



Youth-Inclusive
Local Communities



2023

PUBLIC POLICY DOCUMENT

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW ON YOUTH
PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH POLICIES



Funded by
the European Union



National Youth Council
of Macedonia



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PLATFORM



SFERA
INTERNATIONAL

ФОНДАЦИЯ
ЗА РАЗВОЈ НА
ЛОКАЛНАТА
ЗАБАВКА



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The main goal of the "Youth Inclusive Communities" project is to engage youth civil society organizations to provide support to their local communities, to use the existing mechanisms for participation in local policies and decision-making processes that relate to their needs and the needs of their constituents.

The main activities of the project include: strengthening the capacities of youth organizations and local youth councils through a series of workshops, monitoring the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, evaluating the inclusiveness of young people in local governments in North Macedonia, drafting policy recommendations and support of youth advocacy initiatives that increase youth participation in public policy.

The project is implemented by the National Youth Council of Macedonia, in partnership with the Local Community Development Foundation - Shtip, SFERA International Bitola and the Youth Empowerment Platform (YEP) - Gostivar. The project "Youth Inclusive Communities" is supported by the European Union.

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ON THE LAW ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH POLICIES

In 2018, following the initiative of the Club for Youth Affairs and Policies in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, a process for drafting a Law on Youth was initiated. This was the second time this process was initiated, after in 2011, at the request of the youth sector, the stated withdrew the then Draft Law on Youth.

At the national level, during the process of drafting the law, an expert working group composed of representatives of the youth sector was established, in order to contribute to the drafting of the content of the law, based on their experiences from working with young people, both at the national and local level. In the course of this process, the National Youth Council of Macedonia with the support of its member organizations and the NYCM Pool of Trainers conducted 17 consultations with young people at a local level with the aim of determining the requirements of the young people and what they would like to see implemented with the new Law on Youth.

On 14 January 2020, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia passed the law under the name "Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies".

The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies is the first legal solution in North Macedonia that guarantees youth participation and recognizes young people and forms of youth organization. As such, the law makes a distinction between youth organization, organization for young people and youth umbrella organization, and delegates the obligation to the Agency for Youth and Sports to keep a Register of the forms of youth organization. The law also defines for the first time the terms young person, youth policy, youth participation, youth work and youth worker.

In terms of youth participation, the law foresees mechanisms at the national and local level for the inclusion of young people in policy-making and decision-making processes, that is, the National Youth Policy Advisory Body and the local youth councils in all municipalities.

From the perspective of youth policies, the law itself covers the adoption of local youth strategies, as key strategic documents for youth activities planned and implemented by the institutions and municipalities.

The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies provides services for young people, that is, mechanisms for bringing institutions closer to young people and enabling their growth and

development. As such, youth offices and youth centers are defined within the law, and with respect to state institutions and municipalities it foresees the appointment of a youth officer, i.e. a person responsible for the operation of the aforementioned youth office, as well as for coordinating, implementing and monitoring issues of interest to young people within the scope of the institution's competences. The chapter on Youth Services also provides the establishment of a research center with youth-related topics by the Agency for Youth and Sport.

And finally, in terms of funding for the implementation of this Law, no less than 0.3% are allocated from the budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, on an annual level, while at least 0.1% are allocated from the budgets of the municipalities for youth for the same time period.





YOUTH PARTICIPATION

NATIONAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY

The National Youth Assembly is a body of the forms of youth organization that elects youth representatives in the National Youth Policy Advisory Body, creates priorities and policies for the representation of youth representatives, and coordinates and monitors their work¹.

The National Youth Assembly is convened by an initiative board of at least two-thirds of the forms of youth organization from the Register of the Agency for Youth and Sports.

Since the passing of the law, the National Youth Assembly has not yet been established.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY ADVISORY BODY

The National Youth Policy Advisory Body is a mechanism for cooperation between representatives of the youth sector and representatives of state administration bodies, which has an advisory and supervisory role in the implementation of youth policies and activities for young people².

The advisory body consists of nine youth representatives elected by the National Youth Assembly and eight representatives nominated by the state administration bodies. One of the representatives of the youth sector has been appointed as its president.

Since the National Youth Assembly has not yet been established, and since its composition nominates members of the National Youth Assembly, the National Youth Policy Advisory Body, has not yet been established.

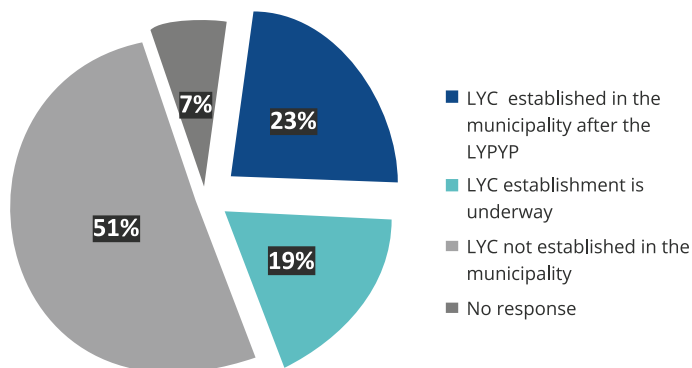
LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS

The local youth councils are bodies of the local self-government consisting of young representatives of the various forms of organization in the municipality, who have an advisory and representative role on issues of youth interest to the local self-government. Local youth councils have the role of guaranteeing youth participation at the local level, that is, at the level of the municipality. The law provides for the establishment of a local youth council in all 81 municipalities.

The law envisages a detailed procedure when it comes to creating a local youth council for the first time, but there are circumstances where in some municipalities a local youth council already exists or has existed, and in such cases the council needs to be transformed in order to comply with the legal provisions.

¹ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

² Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)



Regarding the implementation of the law on the establishment of local youth councils, only 19 municipalities, representing only 23% of the total number of municipalities, have established the Local Youth Council in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies. Some of the municipalities that responded positively on the establishment of a Local Youth Council, further stated that there was no public call with respect to its constitution, which is contrary to the steps for the establishment of a Local Youth Council according to the law. According to the research, in 15 municipalities the process of creating a Local Youth Council has been underway, in 41 municipalities no process has started, while 6 municipalities have not responded.



YOUTH POLICIES

The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies regulates youth policies at the national and local level, except for youth participation. In accordance with the law, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has the task of creating and adopting a national youth strategy, including an action plan for the implementation of the strategy at the national level. Each municipality has the task of adopting a five-year local youth strategy, including action plans for implementation at the local level.

NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The National Youth Strategy is a strategic document that establishes mid-term goals and priorities for the development of youth policies and the promotion of the interests of young people, and establishes organizational, financial and administrative measures for their implementation³.

The National Youth Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia (2016-2025) currently in force, covers the following thematic areas: youth participation, youth information, local youth work, education, employment and pre-employment support, culture, sports, health and quality of life⁴.

Despite the existence of this National Strategy, according to the new Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, a new National Youth Strategy it planned to be adopted, specifically within 18 months from the adoption of the law. **The legal deadline for adoption expired on 14 July 2021.**

In August 2022, on International Youth Day, the Agency for Youth and Sports officially announced the start of the process for the establishment of the new National Youth Strategy. The new strategy will focus on the following strategic priorities, i.e. youth participation, youth information, youth work, education, culture, health, employment and entrepreneurship, and security. Compared to the previous strategy, security is a new strategic priority in the text. The final version of the National Youth Strategy was presented in May 2023, and its adoption is expected in the forthcoming period. According to the announcement, two action plans will be prepared for the Strategy, that is, one for the period 2023-2025 and another for the period 2025-2027.

³ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

⁴ National Youth Strategy 2016-2025 (available at: <http://ams.gov.mk/images/dokumenti/mladi/National_Youth_Strategy_2016-2025_eng.pdf>)

LOCAL YOUTH STRATEGIES

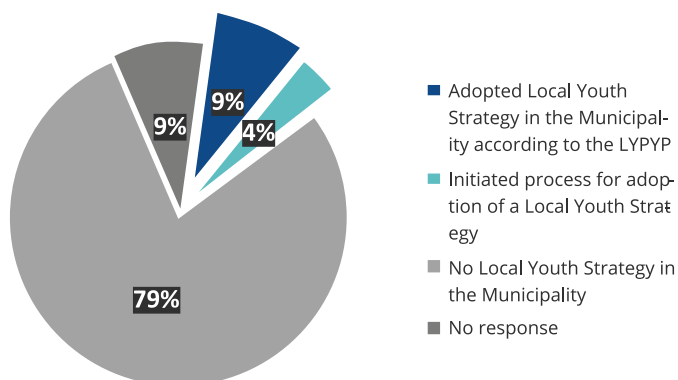
The Local Youth Strategy is a strategic document that, in accordance with the National Youth Strategy, determines the mid-term goals and priorities for the development of youth policies and the promotion of the interests of young people at the local level, and the organizational, financial and administrative measures for their realization⁵. It represents the basis for the development of the local youth policies of the specific municipality in the five years for which the strategy was adopted.

The local strategy also contains an Action Plan for implementation with defined activities, dynamics, responsible bodies for the activities and projections of budget funds, as well as conditions and indicators for evaluation for the implementation of the local youth strategy.

According to the data obtained from the conducted monitoring, in 11 municipalities consultations with young people on the Local Youth Strategy were carried out, and in 7 municipalities the Local Youth Strategy was adopted, i.e. in only 8% of the municipalities.

In the specific case, we are talking about the municipalities of Kriva Palanka, Shtip, Kochani, Krushevo, Tearce, Kichevo and Ohrid.

Regarding the action plans, only 4 municipalities answered that they have prepared an action plan.



⁵ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)



YOUTH SERVICES

YOUTH OFFICE

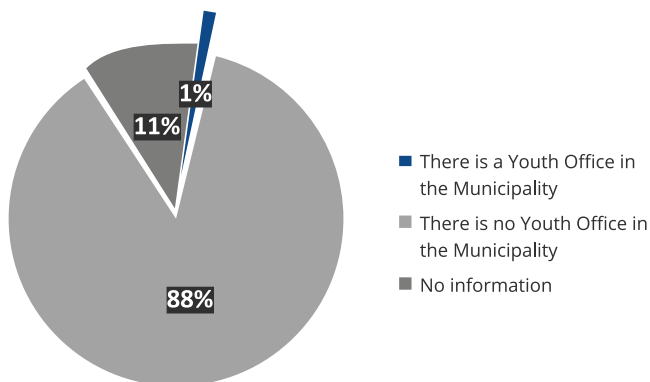
Youth offices represent the primary point of access for young people at the local level and the work for young people in the municipalities is coordinated from there⁶. The appointed youth officer in the municipality is expected to be the responsible person for the operation of the Youth Office. The Youth Office within the municipality is the place where all young people from the municipality can turn to and get information about issues related to the youth, under the jurisdiction of the municipality.

According to the law, all municipalities have the obligation to establish a youth office within one year from the date of entry into force of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

The deadline expired on 14 January 2021, and according to the information from the Agency for Youth and Sports, a youth office was established only in 1 municipality (in 1% of the municipalities). In relation to the data received from the municipalities, some of them still have the dilemma as to what constitutes a youth office and what is meant by youth center, and in addition, some of them who claim to have a youth office lack a decision to confirm that information.

According to the data received by the municipalities, 6 of them claim that they have established youth offices (7% of the municipalities), and they clarify that with the appointment of the youth officer it is understood that their role is to manage the youth office. An additional explanation they use is that the youth office is the office in which the youth officer works, without having the decision with respect to its establishment. In addition, certain municipalities by decision have allocated an office for the use of the local youth council, and consider it as a youth office per se. **Despite their claim, the real picture is that a youth office, as defined in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, exists only in the Municipality of Kumanovo.**

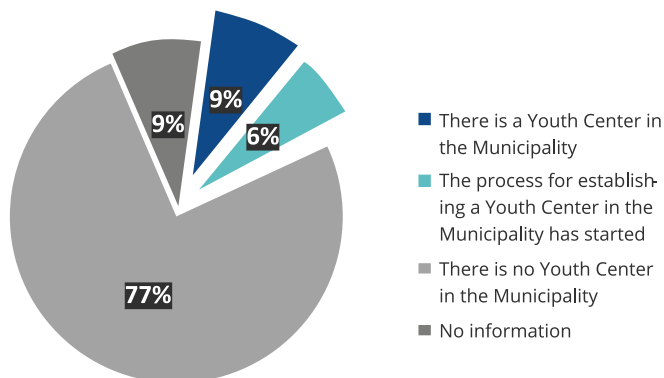
⁶ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)



YOUTH CENTER

Youth centers are places where programs are prepared and implemented that improve the welfare of young people, the development of personal, social and professional life of young people, information of important interest to young people and other aspects of young people's lives⁷. According to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, each municipality has the obligation to establish a Youth Center within 5 years from the date of entry into force of the law. **To date, according to the responses received from the municipalities, there are Youth Centers in 7 municipalities (9% of all municipalities), namely in the following municipalities: Centar, Kumanovo, Probishtip, Shtip, Veles, Kavadarci, and Ohrid.** Regarding to the manner in which the youth centers function, the research has shown that so far only 3 youth centers have their own work program, and in 2 centers the development of the programs is ongoing.

The deadline for this legal obligation has not yet expired.



⁷ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

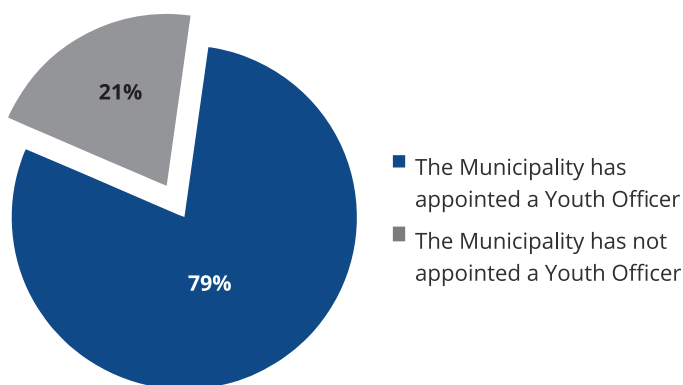
YOUTH OFFICERS

According to the law, all municipalities also have the obligation to appoint a youth officer, i.e. a person who will be responsible for the operation of the Youth Office, as well as for coordinating, implementing and monitoring issues of interest to young people within the scope of the institution's competences⁸.

The appointed youth officers are available on the official website of the Agency for Youth and Sports, along with their e-mail addresses, which young people can contact. Based on the published list, institutions and municipalities have shown the greatest interest in implementing this obligation, which primarily consists of appointing an already employed person within the institution, that is, the municipality.

From the publicly available information on youth officers⁹, it can be concluded that to date 57 youth officers have been appointed in state institutions, i.e. state administration bodies, and 64 in the municipalities. Percentage wise, 79% of the municipalities have fulfilled the same obligation.

The deadline for implementing this legal obligation expires within one year from the date of entry into force of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and it has expired since 14 January 2021, and according to the collected data, the obligation has not been fully implemented.



⁸ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

⁹ Youth Officers in Institutions and Municipalities (published November 2021), available at: <<http://ams.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Officials-for-young-institutions-and-opshtinis-AMS-VLADA.pdf>>

RESEARCH CENTER FOR TOPICS RELATED TO YOUTH AT THE AGENCY FOR YOUTH AND SPORTS

In terms of creating relevant policies for young people, the law foresees that the Agency for Youth and Sports will establish a research center for various topics related to young people¹⁰. The legally stipulated deadline for the establishment of the research center expires one year after the entry into force of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, that is, 14 January 2021.

The deadline has expired, and a research center for topics related to youth has not been established in the Agency for Youth and Sports. From there, they clarify that the Agency for Youth and Sports is currently undergoing a transformation of its structure and the necessary consents from other institutions are required before proceeding with the establishment of a research center, which will be a part of the Youth Sector as part of the agency.

In addition, this obligation of the Agency for Youth and Sport can be replaced by strategic partnerships with youth organizations that have the expertise to conduct research on the various topics of interest to young people, in order for the youth policies that will be developed to be based on evidence. In this way, the Agency for Youth and Sports will strengthen the cooperation and trust of young people, including the information about young people which will come from the young people themselves.

¹⁰ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

FUNDING

In the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies stipulates that for the implementation of this law funds of at least 0.3% are to be allocated annually from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia. In addition, from the budgets of the municipalities, the municipalities in the city of Skopje and the City of Skopje, funds in the amount of at least 0.1% per year are to be set aside for youth¹¹.

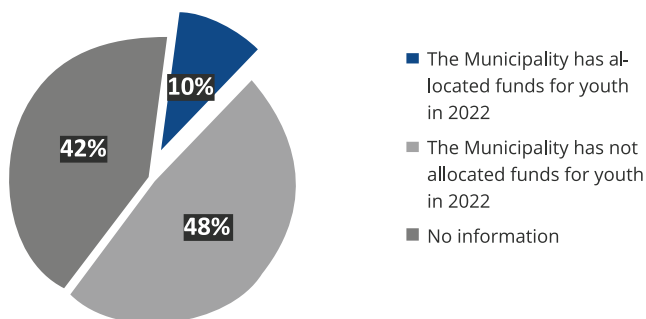
In terms of funding at the local level, municipalities have an obligation to set aside at least 0.1% of the municipal budget annually.

According to the current wording, in the law it is insufficiently clear as to how the funds provided for at the national level are distributed, that is, whether the 0.3% refers only to the Agency for Youth and Sports, or the same is provided for other institutions as well. In addition, with the funds provided for the municipalities, it is unclear whether they are provided for the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, that is, for local youth councils, youth centers, youth offices, and youth policies at the local level. For these reasons, monitoring the spending of youth funds on local youth has been a real challenge.

For the above-stated reasons, this monitoring report tries to investigate the number of the municipalities that have allocated funds for youth in 2022, and the number that planned to do so for 2023, by requesting specific information from them, the extent to which the allocated funds refer to the implementation of the legal provisions, i.e. for local youth councils, youth centers, youth offices, and youth policies at the local level.

Based on the data obtained, the conclusion is that in 2022, only 8 municipalities (10%) allocated specific funds for the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

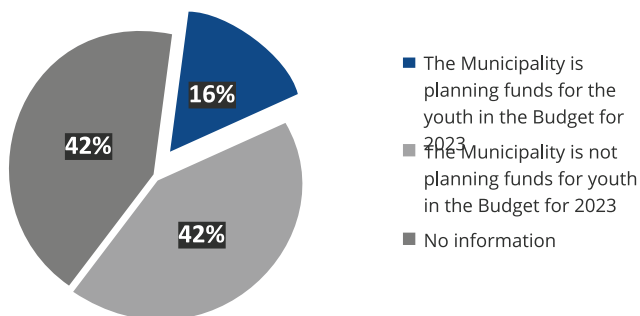
Funds allocated for the LYPYP for 2022



¹¹ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)


In terms of comparing the number of municipalities that have spent funds for the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and the number that are planning funds for its implementation in 2023, we can see an increase, but the extent to which they will be spent is a number that will remain an open question. **For 2023, the number of municipalities increased from 8 to 13 (16%).** In addition, there are examples of municipalities that allocated a budget, but it was not used, such as the Municipality of Valandovo, which allocated 500,000 denars for the local youth council in 2022, but it remained unused.

Funds planned for the LYPYP for 2023



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immediate implementation of the provisions in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, especially at the municipal level;
- Convening and conducting a supervisory hearing on the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- Strengthening the capacities of the Agency for Youth and Sports for the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies;



Establishing strategic partnerships between the Agency for Youth and Sports with youth organizations, organizations for youth, youth umbrella organizations to use their expertise to conduct research on the various topics of interest to young people, in order to see the youth policies that will be developed based on evidence;

Introduction of penal provisions in the law, and creation of mechanisms for supervision of the implementation of the law at the central and municipal level;

Professionalization of the youth officers in order for them to become familiar with their competences and obligations, and at the same time to ensure the stability of this position, and avoid rotation among the employees of the institution, that is, the municipality. Youth officers should be a separate job position, not an added competence of a person with other competences.

Clarifying the role of the youth office and how it should function.

Creating and implementing programs to strengthen the capacities of representatives of local youth councils and youth officers.

Creating manuals for the administrative procedures for establishing and managing the mechanisms and services under the jurisdiction of the Local Self-Government Units.

Clarification of the provisions of the Law that refer to funding, that is, when it comes to the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, to determine the specific institutions that will receive these funds for the implementation of the Law. Additional clarification of what these budget funds are used for, that is, whether these funds refer only to the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

Introducing a special budget item or programs for youth within the budgets of municipalities and state institutions, with the aim of transparency and accountability to young people in terms of how they are spent and whether the funds defined in the law are really allocated.

