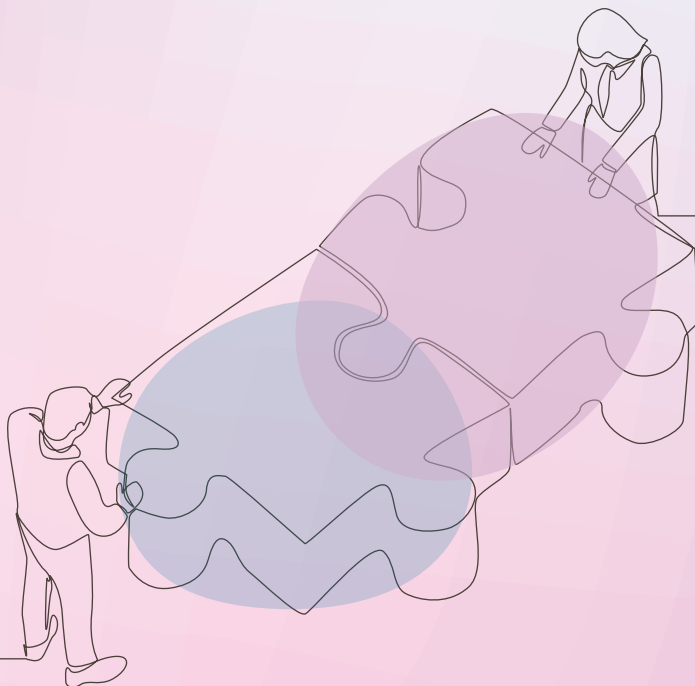


INDEX

OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL 2023 - 2024



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The main goal of the “Youth Inclusive Communities” project is to engage youth civil society organisations 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 organisations 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.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF MACEDONIA

National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM) is a platform that represents the interests and needs of young people as a link between all stakeholders and that ensures the inclusion and active participation of young people in the decision-making process at every level. NYCM was founded on 29 June 2013 by 55 organisations.

NYCM is a representative body of youth organisations in North Macedonia. The Council unites alliances, youth organisations, organisations for young people and youth branches of other organisations in order to promote and represent young people and the rights of young people in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The membership of NYCM is diverse, uniting organisations working at the national and regional level, in rural and urban environments, student organisations, branches of international organisations and other types of associations. In the process of achieving its goals, NYCM represents the interests of young people in the Republic of North Macedonia regardless of their socio-economic position, gender, race, ethnic and cultural origin, political and religious belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other type of difference.

LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Local Community Development Foundation Shtip (LCDF) was established in December 2006 and is the legal successor of the Shtip NGO Support Centre. The mission of LCDF is the effective participation of citizens in the creation of public policies and their consistent implementation. LCDF has established good cooperation with civil society organisations from Macedonia, local and national institutions, the business community and the media.

Domestic and foreign donors are partners of LCDF in supporting the development of civil society in Macedonia and the promotion of the principles of the rule of law and good governance. The foundation actively works in the following sectors: decentralization, good governance, rule of law, lobbying and advocacy, human rights, transparency and accountability, promotion of philanthropy, etc.

The Foundation's activities are used by citizens, civil society organisations, local and state institutions, the business sector, active young people, the media and donors.

SFERA INTERNATIONAL

The association for sustainable development SFERA INTERNATIONAL - Bitola was established in 2009 with a focus on the youth and all citizens in the municipality of Bitola to achieve their main goals, activities and actions as part of our mission, which is to raise awareness and educate the local communities, through informal educational methods, on topics such as environmental protection, cultural and natural heritage, healthy lifestyle, long-term sustainability of youth development and active participation of young people through volunteering in North Macedonia.

The vision of SFERA INTERNATIONAL is a clean, ecologically safe environment in the Republic of North Macedonia and the use of alternative energy sources.

Through informal education, SPHERA INTERNATIONAL encourages the practice of a healthy life, care for the environment, active participation of young people in the Republic of North Macedonia and volunteering.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PLATFORM

Youth Empowerment Platform - YEP, was established in 2015 with the aim to support the youth of Gostivar and the surrounding area by nurturing their leadership skills, encouraging their civic engagement and providing technical skills.

The mission of YEP is encouraging and empowering young people through various projects. Our goal is to inspire and train young people to take an active role in the decision-making process.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSOs – Civil Society Organisations

LYC – Local Youth Council

AYS – Agency for Youth and Sports

EU – European Union

LSGU – Local Self-Government Unit

NYS – National Youth Strategy

Inclusion of young people and consultations with them remain the bedrock of participative and transparent governance, key for enabling the youth to actively contribute to their social and local development with their own ideas and participation. Although the basis for this inclusion was laid down in the legal frameworks of the state, especially through consistent implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies¹ and the National Youth Strategy 2023-2027² practice has shown that there is significant room for improvement of their implementation at the local level.

This analysis, based on a methodological approach that includes requests for public information and research of available data from the web pages of municipalities, aims to provide a complete overview of the current practices of local governments and citizens regarding youth participation at the local level.

The analysis clearly points that there have been efforts by the local governments to include young people, particularly when it comes to informing about their activities. In that context, local governments actively use all available means of communication, enabling citizens to have a general picture about the activities of their local governments. However, this conclusion refers to informing the general public, without designing a tailored approach for the separate target groups, including the youth. The transparency of the municipalities comes down to informing the public about the beginning and end of the implemented projects, without leading consultations with the public and even less conducting separate consultations with the youth. The same applies about the access to services; LSGUs do not envisage separate tools to alleviate the access to services for citizens, and there are even less tools intended for the youth as a target group with a particular dynamic. Similar to the information, the LSGUs do not address the youth as a separate target group for which there should be provided separate tools for accessing the services of the LSGUs.

This can be particularly seen in digitalisation of services; it is expected that young people would use digital services more, however such tools are not prepared and offered by the LSGUs. Challenges arise in the field of equal and effective inclusion of youth in processes of decision-making as well as their implementation. Despite the existing mechanisms and tools present in the legal frameworks, they are

1. <<https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/862649465cf4432aadcb4119f52bfd81.pdf>>

2. <<https://api.ams.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/nsm23-27-sluzhben-vesnik.pdf>>

frequently perceived as complex and binding to be applied with minimum criteria, which limits their use by citizens and leads to selective use by the local governments. Primarily, this refers to the functioning of the Local Youth Councils (LYCs) as a mechanism designed to ensure youth perspective in all public policies. Although there is a legal basis and will for youth participation, for effective realisation and realistic inclusion of youth in local decision-making, there is the necessity of further efforts and improvements. This analysis has shown that a small number of the municipalities have established LYCs and in the locations where they are established, there is lack of understanding for their role. Namely, the interests of young people are not focused solely on local policies which pertain to them, but also on topics that are not necessarily related to the youth, but are crucial for the life in the local communities, such as budgeting, urban planning and capital investments, but it seems that consultations are frequently superficial and serve more as formality, and the LYCs are not seen as a mechanism that has to ensure the youth perspective in all policies.

The analysis has shown that LSGUs very rarely use the LSGUs budget resources for initiatives related to, or incepted by youth. Those who finance such activities do it mostly as bursaries for the best students or support for talented students to participate in international competitions. LSGUs do not have encouraging measures for development of innovation and/or entrepreneurship of young people despite the statements that migration of youth is the biggest problem in the municipalities outside of Skopje.

This analysis offers a package of measures for the local governments, citizens and other stakeholders for advancing the processes of youth participation at the local level, with the ultimate goal of achieving increased transparency, accountability and effectiveness in local governance.

10 | INTRODUCTION

The Social Index is an important research effort which involves months of research, collection of data, selection, transformation and calculation. This would not be possible without the associates in the field, one in each of the regions, who collected data. For this purpose, there were hired 8 field associates, one for each of the eight planning regions, who on the basis of jointly designed matrix with indicators collected data for each of the municipalities in the planning regions.

This analysis is within the “Youth Inclusive Communities” project, financed by the European Union and 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.

In order to increase the inclusion of youth in creating policies by the LSGUs, within the project there was designed and conducted Index of Social Inclusion of Young People at the Local Level.

This Index evaluated the inclusion of youth in local communities in North Macedonia, involving: access to services, information, inclusion in local policies, youth participation in decision-making and policy-creation processes.

The Index contains ranking of LSGUs according to social inclusion of young people, as well as examples of good practices and recommendations for improvements. The document will be published for use by other institutions. Through this activity the project partners have piloted the process, the methodology will be available to use by all stakeholders and easily applicable to monitor the improvements of local self-government units in the years after the completion of the project.

The goal of the project is improving the local governance through increasing the inclusion and social influence of youth in social life at the local level. In order to contribute to achieving this goal, the project aims to use the sustainable mechanism for youth participation in public political decision-making at the local level, laid down in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, which would have a significant and direct positive effect on local communities.

The objectives of the project entail support to local governments in developing and implementing policies through youth prism, by enhancing the mechanisms for youth participation, capacity building of youth CSOs as well as encouraging dialogue and social cohesion and fighting discrimination and segregation.

12 | LEGAL CONTEXT

The legal system in Macedonia adequately treats young people (in accordance with the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, young people are 15 to 29 years of age), with the legislation intended for young people as a separate group in the society. Despite the low implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, there have been positive steps in improving the state of youth by the passing of legislation. In Macedonia there is also in force a National Youth Strategy making it one of the few countries that have such document.

It is important to note that there have been recent significant changes in the legal and organisational areas related to youth policies and youth participation in our country. These changes stem from the adoption of the Law on Amendments and Additions of the Law on the Organisation and Work of State Administration Bodies³, a law which led to reorganisation of the Agency for Youth and Sports where all the competences of the Agency related to youth have been transferred to the newly established Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth. The establishment of the Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth is a new era in the administration and planning of youth policies and youth participation, but having in mind this organisational transition, it is imperative to revise and adjust the current Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies in order to harmonise it with the mechanisms and the structure of the new ministry and to reflect the roles and competences of the new ministry regarding youth issues.

LAW ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND YOUTH POLICIES

Basic law which regulates the youth participation in social life, as a separate group of citizens, is the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies (Official Gazette, No. 10, January 2020). The law provided a framework for youth participation and youth policies and legalised the particular care of the state for the youth, especially in circumstances of mass migration of young people. However, despite the fact that it was passed and the legally underscored deadlines for the obligations of the state towards the youth, the implementation of the law is at a low level. The four-year period after the adoption of the law was marred by economic and political crises, which were regularly used as an excuse for the delayed implementation of the provisions of the law. The young people in this period remained a priority only in

3 https://obse.mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/legislation/ZAKON_ZA_IZMENUVANJE_I_DOPOLNUVANJE_NA_ZAKONOT_ZA_ORGANIZACIJA_I_RABOTA_NA_ORGANITE_NA_DRZAVNATA_UPRAVA_SV-44-2002.pdf

electoral promises, and the lack of implementation of the law only reaffirms the youth's view that despite the declarations, in reality they are low on the decision-makers' agendas. Based on the research conducted by the NYCM in 2019, 13 % of the respondents consider that they have not been listened by the decision-makers and with this practice of the state, the youth's view will be more difficult to change.

The subject of regulation of this law are the forms of youth organisation, youth participation in the process of creating youth policies and making decisions that pertain to them, strategic documents on national and local level, activities and measures taken by the bodies of the state administration and local self-government to improve the state of young people in society, as well as informing and jointly planning activities related to and for youth.

The purpose of the law is to ensure creation and implementation of youth policy at all levels through multi-sector approach, starting from the needs and interests of young people; enhancing youth participation in policy-creation processes for youth, actively informing, promotion and protection of youth interests as well as raising awareness about the importance of youth and their social role; promoting inter-generational partnership to support youth participation in the decision-making and policy-creation processes; support and enhance youth organising; encouraging structural dialogue at national and local level; encouraging volunteering, youth activism and youth work and encouraging personal, professional and social development of youth.

The law also regulates services that will enable institutions and municipalities to get closer to young people, through the establishment of youth offices, youth centres and the appointment of youth officers.

The municipalities and the City of Skopje should establish youth office which would coordinate the work on youth in the municipalities and serve as the primal point of access for young people at the local level and thereto coordinate the work on youth in the municipalities. The appointed youth officer in the municipality should be the competent person who would be appointed to run the Youth Office. The youth office within the municipality is the point where all young people from the municipality can access, to get informed about the issues related to youth and which are in the competence of the municipality. According to the law, all municipalities have the obligation to establish a youth office within one year at the latest from the date of entry into force of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

The deadline expired on 14 January 2021. Regarding the received data from municipalities, some of them still have the dilemma as to what constitutes a youth office and what is meant by youth centre. In accordance with data collected from the municipalities, 18 of them stated to have a youth office, which is 22% of the municipalities.

Youth centres are places where programs are prepared and implemented that improve the well-being 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 lives. According to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, each municipality has the obligation to establish a youth centre within 5 years from the date of entry into force of the Law. The procedure for opening youth centres and ensuring their quality is further determined by the Rulebook on the Quality Standards of Youth Centres, which was adopted by the Agency for Youth and Sports. To date, youth centres have been opened in 10 % of the municipalities. Out of these only 3 municipalities meet the standards for quality of the youth centres in accordance with the Rulebook.

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 competences. The appointed youth officers are available on the official web page of the Agency for Youth and Sports, along with their e-mail addresses, which young people can contact. From the publicly available data about youth officers, it can be established that to date there have been appointed 53 youth officers in the state institutions, i.e. the state administrative bodies, and 65 in the municipalities. Seen in percentage, 80 % of the municipalities have completed this obligation. The data points to eventual difficulties for the implementation of the law at the local level which can also be noted from the overall slow and delayed implementation of the youth services in the municipalities.

For the application of this law, the allocation from the budget of the Republic of North Macedonia is 0.3 % on annual level. The municipal budgets, municipalities within Skopje and the City of Skopje allocate at least 0.1 % annually.

LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS

The local youth councils are bodies of the local self-government consisting of young representatives from the various forms of organisation in the municipality, who have an advisory and advocacy 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 itself provides for the creation of a local youth council in all 81 municipalities. After the harmonization of the Statute is achieved, the municipality will announce the call for the formation of an Initiative Board, composed of forms of youth organisations recognized by law, which are active in the municipality. The Initiative Board will publish the call for the constitutive Local Youth Assembly, in accordance with the Statute of the municipality. After holding the first constitutive session of the Local Youth Assembly, the Initiative Board will be dissolved.

Youth assembly members can be youth organisations, organisations for young people, political youth, pupil and student organisations and other forms of youth association. The youth assembly will announce the public call for members of the Local Youth Council. The call will be available on the web page of the municipality, municipalities in the city of Skopje and the City of Skopje. The youth assembly will elect members of the local youth council through direct elections with secret vote, where delegates from the local youth assembly have the right to vote. The elected members of the local youth councils are considered those candidates who have won the most votes from the present delegates. From the elected members of the youth local council the president and the deputy president are elected.

Regarding the implementation, the National Youth Assembly and the National Advisory Body on Youth Policies have not been established yet and 34 municipalities (representing 42% of the total number of municipalities) have established a local youth council. Representatives of the local youth council have the right to suggest items on the agenda of the municipal council, municipalities in the city of Skopje and the City of Skopje, which affect young people, to initiate issues about youth from the areas of work of the municipalities, municipalities in the city of Skopje and the City of Skopje, to initiate, participate and provide feedback about the process of local youth strategy and other policies, to distribute information to municipalities, municipalities in the city of Skopje and the City of Skopje for issues pertaining to young people and to perform other advisory and advocacy activities in accordance with this law.

Recognizing young people as agents of positive changes, a resource for innovation and a future driving force of social and economic development, the Government adopted a National Youth Strategy 2023-2027. According to the strategy, it is extremely important to constantly and systematically invest in their development, but also in establishing mechanisms for their active participation in social processes. Only by building a real partnership between institutions and young people it will be ensured that policies are inclusive, reflect and address real needs and encourage social integration. The National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2023-2027 lays down the basic principles and guidelines for action of all stakeholders in society that will lead to the improvement of the socio-economic position of young people and to the creation of an environment that will enable young people to exercise their rights, needs and interests. For the purposes of this strategy, and in accordance with historical, social, political and ethical practice to date, the term youth refers to all persons aged 15 to 29 years of age.

The main imperative of the strategy is to improve the position of young people in society by setting basic principles of action and measures that offer reform, above all for institutions. In order to approach the range of different issues related to youth rights in a structured manner, the interventions proposed in this strategy are divided into nine key areas, namely:

1. Youth participation
2. Youth information
3. Youth work
4. Education
5. Culture
6. Health
7. Entrepreneurship and pre-employment support
8. Security (violence)

Local institutions will be fully coordinated with the Agency for Youth and Sports in planning and implementing local programs for youth development. Local authorities will maintain productive and constructive communication and cooperation with youth and youth associations at the local level in order to properly implement the strategy in an inclusive and consultative process. The civil society that implements programs and projects for young people has a great

responsibility for the development of the overall life of young people. The positive approach to treating youth problems should be parallel to the alignment of its plans and programs with the goals and measures provided by the NYS. The civil society should direct its capacities in strengthening the youth to be independent and autonomous, to be proactive and to be active stakeholders in the socio-political development of the Republic of Macedonia.

Local strategies for youth are strategic documents of LSGUs which, in accordance with the National Youth Strategy, determine 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 determine organisational, financial and administrative measures for their realization. They represent the basis for the development of the local youth policies of the specific municipality in the years during which the strategy was adopted. The local strategy also contains an Action Plan for implementation with defined activities, dynamics, deliverers of activities and projections of budget funds, as well as conditions and indicators for evaluation for the implementation of the local youth strategy. The local youth strategy, together with the action plans, is developed by the municipalities in cooperation with the local youth council, and is implemented with budget funds from the specific municipality. According to the data obtained from the conducted monitoring, in 11 municipalities consultations were conducted with young people on a local youth strategy and in 7 municipalities the Local Youth Strategy was adopted, that is, only 8% of the municipalities, according to the data from 2023.

LAW ON LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS⁵

The Law on Local Self-Government (Official Gazette No. 5, January 2002) does not include specifically youth participation and youth policies, but provides general guidelines for citizen participation in decision-making at the local level which pertains to youth as well. This law establishes the legal frameworks for organising the local self-government, which can be further upgraded with other regulations.

The law provides the general guidelines for the functioning of the local self-government units and regulates: the competences of the municipality; the direct participation of citizens in decision-making; the organisation and work of the municipal bodies; the municipal administration; the acts of the authorities; property - ownership of the municipality; the supervision over the work of the municipal

5. <https://aa.mk/WBStorage/Files/Zakon_lokalnata_samouprava.pdf>

bodies; the dissolution of the municipal council; the cooperation mechanisms between the municipalities and the Government; the local self-government; the protection of local self-government; determination of official languages in municipalities and other matters of importance for local self-government.

Certain issues, such as financing of municipalities, association, etc. are elaborated in separate laws.

Municipalities are responsible for performing the following tasks:

1. Urban (urban and rural) planning;
2. Protection of the environment and nature;
3. Local economic development;
4. Public utilities;
5. Culture;
6. Sports and recreation;
7. Social protection and protection of children;
8. Education;
9. Healthcare;
10. Measures for the protection and rescue of citizens and material goods from military destruction, natural disasters and other accidents and from the consequences caused by them;
11. Fire protection.

The law contains a special chapter on informing the public, that "The bodies of the municipality, council commissions and public services established by the municipality are obliged, without compensation, to inform the citizens about their work, as well as about the plans and programs that are important for the development of the municipality, in a manner determined by the Statute. The municipality is obliged to provide citizens with access to basic information about the services it provides, in a manner and under conditions regulated by the Statute."

The direct participation of the citizens is the individual or collective involvement of the inhabitants of the municipality in decision-making on matters of local importance at different levels of decision-making. Citizens directly participate in decision-making on issues of local importance, through citizens' initiatives, citizens' meetings and referendum.

The costs of implementing the direct participation of citizens in decision-making are borne by the municipal budget.

Forms of civic participation are:

- civic initiative
- gathering of citizens
- referendum
- petitions and submissions and
- public forums, polls and submissions

The application of the legal provisions for the participation of citizens through the forms provided by law is limited, primarily due to the complexity of the processes of collecting signatures and the necessary deadlines and censuses in order to apply a certain form. The idea of these forms is to enable faster and more effective consultation with citizens on certain local issues, which is why certain issues can only be resolved with a certain legal form, taking into account the importance and weight of the decision. However, at the state level there are only a few examples of the use of these legal forms, and municipalities mostly decide for more informal ways of consultation, such as petitions, submissions, open days and direct meetings. An additional aggravating circumstance is that none of these forms of citizen participation is mandatory. Namely, only when it comes to changing the Detailed Urban Plan, there is a legal obligation to conduct a public survey, while there is no such legal obligation for any other form of such participation.

INDEX

METHODOLOGY

The index is a standardized method for monitoring the performance of a specific social group in a specific area. This Social Index assesses the inclusion of young people in local self-governments in North Macedonia, covering aspects such as access to services, availability of information, involvement in local policies, as well as the participation of young people in decision-making and political processes.

The goal of the Social Index of Inclusion is to measure the level of inclusion, progress and quality of life of young people in each municipality. Thus, the goal is to provide decision makers and citizens with data that will help them set priorities and make informed decisions. This social index of inclusion ranks municipalities according to their performance in supporting youth inclusion and equality. This ranking will serve as a tool to identify areas that require improvement and to highlight successful practices that can be replicated in other municipalities.

The social index, designed and implemented, has limitations and not all aspects of social inclusion are incorporated in it. The focus is on areas over which local authorities have jurisdiction, meaning employment, pupil/student standards, health, education, social care and culture, are not covered by this research, because LSGUs either have no influence, or that influence is exceptionally low. Certainly, the municipalities can influence through their mechanisms for improvement in these areas that are under the competence of the national institutions.

The highest level of the index framework allows us to synthesize three different, although related questions that, together, give us an impression of the level of social progress: 1) Does a municipality meet the basic needs of its citizens? 2) Are basic conditions created for individuals and communities that will increase and maintain their well-being? 3) Is there an opportunity for all individuals to reach their full potential? Each of these questions describes a dimension of social progress, respectively: basic human needs, foundations for well-being, and opportunities.

Any discussion of social progress must include whether the population of a country has the freedom and opportunity to make their own choices and be educated. Personal rights, personal freedom and choice, inclusion and access to advanced education contribute to the level of opportunity in a given community. This dimension of the Social Progress Index is perhaps the most controversial and the most difficult to measure.

In fact, it is important to point out that communities, be they high or low income, developed or developing, still face the moral obligation to guarantee equal opportunities for all citizens. The multidimensional construction of the Social Progress Index should not be interpreted as a step-by-step movement towards progress from one dimension to another. Those three dimensions are interrelated and in fact, statistically correlated. Although we distinguish these three aspects of social progress, numerous problems that comprise them are interrelated with each other to lead to delivering more significant change.

1. INDICATORS

Based on the available information from the “Youth Inclusive Communities” project and the goals that this project has in terms of the social inclusion of young people at the local level, a package of indicators was developed, distributed in 4 interest groups, as well as a way to monitor and collecting information about them (available matrix in Annex 1).

The research covers the areas in which the local self-government has competence, such as: access to services, access to information, involvement in creating public policies and decision-making and implementation of the provisions of the Law on Youth Participation for the establishment of a youth council as a consultative body of the municipal councils

2. MUNICIPALITIES

The sample on which the research will be conducted are all (80) municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia.

3. APPROACH

Depending on the importance of the examined indicators, points are assigned to each question. A total of 23 indicators, distributed in 4 groups, were analysed through the available data on the web pages of the municipalities (where available), through a questionnaire distributed to the municipalities and through interviews with decision makers.

The maximum points that each municipality can receive is 81. The research was conducted in the period from 1 December 2023 to 31 May 2024. The final ranking of the municipalities was made according to the degree (percentage) of fulfilling the obligations, i.e. according to

the index of social inclusion of young people at the local level, which is obtained as a ratio between the number of assigned points and the total number of possible points. Here, 0 is the lowest rank and 100 is the highest.

The index of social inclusion of young people at the local level is divided into 3 groups: municipalities with 71-100% completion are ranked in the “excellent” group, those with 41-70% in the “good” group, with 0-40% completion – in the group of “unsatisfactory” social inclusion of young people at the local level.

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL

INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

AT THE LOCAL LEVEL 2023

The research covered all 80 municipalities in RN Macedonia. Out of all the municipalities, only 2 from the Skopje Region (Sopishte and Petrovec) did not provide response.

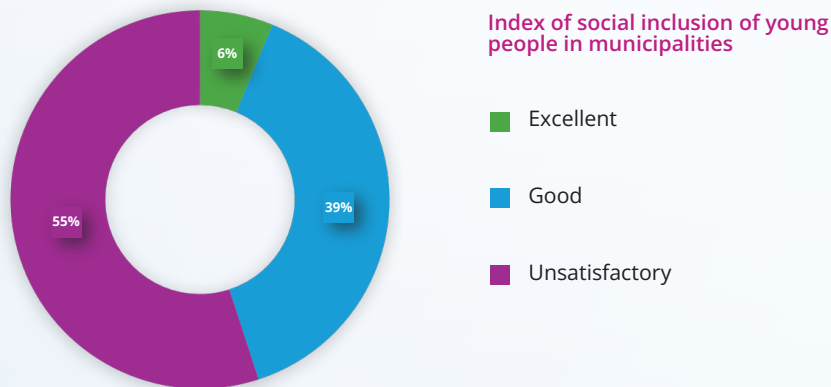
Only 4 municipalities are excellent and qualify as youth-friendly LSGUs, namely the municipalities of Ohrid, Gostivar, Kriva Palanka, Strumica and Gevgelija.

Rank	Municipality	Percentage points
1	Ohrid	93
2	Gostivar	85
3	Kriva Palanka	74
4	Strumica	73
5	Gevgelija	71
6	Tearce	70
7	Kavadarci	69
8	Kratovo	66
8	Kochani	66
10	Dojran	65
10	Tetovo	65
12	Bogovinje	64
13	Delchevo	63
14	Shtip	61
14	Bitola	61
16	Zelenikovo	60
16	Valandovo	60
16	Centar	60
19	Kumanovo	58
19	Veles	58
21	Gazi Baba	56
22	Makedonski Brod	54
22	Prilep	54

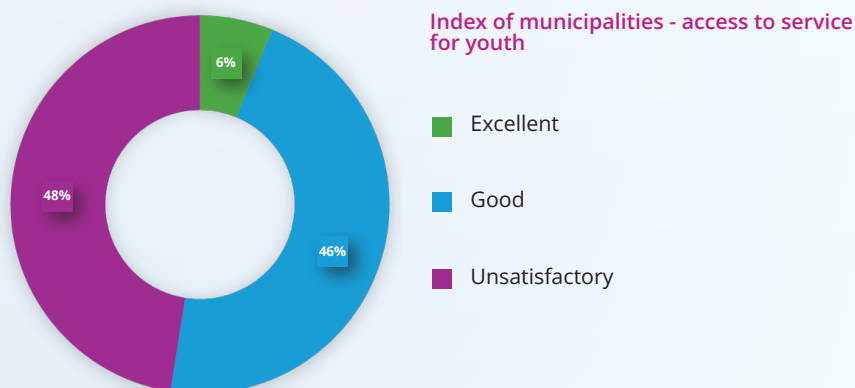
22	Struga	54
22	Probishtip	54
26	Lipkovo	49
26	Radovish	49
28	Karposh	48
28	Zrnovci	48
28	Kisela Voda	48
28	Kichevo	48
32	Demir Kapija	45
32	Debar	45
32	Mogila	45
35	Shuto Orizari	44
36	Bogdanci	43
37	Berovo	41
37	Lozovo	41
37	Krushevo	41
37	Chashka	41
37	Novaci	41
42	Bosilovo	40
43	Butel	39
44	Demir Hisar	38
44	Sveti Nikole	38
46	Brvenica	35
46	Makedonska Kamenica	35
46	Debarca	35
49	Gradsko	34
49	Centar Zhupa	34
49	Dolneni	34
49	Vrapchishte	34

49	Jegunovce	34
54	Aerodrom	33
54	Chair	33
56	Mavrovo-Rostusha	31
57	Krivogashtani	30
57	Negotino	30
59	Novo Selo	29
60	Vinica	28
60	Gjorche Petrov	28
62	Ilinden	25
62	Karbinci	25
62	Rosoman	25
65	Pehchevo	24
65	Cheshinovo-Obleshevo	24
65	Resen	24
68	Staro Nagorichane	20
68	Zhelino	20
68	Saraj	20
68	Arachinovo	20
72	Chucher Sandevo	19
73	Konche	18
74	Rankovce	16
75	Vasilevo	14
75	Plasnica	14
75	Studenichani	14
78	Vevchani	10
79	Sopishte	0
80	Petrovec	0

The average score of social inclusion of young people at the local level is 41%, which is at the lower limit of the average value for social inclusion of young people at the local level. 55% of municipalities belong to the “unsatisfactory” group regarding the social inclusion of young people at the local level. From the ranking, the conclusion is obvious that rural municipalities find it more difficult to tackle these issues and the reasons for this situation should be further investigated.

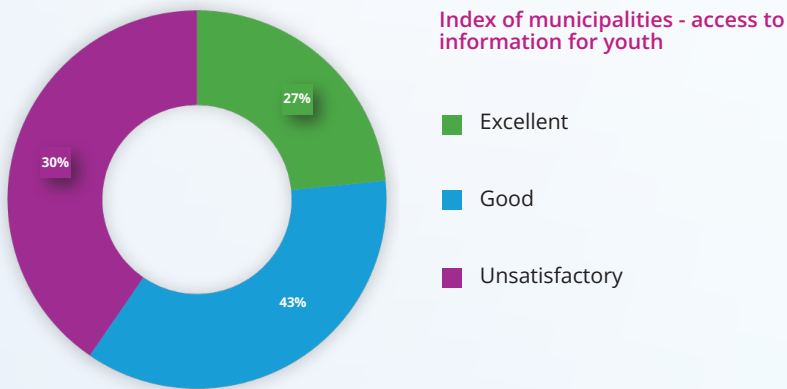


Of the 4 areas that were examined, the municipalities are the best in access to services. This group of indicators gives a general picture of the access to services for all citizens, but the access of young people was also measured, through questions that only referred to this target group. From the obtained results, 40% of the municipalities are ranked good and excellent, and the best ranked municipalities are: Ohrid, Veles, Bitola, Strumica and Gostivar, and the worst ranked are once again rural municipalities.



The second group of indicators was summarized in a separate group – access to information. The questions that were important here related to how much the municipalities focus on the youth, as a special target group, and whether they have provided information tools, intended specifically for the youth.

The results showed that in terms of access to information for young people, 30% of municipalities are characterized as unsatisfactory, 39% are good and 31% are excellent. The best ranked municipalities on this issue are: Kisela Voda, Ohrid, Berovo, Zrnovci, Dojran, Kratovo, Kavadarci, Kriva Palanka, Prilep, Gazi Baba, Kochani, Butel, Demir Kapija, Karposh, Shtip, Valandovo, Gostivar, Makedonska Kamenica, Delchevo, Lipkovo, Kumanovo and Bitola.

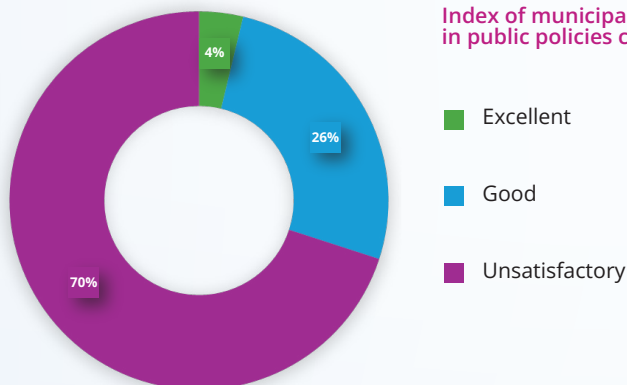


The third group of indicators referred to the involvement of young people in creating and implementing public policies at the local level. Regarding the inclusion of young people in the creation of public policies, the average rating is 30%, which is unsatisfactory on the ranking scale.

17.5% of municipalities do not involve young people at all in the creation of public policies, only 4% of municipalities are ranked as excellent in consulting young people, the rest are within the average. The best ranked municipalities in this group are: Ohrid, Zelenikovo and Tetovo.

This is related to consultations with citizens, in general. A small number of the municipalities apply tools for effective consultation with citizens in creating local policies, and the situation is much worse when it comes to the inclusion of young people in particular.

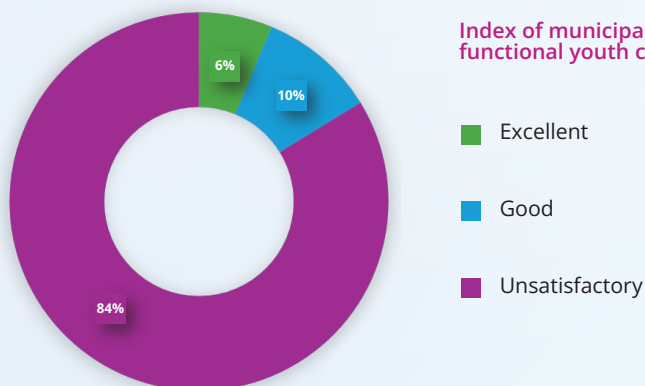
Index of municipalities - inclusion of youth in public policies creation



The fourth group of indicators refers to the legal obligation that municipalities have in accordance with the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, for establishing a youth council. Regarding the establishment of functional youth councils, the average rating is 16%, which is a rank of unsatisfactory circumstance. 48 municipalities or 60% of the municipalities have not established a youth council, and in 15% of the municipalities the council was only formally established without any participation or influence in the creation of public policies. Functional youth councils were established in the municipalities of Tearce, Zelenikovo, Gostivar, Lozovo and Gevgelija.

The poor results in this group are related to the results of the previous group; LYCs are conceived as an institutional consultative mechanism for youth involvement. The non-use of tools for citizen involvement in general, implies the non-use of this consultative mechanism.

Index of municipalities - established functional youth councils



CONCLUSIONS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the social inclusion of young people at the local level showed numerous shortcomings that require the attention of the local institutions.

The general conclusions are:

- Significant part of the legal obligations arising from the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies are not fulfilled or are partially fulfilled despite the legal deadlines;
- A large part of the measures foreseen by the National Youth Strategy have not been implemented;
- The participation of young people in society is seen more as a process of informing young people, while their essential and effective involvement is missing;
- Despite the declarative determinations that young people are important for the development of municipalities, they rarely have measures that encourage youth participation in the creation and implementation of public policies;
- Municipalities do not target young people as a special target group in accessing information and do not model communication channels according to their needs. This shows that despite the statements about the special importance of young people in society, LSGUs do not see them as a special target group.
- Municipalities are not limited by law and can develop their own mechanisms for involving young people in the creation of public policies;
- Youth councils usually do not exist, and where they do exist, they are not functional.
- Municipalities do not target young people as a special target group when preparing and implementing their budgets. Financial support for young people is mostly reduced to support of sports clubs.

- 52% of the municipalities had planned financial support for young people in the form of bursaries and in 37% of the municipalities they spent the planned funds. 15% of the municipalities that did not realize the planned funds for bursaries are mostly from the Pelagonia Region. In the Polog Region, no municipality has planned this type of support for young people;
- Civil society organisations that work on youth issues within their capabilities make efforts to make the law on youth participation and youth policies work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective citizen participation is a challenge for LSGUs and perhaps the most difficult part to implement. The analysis of the social inclusion of young people at the local level showed that the municipalities will have to make changes, primarily in the organisational structure and culture to ensure the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

Recommendations:

- Appropriately and fully implement the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies;
- Appointed youth officers should be persons whose primary focus of work will be the youth, their needs and problems. The current practice shows that the municipalities have appointed a youth officer, but the person who performs this function, does it as one of many other work obligations in other areas;
- Establish youth offices within the municipality;
- Provide physical access to young people with physical disabilities (access ramps, elevator);
- Initiate and apply different tools for the participation of young people, which are more suitable for their dynamics. This allows municipalities to be creative and innovative when consulting with young people;
- Enable easier access to the already existing tools for civic participation by the youth and civil society organisations that work with and for the youth, through their improvement;
- Establish youth councils in municipalities where they have not been established;
- Provide conditions for real involvement of young people in the creation of public policies;
- Youth councils should receive all materials for council meetings, not selected “issues relevant to youth”, receiving information only on selected issues;

- Strengthen the capacities of municipal councils for the importance and role of youth councils. To see the youth councils as their consultative body;
- Strengthen the capacities of the youth councils to responsibly and successfully perform their function - an advisory body of the councils of the municipalities;
- When preparing the budgets, the municipalities should separately plan projects and funds to support young people. To fulfil their obligation of 0.1% of the municipality's budget to be earmarked for youth issues;
- Establish youth centres in the municipalities;
- Develop closer cooperation between municipalities and civil society organisations and the involvement of civil society organisations in the design of work programs for youth centres and in their management;
- Change the focus, from informing young people, to involving them in the decision-making process, identifying problems, offering and discussing solutions, implementing jointly adopted solutions, monitoring and reporting;
- Introduce digital tools for the involvement of young people in adopting public local policies, which are more suitable for their rhythm of functioning;
- Add the text to speech option to the web page of the municipality;
- Improve cooperation with CSOs that work with and for youth.

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL			
Area	Indicator	Source of verification	Score of indicator
Access to services	Does the municipality award bursaries to young people?	Questionnaire Official Gazette	2
	Number of awarded bursaries for young people (athletes, pupils, students)	Official Gazette	3
	Does the municipality provide public transport (connection to suburban areas and villages)?	Questionnaire and field check	2
	Functional physical accessibility for disabled persons (elevator, access ramp)	Questionnaire and field check	2
	Established youth office	Official Gazette and field check	2
	If there is one, what is the number of users?	List of records from the youth office	3
	Local community offices are functional in the municipality	Questionnaire	2
	The municipality has appointed youth officer	Questionnaire	2

	The municipality has youth centre	Questionnaire	2
	Does the municipality provide premises for youth organisations?	Questionnaire	
	Does the municipality cover rent costs for premises of youth organisations?	Questionnaire	
	The municipality planned financial support for youth in the 2023 budget	Questionnaire	3
	If yes, how much did the municipality plan?	Questionnaire	
	The municipality provided financial support to youth in 2023	Questionnaire	3
	If yes, how much and for what purposes were the assets awarded?	Questionnaire	
	Whether they used item 463 to support youth CSOs registered in the AYS?	Questionnaire	
	Did they provide financial means to the youth centre and activities of the centre?	Questionnaire	

	Did the municipality provide funds for the local youth council?	Questionnaire	
	Did the municipality plan financial support for youth in the budget for 2024?	Questionnaire	3
	If it did plan, which amount is it?	Questionnaire	
	Does the municipality have e-services?	Questionnaire	
Access to information	The municipality has web page	Web page	2
	Does the municipality have integrated tool for disabled persons?	Web page	
	The municipality has an office for informing citizens	Questionnaire	2
	Statistical check – how frequent is the word 'youth' on their web pages?	Screenshot from checks	3
	The municipality has a Facebook profile	Screenshot from checks	2
	The municipality has profiles on other social media	Screenshot from checks	2
	The municipality posts content relevant for youth	Screenshot from checks	2

	Number of posted items	Screenshot from checks	3
	The municipality has published the members of the LYC and their contact details on the web page	Screenshot from checks	2
	The municipality promotes activities for youth through their web page and social networks	Screenshot from checks	2
Public policies	Young people are involved in the preparation of the local strategies	Records of presence (copy/scan)	2
	How are the youth informed to take part in the preparation of strategies?	Questionnaire	
	What is the number of employees in the municipality?	Questionnaire	
	Number of employees in the municipality younger than 29	Questionnaire	3
	The municipality has adopted a youth strategy	Official Gazette	2
	The municipality has adopted a youth action plan	Official Gazette	2

	The municipality involved the youth in the budget planning process for 2024	Questionnaire	2
	If yes, how does it involve them?	Questionnaire	
	The municipality publishes minutes form the conducted budget consultations	Questionnaire Copies of minutes	2
Youth Council	The municipality has established a youth council	Official Gazette	2
	The municipality regularly distributes materials for council meetings which are sent to the LYC members	Questionnaire	2
	The municipality distributes invites to LYC for presence/ participation in the council meetings	Questionnaire and field check	2
	Number of present LYC members at a council meetings	Questionnaire	3
	LYC holds meetings at least 4 times per year	Copies of minutes	2
	Number of submitted proposals to the municipality	Questionnaire and field check	3
	Number of accepted proposals by the municipal council	Questionnaire and field check	3

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies (<<https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/862649465cf4432aad-cb4119f52bfd81.pdf>>)
- Law on Local Self-Government (<https://aa.mk/WBStorage/Files/Zakon_lokalnata_samouprava.pdf>)
- National Youth Strategy <<https://ams.gov.mk/campaign/nacionalnata-strategija-za-mladi-2023-2027>>

