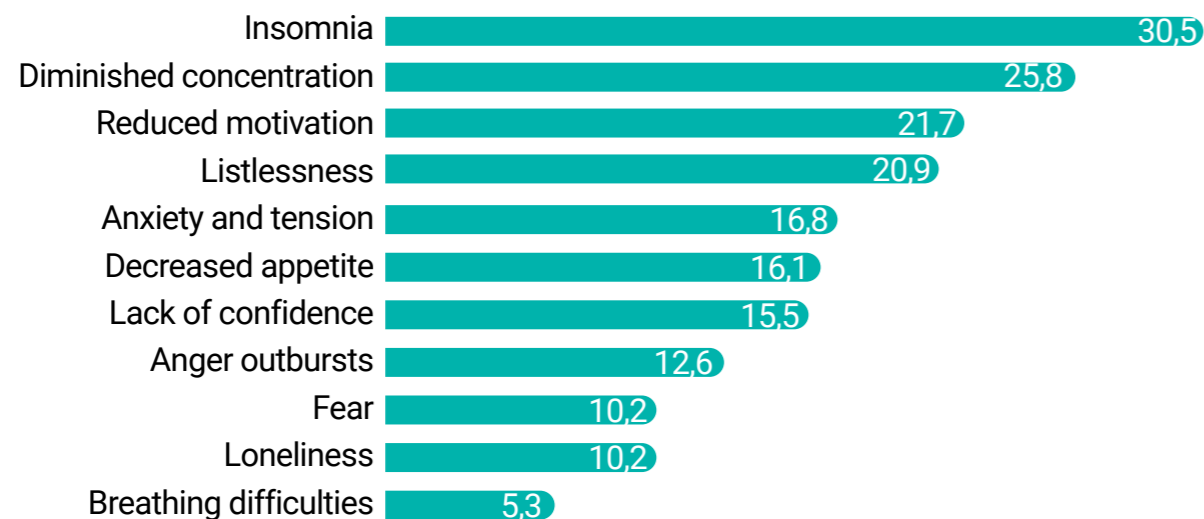
*Montenegro, defined as an ecological state by its Constitution, is committed to sustainable development, emphasizing the preservation of a healthy environment and biodiversity, and the protection and enhancement the quality of water, sea, air, soil, space and other natural resources for future generations. The Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism primarily bears responsibility for environmental protection and addressing climate change. However, given the cross-cutting nature of environmental issues, other sectoral policies, such as those overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, also contribute to these efforts. This Ministry focuses on developing policies and measures for enhancing agriculture, rural development, and sustainable resource management, in conjunction with forestry and water management policies. The National Strategy for Climate Change serves as the overarching strategic framework for these endeavors.*

*The Ministry of Internal Affairs, alongside the Police Directorate and the National Security Agency, holds primary responsibility for ensuring safety and security within Montenegro. The Ministry of Internal Affairs oversees the implementation of various strategic documents, including the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, the Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking, the Strategy for Migration and Reintegration of Returnees, and the Strategy for the Prevention and Suppression of Radicalization and Violent Extremism. Additionally, the Ministry of Defense is tasked with administrative duties related to defense policy and national security objectives. This includes the planning and execution of defense strategies, programs for the Army of Montenegro, and the management of electronic communications and cybersecurity for defense purposes. The Ministry of Justice also plays a significant role in this domain, handling a diverse range of responsibilities such as coordinating with judicial institutions to ensure the effective functioning of the legal system. Some of the key strategies overseen by this ministry include the Judicial Reform Strategy, the Criminal Sanctions Execution Strategy, and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Programme.*



The socio-economic and living conditions in Montenegro underscore the disparity between equal access to healthcare and equality in health outcomes. Particularly concerning is the **mental health of young people, exposed to significant risks**. A notable proportion of young individuals have expressed experiencing weak motivation (21.7%) and feelings of listlessness (20.9%) as prevalent psychological challenges. Although a majority (58.5%) of those who acknowledge experiencing such conditions lately are aware of available services or resources for assistance, there remains a strikingly low uptake of professional help. Indeed, a staggering 78.8% of respondents admit to not seeking any professional assistance for mental health issues they may encounter.<sup>131</sup>

Chart 1: Have you experienced any of the following recently?



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, adolescents and young people already grappled with the significant challenge of limited access to mental health support services.<sup>132</sup> However, with the onset of restrictive measures due to the pandemic and the negative influence of the environment, triggering antisocial behaviour and aggression among young people, this challenge was exacerbated.<sup>133</sup> The pandemic's impact on children and young people is multi-faceted, encompassing (a) increased risk of poverty, (b) disruptions in the learning process leading to additional losses, (c) threats to their survival and health, and (d) heightened security risks. Addressing anxiety, depression, and risky behaviour often falls on a rotating responsibility among parents, teachers, and health professionals.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, there is a lack of guidance for parents to recognize early signs of dissatisfaction and difficulties, but also regarding sexual and reproductive health issues, which often remain taboo topics avoided by both adolescents and their parents or guardians. Menstrual poverty poses another challenge for Montenegrin society, with research indicating that up to 25% of respondents have been unable to afford menstrual hygiene products at some point, while a similar number struggle to consistently access medications for menstrual pain.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, Centres for Social Work are understaffed

131 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth  
 132 Report on the Rapid Social Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 outbreak in Montenegro, UN, 2021, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3Vam6kf>  
 133 Social determinants of health, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://www.ijzcg.me/me/publikacije/promocija-zdravlja>  
 134 Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Montenegro, 2021, UNICEF, accessed on February 1, 2023 at <https://uni.cf/3Z9ISvr>  
 135 Roundtable Discussion of Menstrual Poverty, CAZAS, accessed on May 30, 2023 at <https://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/371686/menstrualno-siromastvo-ozbiljna-i-teska-situacija.html>

to effectively support adolescents. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Montenegro witnessed an average of 130 suicides annually.<sup>136</sup>

**Young people lack sufficient information about healthy lifestyles, sexual reproductive health, and addiction diseases.**

The majority perceive themselves as very (72.9%) or somewhat (21.5%) healthy.<sup>137</sup> However, there is a noticeable lack of knowledge and discussion about health-related topics and healthy lifestyles among young people.<sup>138</sup> Statistics reveal that young men are more prone to marijuana consumption, smoking, and alcohol consumption compared to young women.<sup>139</sup> Notably, young women generally represent the largest proportion of those who have never consumed alcoholic beverages, a trend observed across various municipalities.<sup>140</sup> Young women exhibit better awareness and utilize contraception more frequently than men.<sup>141</sup> However, there are significant gaps in health education programmes within standard school curricula, inadequate resources allocated for their implementation, and insufficient evaluation of these programmes. As a result, health service providers lack motivation to execute such initiatives.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, there is a noticeable absence of intersectoral collaboration and multidisciplinary approaches in health promotion efforts.<sup>143</sup> The elective

course "Healthy Lifestyles" for secondary school students attending grammar schools in Montenegro falls short in terms of coverage and fails to adequately address the needs in this domain.<sup>144</sup> The Institute of Public Health also identifies shortcomings in monitoring the health needs of young people and implementing health promotion programmes tailored to their needs.<sup>145</sup> **Health risk behaviour is notably prevalent during adolescence.** Approximately one in five young individuals aged 15-19 engages in daily tobacco use, while nearly 60% consume alcohol, with 13.8% admitting to drug use.<sup>146</sup> However, responses regarding alcohol consumption vary; 62.4% claim they never consume alcohol, while 29.2% report doing so only once or twice a week. Men tend to consume alcohol more than women, with three-quarters of women stating they never use alcohol.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, the majority of non-consumers of alcoholic beverages are women, a trend observed across various municipalities.<sup>148</sup> One in four children is overweight,<sup>149</sup> and most have experience with gambling.<sup>150</sup> There is a perceived lack of encouragement for tolerance, empathy, and acceptance of diversity among peers, as well as education on the detrimental effects of excessive screen time and media exposure.<sup>151</sup>

136 Injac-Stevović, L., Repišti, S., Radojičić, T. et al. (2021) „Trends in suicide mortality in Montenegro from 2000 to 2018.”, *Ann Gen Psychiatry* 20, 17. accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12991-021-00337-3>  
 137 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth. /  
 138 Consultation Report on Priorities in Youth Policy, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at [www.gov.me/dokumenta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/dokumenta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)  
 139 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>, str. 21-22.  
 140 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Sex-segregated data, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, UNDP, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/Analiza%20po%20polu.pdf>, str. 38.  
 141 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>, str. 23.  
 142 "The Significance of Promoting Health Among Young People", IJZCG, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3T9i9KT>  
 143 Ibid  
 144 Ibid  
 145 Ibid  
 146 Ibid  
 147 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth  
 148 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>  
 149 "The Significance of Promoting Health Among Young People", IJZCG, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3T9i9KT>  
 150 Ibid  
 151 Ibid

Preserving youth health necessitates fostering cooperation between the health sector and other relevant entities dedicated to improving youth health and facilitating their active participation in society.

The safety of young people, as well as the propensity for engaging in extreme behaviour or criminal acts, is widely understood to be influenced by their social circumstances, including education level and economic situation. Unfortunately, Montenegro lacks a robust system for protecting human rights online, and there is a dearth of data in this area.

**Inadequate protection from various forms of violence**, including peer violence, domestic violence, and online violence, is also evident. Peer violence, in particular, is identified as a significant problem with lasting consequences for young individuals. However, it has not been systematically addressed, often being treated as a project rather than a sustained initiative (e.g., “School without violence”), leading to inconsistent support depending on school involvement in such projects.<sup>152</sup> From the beginning of the 2022/23 school year until the moment of the survey, 43% of students in their schools witnessed violence perpetrated by individual students against another student, while 17% of students experienced at least one act of violence, making them victims of violence at school, a deeply concerning statistic. Violence at school is not a widespread and arbitrary occurrence; rather, distinct roles of offender and victim tend to be established. Remarkably, 65% of students who were victims of violence this year also experienced violence in previous years,

while 72% of students who acted violently this year had engaged in similar behaviour in the past.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, one-third of young people who reported experiencing at least one form of violence were unsure about whom to turn to for help in such situations.<sup>154</sup>

Clear data on crimes involving young perpetrators (except for minors) or victims is lacking, although the number of juvenile perpetrators of serious crimes in 2020 was reported as 262.<sup>155</sup>

Every tenth young person (10.5%) believes that resorting to violence is sometimes necessary for conflict resolution, while 55.8% of young people reject violence as a viable strategy for resolving conflicts.<sup>156</sup>

Additionally, the traffic culture among young people is subpar, with **traffic accidents being among the leading causes of death for this demographic**.<sup>157</sup> Non-aligned legislation with the development of micromobility means contributes to the higher participation of young people in traffic accidents. There is also a notable absence of continuous and active preparation for responsible and safe participation in traffic through the educational process.

Furthermore, young people **lack developed competencies and, to some extent, a critical attitude towards the issue of data protection**, especially online. Nearly a quarter of young people (23.6%) largely believe that they are not safe on the Internet.<sup>158</sup> Additionally, one in four

152 Consultation Report on Priorities in Youth Policy, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at [www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)

153 Research on the prevalence and forms of violence in schools in Montenegro during 2022/23 school year, mr Zoran Lalović, Education Bureau, 2023, accessed on May 3, 2023 at <https://www.gov.me/clanak/u-zavodu-za-skolstvo-odrzana-prezentacija-nasilje-u-skolama>

154 Ibid

155 Perpetrators of criminal offences, MONSTAT, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=85&pageid=85>

156 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>

157 World Health Organisation, accessed on June 30, 2023 at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-health-risks-and-solutions>

158 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>

young people in Montenegro feels somewhat or completely insecure on the Internet, with young girls feeling somewhat more insecure than young men (27.4% compared to 22.3%).<sup>159</sup> Children and young people perceive certain dangers they face online, primarily concerning the misuse of their personal data, including photos and locations, as well as a lack of protection when interacting with unknown individuals.<sup>160</sup> They also exhibit weaknesses in online protection skills, such as knowledge and skills in basic profile settings and ensuring data privacy, as well as being more cautious in selecting the information they share.<sup>161</sup> The current institutional protection in terms of cybersecurity is deemed inadequate and insufficiently specialized.<sup>162</sup>

**Young people are not systematically involved in solving the problems of climate change and environmental protection.** Nearly three-quarters of young people believe that climate change is a major problem at the global level, with 57% holding the same belief for the national level.<sup>163</sup> Women tend to be more familiar with the consequences of climate change than men, and greater awareness is observed among young people aged 25 to 29 compared to younger age groups.<sup>164</sup> A third of young people consider themselves responsible, stating that they actively protect the environment and see themselves as part of the solution.<sup>165</sup> Women, to a greater extent than men, believe that climate change has a significant impact on people's health and life, particularly among those with impaired health (862%), the elderly (835%), people working outdoors (82.4%), and people with disabilities

(80.5%).<sup>166</sup> Young people report a lack of information, awareness of the importance, and a lack of dialogue with young people. Women primarily use the internet and web portals for information about climate change, while men rely more on social networks.<sup>167</sup> Women also show greater interest in being informed about climate change, especially if they knew they could contribute to reducing its harmful impacts.<sup>168</sup>

## Shortage of opportunities for quality free time and fostering creativity

### Mandates and existing strategic documents:

*The Ministry of Culture and Media, along with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, hold responsibility for these domains. The Ministry of Culture and Media primarily supports the development of cultural and artistic creativity, the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, the advancement of creative industries, and fostering public interest in culture. Apart from propounding and fostering youth policy, the Ministry of Sports and Youth focuses on enhancing sports initiatives, promoting Montenegro through sporting events, encouraging recreational activities, and facilitating sports participation among children, students, and individuals with disabilities. Central to sports initiatives is the Sports Development Strategy, serving as a key strategic framework.*

159 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), “Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027,” supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

160 Attitudes of children and young people / “Orientate towards the EU” Project, Qualitative research, De Facto Consultancy, 2021.

161 Ibid

162 Ibid

163 “Consultations with Young People in Montenegro on Climate Change”, UNDP, 2021.

164 “Consultations with Young People in Montenegro on Climate Change”, UNDP, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zsk-gke326/files/2022-10/Istrazivanje%20-%20Mladi%20i%20klimatske%20promjene%20-%20mne.pdf>, str. 10.

165 Ibid

166 “Consultations with Young People in Montenegro on Climate Change”, UNDP, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zsk-gke326/files/2022-10/Istrazivanje%20-%20Mladi%20i%20klimatske%20promjene%20-%20mne.pdf>, str. 18.

167 “Consultations with Young People in Montenegro on Climate Change”, UNDP, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zsk-gke326/files/2022-10/Istrazivanje%20-%20Mladi%20i%20klimatske%20promjene%20-%20mne.pdf>, str. 15-16.

168 “Consultations with Young People in Montenegro on Climate Change”, UNDP, 2021, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zsk-gke326/files/2022-10/Istrazivanje%20-%20Mladi%20i%20klimatske%20promjene%20-%20mne.pdf>, str. 25.



During their educational journey, young people engage in both curricular and extracurricular activities, while also pursuing various interests, notably **culture and sports**, during their leisure time. The vast majority (90.9%) of young individuals prefer spending their free time socializing with friends and family (89.4%), as well as engaging with social networks (83%) and the broader Internet (82.9%).<sup>169</sup> In their leisure pursuits, young women often gravitate towards reading, creative activities, and spending time with family, while young men are more inclined towards sports and video gaming. Young women tend to spend more time shopping and listening to music,<sup>170</sup> and to a lesser extent engage in daily socializing with friends.<sup>171</sup>

Adolescents predominantly allocate their free time to browsing the Internet or engaging on social networks (63%).<sup>172</sup> However, 69% of adolescents feel that there is a **scarcity of cultural and artistic content tailored for their age group**, with a mere 14% expressing satisfaction with the current offerings.<sup>173</sup> Nearly half (43.7%) of young people in 15 municipalities never go to cultural events such as museums, galleries and theatres, and a third go to concerts and performances only a few times a year or less.<sup>174</sup> As many as 32% of adolescents believe that their cities lack concert halls, and 17% believe that

their cities lack a theatre.<sup>175</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly diminished cultural offerings for both the general population and young people specifically. Moreover, **young individuals are often overlooked as creative contributors**, with a greater proportion of girls identifying themselves as such across most municipalities.<sup>176</sup> Although there are no dedicated calls or lines of support for young creators of artistic content, they can submit their ideas to some of the contests published annually by the departments for culture, potentially securing (co)financing for their projects. Unfortunately, there is a lack of statistics on the number of young people who have utilized these funds in previous years. A significant challenge in the realm of sports is the **unequal accessibility of sports and recreational activities for all young people**. Approximately 38% of adolescents spend part of their free time on sports, yet 32% of them report a shortage of sports facilities in their municipalities.<sup>177</sup> Additionally, a quarter of young individuals never participate in physical activity, nearly half (47.6%) never attend sports events, and **37.5% do not have a hobby**.<sup>178</sup> Another survey<sup>179</sup> indicates that 52.4% of young people are engaged in a hobby, while **47.6%** are not. Clear statistics on how many young people managed to sustain their engagement in sports activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and

169 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

170 Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>, str. 18.

171 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Sex-segregated data, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, UNDP, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/Analiza%20po%20polu.pdf>, str. 33.

172 Presentation of Research Findings on the Sports and Cultural Needs of Young People, JUVENTAS, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3RJVfs7>

173 Presentation of Research Findings on the Sports and Cultural Needs of Young People, JUVENTAS, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3MfQqWq>

174 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

175 Presentation of Research Findings on the Sports and Cultural Needs of Young People, JUVENTAS, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3MfQqWq>

176 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

177 Presentation of Research Findings on the Sports and Cultural Needs of Young People, JUVENTAS, 2020, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3MfQqWq>

178 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

179 DeFacto Consultancy (2023), "Analysis of Youth Needs - Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy 2023-2027," supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Sports and Youth

under what conditions, are not available. However, research conducted in 2021 suggests that half of young men engage in physical activities daily, while an equivalent number of young women never engage in physical activities.<sup>180</sup>

## Improving the situation of young people: Key problem, causes and measures

The primary issue in this domain is the **poor standing of young people in Montenegro, evident in inadequate opportunities for their development and fulfilment of their full potential, discrimination, and inequality in accessing essential needs and exercising their rights, as well as compromised mental health and well-being. Additionally, there is a deficiency in opportunities for young individuals to engage in quality leisure activities and foster their creativity.**

The following have been identified as the CAUSES and the CONSEQUENCES of the problem:

CAUSES	CONSEQUENCES
Young people lack opportunities for independence, capacity development, and realizing their full potential, particularly in education and employment.	The youth unemployment rate remains high.
Systemic solutions for youth unemployment are lacking, with only sporadic and short-term programmes available.	Limited awareness of alternative career paths among young people.
Disparities in access to extracurricular activities and optional content exist across Montenegro, limiting opportunities for improvement and learning.	Young people lack competitiveness on the labour market.
Young individuals often lack practical and life skills.	Delayed independence compared to peers in other European countries.
The educational system does not adequately equip young people with the competencies needed for career development, independent living, and overall growth in the rapidly evolving digital age.	Many highly educated young individuals leave Montenegro due to dissatisfaction with the socio-political climate, along with difficulties accessing the labour market, (lack of) work culture, low living standards, and income.
Youth in general, and marginalized groups of young people in particular, are vulnerable to poverty during childhood, abuse, and exploitation in the labor market.	In the northern region, young people face particularly challenging circumstances, with significantly higher child poverty rates compared to other regions and social tensions prompting some to consider leaving their municipalities.
Functional and digital literacy among young people remains below satisfactory levels.	Some young people engage in informal work, increasing their vulnerability to workplace injuries.
Most young individuals aspire to public sector employment.	Those studying abroad lack adequate support for integrating into the local labour market upon their return.
There is no clear policy or record regarding the return of young people studying abroad.	

180 Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Young People and the Needs of Young People in 15 Local Governments, Regional Programme for Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, UNDP, 2022, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3CHzsNu>

<p>Discrimination and inequality exist among young people in terms of realizing their rights and potential, based on various characteristics.</p> <p>Young people from marginalized groups, such as those with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians, those from rural areas, those affected by poverty, those without parental care, LGBTIQ+ youth, young single parents, and others, require greater and more specific support to develop competencies to address these challenges.</p> <p>The culture of dialogue, interculturalism, inclusivity, solidarity, and gender equality are largely absent from educational programmes, and not socially valued.</p> <p>Young people lack the necessary skills to address issues such as peer violence, hate speech, and discrimination.</p> <p>Young people are susceptible to the effects of polarization and hate speech, including online.</p> <p>The political and media literacy of young people is low.</p> <p>The skills, values, and attitudes of young people towards accepting diversity are not adequately developed.</p>	<p>Youth from marginalized groups, including those with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian youth, those from rural areas, those affected by poverty, those without parental care, and LGBTIQ+ youth, are at a higher risk of poverty.</p> <p>The views of young people on gender equality tend to be conservative.</p> <p>Youth from marginalised groups are at a higher risk of exclusion.</p> <p>Young beneficiaries of social security benefits live in poor conditions. The most vulnerable group are young single mothers who rely almost entirely on such benefits.</p> <p>In a polarized society, young people tend to distance themselves from other ethnic groups just as much as other age categories.</p> <p>Young people hold the most negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ+.</p> <p>Most young people are aware of hate speech, particularly those of age and with higher education, but they may not know how to handle it or who to seek help from.</p>
<p>Young individuals lack sufficient support and the necessary competencies to navigate mental health challenges effectively.</p> <p>A significant number of children have encountered gambling, with one in four being overweight.</p> <p>There is a notable deficiency in young people's awareness regarding healthy lifestyles, sexual reproductive health, and addiction diseases.</p> <p>During adolescence, young people exhibit health-risk behaviours more prominently.</p> <p>Young people are not fully shielded from various forms of violence, including peer, domestic, and online violence. In the digital realm, young women report feeling more vulnerable than their male counterparts.</p> <p>The traffic culture among the youth is poor, with traffic accidents being a leading cause of death among this demographic.</p> <p>Young people lack developed competencies and, to a degree, a critical stance on data protection issues.</p> <p>Concerns about climate change and environmental protection are significant among the youth, yet their systematic involvement in addressing these issues is lacking. Young men, in particular, show less interest in environmental concerns.</p>	<p>The well-being of young people is at risk, as well as their health, especially mental health.</p> <p>Experimentation and regular consumption of tobacco products, alcohol, and psychoactive substances begins at an increasingly young age, negatively impacting the overall health of young people.</p> <p>Young people are often exposed to (online) violence and are more tolerant of risks to their own safety.</p> <p>One in ten young people believe that violence is sometimes necessary to resolve conflicts.</p> <p>Traffic accidents are one of the leading causes of death among young people.</p> <p>Only around a quarter of young people strongly believe that they are safe on the Internet.</p> <p>The negative impact of endangered natural resources, food sources, unsustainable agriculture, and poor living standards is felt by young people and the overall population. This impact is not only reflected in health but also in feelings of powerlessness and reluctance to participate.</p>

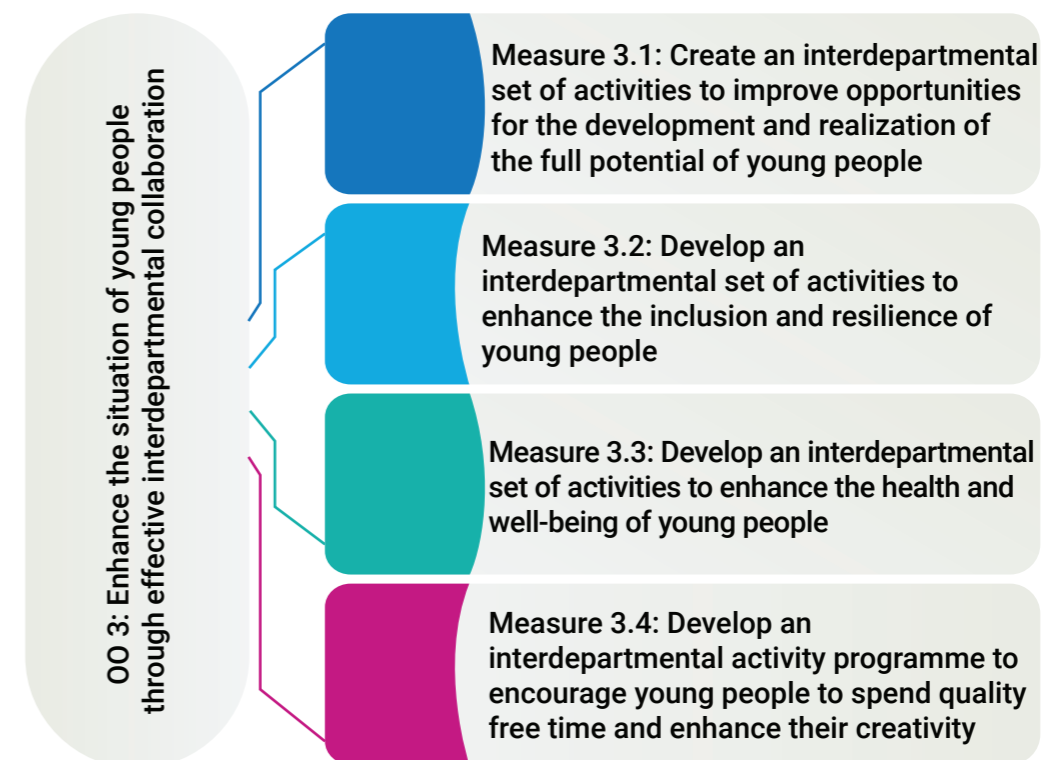
<p>The availability of cultural and artistic content for young people is limited.</p> <p>Young people are often not recognized as creative individuals, particularly young men.</p> <p>A significant proportion of young people do not have hobbies.</p> <p>Access to sports and recreational activities is not equal for all young people, and even when available, less than half of adolescents choose to spend their free time participating in sports.</p> <p>Half of young women never engage in physical activity.</p>	<p>Young people do not typically spend their leisure time consuming or creating cultural content. The small percentage of young people who are considered creative creators often leave in search of better conditions for development.</p> <p>In sports, there is inequality in support for different sports and in relation to gender, and there is a visible outflow of sports talent at the local, regional, and state levels, as well as a high rate of young people abandoning a career in sports.</p> <p>Insufficient physical activity, particularly among young girls, can have long-term consequences for their overall health and well-being.</p>
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The key problem identified in this domain is addressed by the Operational Objective 3:

**OO3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration**



To achieve this operational objective, in light of the identified causes of the issue, the following measures have been outlined:





### MEASURE 3.1: Create an interdepartmental set of activities to improve opportunities for the development and realization of the full potential of young people.

**Description:** In order to enhance the status of young people by fostering their competencies, and bolstering their competitiveness in the job market while promoting independence, it is imperative to devise an interdepartmental framework of initiatives aimed at amplifying opportunities for youth development and realizing their full potential. This comprehensive framework should stem from collaborative endeavours across various sectors, drawing from prior consultations with young individuals and youth policy stakeholders. Moreover, it must ensure a synchronized approach and efficacious responses to identified priorities, aiming to elevate the standing of young people. Special emphasis should be placed on integrating digital and gender perspectives, alongside assessing the impact of these initiatives on marginalized youth groups, including those with disabilities, LGBTIQ youth, young Roma and Egyptians, individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, young migrants, among others. Furthermore, the involvement of young people and NGOs in the formulation of this framework is essential.

This set of activities should include, at a minimum, the following aspects due to the specificity of the analysed challenges:

- a. Incorporate into the youth services' work programme, as well as through youth work initiatives and non-formal educational endeavours, opportunities for enhancing young people's competencies in functional literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, and career development. Additionally, focus on addressing identified competency gaps among young people, particularly those from marginalized groups, to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market.

- b. Collaborate with the Ministry of Economy and Tourism and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to review, enhance, and establish targeted initiatives supporting the employment and autonomy of young individuals, engaging entities like CIPS, Employment Bureaus, and Centres for Social Work in their execution. Prioritize participation from disadvantaged youth, particularly those at risk of poverty, while also implementing measures to address labour market abuses and ensure workplace protection, especially concerning gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, jointly develop strategies to bolster youth entrepreneurship, encompassing social, environmental, and female entrepreneurship. Emphasize activities aimed at challenging patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes in economic empowerment and career selection, with a particular focus on promoting opportunities for women.
- c. Collaborate with the Ministry of Education to enhance and establish tailored initiatives within all levels of formal education, catering to young individuals, teaching staff, and other professionals. These activities should aim to support youth in nurturing their individual talents, advancing their careers, and acquiring essential competencies for independent living in the digital era.
- d. Spearhead the establishment of support mechanisms for young individuals seeking independent housing, in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Economy and Tourism, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.
- e. Lead the initiative and actively contribute to crafting an institutional-strategic response aimed at ensuring "brain circulation," and develop and execute support activities tailored for young individuals returning from studies or professional training abroad.

**Key carriers and partners:** Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economy and Tourism, Ministry of Finance and Office of the Prime Minister

**Other partners:** academia, local self-government units, NGOs, international organisations

In the process of formulating the Youth Strategy, numerous activities have been proposed to address this issue, such as: legal counselling centres dedicated to young people, specifically focusing on labour law and workplace protections; support for the development of youth social enterprises and entrepreneurship by offering exemptions from levies for young entrepreneurs during their initial years of operation; establishing resource centres dedicated to supporting youth entrepreneurship; the creation of a Youth Guarantee Fund; establish co-working spaces within existing youth services and other public venues. Implementation of internship programmes that are accessible to young people with fewer opportunities, ensuring equal opportunities for all, is also recommended. Moreover, there is a focus on encouraging employers to hire young people through financial incentives and facilitating cooperation with the diaspora to support the entrepreneurial endeavours of young people. Additionally, it is proposed to enhance the development of soft skills among young people through CIPS, introducing career counselling programmes at universities and establishing student services dedicated to assisting in finding temporary and occasional employment opportunities. Special activation programmes tailored to young people from families affected by poverty should also be implemented. Information campaigns on lifelong learning are recommended, alongside the development of a system for tracking young people studying abroad and the establishment of support

services for those returning to Montenegro. Furthermore, there is a suggestion to introduce and enhance service learning concepts within formal and non-formal education settings, as well as to bolster the capacity of young people for innovation in youth services, alongside with promoting public calls and providing financing for young innovators within youth services. Additionally, efforts should be made to establish a scholarship fund for studies and educational programmes abroad, with the condition of returning to work in Montenegro upon completion of studies. Finally, a programme to support the independence of young people through subsidies for renting and purchasing housing should be developed.

### MEASURE 3.2: Develop an interdepartmental set of activities to enhance the inclusion and resilience of young people.

**Description:** To improve the position of young people, particularly in reducing inequality and discrimination, preventing violence, and increasing resistance to negative phenomena such as polarization and hate speech, an interdepartmental set of activities should be designed to enhance the inclusion and resilience of young people. The set of activities for future action should result from joint efforts across different sectors, based on consultations with young people and actors of youth policy. It should enable a coordinated approach and ensure meaningful responses to prioritised challenges, with the aim of improving the position of young people. Special attention should be given to integrating digital and gender perspectives, as well as assessing the impact of activities on marginalized groups of young people, including those with disabilities, LGBTIQ youth, young Roma and Egyptians, those from socially disadvantaged families, young migrants, and others.

This set of activities should include, at a minimum, the following aspects due to the specificity of the analysed challenges:

- a. Within the youth services work programme, as well as through youth work, non-formal education, and information activities, provide opportunities for young people to develop their competencies in political and media literacy, dialogue culture, interculturalism, inclusivity, solidarity, gender equality, and coping skills for challenges related to present-day gender-based violence, hate speech, and discrimination. It is important to encourage young people to participate and contribute to the development of solutions for these topics.
- b. Within all levels of formal education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, specific and targeted activities should be improved or created for young people, teaching staff, and other professionals. These activities aim to support young people in developing political and media literacy, as well as competences for building a safe and inclusive school environment. Additionally, they should equip young men and women to face challenges related to gender-based violence, hate speech, and discrimination.
- c. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, alongside the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, should review existing initiatives and enhance them to provide targeted support for young people belonging to marginalized groups. Additionally, the Ministry of Justice should focus on improving and developing specific, tailored activities aimed at ensuring the full realization of the rights guaranteed to these individuals.
- d. Collaborating with the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of Culture and Digital Media, develop activities aimed at enhancing the media's capacity to foster

the inclusion and resilience of young people focusing on combating gender-based hate speech, sexism, and gender stereotypes. Additionally, efforts should be made to empower young individuals to provide alternative narratives and advocate for safe and inclusive digital citizenship.

Key holders and partners: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Culture and Digital Media

Other partners: universities, local self-government units, NGOs, international organisations

In the process of drafting the Youth Strategy, several activities have been proposed under this heading, such as initiatives focused on cultural differences and solidarity to counter hate speech. Additionally, efforts will be made to enhance media literacy and resilience to hate speech, while sensitizing the media about the role of young people in creating positive content and promoting of positive stories. Capacity-building programmes will be implemented to help individuals recognize and report hate speech, while parents will receive training on promoting social cohesion. Moreover, training sessions for teachers will be conducted to address hate speech in educational settings. Additionally, it is proposed to create cultural and media content that enables young people to discuss current topics, revise the plan of student excursions to ensure all young people have the opportunity to visit all municipalities in Montenegro, provide training and education for young people from marginalized groups on anti-discrimination policies, and organise visits for young people from rural areas to participate in youth service activities with a focus on empowering marginalized groups, particularly girls and women.

### MEASURE 3.3: Develop an interdepartmental set of activities to enhance the health and well-being of young people

Description: To enhance the well-being of young people, particularly when dealing with health and mental health challenges, it is essential to develop an interdepartmental set of activities. This set of activities should be the outcome of collaborative efforts from various sectors, based on prior consultations with young people and youth policy stakeholders. Furthermore, it should facilitate a coordinated approach and ensure effective responses to prioritised challenges, with the goal of enhancing the status of young individuals. Special attention should be given to integrating digital and gender perspectives, as well as assessing the impact of activities on marginalized groups of young people, including those with disabilities, LGBTIQ youth, young Roma and Egyptians, those from socially disadvantaged families, young migrants, and others..

This set of activities should include, at a minimum, the following aspects due to the specificity of the analysed challenges:

- a. Within the youth services work programme, as well as through youth work activities and non-formal education and information, provide opportunities to support young people in maintaining good mental health. Additionally, provide opportunities for young people to develop competencies in creating a culture of non-violence and protecting themselves from violence, including online violence. Dealing with crisis situations, addiction and risky behaviours, informing young people about sexual and reproductive health, health literacy, preserving mental hygiene, climate change, environmental protection, and traffic culture, and encouraging young people to take part and make their contribution in developing answers to these topics.

- b. Revise, improve and create specific and targeted activities within the formal education system (primary, secondary, higher education) to support young people in preserving their mental health, developing competences for a culture of non-violence, protecting themselves from violence (including online violence), dealing with crisis situations, addressing addiction and risky behaviours, and informing them about sexual and reproductive health, climate change, environmental protection and traffic culture. These activities should be designed for young people, teaching staff and other professionals.
- c. Execute initiatives to enhance service provisions for young individuals while concurrently reinforcing the competencies of parents within health centres and other relevant institutions overseen by the Ministry of Health. This endeavour is geared towards augmenting the accessibility of specialized and precisely tailored activities designed to assist youths grappling with mental and physical health hurdles, instances of violence, and mitigating the adverse effects of risky behaviours and addiction.
- d. Collaborate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Administration to devise initiatives targeting the prevention of various forms of violence, encompassing online violence, radical and extremist behaviours, and institute direct support programmes tailored to young individuals to promote online safety, data protection, and related issues.

Under the purview of the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism, execute initiatives directed at mitigating the pace of climate change. Collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management, and Forestry to execute sustainable agriculture programmes. Coalesce efforts to encompass



additional facets of sustainable development, ensuring the involvement of young individuals in pertinent activities, projects, and entities.

Key actors and partners: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism, Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Public Administration

Other partners: academia, local self-government units, NGOs, international organisations

During the formulation of the Youth Strategy, several initiatives were suggested to address these concerns, such as non-formal educational programmes focused on climate change mitigation, environmental conservation, sustainable resource management, and sustainable agriculture. Encouragement of eco-friendly transportation in collaboration with local administrations, backing young innovators with “green” initiatives, and empowering youth in combating climate change were also proposed. Furthermore, plans entail conducting workshops to enhance youths’ mental well-being by fostering health literacy and offering accessible psychological aid. This encompasses support for both male and female students residing in dormitories and university precincts, parental training on adolescent mental health, teacher workshops on youth mental hygiene, and ongoing studies on youths’ mental health. Additionally, there is a proposal to heighten awareness regarding safe traffic participation and promoting healthy mobility options, integrating traffic culture topics into educational curricula, establishing violence prevention and response services, and conducting workshops on healthy lifestyles, covering obesity prevention, HIV/AIDS awareness, reproductive health, and substance abuse prevention, including alcohol, smoking, and psychoactive substances.

Another significant programme is the inclusive youth leadership training offered by the Special Olympics. This initiative aims to heighten young individuals’ awareness regarding the significance of human rights, tolerance, and diversity, addressing the specific needs recognized by educators and professionals, particularly in fostering a sense of belonging among adolescents with intellectual disabilities, especially during puberty. Moreover, this leadership training programme emphasizes the acquisition of valuable skills and underscores the importance of collaboration with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Inclusive youth leadership endeavours to empower young people of all abilities to assume leadership roles within their schools and communities. Through these leadership activities, students can discover their voices and learn to become catalysts for positive change by advocating for equality and fostering acceptance within their communities.

**MEASURE 3.4: Develop an interdepartmental set of activities to encourage young people to spend quality free time and enhance their creativity.**

Description: With the goal of enhancing the status of young people, particularly by promoting quality leisure activities and fostering creativity and sports engagement among them, it is essential to develop an interdepartmental framework of initiatives for quality leisure activities and youth creativity. This plan for future endeavours should be the culmination of collaborative efforts across various sectors, informed by prior consultations with young individuals and stakeholders in youth policy. Furthermore, it should facilitate a unified approach and deliver effective responses to identified challenges, with the overarching objective of advancing the welfare of young people. Notably, special emphasis should be placed on integrating digital and gender perspectives, as well as evaluating the impact of these activities on marginalized

groups of young people, including those with disabilities, LGBTIQ youth, young Roma and Egyptians, individuals from economically disadvantaged families, young migrants, and others.

This set of activities should include, at a minimum, the following aspects due to the specificity of the analysed challenges:

- a. Within the framework of youth services’ work programmes and youth engagement initiatives, as well as through non-formal education and information endeavours, incorporate avenues for quality leisure activities. Emphasize the development of young people’s skills in creating and promoting cultural, sports, and recreational content. Particularly, prioritize initiatives that encourage the increased participation of girls and young women in sports and recreational pursuits.
- b. Review, enhance, and introduce specific and tailored initiatives within the network of cultural centres, theatres, and other establishments overseen by the Ministry of Culture and Media. These activities should be designed to bolster young people’s involvement both as consumers and creators of cultural content, with a particular focus on fostering engagement with new and alternative forms of expression.
- c. Enhance, refine, and establish specific and tailored initiatives within the network of sports clubs and other organisations overseen by the Ministry of Sports and Youth aiming to support young people, with a particular emphasis on empowering and encouraging the participation of young women in sports, both as active participants and creators of sports and recreational content. Prioritize the inclusion of a larger number of girls and young

women in sports and recreational activities. Within the formal education system encompassing primary, secondary, and higher education, re-evaluate, enhance, and introduce specific and targeted activities for young people, educators, and other professionals designed to facilitate young people in discovering hobbies, nurturing creativity, and advocating for the promotion of their created content.

Key actors and partners: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Culture and Media, Ministry of Education

Other partners: universities, local self-government units, NGOs, international organisations

During the development of the Youth Strategy, several activity proposals emerged for this domain, such as fostering cultural appreciation and engagement among young people, particularly those residing in rural areas; establishing regular funding mechanisms to support young cultural creators and artists, and support through the public calls of the Ministry of Culture. It is also important to place special emphasis on rural areas and ensure accessibility to sports activities in those areas. Discounts may be provided to young people for attending cultural and sports events. Additionally, sports and recreational programmes can be organised for young people. Non-formal education and cultural content can be promoted through the painting of murals throughout Montenegro by young artists. Caravans can also be organised for the promotion of cultural and historical content intended for young people. Support can be provided for informal cultural creators for the consumption of cultural content. Workshops can be organised for the development of creative skills and entrepreneurship among young people through the creation of creative handicrafts.

## Expected results and performance indicators

The expected effects, or results, of the implementation of the measures above are as follows:

1. Enhanced and more effective interdepartmental coordination contributing to the improvement of young people's status.
2. Young individuals are afforded diverse opportunities for labour market access, with employment procedures that are merit-based, transparent, and equitable.
3. Equal opportunities for training and education are available to youth across all Montenegrin regions. Embedded within formal education is the acquisition of practical knowledge and life skills, encompassing competencies and foundational understanding in areas such as career development, employment, management, entrepreneurship, labour rights, dialogue culture, interculturalism, inclusivity, solidarity, tolerance, empathy, diversity acceptance, human and minority rights, cultural and creative endeavours, sports, recreation, climate change, environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, traffic safety, internet security, civic responsibilities, digital and media literacy, financial education, activism, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, healthy living, risk behaviour awareness, the impacts of excessive screen time and media consumption, traffic safety, online security, and more.
4. There is a reduction in hate speech, ethnic bias, and discrimination among youth, supported by efforts from various stakeholders working with young populations and the media.
5. Young individuals from marginalized groups are informed of their rights, with their perspectives and needs thoughtfully considered in public policy development.
6. Young people's outlook on their future within Montenegro has become more positive, with a decrease in youth emigration and an increase in returns.
7. Youth in all municipalities have equal and ongoing access to diverse cultural and sports activities, along with the necessary support for participation.
8. Young people are systematically and actively engaged in sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation, and mitigating climate change's adverse effects, enhancing natural resource preservation, life quality, and sustainability.
9. The health of young individuals, particularly mental health, has improved, with a decrease in risky behaviours and an increase in awareness about healthy lifestyles, sexual and reproductive health, and addiction prevention.
10. The safety of young people is prioritized, encompassing both physical and virtual environments, with a focus on non-violent conflict resolution methods.

The table below outlines performance indicators for operational objective 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

Performance indicator	2023 Baseline	2025 Mid-target	2027 Target
The percentage of young people who want to leave Montenegro in search of a better future <i>Source of data: Western Balkan Youth Lab Report</i>	In search of a better future, 50% of young people want to leave Montenegro	Compared to the current situation, the number of young people who want to leave Montenegro will be reduced by 10% (45%)	Compared to the current situation, the number of young people who want to leave Montenegro will be reduced by 10% (40%)
Percentage of young women and young men who think that hate speech is acceptable  <i>Source of data: Shared Futures: Youth perceptions on peace in the Western Balkans</i>	Hate speech is considered acceptable by 44% of young men  Hate speech is considered acceptable by 40% young women	Percentage of young men who think that hate speech is acceptable reduced by 10%  Percentage of young women who think that hate speech is acceptable reduced by 10%	Percentage of young men think that hate speech is acceptable reduced by 20%  Percentage of young women who think that hate speech is acceptable reduced by 20%
Develop national/local mental health support services for Montenegrin youth  <i>Source of data: MoH/IPH Activity Report</i>	Lack of mental health and healthy lifestyles support services	At least one new youth mental health support service established	All Montenegrin municipalities have in place youth mental health support services
Percentage of young people who consume cultural, sports and creative activities in Montenegro  <i>Source of data: Survey and Assessment of Local Youth Policies and Youth Needs in 15 LSGUs, 2022</i>	Current percentage of young people who never attend cultural events: 43.7% (56.3% attended some form of cultural events)  25% of young people do not engage in any form of physical activity	Increase the percentage of young people attending/participating in cultural events by 10%  Reduce the percentage of young people who do not engage in any form of physical activity by 5%	Increase the percentage of young people attending/participating in cultural events by 15%  Reduce the percentage of young people who do not engage in any form of physical activity by 10%
Percentage of young people who believe that the use of violence is an acceptable model of conflict resolution <i>Source of data: Study on Young People in Montenegro, FES, 2018/19</i>	10.5% of young people believe that it is sometimes necessary to use violence as a model for conflict resolution (2018/19) <sup>181</sup>	5% reduction	10% reduction

<sup>181</sup> Study on Young People in Montenegro, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2018/19, accessed on October 5, 2022, at <https://bit.ly/3ynt230>



# Mechanisms for creating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating youth policy

## Situation analysis



Meeting of the Working Group for drafting the Youth Strategy, September 2022

The Ministry of Sports and Youth is tasked with the crucial roles of youth policy planning, executing, and evolving. The 2019 Youth Law sets forth an objective to enhance the societal standing of the young and foster their active engagement. Presently, the Law endeavours to fulfil this aim solely through the formulation and execution of youth policy. However, the legislative infrastructure and the operational practices of individual departments and their interdepartmental collaboration within the government are **mismatched**. This lack of harmony hinders the effective rollout of youth policies, attributed partly to the inconsistent age categorization of youth across various departments. Such dissonance complicates

tracking the progress of strategic youth-related documents, evaluating achievements, and accurately determining the required investment and financial support. This scenario results in youth strategies and policies not substantially reaching their intended audience, with the impacts of executed measures often being nebulous and sometimes imperceptible. Within the General Secretariat of the Government, there exists a department tasked with coordination, compliance monitoring, and oversight of implementation over strategies that define specific policies. Nonetheless, fostering interdepartmental cooperation is not a high priority, making the development, implementation, and assessment of cross-

sectoral policies, such as those concerning youth, considerably more challenging. A notable issue is the ineffective communication and coordination among entities responsible for crafting and executing current programmes and strategies impacting young individuals. Given that youth are influenced by policies across all societal sectors, irrespective of purviews, this represents a significant challenge. There is an **absence of a unified mechanism at both the departmental level overseeing youth matters** and the broader public administration to monitor the efficacy of youth policy implementations and their tangible outcomes, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This gap impedes the monitoring and evaluation of youth policies and others targeting this demographic, also obstructing the creation of new policies due to the difficulty in assessing the success of prior initiatives. Moreover, various policies, programmes, and projects lack sensitivity to young people's needs and fail to recognize them as a valuable resource. The public administration system's overarching insensitivity towards youth, combined with the **inadequate capacity of officials across departments to engage with young individuals**, leads to diminished youth motivation to propose new projects or ideas and fosters a growing mistrust in institutional systems. To address these issues, there is an urgent need for synchronization, especially in areas affecting young people such as education, employment, health, housing, human and minority rights, culture, sports, security, environment, etc., to align with their needs and interests.

The obstacles to fully realizing the potential of youth policy chiefly stem from a fragile legislative framework specific to youth affairs, the constant reshuffling of departments housing the youth sector, and a habitual relegation of youth matters to the lower end of daily priorities.<sup>182</sup> The enactment of the Youth Law in 2019 fell short of its aspirations to ameliorate the conditions for young people. In response, the Ministry, with backing from the RCC, sought an external evaluation of the law in 2021, which led to suggestions for its amendment. The review highlighted the necessity for the law to categorize the execution of youth policies and youth work as matters of public interest, advocating for support to young individuals through the facilitation of effective and decentralized youth policy measures, high-quality youth engagement, and the promotion of both formal and informal youth organisations. A key focus was placed on fostering synergies and the complementarity of initiatives across various sectors relevant to youth, aiming for their enhanced participation at both local and national levels. The recommended amendments are tailored to directly bolster young individuals, their groups, representative bodies, and initiatives, alongside fortifying the capabilities of entities involved in youth policy to adeptly navigate and execute youth-focused strategies and interactions at every tier. Moreover, despite the stipulations of the 2019 Youth Law, the establishment of a Youth Council did not transpire, resulting in an absence of professional, cross-departmental guidance and oversight of youth policy execution. Additionally, the legislation failed to acknowledge adolescent boys and girls as a distinct developmental category. A critical flaw identified was the excessive regulation within the legislation, which imposes constraints on the necessary operational flexibility within youth policy and activities aimed at engaging young people.

“  
That law (the Youth Law) is a dead letter.  
”  
Focus group participant

182 Consultation Report on Priorities in Youth Policy, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at [www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)

The execution of youth policy faces challenges due to fluctuating and unstable **funding sources and mechanisms for youth initiatives, alongside support programmes dedicated to youth and youth organisations**. A relatively minor portion of the budget is allocated to youth-centric initiatives, and the utilization of these funds is not maximized. This issue is partly due to the overlapping responsibilities and domains of various departments and partly because of a heavy reliance on international partners for financial and programmatic support.<sup>183</sup> The responsibility for budget creation lies with the Ministry of Finance, which holds a wide range of duties. These include drafting proposals for Montenegro's current economic policy and overseeing its execution, preparing, planning, and implementing the national budget, proposing guidelines and a medium-term macroeconomic framework for budget preparation and planning, as well as managing financial policy and its regulation. An overview of the annual budget allocated for youth is provided in the following table.

Year	Allocation	Expenditure
2017	€170,000	€170,000
2018	€511,876	€511,876
2019	€1,000,000	€1,000,000
2020	€1,936,488.36	€1,803,364.36
2021	€667,916.00	€564,633.00
2017-2021	€4,286,280.00	€4,049,873.00

Beyond financial challenges, **institutional instability** also prominently affects the landscape of youth policy. This instability is manifested through frequent changes and reorganisations within the government, particularly within departments responsible for youth policy. Such shifts significantly impact the feasibility of implementing youth policy in a consistent and high-quality manner. A persistent issue is the **inadequate human capacity** within the department tasked with youth affairs. This is primarily due to the limited number of staff members, who often find themselves overwhelmed by the workload. This situation not only hinders the effective execution of youth policy but also adversely affects the motivation of employees to remain and work within the youth sector

Such developments are summarised in the table below.

Recent organisational developments within the "youth sector":					
1.	2015: The youth sector operates within the Ministry of Education, as part of the Directorate for Sports and Youth				
2.	2016: The youth sector was forgotten in the newly established government				
3.	2016: The youth policy sector was subsequently added to the job description of the Ministry of Sports				
4.	2018: The Ministry of Sports changes its name and becomes the Ministry of Sports and Youth				
5.	2020: The Ministry of Sports and Youth is abolished and the Directorate for Sports and Youth is formed, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports				
6.	2022: The Ministry of Sports and Youth is re-established				
No. of youth officers (excl. managers)	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	6	6	6	5	5

<sup>183</sup> Consultations with other departments and institutions, December 2, 2022

Moreover, challenges related to the **mechanisms available for youth policy implementation** further burden and complicate the responsibilities of the relevant authorities. The Ministry of Sports and Youth, previously known as the Directorate for Youth, navigates these challenges within the legal framework established by the Youth Law (Official Gazette of Montenegro 025/19 and 027/19), the Rulebook on the functioning of youth services and the management of administrative and technical tasks for their operation (Official Gazette of Montenegro 009/20), and the Law on Local Self-Government (Official Gazette of Montenegro 2/2018, 34/2019, and 38/2020). Through this framework, the Ministry has implemented several mechanisms:

- The establishment of youth services at the local level, leading to the opening of 11 youth clubs in various municipalities including the Old Royal Capital Cetinje, Danilovgrad, Nikšić, Šavnik, Bar, Kotor, Mojkovac, Petnjica, Plav, and Pljevlja, along with one youth centre in the Capital Podgorica. These clubs provided services for a certain period.
- The determination of the representativeness of the umbrella alliance of youth organisations, recognizing it as the highest independent youth representative body. This partnership with the competent state body ensures the participation of young people in the decision-making processes within Montenegro, with the Youth Network of Montenegro being designated from 2020.
- Support for the implementation of youth initiatives and activities targeting young individuals in line with the Law on NGOs until 2021, and during a certain period, direct support under the Youth Law.

- The adoption and execution of the Programme for the Realization of Public Interest in the Field of Youth Policy for the year 2020.
- Support for the implementation of the European Youth Card in Montenegro, an initiative ongoing since 2017.
- Support for the Youth Exchange and Mobility Programme in 2021.

The preceding Youth Strategy for 2017-2021, inspired by the EU Youth Strategy, underscored the importance of a **data-driven** approach in the formulation of youth policies. It advocated for gender-specific data collection in line with the Law on Gender Equality, aiming to tailor and implement policies that acknowledge the distinct perspectives and requirements of young men and women. However, establishing a comprehensive and efficient system to monitor the status of young people in Montenegro remains a formidable challenge, crucial for the effective implementation of the Youth Strategy. The current method of gathering data on youth does not align with the legal definition of the demographic, nor is there a systematic collection or exchange of youth data among key government departments, with censuses being the exception. Data pertaining to young individuals are largely unavailable, rendering them almost invisible to policymakers, decision-makers, and policy implementers. The **absence of a developed methodology for monitoring youth statistics** further complicates the tracking of impact indicators set across various youth policy areas. The strategy also outlined a roadmap towards establishing a functional and comprehensive national system of indicators for monitoring the situation of young people, aiming to align with the best international practices. However, a developed system for collecting, analysing, and utilizing data on



the status of young individuals, which would integrate into a broader framework for creating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating all policies, strategies, and programmes for youth, is yet to be realized. Periodic research on young people and their needs, conducted by various actors using differing methodologies, fails to consistently track or elucidate certain trends. Nonetheless, the recurrence of certain results or the observation of negative trends in various representative studies suggests that challenges in youth policy implementation are manifesting in tangible consequences on the ground. This situation serves as an indicator of the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of youth policy implementation.

**“** *There (in the Youth Strategy) they write a list of wishes, it looks nice, but nothing happens.* **”**

Focus group participant

In the realm of **international cooperation**, youth policy in Montenegro does not fully realize its potential. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is primarily engaged in establishing political, economic, cultural, and other relations with foreign nations and international organisations, focusing on strategic foreign policy priorities like regional cooperation, European integration, and improving bilateral and multilateral relations, it lacks sufficient coordination and cooperation with the Ministry of Sports and Youth in the domain of international youth policy. Moreover, the Ministry of European Affairs, which is charged with managing and coordinating Montenegro’s accession process to the European Union, including the harmonization of domestic legislation with EU laws, does not optimally collaborate with the Ministry of Sports and Youth. This

underutilization of potential synergies hampers the broader integration of youth policies within the framework of European affairs. Montenegro’s membership in the Council of Europe offers opportunities to engage in the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), facilitating the enhancement of government cooperation in youth-related areas and creation of the framework for comparing youth policies, the exchange of best practices, and the drafting of standard-setting texts. These platforms could be leveraged more effectively to advance youth policy in Montenegro. As part of its ongoing negotiations for membership to the European Union, Montenegro has provisionally closed chapters on science and research, education and culture, and external relations. The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, which is based on the outcomes of the EU Youth Dialogue mechanism, primarily operates through EU youth programmes such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). Currently, Montenegro participates as a “third country,” despite having the potential to engage as a “programme country”. Additionally, the EU and the Council of Europe further their youth objectives through the EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership. As a United Nations member, Montenegro is involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which emphasizes the active participation of young people and supports the empowerment of children, adolescents, and young individuals as agents of change. The establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) by Montenegro and five other Western Balkans contracting parties aims to enhance youth mobility in the region and foster reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. However, the utilization of available resources, tools, mechanisms, and various funds, primarily from the EU, remains insufficient.<sup>184</sup>

184 Consultation Report on Priorities in Youth Policy, 2022, accessed on May 3, 2023 at [www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3](http://www.gov.me/dokumen-ta/54c48080-7205-4622-8303-fdc12461abd3)

In summary, youth policy in Montenegro has consistently fallen short of its potential, failing to deliver a timely, adequate, and high-quality systemic response to the challenges identified by young people, with the goal of securing long-term positive outcomes. Without substantial progress in this domain, specifically in creating conditions that facilitate seamless and high-quality planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policies, it remains challenging to anticipate positive results in any specific area of concern for the youth.

## Mechanisms for creating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating youth policy: Key problem, causes and measures

**Underdeveloped mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policy** are recognized as key problems in this area.

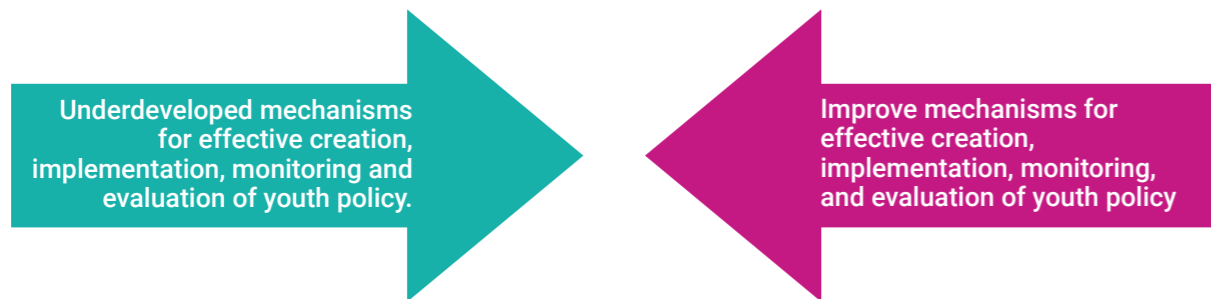
The following have been identified as the **CAUSES** and the **CONSEQUENCES** of the problem:

CAUSES	CONSEQUENCES
<p>The legislative framework for youth policy is weak. The implementation of the Youth Law (2019) did not improve the position of young people or establish effective youth policy.</p> <p>Overly regulated legislation does not allow for the necessary freedom of action in the field of youth policy and working with young people.</p> <p>The Youth Council, anticipated by the Youth Law (2019), has never been established.</p>	<p>The Youth Strategy measures do not have the intended effect on the young people they are designed to help.</p> <p>Implementation of youth policy is hindered or even impossible in certain areas.</p>
<p>Youth policy development and implementation at the local level is highly variable.</p> <p>Officials responsible for youth in local self-governments typically oversee multiple reports.</p>	<p>The potential synergistic effect of youth policy is not being realized.</p> <p>Prioritization and capacity for dealing with young people and youth policy at the local level are limited.</p>
<p>Youth policy is not a priority.</p> <p>The legislative framework and practice of individual departments and interdepartmental activities within the Government are not synchronized, which prevents continuous, coherent youth policy planning and execution.</p> <p>Lack of interdepartmental coordination in youth policy planning, implementation, monitoring and execution.</p> <p>The Youth Law is inconsistent with other relevant laws. Sectoral policies, programmes, and projects do not sufficiently consider the position and needs of young people, nor do they recognize young people as a valuable resource.</p>	<p>The implementation of youth policy and monitoring of its impact are challenging.</p> <p>There is a lack of a comprehensive and systemic response to improving the situation of young people and realizing their full potential.</p> <p>Effective improvement of the standing of young people and the realization of their rights and potential are hindered.</p>

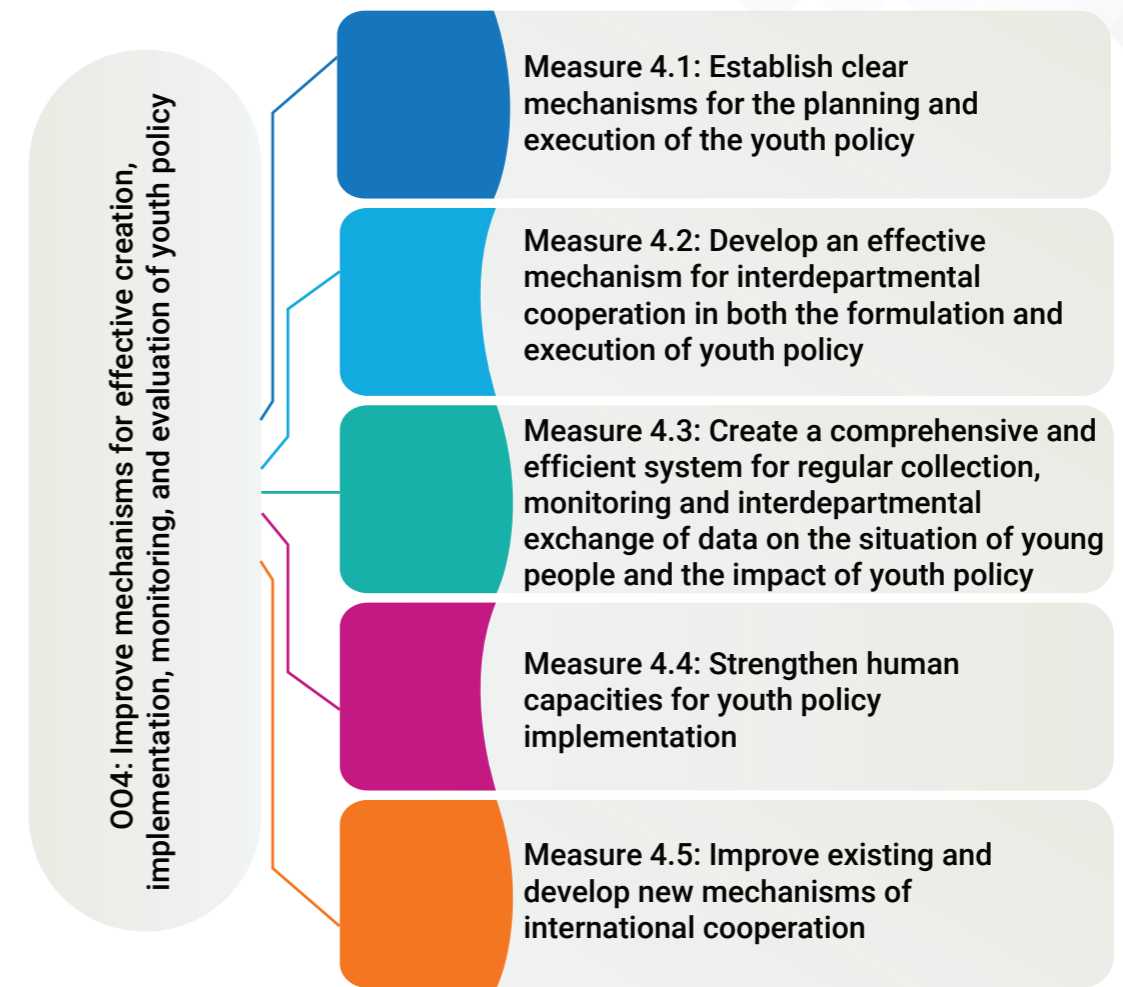
<p>The department responsible for youth policy has insufficient human resources.</p> <p>Officials in various departments lack the necessary skills to effectively engage with young people.</p>	<p>The improvement of the position of young people and the realization of their rights and potential are hindered/</p> <p>Inability to ensure high-quality and unremitting youth policy implementation.</p> <p>Young people lack motivation to initiate new projects and ideas, and they also lack trust in the system's institutions.</p>
<p>The financing of youth policy, support programmes, initiatives, and organisations is subject to change and instability.</p> <p>Institutional insecurity, which is evident in the frequent changes and reshuffling of government departments responsible for youth policy.</p>	<p>The improvement of the position of young people and the realization of their rights and potential are hindered.</p> <p>Inability to ensure the quality and continuity of youth policy implementation.</p>
<p>The approach to data-driven youth policymaking is underdeveloped.</p> <p>No established methodology for monitoring youth statistics.</p> <p>The collection of data does not adhere to the legal definition of young people, nor are youth data systematically collected or exchanged by key government departments, except through censuses.</p> <p>Lack of an effective mechanism for monitoring youth policy implementation.</p>	<p>Data on young people is often lacking, making them an almost invisible category for policy- and decision-makers, as well as policy implementers.</p> <p>The effects of implemented measures and activities are nebulous (invisible) to young people and youth policy makers due to the selective collection and lack of relevant and comparable data.</p> <p>Difficult to monitor the impact of different youth policies.</p>
<p>International cooperation is not realizing its full potential.</p>	<p>Young people are limited in their participation in some EU youth programmes.</p> <p>Various funds, primarily EU funds, are underutilised.</p>

The key problem identified in this domain is addressed by the Operational Objective 4:

**OC4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy**



To achieve this operational objective, in light of the identified causes of the issue, the following measures have been outlined:



**MEASURE 4.1: Establish clear mechanisms for the planning and execution of the youth policy**

Description: For the effective execution of youth policy in Montenegro, it is crucial to establish clear and robust mechanisms for both the planning and implementation phases. This necessitates, firstly, an enhancement of the legal framework to bolster the development of youth work, regulate youth services' operations and the funding of youth policy, which encompasses support for youth initiatives and organisations. Thus, ensuring sustainable and stable financial backing for the initiatives outlined in the Youth Strategy is essential. This funding should support the

work and growth of the youth sector and guarantee, through collaboration with other departments, ongoing support for young individuals. Additionally, there's a need to create a mechanism that acknowledges the unique characteristics of youth organisations and entities focused on youth, which should facilitate their meaningful involvement in both the formulation and execution of youth policy. Importantly, this involvement should not be constrained by the existing funding models for non-governmental organisations.

A comprehensive revision of the Law on Youth and its associated by-laws, and a more suitable financial structure for youth policy implementation are required. A critical



step in this process is the preparation and publication of a detailed analysis of the financing specifics within the youth sector, including the investment requirements and the establishment of a youth fund to provide ad-hoc support for youth initiatives, projects, and programmes spearheaded by youth organisations. The analysis should include mechanisms and levels of funding at both local and state tiers, incorporating a gender analysis to ensure equitable distribution of resources. Based on the insights garnered from this analysis, it is essential to devise and implement the most effective and equitable funding models determining the appropriate amounts of funding (expressed as a percentage of the total budget) dedicated to youth policy. This approach should support youth organisations and initiatives at both the local and state levels, adhering to the principles of gender-responsive budgeting.

In addition to providing direct support to young people, organising an annual open competition—or devising an alternative model—is vital for the consistent financing of services targeting the youth. This approach should facilitate the outsourcing of projects and programmes run by organisations engaged in youth work, non-formal education, and other activities that align with the objectives outlined in the Youth Strategy.

For the youth policy to be effectively implemented and truly embody the principles of youth participation, it is crucial to develop and execute programmes aimed at enhancing the skills of local officials tasked with youth-related issues and civil servants and employees within the Ministry of Sports and Youth, particularly in the area of securing EU funds and tapping into other relevant funding sources to support the growth and development of youth policy in Montenegro.

**Key actors:** Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Finance

**Partners:** NGOs, local self-government units

### MEASURE 4.2 Develop an effective mechanism for interdepartmental cooperation in both the formulation and execution of youth policy

**Description:** To harmonize the legislative and strategic framework, alongside the practices across all sectors and interdepartmental activities, with the needs and rights of young people, developing an effective mechanism for interdepartmental cooperation in shaping and implementing youth policy is essential. A primary step towards this goal involves establishing an interdepartmental coordination body dedicated to enhancing the situation of young people. This body would play a pivotal role in elevating youth issues to a strategic and political level, facilitating a coordinated, synchronized, and systemic approach to addressing priority concerns of the youth through the operationalization of youth policy and related sectoral policies. Consequently, there is a necessity for proper data collection and monitoring regarding young people, alongside organising (international) expert dialogues and conferences focused on youth policy, emphasizing the importance of interdepartmental cooperation and coordination. Additionally, based on identified needs, capacity-building programmes for the Coordinating Body can be organised to bolster its effectiveness.

The Youth Strategy encompasses mechanisms for engaging young people in the development of sectoral analyses and facilitating dialogue on all matters of concern to them. Consequently, it is essential to draft and dispatch specific guidelines and recommendations derived from this strategic document to the pertinent ministries. A critical aspect of this strategy is the establishment of regular dialogues between youth policy stakeholders at both local and national levels, or routine working meetings, professional consultations, and public conferences centered on youth policy.

Furthermore, there is a need to bolster collaboration with the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) in the realm of youth policy, particularly vital in terms of exchanging information on youth policies and practices at the EU level and receiving support to align Montenegro's youth policies with those of the European Union.

**Key actors:** Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of European Affairs

**Partners:** NGOs, international organisations

### MEASURE 4.3: Create a comprehensive and efficient system for regular collection, monitoring and interdepartmental exchange of data on the situation of young people and the impact of youth policy

**Description:** To guarantee the continuous assessment of youth policy effectiveness, with measurable and transparent outputs from implemented measures and activities, it is imperative to establish a detailed and proficient system for routine gathering, monitoring, and interdepartmental sharing of pertinent data, disaggregated by gender and age, on the status of young people and the impact of youth policy. This entails ensuring that policies, programmes, and projects are attuned to the needs of young people, grounded in relevant data, recognizing young individuals as a valuable resource, and aiding them in achieving their goals, in alignment with measures 4.1 and 4.2. Furthermore, the creation of an Operational Body is essential for overseeing the Youth Strategy's execution. The responsibilities of this body encompass enhancing access to both quantitative and qualitative data on youth, segmented by gender and age, and instituting a mechanism for the systematic collection of relevant data, monitoring and evaluation of the Youth Strategy, alongside scrutinising the interdepartmental exchange of information on young people's needs,

aspirations, and the broader effects of youth and sector-specific policies on diverse youth demographics, including those with fewer opportunities. This entity is also tasked with ensuring information flow regarding the development of sector strategies and action plans, promoting the engagement of young people, youth organisations, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and local self-government units in these processes. A particular focus should be placed on fostering collaboration with LSGUs in data collection, monitoring, and evaluation of the Youth Strategy, particularly through initiatives conducted at the local level. Depending on identified needs, capacity-building programmes can be arranged for members of the Operational Body as well as LSGU officials engaged in youth affairs.

Developing a methodology for gathering data on young people's circumstances, needs, and aspirations is crucial, alongside ensuring that regular, annual studies on youth are conducted, adhering to this methodology. This approach will facilitate the systematic monitoring of influence, performance, and outcome indicators related to youth policy. The methodology should be adaptable, allowing for enhancements and revisions to align with EU indicators and other pertinent research trends. Through this process, a national public knowledge base about young individuals will be established, serving as a reusable resource to enhance the situation of young people.

**Key actors:** Ministry of Sports and Youth, General Secretariat of the Government

**Partners:** NGOs, local self-government units

#### MEASURE 4.4: Strengthen human capacities for youth policy implementation

Description: To ensure that public policies, programmes, and projects effectively meet the needs of young people, facilitating the realization of their rights and improving their status, it is crucial to base these initiatives on pertinent data, acknowledging young individuals as valuable resources and supporting them in achieving their aspirations. This necessitates the enhancement of human capacities dedicated to youth policy implementation. A fundamental step towards this goal involves developing a framework of competencies, values, and work standards for officials overseeing youth policy matters at both the state and local levels.

A functional analysis of the required positions and job descriptions should be conducted, focusing on the necessary competencies, strategic objectives, and the legislative context related to youth. Based on the outcomes, there should be a systematic organisation of an appropriate number of staff within the department responsible for youth policy. Subsequently, it is vital to recruit the requisite personnel missing from the youth policy department, aligning with the established systematization and considering the competency, values, and work standards model. Furthermore, at the local level, each municipality should designate an official for youth matters to implement local youth policies. Depending on the identified needs, specialized capacity-building programmes and study visits can be arranged for officials engaged in youth policy implementation at both state and local levels.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, local self-government units

Partners: NGOs, Human Resources Administration

#### MEASURE 4.5: Improve existing and develop new mechanisms of international cooperation

Description: To ensure the maximization of international cooperation in the youth sector, enabling the effective utilization of various funds, especially EU funds, and providing young people with increased opportunities to engage in diverse EU youth programmes, it is crucial to refine existing and devise new mechanisms for international collaboration. This requires an initial analysis of the effectiveness and potential of current cooperation mechanisms and Montenegro's membership in international institutions (such as the OSCE, Council of Europe, RCC, RYCO, UN, WBF) within the realm of international youth policy. A significant part of this analysis should concentrate on EU youth programmes, examining the potential for participation as a programme country and throughout the EU accession process.

Based on the finding, the development of guidelines for achieving comprehensive international cooperation (covering institutional - bilateral and multilateral, programmatic, financial aspects, etc.) in the youth field is necessary. Subsequently, this would lead to the execution of specific actions, including initiating Montenegro's process to join as a programme country in EU youth programmes (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps).

Depending on identified needs, capacity-building programmes can be arranged for officials engaged in international cooperation concerning youth at the Ministry of Sports and Youth, as well as for local officials responsible for youth and/or international cooperation, enhancing their capabilities to foster and manage international youth relations effectively.

Key actors: Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of Sports and Youth, Ministry of European Affairs

Partners: NGOs, local self-government units

## Expected results and performance indicators

The expected effects, or results, of the implementation of the measures are as follows:

1. Outcomes of the Youth Strategy are quantifiable and evident.
2. Youth policy execution is underpinned by reliable and consistent financing, alongside unwavering support for the youth-oriented public and civil sectors.
3. Legislative and strategic frameworks, alongside departmental practices and interdepartmental collaborations, are harmonised, orchestrated, and designed around the data-driven needs of young individuals, significantly enhancing their societal status, with their impact subject to ongoing evaluation.
4. Relevant data concerning young people is readily accessible.
5. The impacts of enacted measures and initiatives are quantifiable and transparent.
6. Policies, programmes, and projects are attuned to the needs of young individuals, valuing them as vital resources and aiding them in fulfilling their ambitions.
7. International collaborations reach their utmost capacity, with satisfactory utilization of various funding sources, particularly EU funds, thereby expanding young people's engagement in specific EU youth programmes.



The table below outlines performance indicators for operational objective 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy

Performance indicator	2023 Baseline	2025 Mid-target	2027 Target
An effective system for monitoring data concerning the situation of young people is in place  <i>Source of data: MSY's Activity Report</i>	Currently, there is no comprehensive public database related to youth policies in Montenegro	Methodology for regular data collection on young people and their needs developed and the first comprehensive research/ data collection on the situation of young people, including gender analysis, developed	A comprehensive and publicly available database on young people in Montenegro, which includes gender-segregated data, in place
The legal framework for youth policy is harmonized with all relevant national legal acts significant young people in Montenegro  <i>Source of data: MSY's Activity Report</i>	Lack of mutual compliance of legal acts relevant for youth policy implementation  Currently, there is no clearly defined and normatively harmonized age limit for the definition of young people and adolescents	The youth policy is fully aligned with: - The Youth Law - The Law on NGOs  - Decree on the election of representatives of NGOs in the working bodies of state administration authorities and the conduct of public consultations  - Regulation on the manner and procedure of drafting, harmonizing and monitoring the implementation of strategic documents  The Youth Law sets the age limit for the definition of youth and adolescents	Alignment with - Law on LSGU - Law on State Administration - other laws ensured  The entire normative framework is harmonized with the age definition of young people and adolescents from the Youth Law
Strong interdepartmental coordination and cooperation in the youth policy implementation and monitoring at all tiers of government  <i>Source of data: MSY's Activity Report</i>	Mutual coordination and cooperation during the implementation and monitoring of youth policies is not at a satisfactory level	Body for coordination of youth policies established at the level of the Government of Montenegro	Body for coordination of youth policies established at the level of the Government of Montenegro operational in continuity

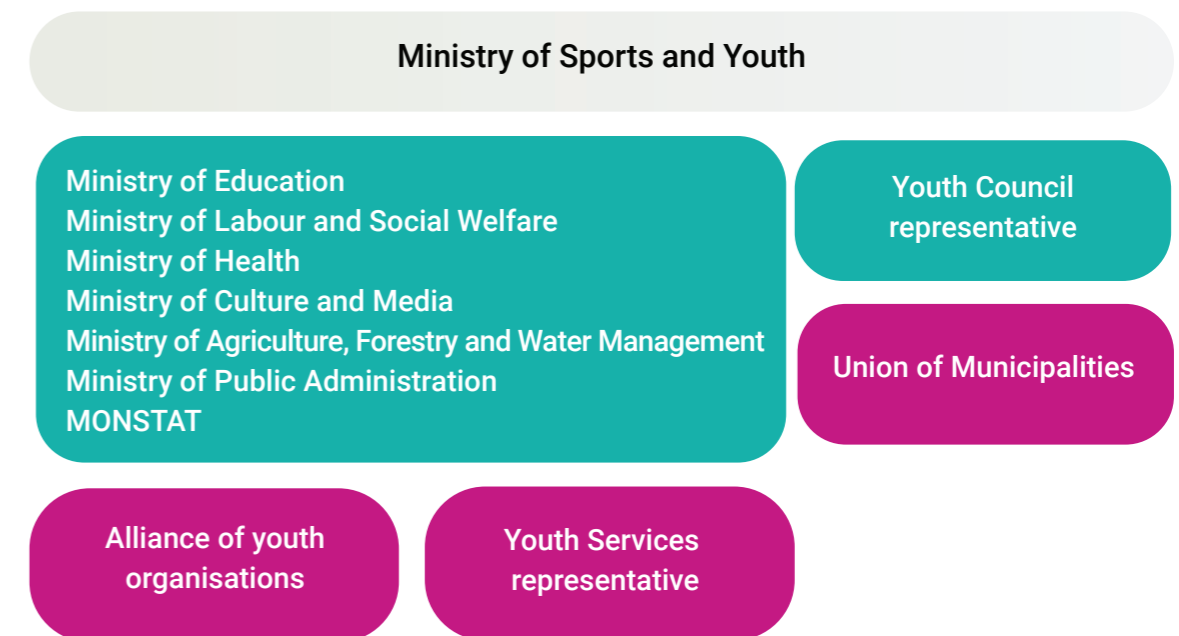
## Budget

Action plan 2023-2024.	Estimate of planned assets: - EUR 725,000.00 (budget) - EUR 188,000.00 (donations)
Action plan 2025-2026.	- EUR 900,000.00 (budget) - EUR 200,000.00 (donations)
Action Plan 2027	- EUR 450,000.00 (budget) - EUR 100,000.00 (donations)
Total:	EUR 2,563,000.00

## Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The monitoring and reporting mechanism for the implementation of **the Youth Strategy 2023–2027** is anchored in the activities of the **Operational Body dedicated to overseeing the strategic document's execution and the Coordination Body for Youth Policies at the governmental level in Montenegro**. This Operational Body comprises members from institutions involved in the Working Group responsible for drafting the strategic document, alongside representatives from all entities whose involvement is deemed essential for the effective realisation of youth policies during the 2023–2027 period.

The composition of the Operational Body is as follows:

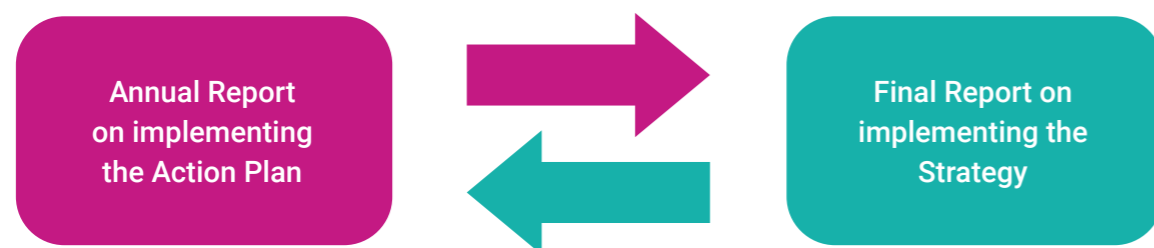


The significance of the **Coordination Body for Youth Policies is paramount**. This body, to be established at the ministerial level by the Government of Montenegro, is set to enhance interdepartmental collaboration among all governmental entities in executing youth policies and in charting the short- and medium-term developmental trajectories of these policies within Montenegro. The Coordination Body will play a pivotal oversight role in the process of monitoring and reporting on the strategic document's implementation, mandating that the Operational Body submit both annual and final reports on the strategic document's progress for its review and approval. Once endorsed by the Coordination Body, these reports will then be presented to the Government of Montenegro for formal adoption.

The **Ministry of Sports and Youth** is charged with coordinating the efforts of the Operational Body, as well as the drafting, execution, and reporting on the strategic document. This strategic framework is supported by an Action Plan, devised for a two-year span.

The Youth Strategy for 2023–2027 is a critical document, necessitating the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, including state administration bodies, local government units, non-governmental organisations focused on youth rights and well-being in Montenegro, and international bodies influential in shaping youth policy. These entities are required to provide details on their activities aligned with the action plan, facilitating timely and accurate data collection for the composition of annual and final reports. This process not only measures performance levels but also identifies potential challenges encountered during the execution of planned activities.

The Operational Body's core duties encompass the generation of two types of reports, specifically:



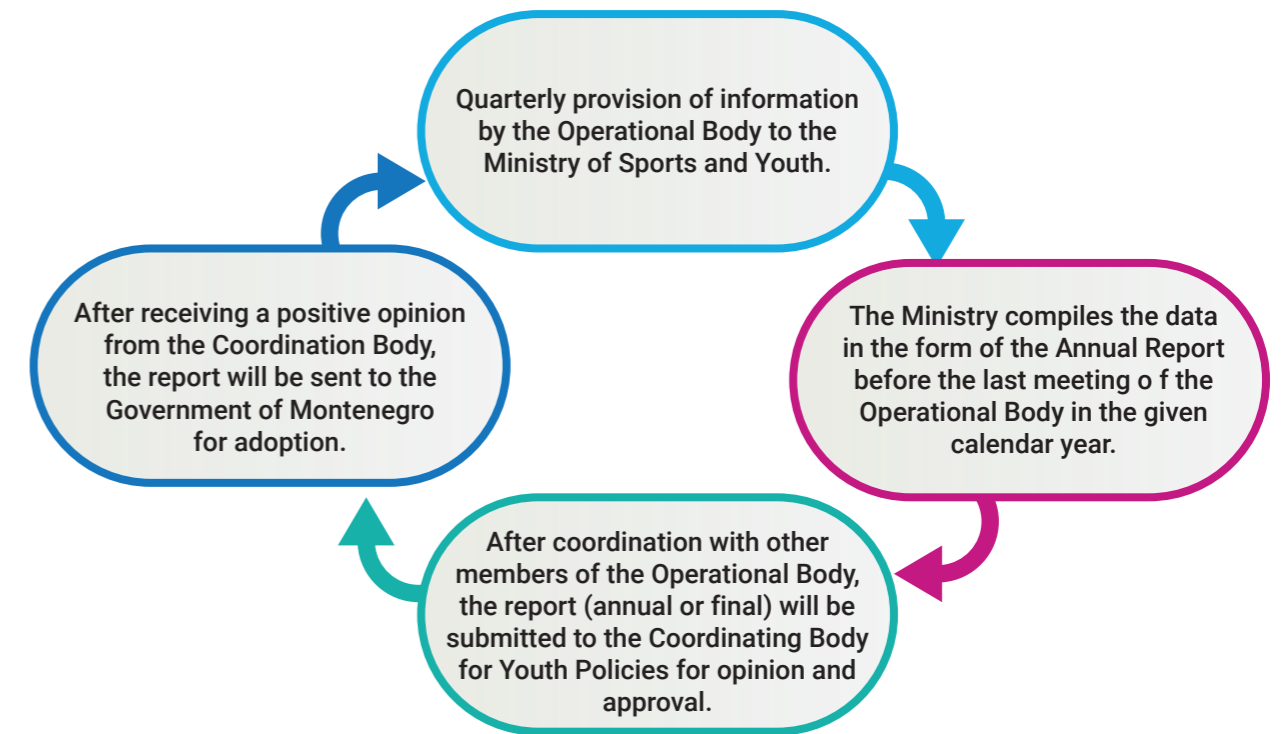
The Operational Body is slated to convene at least four times annually, holding a minimum of one meeting each quarter. This schedule is set in response to the significant breadth, scope, and complexity of issues under its purview, necessitating more frequent gatherings to ensure the youth policy's implementation is assessed promptly and continuously. Such meetings will allow for the examination of potential hurdles and challenges institutions may encounter during activity execution. Data essential for report compilation will be amassed throughout the year and submitted quarterly to the Ministry of Sports and Youth, which oversees the Operational Body's coordination. At the year's final meeting, this data will be meticulously reviewed and, if necessary, augmented to guarantee the report's quality.

The Ministry of Sports and Youth will assume responsibility for gathering and consolidating relevant data for report preparation, in addition to coordinating the Operational Body's efforts. A key focus will be developing a data collection methodology that captures a comprehensive picture of young people in Montenegro. This initiative aims to conduct annual studies on their conditions and

standing, forming the foundation for a detailed, publicly accessible database on Montenegro's youth. The envisaged methodology will not only facilitate the creation of this database but also strengthen the alignment among all pertinent national public policies impacting young Montenegrins.

Moreover, the Operational Body will address any potential issues or barriers encountered during the strategic document's rollout at its regular quarterly gatherings.

The report's progression will be overseen through several stages, specifically:



To ensure transparency of the strategy implementation process, the reports will be published on the Ministry of Sports and Youth's webpages.



## Evaluation

The evaluation of the strategic document will unfold in two distinct phases: a mid-term evaluation and an ex post evaluation. To address the document's complexity and breadth while ensuring an elevated level of objectivity, both evaluation phases will be conducted by external experts specializing in youth policies. **The funding for these evaluations will be sourced either from the Ministry of Sports and Youth's budget or through contributions from donor organisations, with potential donor assistance being integrated at later stages of the strategic document's implementation. The allocation for these activities will be specified in the action plan dedicated to the strategic document's execution.** It is anticipated that the mid-term evaluation will conclude by the

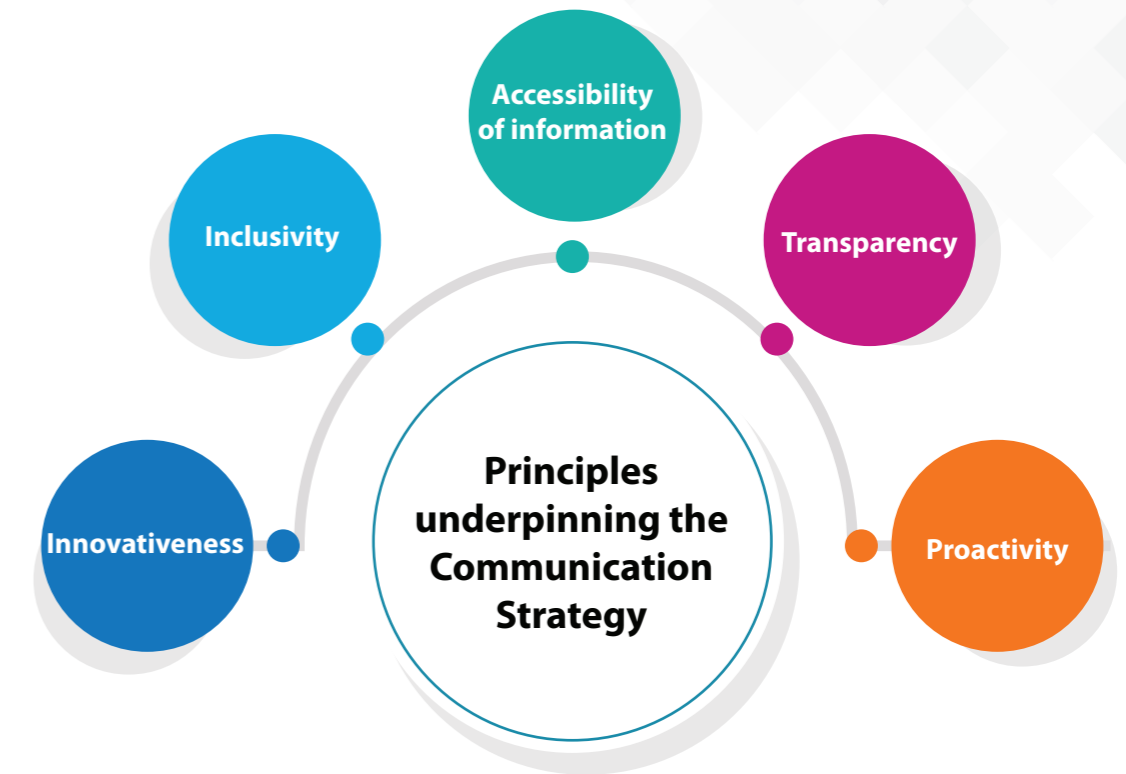
end of 2025. In contrast, the ex post evaluation is scheduled to commence in the latter half of 2027, concluding by year's end. This timing is strategic, allowing for the prompt delivery of evaluation findings to be incorporated into the final report and laying a solid foundation for devising a new strategic document. The insights gleaned from both evaluation stages will offer a concise and accurate assessment of the strategic document's effectiveness in implementing youth policies. This process aims to verify the attainment of desired outcomes through collective efforts and assess whether such activities have positively impacted young people's status in Montenegro.

## Communication strategy

The essence of the communication strategy lies in enhancing the visibility and accessibility of youth policy in Montenegro, centrally represented by the Youth Strategy 2023–2027. This strategy underscores the core objective of youth policies aimed at fostering conditions conducive to the personal and social development of young people. It emphasizes learning, opportunities, and experiences that empower young individuals to actively engage in Montenegro's societal processes. Youth policy positions young people as dynamic participants in democratic life, facilitating their integration into society and, notably, enabling their active involvement in both civil society and the labour market.

Rooted in human rights and democratic standards, the national youth policy is designed with a focus on young people's opportunities. It actively involves them in the processes of defining and implementing these policies, creating avenues for learning, opportunities, and experiences, all underpinned by the systematic collection and utilization of quality data. The policy acknowledges the significance of youth work and non-formal learning, highlights the need for an intersectoral approach and collaboration, and prioritizes ongoing dialogue with young people.

In light of this, it is critical to highlight that the communication strategy is grounded in the following fundamental principles:



### → Accessibility of Information

All pertinent institutions afford young people and other stakeholders prompt and efficient access to information regarding their operations and accomplishments, leveraging every available communication channel and tool.

### → Transparency

Entities tasked with enacting youth policy maintain a commitment to timely and lucidly informing young people and the wider public about their outcomes, upholding the values of transparency and accountability.

### → Innovativeness

A significant focus is directed towards cultivating digital and other novel communication methods, aimed at bolstering interactions among all parties engaged in youth policies, prioritising direct communication with young individuals.

### → Inclusivity

Guarantee the participation of young people in shaping and executing the national agenda and developmental pathways across all public policies pertinent to youth.

### → Proactivity

Promote a forward-thinking communication stance to effectively facilitate dialogue and address the requirements of young people in Montenegro.

Given these principles, the communication strategy delineates the following key audiences:



Acknowledging the outlined principles and identified target groups, it is crucial to emphasize that the communication strategy prioritizes the realization of the following objectives:

- Communicate the essence and objectives of the Youth Strategy to young individuals in an engaging and comprehensible manner, leveraging digital tools and platforms.
- Convey the content and aims of the Youth Strategy to other interested entities.
- Boost young people's involvement in the development, execution, and assessment of youth policy and other relevant policies.
- Fortify collaboration among all entities involved in youth policy. Focus on enhancing dialogue between governmental bodies tasked with youth policy and all other national, local, and international stakeholders contributing insights.
- Elevate the quality of interdepartmental collaboration and communication throughout the execution of youth policy.
- Ensure youth services are reachable and interconnected with additional support services, providing information on all opportunities for young people across various public interest sectors.
- The Government of Montenegro acknowledges the significance of youth policy by establishing specialized bodies to oversee its implementation.

- Facilitate public access and gather data on young individuals through the creation of digital and innovative technological solutions.
- Offer visually appealing and accessible presentations of youth policy and its developments.
- Elevate the transparency and openness level of policies directed at Montenegro's youth.





## Annex 1: Working Group members

The Working Group tasked with drafting the Strategy had 23 members:

1. Martin Lulgjuraj/Amina Cikotić – MSY, Chair
2. Danijela Vujošević, MSJ, member
3. Anja Kečalović, MSY, member
4. Armin Fetahović, MLSW, member
5. Zorana Milutinović-Lakićević, Ministry of Science and Technological Development, member
6. Zorka Popović, Ministry of Culture and Media, member
7. Kristina Radević, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, member
8. Lazar Radonjić, Ministry of Finance, member
9. Zlatko Gligorović, Ministry of Public Administration, member
10. Vesna Raičević, Ministry of Health, member
11. Bojana Šćekić, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, member
12. Ivana Vučinić, Center for Vocational Education, member
13. Ivana Nedović, Union of Municipalities, member
14. Jovana Živković, MONSTAT, member
15. Borjan Radović, Ministry of Education, member
16. Aida Perović, NGO Prima, member
17. Milena Šćepanović, NGO ADP ZID, member
18. Jelena Fuštić, Representative Alliance of Non-Governmental Organisations Implementing Youth Policy – Youth Network, member
19. Dušan Stanović, Youth Service Podgorica
20. Ajla Jadadić, Youth Service Bar
21. Sreten Čeranić, Youth Service Šavnik
22. Ivana Bošković, UNICEF Office in Montenegro (observer)
23. Boban Stanišić, Parliament of Montenegro (observer)

## Action Plan 2023–2024

**Operational objective 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood**

Operational objective 1: Establish a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programmes to support young people during their transition to adulthood						
Measure 1.1: Establish a quality assurance system for youth work						
	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Organise study visits to exchange experiences in development and implementation, and to establish an ecosystem for youth work	MSY Partners: international organisations, NGO	Q2 2024	- Organised study visit for 15 youth workers and/or officials from MSY or officials from other departments  Source: Activity report	EUR5,000 (EUR2,000 – MSY, EUR 3,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
2.	By revising the Youth Law, establish mechanisms to support the implementation of youth work	MSY	Q4 2023	- Youth work defined by legal provisions  - Established methods of implementation and support for operationalising youth work  Source: Youth Law	No funding needed	Budget
3.	Determine the quality standards for youth work activities	MSY Partners: VET Centre, NGO	Q1-4 2024	- Secondary legislation drafted in broad consultation with practitioners of youth work  - The Rulebook also outlines methods for renewing the licence for youth work  Source: Secondary legislation	No funding needed	Budget
4.	Create an educational programme for the profession of youth worker and promote the positive effects of youth work	MSY Partners: VET Centre, NGO	Q1-4 2024	- A programme developed in line with the best European practices, including topics on gender equality and digital literacy  - Organised media campaign on youth work (see Activity 1.2.5)  Source: Programme and Activity report	EUR 2,000	Budget

Measure 1.2: Establish a functional system of youth services in all municipalities						
	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Revise the Youth Law and related by-laws to define the establishment, sustainable financing, minimum quality standards, and implementation of programmes in youth services	MSY	Q4 2023	- Youth services, as defined in the law, extend beyond those established solely by MSY.  - Secondary legislation outlines spatial-technical, programmatic, and administrative quality standards necessary for obtaining the status of a youth service.  Source: Youth Law and secondary legislation	No funding needed	Budget
2.	Develop work quality standards and an ethical code for youth services	MSY	Q3 2024	- A gender analysis was conducted, leading to the creation of gender-responsive standards and a code aimed at tailoring youth services to the needs of young men and women.  - Secondary legislation was adopted that specifies the standards of work quality and the ethical code for youth services.  Source: Work quality standards and by-laws	EUR 2,000	Donor funding
3.	Establish new Youth Services responsive to the needs of young people and in alignment with established standards.	MSY Partners: LSGUs, NGO	Q1-4 2024	- 3 to 5 new YS established  - Existing 11 YS properly equipped  Source: Budget, Activity report	EUR 45,000 (EUR 35,000 – MSY, EUR 10,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
4.	Organise training courses for obtaining a youth activist license for youth service administrators and other interested young individuals.	MSY Partners: VET Centre, licensed education providers, international organisations	Q3-4 2024	- Licensed training organised for 30 youth service administrators and young people  - Training incorporates a gender equality perspective  Source: Activity report	EUR15,000 (EUR10,000 – MSY, EUR5,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

5.	Develop and execute a communication campaign to promote youth services	MSY Partners: LSGUs, international organisations	Q1-2 2024	- The strategy adopts specific approaches for adolescents, youth, girls, boys, young people from rural areas, young people with disabilities, young individuals with intellectual disabilities, LGBTIQ+ community, Roma, parents, as well as local and national services and institutions, NGOs, etc.  - A campaign and promotional events carried out in all regions, reaching 10,000 young people and parents (related to activity 1.1.4).  Source: Activity Report, YS webpages	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
6.	Develop, finance, and execute programmes within youth services, following consultations with the youth.	MSY Partners: LSGUs, NGO, international organisations	Continuously	-Secondary legislation adopted stipulating the participatory involvement of young people in creating YS programmes, as well as the methods of their financing and execution.  - YS programmes designed to cater to groups such as adolescents, youth, females, males, individuals from rural areas, young people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ community, Roma, and young people with fewer opportunities, among others.  Source: Activity report	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
7.	Delivery of a youth programme within Youth Services	UNDP, MSY	2023	- Programmes implemented across all 11 youth services, engaging at least 1,000 young people.  - Annually, youth services organise a minimum of 20% of events aimed at promoting gender equality.  - A methodology for tracking gender-segregated data on the number of youth service users has been established.  Source: Activity report	EUR 80,000 (EUR 65,000 – MSY, EUR 15,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding



8.	Develop youth services following the “one-stop-shop” principle by integrating them with other services within the local community with the aim of providing comprehensive information and creating joint and holistic services for young people.	MSY Partners: other ministries, LSGUs, NGO	Continuously	- Developed Guidelines for the “one-stop-shop” operating model of youth services.  - Administrators trained in the “One-stop-shop” service model and networking at the local level.  - At least two meetings organised annually in each municipality with local stakeholders.  Source: Activity report	EUR 1,000	Budget
9.	Establish mobile youth services “youth work on wheels” and “outdoor youth work”	MSY Partners: LSGUs, NGO	Q3-4 2024	- Mobile services piloted in 3 youth services (1 per region).  - Effects of mobile services assessed and needs for the upcoming period determined.  Source: Activity Report, Needs and Impact Reports	EUR 5,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 4,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
10.	Develop a model for empowering and involving young people with fewer opportunities, especially those from socially disadvantaged families.	MLSW Partners: MSY	Q2-4 2024	- Developed model for the empowerment and inclusion of young people.  - Model promoted among youth policy stakeholders and youth services.  Source: Activity Report	Current Budget	Budget

**Measure 1.3: Develop and deliver inclusive youth work and non-formal education programmes**

	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Connect teaching staff and NGOs for planning an open curriculum in schools, in collaboration with NGOs.	MoEd Partners: educational establishments	Q2 2023	3 events held (1 per region) involving at least 30 schools and 30 NGOs.  Source: Progress report	Current Budget	Budget
2.	Launch regular calls for the implementation of NGO activities in remote and rural areas, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations.	MSY & MoEd Partners: NGO	Q1 2024	- The call announced and funds allocated to reach 1,000 young people (three regions) annually.  - Methodology for monitoring gender-segregated data on the number of young people attending NFE programmes established  Source: Activity report, Financial report	Current Budget	Budget

3.	Initiate campaigns aimed at encouraging NFE providers to undergo licensing processes for their programmes	MoEd & VET Centre Partners: MSY	Q3-4 2023	- Promotional events took place across all regions, engaging 40 key stakeholders  Source: Activity report	Current Budget	Budget
4.	Organize informational campaigns to highlight the significance of benefits offered by non-formal education	MP, MEDT, MLSW, MSY,	Q1-4 2024	- Campaign and promotional events successfully conducted in all regions, reaching 10,000 young people and parents  - A special focus on engaging and motivating young men  Source: Activity report	Current Budget	Budget
5.	Develop mechanisms for recognition and verification of non-formal education through EUROPASS	MP, MLSW, MERT Partners: LPO, NGO	Q2 2023 – Q2 2024	- An interdepartmental group was established and carried out the task.  - The proposed instrument was put forward and approved.  Source: Instrument, Activity report	Current Budget	Budget
6.	Continuously enhance and supplement the digital school platform, digitalnaskola.edu.me, with content from the domain of non-formal education	MP, UNICEF	Continuously	- The digitalnaskola.edu.me platform features relevant content for young people, aligned with the themes identified in this strategy  Source: New content posted at digitalnaskola.edu.me	Current Budget	Budget

**Measure 1.4: Establish a functional information system for young people and strengthen their competences in utilising available information**

	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Establish a model for informing young people, incorporating quality standards, through consultations with youth and other relevant stakeholders	MSY Partners: MCM, NGO	Q1-4 2024	- In collaboration with young individuals, an interdepartmental group formulated Guidelines for the Coordinated Provision of Information to Youth  - A comprehensive model for disseminating information to young people has been set up, detailing the contributions of youth services and incorporating online information channels  - The established standards are detailed in the developed rulebook/manual  Source: Rulebook/manual	EUR 1,000 (EUR 300 – MSY, EUR 700 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

2.	Organize training sessions for youth information providers	MSY Partners: LPO, international organisations	Q3-4 2024	- Training organized and capacities of information providers (youth services, contact persons in other youth services) built for at least 20 participants  Source: Activity report	EUR 5000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 4,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
3.	Create a comprehensive digital guide for young people to access information and support services for youth at both local and national levels	MSY, MPA	Q3-4 2023	- The Coordination Body gathered relevant information and prepared the guide  - The digital guide published on the Government's website, as well as the websites of the MSY and MPA.  Source: Guide, Government website	EUR 2,000	Budget
4.	Conduct training sessions to enhance the information literacy capacities of young people	MSY Partners: NGO, international organisations	Q1-4 2024	- Training sessions on information literacy conducted for a minimum of 100 young individuals  Source: Activity report	EUR 10,000 (EUR 2,000 – MSY, EUR 8,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

**Measure 1.5: Develop youth mobility programmes inside and outside of Montenegro**

	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Organize regular competitions for youth mobility programmes within Montenegro	MSY Partners: NGO	Q1 2024	- The competition announced and funds allocated to reach 600 young people (three regions) annually  Source: Activity report, Financial report	EUR 50,000	Budget
2.	Organize campaigns to promote youth mobility programmes in youth services and educational institutions	MSY & MoEd Partners: Erasmus+ Office, NGO, international organisations	Q2 2023 Q3 2024	- "Youth Mobility Fair" promotional events held in all regions, reaching 1,200 young people  - Parents included as a target group of the campaign  Source: Activity report	EUR 2,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY & MoEd, EUR 1,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
3.	Create mechanisms for monitoring the number of young people utilizing mobility programmes and the effects of their participation	MSY Partners: mobility programme organisers	Q2 2023	- Within the MSY's M&E plan, indicators and tools are anticipated for tracking the effects of utilizing mobility programmes  Source: MSY's M&E plan, Activity report	No funding needed	Budget

4.	Enhancing the capacities of municipalities to participate in EU programmes and funds for youth mobility	MEA Partners: Union of Municipalities, MSY, LSGUs	Q1-4 2024	- A minimum of 15 representatives from LSGUs informed/trained on existing opportunities and programmes  Source: Activity report	Current Budget	Budget
5.	Develop a programme for youth mobility within Montenegro	MSY Partners: MoEd, MCM, MSTD	Q1-3 2024	The programme has been developed and promoted among institutions and actors in youth policy  Source: Activity report	EUR 15,000 (EUR 3,000 – MSY, EUR 12,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding



## Operational objective 2: 2. Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes

### Operational objective: 2. Facilitate active citizenship among young people, fostering their involvement in policy creation and implementation processes

#### Measure 2.1: Establish sustainable mechanisms to support youth initiatives, informal youth groups, and organisations

	Activity	Implementing entities	Time-frame	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Revise the Youth Law to enhance the status, registration, financing, and sustainability of youth organizations, youth initiatives, and informal youth groups	MSY	Q2 2023	<p>- Amendments to the Law have been adopted that foresee clear mechanisms for improving the status, registration, financing, and sustainability of youth organizations, youth initiatives, and informal youth groups</p> <p>- Secondary legislation has been adopted to ensure a gender-responsive approach in resource allocation and gender mainstreaming in the creation and implementation of all initiatives</p> <p>Source: Law and secondary legislation</p>	No funding needed	Budget
2.	Compile an analysis of opportunities and assess the need for providing institutional grants to youth organizations and umbrella youth organizations	MSY Partner: RKSOM	Q3-4 2023	<p>- Analysis conducted and disseminated, featuring explicit conclusions and recommendations</p> <p>Source: Analysis</p>	EUR 700 (EUR 200 – MSY, EUR 500 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
3.	Organize a networking event for youth organizations and the youth sector.	Umbrella youth organisation Partner: MSY	Q2 2024	<p>- Organized at least one event with the participation of a minimum of 25 youth organizations, particularly those encouraging the participation of young women and marginalized groups</p> <p>Source: Activity report</p>	EUR 1,000 (EUR 500 – RKSOM, EUR 500 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

4.	Create and implement support programs for youth initiatives and informal youth groups, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations	MSY Partners: NGO, international organisations	Q1-4 2024	<p>- The competition was announced, and funds were distributed for the implementation of a national support programme for youth initiatives, including a multi-month capacity building programme. At least 12 youth ideas were supported and implemented annually, with a minimum of 30% focused on promoting gender equality</p> <p>- The competition incorporates principles of gender equality and adheres to a gender-responsive approach in resource allocation</p> <p>Source: Activity report, Financial report</p>	EUR 80,000 (EUR 40,000 – MSY, EUR 40,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
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#### Measure 2.2: Create new and improve existing youth participation mechanisms, with a special focus on encouraging the participation of young women and marginalized groups

	Activity	Implementing entities	Time-frame	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Prepare a youth-friendly version of the Youth Strategy	MSY Partners: NGO, youth, international organisations	Q2 2023 & Q1 2024	<p>- The online version tailored and published on the website Strategijazamlade.me, as well as other types of materials prepared for various subgroups of youth and other target audiences</p> <p>Source: Strategijazamlade.me</p>	EUR 2,000	Donor funding
2.	Implement a capacity-building programme for the youth sector to utilize available (including digital) mechanisms for youth participation, complementing the efforts outlined in the Action Plan for Open Government	MSY, MPA Partners: RK-SOM, LPO	Q3-4 2024	<p>- Training sessions conducted within youth services for 30 participants from youth organizations, informal youth groups, and youth initiatives.</p> <p>Source: Activity report</p>	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY & MoEd, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

3.	Develop standards for consulting and involving youth in the development of sectoral policies and services at both central and local levels	MPA, MSY Partners: international organisations, RK-SOM, NGO	Q1-2 2024	- Developed standards in collaboration with youth and youth NGOs:  - At least 3 promotional events (tailored to young people, mechanisms for regular exchange of opinions, and youth involvement in sectoral policies) implemented.  - Standards promoted among decision-makers and officials at both central and local levels.  Source: Standards and Activity Report	EUR 4,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY & MoEd, EUR 3,000 – Donor funding)	Budget  Donor funding
4.	Create Guidelines for public officials for informing and communicating with youth, engaging youth in policy- and decision-making, supporting youth initiatives, and designing programmes and services tailored to youth (youth mainstreaming).	MSY, MPA Partners: international organisations, RK-SOM, NGO	Q1-2 2024	- Guidelines created in collaboration with youth and youth NGOs.  - The guidelines incorporate gender-responsive principles in youth policy.  - The guidelines are tailored to all youth.  Source: Guidelines	EUR 2,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY & MoEd, EUR 1,000 – Donor funding)	Budget  Donor funding
5.	Train public officials to utilize the Guidelines for informing, engaging youth, and designing programmes and services tailored to youth	MSY Partners: international organisations, RK-SOM, NGO	Q3-4 2024	- Training sessions conducted for 30 officials responsible for creating strategic documents, youth focal points in ministries, and local officials  Source: Activity report	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget  Donor funding
6.	Implement Youth Dialogue (EU mechanism)	MSY Partners: all departments, RKSOM	Q2 2023	- Conducted Youth Dialogue with direct involvement of decision-makers from all Government departments.  - Report on implemented recommendations presented to the youth.  Source: Activity report	EUR 4,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 3,000 – Donor funding)	Budget  Donor funding

7.	Develop guidelines for enhancing citizen and community participation in decision-making in local self-governments, with a focus on youth involvement	Union of Municipalities Partners: MSY, LSGUs	Q3-4 2023	- Guidelines are developed through consultations with youth and include youth perspectives and suggestions.  - The guidelines incorporate inclusive models tailored to and appealing to youth.  - Published version of the Youth Guidelines.  - Guidelines presented to youth in all local self-governments.  Source: Guidelines, Activity report	EUR 2,000	Donor funding
8.	Inform and involve youth in pre-accession negotiations	MEA Partners: MSY, LSGUs	Q1-2 2024	- In collaboration with local communities and youth services, informative and consultative meetings with youth organized on current issues from the pre-accession negotiation process  Source: Activity report	No funding needed	Budget
9.	Involve youth in the creation and implementation of the Open Government Plan and e-participation to ensure it is tailored to the needs of young people.	MPA Partners: MSY, RKSOM, international organisations	Q3-4 2023	- Collaborated with youth services and youth NGOs to organize informative and consultative meetings with young people about the Open Government Plan and e-participation.  - Designed and implemented the Open Government Plan and e-participation in a way that was tailored to the needs of young people.  Source: Activity report, Open Government Plan	Current Budget	Budget
10.	Regularly implement the Youth Parliament	Parliament of Montenegro Partners: RKSOM	Q3 2024	- Current perspectives and opinions of youth on all significant topics were thoroughly discussed within the Youth Parliament, leading to the adoption of concrete initiatives deliberated upon in the Montenegrin Parliament  Source: Activity report, Parliament's Activity Report	Current Budget	Budget



11.	Ensure accessibility of youth services to all young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities	MSY Partners: all departments, LSGUs	Continuously	- Youth services implement quality standards that include guidelines for accessibility and inclusion of all young people  Source: Activity report	5000 EUR	Budget
12.	Implementation of the democratic workshop programme	Parliament of Montenegro	Continuously	- Incorporate information about youth services and opportunities for youth participation at the local level into the democratic workshop programme	Current Budget	Budget
13.	Strengthening the capacity of local governments and parliaments to enhance the utilization of existing mechanisms and develop new ones for youth participation at the local level	MSY Partners: Union of Municipalities, LSGUs, NGO, MAFW, international organisations	Q1-3 2024	- Training sessions conducted for 30 participants from local governments and parliaments.  - Training programme for 25 local government units on implementing the LEADER approach in community development with a focus on the role of youth in creating LAGs (Local Action Groups).  - Leaflets containing information.  Source: Activity report	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

**Measure 2.3: Enhance the capabilities of young individuals to participate in community development, democratic life and decision-making**

	Activity	Implementing entities	Time-frame	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Design and implement a programme to encourage the involvement and activism of young people after completing secondary school	MSY Partners: student parliaments, student organisations, RKSOM	Q1-4 2024	- A programme to empower student activism in student dormitories and on campuses was created  Source: Activity report	EUR 5,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 4,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
2.	Promotion of positive examples of youth who have contributed to changes in their communities	RTCG Partners: MSY, NGO, RKSOM	Q1-4 2024	- 100 posts about youth (events, positive stories, and challenges) were published on the RTCG and YouTube channels  Source: RTCG	Current Budget	Budget

3.	Develop and deliver educational programmes on civic education in youth services	MSY, MoEd Partners: NGO	Q2 2023 Q1-4 2024	- An educational programme on civic education was developed, with a focus on human and women's rights.  - Training sessions were conducted for administrators and volunteers in youth services for the implementation of the programme  - The programme is implemented in at least 50% of youth services  Source: Activity report	EUR 4,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY & MoEd, EUR 3,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
4.	Introduce civic education and media literacy as compulsory subjects in all secondary schools, as well as in higher grades of primary schools	MP	Q1-2 2024	- Starting from the academic year 2024/25, civic education and media literacy are compulsory subjects in secondary schools, as well as in higher grades of primary schools  Source: Activity report	Current Budget	Budget
5.	Launch regular calls for programmes aimed at strengthening competencies, including digital skills, for youth participation and activism	MSY Partners: NGO	Q1-4 2024	- The programmes cover a minimum of 200 youth from 3 regions  - The programmes also include topics on gender equality and solidarity  Source: Activity report	EUR 100,000	Budget

**Measure 2.4: Enhance the conditions for the development of volunteerism**

	Activity	Implementing entities	Time-frame	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Organize information days about volunteering opportunities in Montenegro and abroad	MSY, National Volunteer Service Partners: RYCO, Erasmus+ focal point, RKSOM, NGO	Q2 2023 Q4 2024	- Annually, a minimum of 2000 youth were informed through Information Days  Source: Activity report	EUR 2,000 (EUR 500 – MSY, EUR 1,500 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
2.	Promote volunteering opportunities and NFE programmes through Erasmus+ in collaboration with the Erasmus+ focal point for Montenegro	Erasmus+ Office Partners: Erasmus+ focal point	Continuously	- Annually, a minimum of 2000 youth were informed  Source: Activity report	Current Budget	Budget

3.	Implementation of volunteering programmes in secondary schools	MoEd Partners: MSY, NGO, MLSW	Continuously	- Training sessions were conducted for 20 secondary school teachers to lead volunteer clubs.  - At least 15 new volunteer clubs were established in secondary schools.  Source: Activity report	Current Budget	Budget
4.	Conduct actions with community-oriented organizations, organized by youth, focusing on volunteering and solidarity development, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and local self-governments	MSY Partners: NGO	Q1 2023 Q1 2024	- A call was announced and funds were distributed for a minimum of two actions per year, with the participation of at least 2000 youth  Source: Activity report, Financial report	EUR 50,000	Budget
5.	Improve the legal framework for volunteering and promote volunteering among youth	MLSW Partners: MSY, MoEd	Q1-2 2024	- The collision created by legal solutions treating volunteering solely as employment has been resolved  Source: Law amendments	No funding needed	Budget

### Operational objective 3: 3. Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration

To enhance the position of youth through effective inter-ministerial collaboration, and in line with the implementation of the envisaged 4 measures, the following Activity Plan for the period 2023-2024 has been developed.

Operational objective 3: Enhance the situation of young people through effective interdepartmental collaboration.						
	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Create an interdepartmental set of activities to improve opportunities for the development and realization of the full potential of young people, in line with Measure 3.1.	MSY, MLSW, MoEd, MEDT, MoF, Prime Minister's Office  Partners: Youth Office, LSGUs, YS, NGO, international organisations, etc.	Q3 2023	- A set of activities was developed and submitted to the Government for adoption by September 30 <sup>th</sup> .  - Youth and stakeholders in youth policy were involved in the development of the set of activities.  - The set of activities includes a mechanism for coordinating activities and efforts.  - The document also includes financial planning.  Source: Set of activities, Activity report	20 000 EUR (to be implemented in 2024)	Budget
2.	Develop an interdepartmental set of activities to enhance the inclusion and resilience of young people, in line with Measure 3.2	MSY, MoEd, MHMR, MoEc, MLSW, MPA, MCM  Partners: Youth Office, LSGUs, OS, NGO, international organisations, etc.	Q3 2023	- A set of activities was developed and submitted to the Government for adoption by September 30 <sup>th</sup> .  - Youth and stakeholders in youth policy were involved in the development of the set of activities.  - The set of activities includes a mechanism for coordinating activities and efforts.  - The document also includes financial planning  Source: Set of activities, Activity report	20 000 EUR (to be implemented in 2024)	Budget

3.	Develop an interdepartmental set of activities to enhance the health and well-being of young people, in line with Measure 3.3	MSY, MoH, MESPU, MAFW, MLSW, MoEd, MIA, MPA  Partners: Youth Office, LSGUs, OS, NGO, international organisations, etc.	Q3 2023	- A set of activities was developed and submitted to the Government for adoption by September 30 <sup>th</sup> .  - Youth and stakeholders in youth policy were involved in the development of the set of activities.  - The set of activities includes a mechanism for coordinating activities and efforts.  - The document also includes financial planning  Source: Set of activities, Activity report	20 000 EUR (to be implemented in 2024)	Budget
4.	Develop an interdepartmental activity programme to encourage young people to spend quality free time and enhance their creativity	MSY, MSY Sport, MCM, MP  Partners: Youth Office, LSGUs, OS, NGO, international organisations, etc.	Q3 2023	- A set of activities was developed and submitted to the Government for adoption by September 30 <sup>th</sup> .  - Youth and stakeholders in youth policy were involved in the development of the set of activities.  - The set of activities includes a mechanism for coordinating activities and efforts.  - The document also includes financial planning  Source: Set of activities, Activity report	20 000 EUR (to be implemented in 2024)	Budget

### Operational objective 4: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy

Operational objective: Improve mechanisms for effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy						
Measure 4.1: Establish clear mechanisms for the planning and execution of the youth policy						
	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Through the revision of the Youth Law, establish mechanisms for the effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy.	MSY	Q2 2023	- Participatory and equitable mechanisms for the effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy tailored to youth are defined in the law.  Source: Youth Law	No funding needed	Budget
2.	In accordance with the assessment of the Budget for implementing the Strategy and Action Plan, submit an initiative to the Ministry of Finance and the Government an appropriate increase in expenditures for youth policy implementation in 2024	MSY	Q3 2023	- The initiative submitted  Source: Activity report	No funding needed	Budget
3.	Implement a feasibility analysis and methodology for proposing to the Government and the Parliament the establishment of a minimum quota from the state budget of Montenegro for youth policy	MSY  Partners: NGO, international organisations	III–Q2 2023	- The analysis done and presented to the Government  Source: Activity report, Analysis	EUR 3,000  (EUR 500 – MSY, EUR 2,500 – Donor funding)	Budget  Donor funding
4.	Prepare and publish an analysis detailing the specificities of financing the youth sector at both the state and local levels	MSY  Partners: Union of Municipalities, NGO, international organisations	III–Q2 2023	- Compiled and published analysis outlining the areas, ministries, and municipalities funding activities/programmes/policies for youth.  - The analysis includes a gender analysis.  - The analysis proposes innovative and more efficient funding models, such as support instruments for ad hoc initiatives and informal youth groups, which should be regulated by law and subordinate acts.  Source: Analysis, Law	EUR 2,000  (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 1,000 – Donor funding)	Budget  Donor funding



5.	Implement new financing mechanisms for the youth sector in accordance with the findings of previously conducted analyses (4.1.3) and adopted legal norms	MSY	Q1-4 2024	- A report on the status of the implementation of the proposals drafted  Source: Document, Activity report	No funding needed	Budget
6.	Develop a capacity-building program for state officials and employees in the MSY, as well as officials in LSGUs, to enhance their skills in accessing EU funds	MSY, MFA Partners: international organizations, MoF's CFCU, LSGUs	Q1-4 2024	- Training sessions conducted for a minimum of 15 officials from MSY and LSGUs.  - Developed a minimum of 3 project proposals.  Source: Activity report, project proposals	4000 EUR (1000 EUR – MSY & MFA, 3000 EUR – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
7.	Regularly launch calls for the implementation of activities outlined in the Youth Strategy, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations.	MSY Partner: MPA, NGO	I <del>II</del> Q2 2023 Q1-4 2024	- Published and executed calls, along with prepared reports on the implementation of annual calls based on yearly action plans for executing the Strategy.  - Contributed significantly to meeting the performance indicators outlined in this Strategy.  Source: Activity report, Financial report	EUR 200,000	Budget

**Measure 4.2: Develop an effective mechanism for interdepartmental cooperation in both the formulation and execution of youth policy**

	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Establish an inter-ministerial coordination body to coordinate the planning and implementation of youth policies at the governmental level.	MSY Partners: GSG, MPA	Q3-4 2023  Continuously	- An initiative was sent to the PM's Cabinet and GSG, resulting in the adoption of amendments to the Youth Law, establishing inter-ministerial coordination  - An inter-ministerial coordination body was established.  - A set of activities plan was created.  - The coordination body operates continuously  Source: Activity report	Current Budget	Budget

2.	Implement a capacity-building programme for the coordination body	MSY Partners: HRMA, international organisations	Q1-2 2024	- Required training delivered  Source: Activity report	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
3.	Organize a conference on youth policy, focusing on inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination	MSY Partner: international organisations	Q3 2024	- The conference was organized with the participation of youth and youth organizations  - Recommendations and conclusions from the conference serve as the basis for the 2025 Action Plan  Source: Activity report	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
4.	Conduct an analysis to assess the alignment of the regulatory framework and youth policy needs with other relevant frameworks and policies, particularly those outlined in the indicators of the operational objective	MSY Partner: international organisations	Q1-3 2024	- The analysis made and findings disseminated  Source: Analysis	EUR 2,000 (EUR 500 – MSY, EUR 1,500 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
5.	Submit initiatives for aligning legal frameworks in accordance with the results of the previously conducted analysis (4.2.3)	MSY	Q4 2024	- Initiatives were submitted.  - An annual report (2024) was prepared on the ongoing alignment processes.  Source: Activity report	No funding needed	Budget
6.	Strengthen collaboration with the European Union Delegation in the field of youth policy	MSY	Q3 2023 Continuously	- An initiative was sent to the DEU for exchanging data on youth policies and practices at the EU level and supporting the alignment of youth policies in Montenegro with EU youth policies.  - A mechanism for exchanging information and support established  Source: Mechanism, Activity report	No funding needed	Budget

8.	Set up the national Youth Council	MSY	Q3 2023 Continuously	- YC established in accordance with the revised legal provisions - The YC work plan was adopted - The YC operates in continuity  Source: Activity report	EUR 2,000	Budget
9.	Build LSGUs capacities for youth participation at the local level	MSY Partners: LSGUs & Union of Municipalities, international organisations	Q2 2024	- Training sessions conducted for a minimum of 15 LSGUs. - Developed 3 local mechanisms for youth participation, in line with the best European practices at the local level (Europe Goes Local).  Source: Activity report, local mechanisms	EUR 3,000	Donor funding
<b>Measure 4.3: Create a comprehensive and efficient system for regular collection, monitoring and interdepartmental exchange of data on the situation of young people and the impact of youth policy</b>						
	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Implementing entities</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Indicators and source of verification</i>	<i>Financial estimate</i>	<i>Source of funding</i>
1.	Develop a methodology for gathering data on the status and needs of youth, as well as for monitoring youth statistics, within both existing and new research initiatives	MSY Partners: MONSTAT, international organisations, RKSOM	Q2 2023 – Q2 2024	- A methodology for collecting data on the status and needs of youth developed and published - The methodology includes data collection methods categorized by age and gender, providing a suitable basis for various analyses - The methodology is gender-sensitive and enables the collection of data pertaining to the positions of young women and men, as well as all aspects of gender equality  Source: Methodology	EUR 5,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 4,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
2.	Conduct the first regular annual survey on youth and their needs, following the previously developed methodology	MSY Partner: international organisations	Q2-3 2024	- The first regular survey was conducted  Source: survey	EUR 15,000 (EUR 3,000 – MSY, EUR 12,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

3.	Develop a national public database and research repository on youth	MSY Partner: international organisations	Q4 2024	- A national, publicly accessible database on youth has been developed - The database includes data on the status of young women and men, as well as all aspects of gender equality, with gender-disaggregated data in all areas relevant to youth  Source: Database	EUR 5,000 (EUR 2,000 – MSY, EUR 3,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
4.	Develop a monitoring and evaluation system for the Youth Strategy and activities and measures within all sectoral strategies and joint interdepartmental projects concerning youth	MSY Partner: GSG, LSGUs, international organisations	Q3-4 2023	- An initiative for collaboration with the GSG was submitted - A monitoring and evaluation system was developed, including an online system for coordinated information dissemination and implementation of youth policy and policies for youth at the central and local levels.  Source: Activity report	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
5.	Implement a capacity-building program for officials working on the monitoring and evaluation system in the Ministry of Sports and Youth, as well as in LSGUs	MSY Partner: HRMA, LSGUs, international organisations	Q1-4 2024	- Organize necessary training sessions for at least 25 officials from the MSY and LSGUs  Source: Activity report	EUR 5,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 4,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
6.	Organize a conference on local youth policy, focusing on horizontal and vertical communication and collaboration	MSY Partner: LSGUs, Union of Municipalities, international organisations	Q2 2024	- The conference was organized with the participation of a minimum of 20 LSGUs - Recommendations and conclusions from the conference serve as the basis for the 2025 Action Plan  Source: Activity report	EUR 3,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 2,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

Measure 4.4: Strengthen human capacities for youth policy implementation						
	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Develop a model of competencies, values, and work standards for officials within the department responsible for youth policy issues	MSY Partner: HRMA	Q1-2 2024	- The model was developed and posted on the Government webpages  Source: Model, Government website	No funding needed	Budget
2.	Envisage the appropriate number of employees within the department responsible for youth policy, in accordance with the analysis of required positions and job descriptions concerning responsibilities, laws, and strategy	MSY & Government of Montenegro	Q3-4 2023 Q1-2 2024	- An analysis of necessary positions and job descriptions aligned with responsibilities, laws, and strategy was completed  - Updated rulebook on the systematization of additional necessary positions, following the conducted analysis, was approved  - The Division for Youth Service Development was established  Source: Rulebook on Job Systematisation	Current Budget	Budget
3.	Carry out the recruitment of essential missing personnel within the youth policy department, following the systematization process and considering the competency model, values, and work standards	MSY Partner: HRMA	Q3-4 2024	- Jobs announced - Minimum required officers recruited  Source: Activity report	EUR 45,000	Budget
4.	Implement a capacity-building program for officials responsible for implementing youth policy within the department tasked with youth policy	MSY Partner: HRMA, international organisations	Q3-4 2024	- Arranged necessary training sessions and ensured participation in study visits, seminars, and conferences (minimum of 2 annually) on youth work, youth services, youth policy, youth participation, European standards, and practices in the youth sector  Source: Activity report	EUR 5,000 (EUR 1,000 – MSY, EUR 4,000 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding

5.	Establish a network for the development of youth policy at the local level	MSY Partners: LSGUs, Union of Municipalities, international organisations	Q4 2023 Continuously	- Initiative launched  - Representatives appointed from at least half of all local self-government units in 2023 and from at least three-quarters of all local self-government units in 2024  - Established a unified communication channel and conducted the inaugural meeting, jointly planning the conference mentioned in 4.3.6.  - Action planning for the network completed, along with the development of a system for coordinated information dissemination and implementation of youth policy  Source: Activity report	EUR 2,000 (EUR 500 – MSY, EUR 1,500 – Donor funding)	Budget Donor funding
6.	Implement a capacity-building programme for officials within the network responsible for implementing youth policy.	MSY Partner: HRMA, LSGUs, international organisations	Q1-2 2024	- Arranged necessary training sessions and ensured participation in study visits, seminars, and conferences for a minimum of 20 officials from local self-government units annually, focusing on youth work, youth services, youth policy, youth participation, European standards, and practices in the local youth sector  Source: Activity report	EUR 3000	Donor funding
Measure 4.5: Improve existing and develop new mechanisms of international cooperation						
	Activity	Implementing entities	Timeframe	Indicators and source of verification	Financial estimate	Source of funding
1.	Conduct an analysis of international opportunities to leverage support in the realm of youth policy and delineate priorities for fostering international collaboration in the youth policy domain.	MSY Partners: MFA, MEA	Q3-4 2023	- Initiative forwarded to departments for foreign and European affairs  - Joint body established and inaugural meetings held  - Conducted analysis with defined priorities for international cooperation in the field of youth policy (bilateral and multilateral, programmatic, financial, etc.)  Source: Activity report, analysis	EUR 1,000	Budget



2.	Implementation of priority activities for international cooperation in the field of youth policy	MSY Partner: MFA, MEA	Continuously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Realized international cooperation activities in accordance with the priorities defined in point 4.5.1.</li> <li>- Achieved strategic support for the development of youth policy in Montenegro.</li> </ul> <p>Source: Activity report</p>	Current Budget	Budget
3.	Implement a capacity-building programme for officials working on international cooperation tasks at the Ministry of Sports and Youth.	MSY Partner: HRMA, international organisations	Q3-4 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training sessions have been organized for officials at the MSY</li> </ul> <p>Source: Activity report</p>	EUR 2,000	Donor funding
4.	Initiate the process of Montenegro's accession as a programme country to EU youth programs (Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps).	MSY, Government	Q1-4 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In line with the findings of the analysis from 4.5.1, an initiative was submitted to the Government</li> <li>- A platform was developed</li> <li>- Contact with the European Commission was established</li> <li>- The negotiation process has commenced</li> </ul> <p>Source: Activity report</p>	Current Budget	Budget
5.	Support local self-government units (LSGUs) in their initiatives to participate in international programs in the field of youth policy	MSY	Continuously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequate support provided in accordance with LSGUs initiatives (e.g. for applications for European Youth Capital)</li> </ul> <p>Source: Activity report</p>	No funding needed	Budget



