



Youth-Inclusive
Local Communities



2023

MONITORING REPORT

ON THE 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

ФОНДАЦИЈА
ЗА РАЗВОЈ НА
ЛОКАЛНАТА
ЗАБАВЛИВА



LOCAL
COMMUNITY
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PUBLISHER:

National Youth Council of Macedonia
st. Veljko Vlahovic, no. 7/1-1, 1000 Skopje
www.nms.org.mk
info@nms.org.mk

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Filip Ivkovski, Acting President

AUTHOR AND EDITOR

Filip Kulakov

ASSOCIATES

Mariana Angelova, Nevenka Longurova Girova, Aleksandar Mihajlovic, Ana Naumoska, Dea Zdravkovska, Dejan Petrovski, Ivana Atanasovska, Ivana Hadji-Nikolova, Jordancho Minevski, Kristijan Panev

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TRANSLATION FROM MACEDONIAN:

Martina Kimovska

PROOFREADING

Valentina Joshevska

LAYOUT

Andrej Badjukov

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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.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF MACEDONIA

The 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 organizations.

NYCM is a representative body of youth organizations in North Macedonia. The Council unites alliances, youth organizations, organizations for young people and other organizations 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 organizations working at the national and regional level, in rural and urban environments, student organizations, branches of international organizations 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

The Local Community Development Foundation Shtip (LCDF) was established in December 2006 and is the legal successor of the Shtip NGO Support Center. 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 organizations 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 organizations, 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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PREFACE

More than three years have passed since the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies. To a large extent, the law has not yet been implemented, especially at the municipal level.

The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies on 14 January 2020. In terms of its drafting, this process was marked by openness, inclusion and dialogue between stakeholders. Unfortunately, despite this process, which brought significant progress for the youth sector in the country, the awareness among the institutions of its implementation remains at a low level.

In 2022, the NYCM published the first Monitoring Report on the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and according to the Report, the young people and youth organizations were shown not to be a priority of state institutions, given that 2 years after the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies was adopted, a large part of the foreseen mechanisms for youth participation and youth services were not yet implemented, and what is more, municipalities showed little interest in implementing their legal obligations (13% of municipalities have established a local youth council, youth office and /or youth center), except in terms of appointing a youth officer (69% of municipalities have appointed a youth officer¹).

This monitoring report will try to give an answer to the extent to which the opportunities and mechanisms that young people have to influence the policy-making and decision-making processes foreseen in the law have been implemented, while comparing the data from the previous monitoring report, in order to determine what segments have marked the greatest progress in terms of the implementation of the law. What is new in this monitoring report is that this monitoring report was prepared with the financial support of the European Union. Its content is the sole responsibility of the National Youth Council of Macedonia and does not reflect the views of the European Union. The monitoring report was carried out within the framework of the "Youth Inclusive Communities" project, which NYCM implements in partnership with the Local Community Development Foundation - Shtip, SFERA International Bitola and the Youth Empowerment Platform YEP - Gostivar.

¹ Monitoring report on the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, 2022 (available at https://nms.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Monitoring-izvestaj_MKD-2.pdf)

Many thanks to our regional observers, who in the period from September 2022 to February 2023 actively followed the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies in their regions.





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. MPs from the governing parties and the opposition, representatives of the youth wings of political parties and representatives of the international community participated in the expert working group. The National Youth Council of Macedonia participated with five representatives, who represented the interests of the member organizations of the council. During this process, the National Youth Council of Macedonia with the support of its member organization 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 Advisory Body for Youth Policies and local youth councils in all municipalities.

From the perspective of youth policies, the law itself covers the adoption of a national youth strategy and local youth strategies, as key strategic documents for youth activities planned and implemented by institutions and municipalities. The national youth strategy is a strategic document that establishes med-term goals and priorities for the development of youth policies and the promotion of the interests of young people, and it is adopted for a period of five years. The local youth strategy is a strategic document that, in accordance with the National Youth Strategy, establishes med-term goals and priorities for the development of youth policies and the promotion of the interests of young people at the local level.

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. Within the Youth Services chapter, the Agency for Youth and Sports is envisaged to establish a research center for topics related to youth.

Finally, regarding the funding for the implementation of this law, the budget of the Republic of North Macedonia annually allocates funds in the amount of at least 0.3%, while funds in the amount of at least 0.1% are allocated from the budgets of the municipalities for youth on an annual level.

The law on youth participation and youth policies, in the shape in which it was adopted, covers many benefits for young people and youth organizations in North Macedonia, but leaves room for its expansion and improvement, especially in terms of creating mechanisms to supervise the implementation of the law at the central and at the municipal level, and ensuring the quality of the foreseen mechanisms for youth participation and youth services, as well as for the recognition of the NYCM as a National Youth Council, which is a practice in European countries, with the aim of using the already existing capacities and practices established through the NYCM towards creating improved high quality youth policies.

Three years after the adoption of this Law, in April 2023, a public hearing was held on the Law



on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, to discuss the aspects of the law that are working and the aspects that are not working - in order to determine the areas where there is a need for changes in the Law.

METHODOLOGY

The subject of monitoring of this report is the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, with a special focus on the implementation of the Law at the municipal level.

For the purposes of monitoring of the report, a monitoring matrix was developed based on which the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies will be scrutinized. In addition, 8 observers were hired, each with the role of monitoring the implementation of the Law in one of the eight planning regions, i.e. Skopje Region, Northeast Region, East Region, Southeast Region, Vardar Region, Polog Region, Pelagonia Region and Southwest Region. For the development of the matrix, two workshops were conducted in August and September 2023, in order to discuss the draft-matrix and to incorporate some of the recommendations of the field observers. The monitoring methodology was based on submitting requests for access to public information to the competent municipalities, but additionally contacting the youth officers in the municipalities where they are appointed, and checking the received data. In addition, in order to highlight the progress in relation to the implementation from the previous year, the data from the previous Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies from 2022 was used.

The requests submitted to the municipalities are available in the section with annexes of this monitoring report.

Given that the data was collected in the period September 2022 to February 2023, NYCM has made its best efforts, but cannot guarantee the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information contained in the monitoring report or eliminate the possibility of anomalies, considering that during the data processing period there is a possibility that the situation on certain issues had changed.





YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies defines the term "youth participation" as a process that enables young people to participate and make joint decisions about policies and programs that directly or indirectly shape the lives of young people².

The law provides mechanisms for youth participation at the national level, through the National Youth Assembly, and at the local level, through the Local Youth Councils.

In terms of implementation, the National Youth Assembly, and consequently the National Advisory Body for Youth Policies have not yet been established, and there are Local Youth Councils in only 21 municipalities (26% of the total number of municipalities).

NATIONAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY

The National Youth Assembly is a body of the youth organization forms that elects youth representatives in the National Advisory Body for Youth Policies, creates priorities and policies for the representation of youth representatives, and coordinates and monitors their work³.

The National Youth Assembly is convened by an initiative board of at least two thirds of the youth organization forms from the Register of the Agency for Youth and Sports. At the moment of processing the data from the conducted monitoring, i.e. based on the data published by the Agency for Youth and Sports by the end of 2021, the Register marks a total of 83 organizations, 10 of which are youth organizations, 70 organizations for youth and 3 umbrella organizations⁴.

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

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

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

⁴ Register of youth and umbrella organizations of the Agency for Youth and Sports (published on 15.12.2021), available at:<https://api.ams.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/registar-na-organizacij-zakluchno-so-15.12.2022.pdf>

NATIONAL ADVISORY BODY FOR YOUTH POLICIES

The National Advisory Body for Youth Policies 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 people⁵.

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, whose members are nominated by the members of the National Youth Assembly, the National Youth Policy Advisory Body, has not yet been established.

In addition, the Government determined the institutions that will participate in this body, i.e. made a decision and tasked the Agency for Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance to appoint a representative in the National Advisory Body for Youth Policies⁶.

LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS

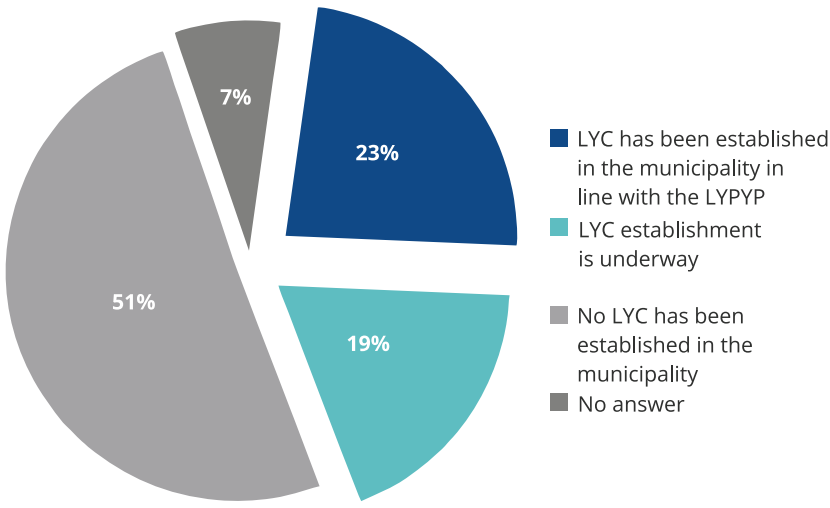
The local youth councils are bodies of the local self-government consisting of young representatives of the various forms of organization in the municipality, who have an advisory and representative role on issues of youth interest to the local self-government. Local youth councils have the role of guaranteeing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

Regarding the establishment procedure, the Statute of the municipality that forms the local youth council should be amended or supplemented, to determine the procedures for the establishment of the local youth council, including the composition, mandate, obligations and responsibilities. After the harmonization of the Statute is achieved, the municipality will

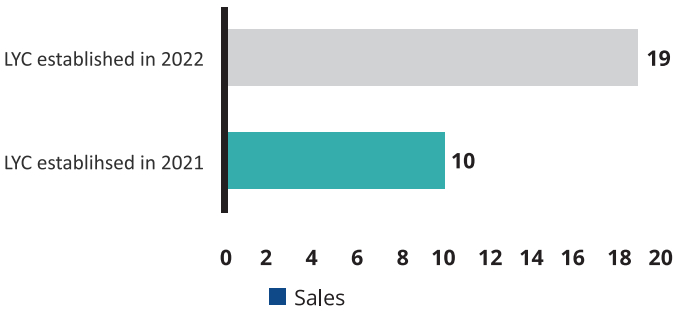
⁵ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

⁶ Press statement from the 86th session of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (available at: <https://vlada.mk/node/25846>)

announce the call for the formation of an initiative board, composed of youth organizations 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. The local youth assembly will announce the public call for members of the local youth council, which will be available on the website of the municipality. The youth assembly will elect members of the local youth council through direct elections, where delegates from the local youth assembly have the right to vote. The elected members of the local youth councils will be verified by the councils of the municipalities. This procedure is most applicable 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 existed, so in such cases the transformation of the council is needed in order to comply with the legal provisions. In order to provide additional support for municipalities and young people at the local level, especially for the creation of local youth councils and taking the necessary steps, the Agency for Youth and Sports and the OSCE Mission in Skopje developed the "Manual for Local Youth Councils". All the detailed steps are defined in the manual itself.




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 spoke positively for the establishment of a Local Youth Council, further stated that there was no public call for its creation, 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 is underway, in 41 municipalities no process has started, while 6 municipalities have not even provided an answer.



These data show progress in the implementation of the law, as 10 local youth councils were established during 2021, and according to the data for 2022, there are currently 19 established local youth councils.

POLICIES FOR YOUTH





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 for a five-year period, including an action plan for the implementation of the strategy at the national level. Each municipality has the task of adopting a local youth strategy for a period of five years, including action plans for implementation at the local level.

NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY

The National Youth Strategy is a strategic document that establishes med-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 realization⁷.

The National Youth Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia (2016-2025) is currently in force, which covers the following thematic areas: youth participation, youth information, local youth work, education, employment and pre-employment support, culture, sports, health and quality of life⁸.

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

In order to prepare the National Youth Strategy, the Agency for Youth and Sports in November 2021 published an announcement for public procurement to conduct research on youth trends⁹. The results of the research were presented in May 2022¹⁰, but unfortunately the survey itself is not available online. In August 2022, on International Youth Day, the Agency for Youth and Sports officially announced the start of the process for the creation of the new National Youth Strategy, and the process for its creation received support from the United

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

⁸ National Youth Strategy 2016-2025 (available at: <http://ams.gov.mk/images/dokumenti/mladi/National_Youth_Strategy_2016-2025_eng.pdf>)

⁹ <<https://e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/home.aspx#/dossie/75a6ee24-db90-4828-a159-ceaa28f58bc6/14>>

¹⁰ Public Administration: AYS Youth Trends Survey (available at: <https://javnaadministracija.mk/2022/05/16/ams-istrazhuvane-na-mladinskite-trendovi/>)

Nations Development Program (UNDP). The OSCE mission in Skopje and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 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 process of preparing the strategy included consultative processes, as well as the organization of events and thematic working groups in the period from October to December 2022. Stakeholders for youth policies such as state institutions, youth organizations, educational institutions, donor community and municipalities were involved in the process. For the needs of the strategy, experts were also hired for the various strategic priorities. At the end of February 2023, the draft text of the National Youth Strategy was published on ENER for comments¹¹. The final version of the National Youth Strategy was presented in May 2023, and its adoption is expected in the following period. According to the announcement, two action plans will be prepared for the afore-stated, that is, one for the period 2023-2025 and for the period 2025-2027.

Additionally, in relation to what is regulated in the law itself, and related to the National Youth Strategy, is that it should be developed through a consultative, inclusive and transparent process and its content should be consulted with the National Advisory Body for Youth, which has not yet been formed.

LOCAL YOUTH STRATEGIES

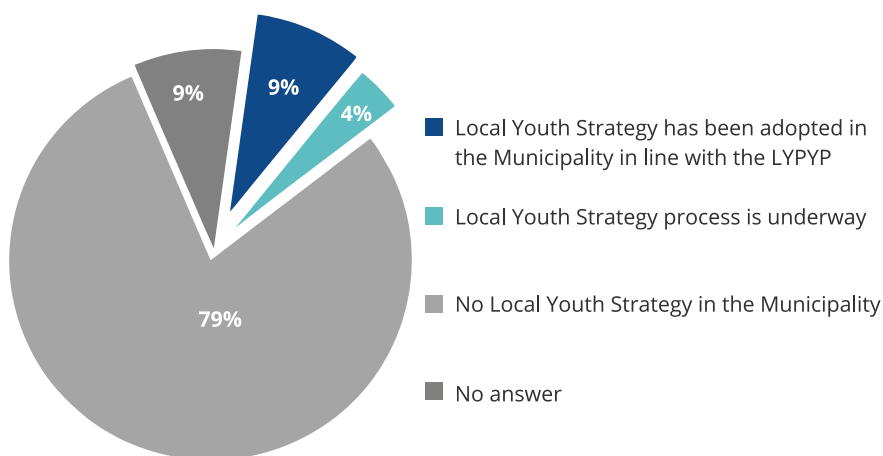
The Local Youth Strategy is a strategic document that, in accordance with the National Youth Strategy, determines med-term goals and priorities for the development of youth policies and the promotion of the interests of young people at the local level, and determines the organizational, financial and administrative measures for their realization¹². It represents the basis for the development of the local youth policies of the specific municipality in the five years in which the strategy was adopted.

¹¹ ENER: Draft - National Youth Strategy 23-27 (available at: <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?Item=newdocumentdetails&detailsid=48>)

¹² Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

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. 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 with young people on the Local Youth Strategy were carried out, and in 7 municipalities the Local Youth Strategy was adopted, that is, 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.

When it comes to local youth strategies, it is important to note that there are circumstances where certain municipalities had valid Local Youth Strategies that have expired, and there are also municipalities that, before the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, created and adopted their own local youth strategies.

YOUTH SERVICES

The Law on Youth Participation also regulates services for young people that will enable institutions and municipalities to get closer to young people, through the establishment of youth offices, youth centers and the appointment of youth officers.

YOUTH OFFICE

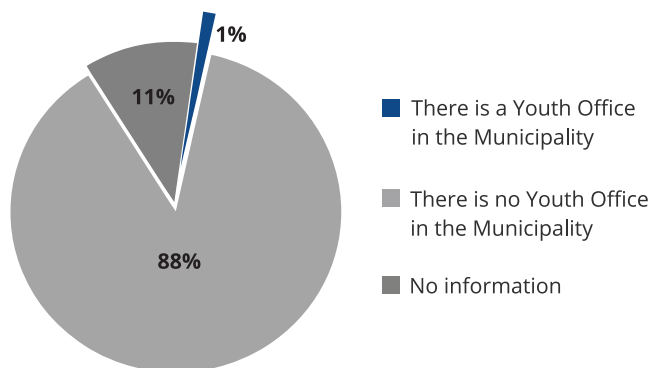
Youth offices represent the primary point of access for young people at the local level and the work for young people in the municipalities is coordinated from there¹³. The appointed youth officer in the municipality itself is expected to be the responsible person for the operation of the Youth Office. The Youth Office within the municipality is the place 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 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, and according to information from the Agency for Youth and Sports, a youth office has been 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 the 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 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

¹³ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

council, and consider it as a youth office per se. **Despite their claim, the realistic picture is that a youth office, as defined in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, exists only in the Municipality of Kumanovo.**



Regarding the comparison of 2021 with 2022, we found a decrease in the number of youth offices, but this only indicates that the municipalities are more familiar with what a youth office is, and realized that the data they sent last year was not correct.

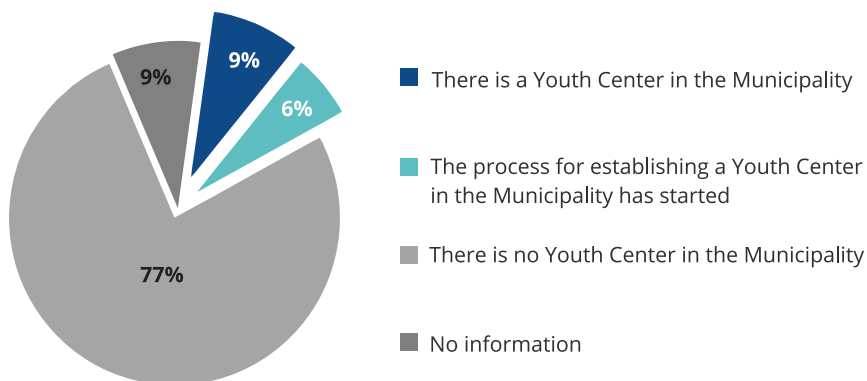
YOUTH CENTER

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 lives¹⁴. 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.

The procedure for opening youth centers and ensuring their quality is further determined by the Rulebook on the Quality Standards of Youth Centers¹⁵, which was adopted by the Agency for Youth and Sports and was developed together with the Youth Work Association.

¹⁴ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

¹⁵ Rulebook on quality standards for youth centers, adopted by the Agency for Youth and Sports, (available at: <https://smr.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Standardi.pdf>)



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. It is stated that

they are managed by youth organizations, i.e. as follows Scouts Association of Macedonia (Municipality of Center), Center for Intercultural Dialogue (Municipality of Kumanovo), GRIT Association of Citizens - Probishtip (Municipality of Probishtip), Local Community Development Foundation - Shtip (Municipality of Shtip), Local Development and Democracy Foundation "Focus" and partner organization "Dimitar Vlahov" Boy Scouts Squad - Veles (Veles Municipality), Youth Association – Creative - Skopje in partnership with the Council for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency - SPPMD (Kavadarci Municipality) and SEGA Coalition (Ohrid Municipality). 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.

In addition, in some municipalities, youth centers function with donor support, but without receiving financial resources from the municipality.

The deadline for this legal obligation has not yet expired.

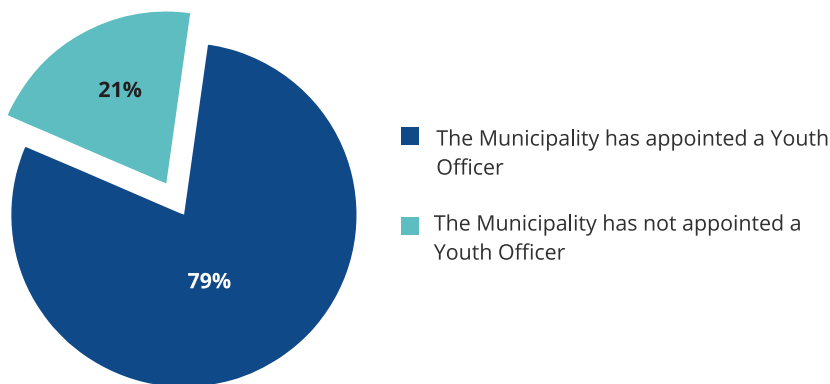
Compared to the situation with the previous year, the number of youth centers has decreased from 8 to 7, but there is a change in relation to the municipalities that claim to have opened youth centers. Specifically, in 2021, the municipalities of Gazi Baba, Gostivar, Sveti Nikole and Chair claimed that they had a youth center in accordance with the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, but in 2022 they answered that they did not. This change signals that municipalities are increasingly aware of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies and its importance.

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 competences¹⁶.

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 itself, that is, the municipality.

From the publicly available information on youth officers¹⁷, 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.



This data indicates difficulties for the implementation of the law at the local level, which can be seen from the overall slow and late implementation of youth services in the municipalities.

What can be further determined is that in the period after the list of youth officials started to be shared on the website of the Agency for Youth and Sports, there has also been a change of appointed persons after a few months. Hence, the professionalization of the youth officers is

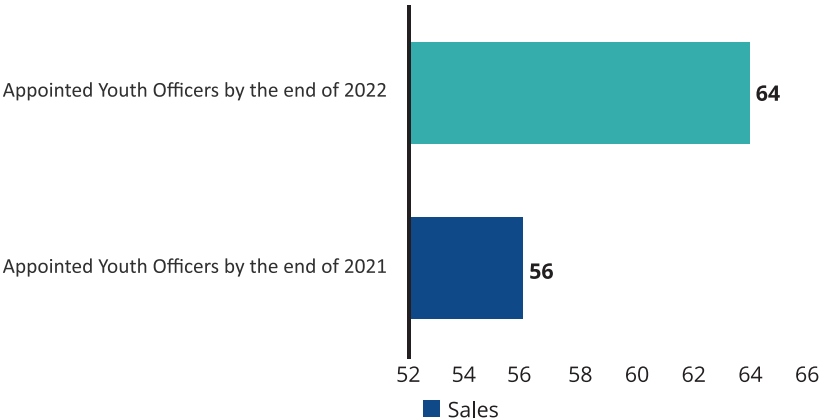
¹⁶ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

¹⁷ 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>

needed 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 not its rotation among the employees of the institution, that is, the municipality. Also, the criteria for appointing a person as a youth officer remain unknown to the public, that is, the extent to which and whether the appointed person has any knowledge or background in the field of youth policies and work with young people.

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 been expired since 14 January 2021, and according to the collected data, the obligation has not been fully implemented.


Additionally, compared to the previous year's data, the number of youth officers grew from 56 to 64.



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

In terms of creating relevant policies for young people, within the law itself, it is foreseen that the Agency for Youth and Sports will establish a research center for various topics related to





young people¹⁸. 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 within 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 to see the youth policies that will be developed 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.

¹⁸ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

FUNDING

The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies itself stipulates that for the implementation of this law funds of at least 0.3% are 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 set aside for youth¹⁹.

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

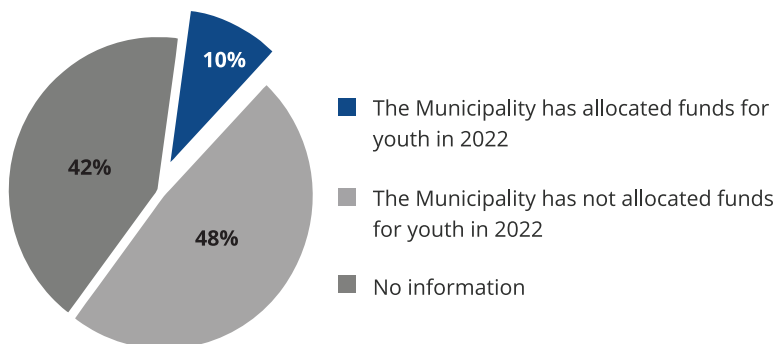
In the Law itself, according to the current wording, it is insufficiently clear as to how the funds provided for at the national level are distributed, that is, whether the 0.3% refers only to the Agency for Youth and Sports, or they are provided for other institutions as well. In addition, with the 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 is a real challenge.

For the above-stated reasons, this monitoring report tries to investigate the number of 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.

When it comes to the year 2022, based on the data from the conducted monitoring, we concluded that when it comes to activities for young people, a large part of the municipalities generally consider sports and recreation activities as such, i.e. supporting sports clubs, setting up sports fields, and the like, and a smaller part of them is specifically set aside for the promotion of youth participation and the establishment of services for young people. **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.**

¹⁹ Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies ("Official Gazette of RNM", No. 10/2020)

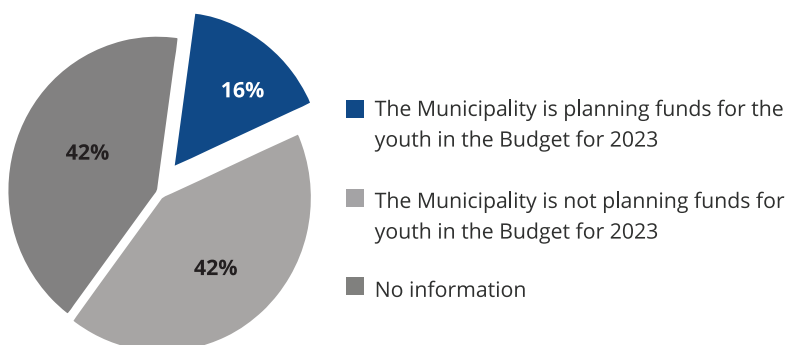
Funds Allocated for the LYPYP for 2022



An additional problem why this is so, the municipalities state that they do not spend and do not plan funds for the implementation of the legal provisions of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies because the processes related to them have not started at all. In most of the municipalities, the answer that the municipalities highlighted was that they did not allocate funds, for example for local youth councils, for the very reason that the municipality has not yet established one.

In terms of a comparing how many municipalities have spent funds for the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and how many of them are planning funds for its implementation in 2023, we can see an increase, but how many of them will be spend 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.

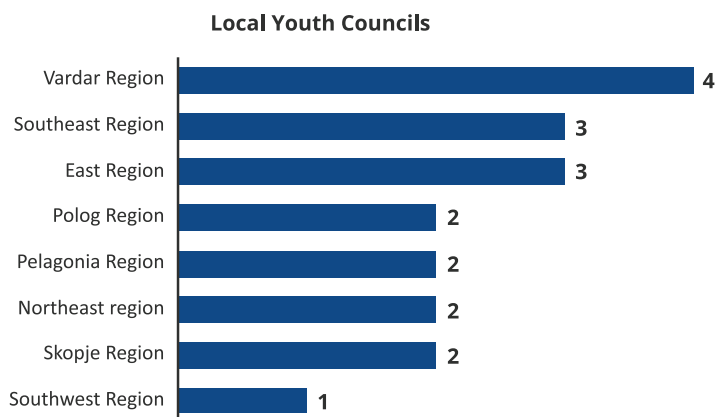
Funds planned for the LYPYP for 2023



REGIONAL REVIEW

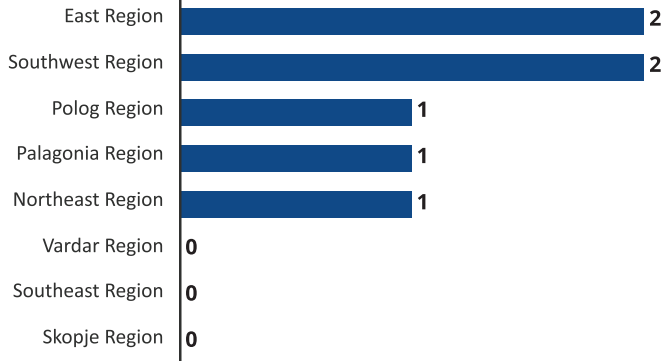
Most of the provisions in the Law on Youth Participation and Policies refer to the establishment of mechanisms for youth participation at the local level, the creation of local policies for youth, and the introduction of youth services in each municipality. From that aspect, the importance of reviewing the implementation at the regional level, i.e. in the eight planning regions in the Republic of North Macedonia, has been determined.

In terms of establishing local youth councils, the Vardar region is the leader, with 4 local youth councils established in the municipalities of Veles, Gradsko, Negotino, and Sveti Nikole.



Furthermore, in terms of adopted local youth strategies, in general the implementation of the law remains at a very low level. Only 8 municipalities across the country have adopted local strategies for young people, and only 4 have adopted action plans for them.

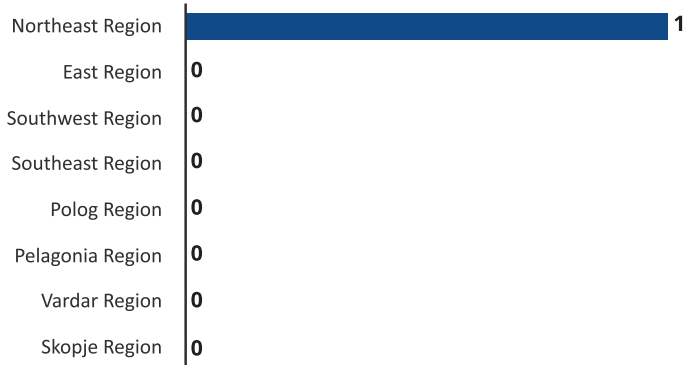
Local Youth Strategies



Regarding local youth strategies, it is important to point out that most of them are strategies that were created and adopted before the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies was passed, and they are still valid.

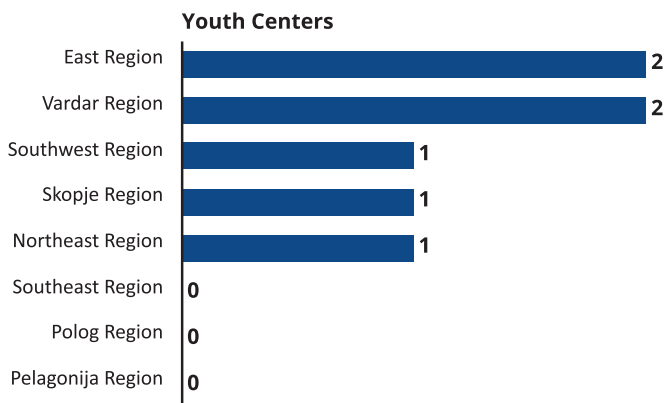
Regarding youth services, according to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, municipalities have the obligation to establish youth offices. The presentation of the data is based on the responses of the municipalities, which contradicts the data from the Agency for Youth and Sports, and which states that only one municipality has established such an office.

Youth Offices



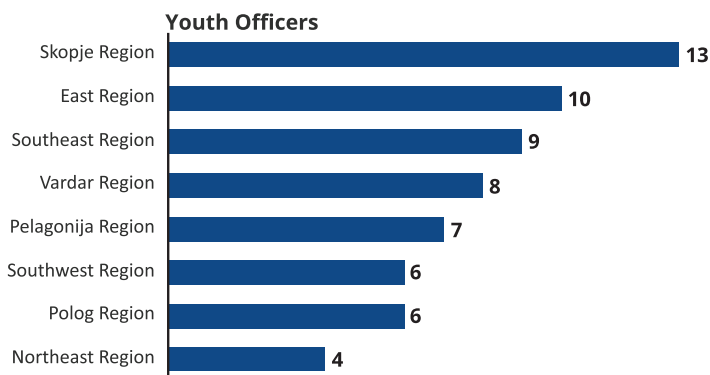
Additionally, when it comes to youth services, and according to the responses received from the municipalities, youth centers have been established in 7 municipalities, namely in the following municipalities: Centar, Kumanovo, Probishtip, Shtip, Veles, Kavadarci, Strumica and Ohrid.

In terms of regional representation, there are 2 youth centers each in the East and Vardar regions.



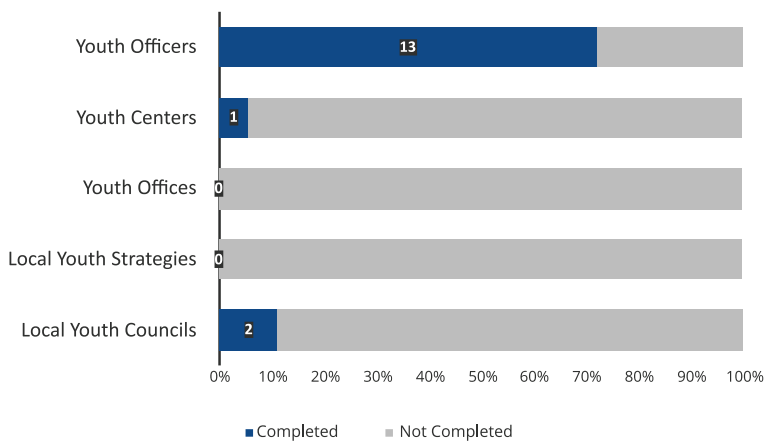
Finally, within the framework of youth services in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, the appointment of youth officers has also been foreseen.

Considering the high degree of implementation of this provision of the Law, in all regions the majority of municipalities have appointed a youth officer.



SKOPJE REGION

The Skopje region includes the municipalities of the city of Skopje and its immediate surroundings, i.e. the municipalities of City of Skopje, Aerodrom, Butel, Gazi Baba, Gjorce Petrov, Karposh, Kisela Voda, Saraj, Centar, Chair, Shuto Orizari, Arachinovo, Zelenikovo, Ilinden, Petrovec, Sopishte, Studenichani, and Chucher-Sandev. In the Skopje region, we are talking about 18 municipalities, however regardless of this, the degree of implementation of the law is at a very low level.



In terms of introduced mechanisms for youth participation, 2 local youth councils have been established in the Skopje region, namely in the municipalities of Ilinden and Saraj.

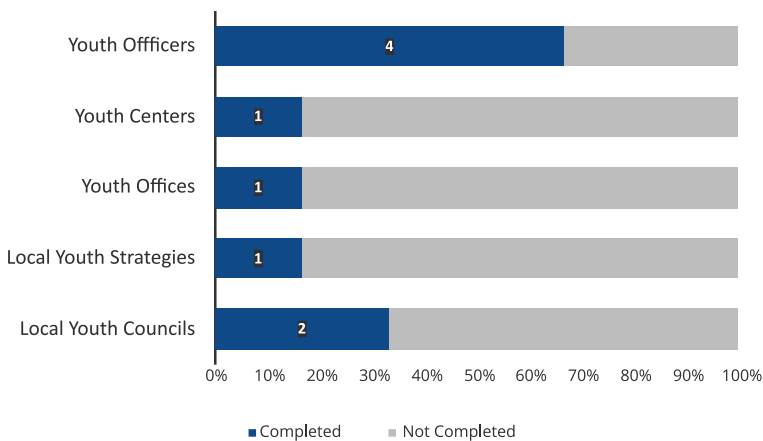
From the perspective of youth policies, no municipality within the Skopje region has adopted a Local Youth Strategy, and consequently no action plan has been drafted. Based on the answers received from the municipalities, what has been established is that some of them have already started some kind of consultation process for Local Youth Strategies, and some announce that those processes will start after the establishment of a local youth council in the municipality.

In relation to youth services, the Skopje region can boast of 13 appointed youth officers, the most of all regions, but this is because the Skopje region also has the most municipalities. Percentage wise, it is about 72% of the municipalities in this region.

There are no youth offices in this region, but one youth center has been established in the Municipality of Centar. In this specific case, we are talking about the Youth Center "Maticno", a space for young people and youth organizations, which is managed by the Scouts Association of Macedonia.

NORTHEAST REGION

The Northeast Region of the Republic of North Macedonia includes six municipalities, namely, Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Kumanovo, Lipkovo, Rankovce and Staro Nagorichane.



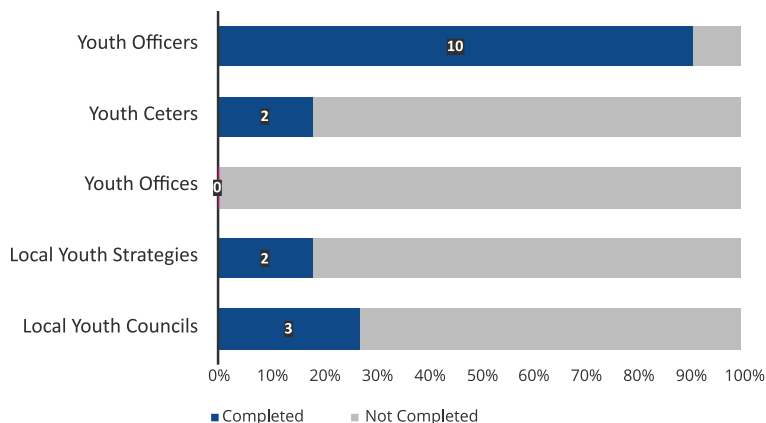
In this region, when it comes to mechanisms for youth participation, local youth councils have been established in two municipalities, i.e. in Kratovo and Kriva Palanka, and in addition, the municipalities of Kumanovo and Rankovce announce that the processes for initiating the formation of a local youth council are underway.

The municipality of Kriva Palanka is also the first municipality in this region to have adopted a Local Youth Strategy, but it precedes the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies and applies to the period 2019-2024.

In terms of introduced youth services, a youth office and a youth center have been established in this region only in the Municipality of Kumanovo. Regarding the center, we are referring to the youth center MultiKulti, which is managed by the organization Center for Intercultural Dialogue (CID). Finally, in terms of appointed youth officers, 4 out of 6 municipalities in this region have a youth officer. Only Lipkovo and Rankovce have not appointed a youth officer in this region.

EAST REGION

The East Region includes 11 municipalities, i.e. the municipalities of Berovo, Vinica, Delchevo, Zrnovci, Karbinci, Kochani, Makedonska Kamenica, Pehchevo, Probishtip, Cheshinovo-Obleshevo and Shtip.



In the East Region, until now, 3 local youth councils have been established, in the municipalities of Delchevo, Zrnovci and Kochani. Additionally, this process is ongoing in the municipalities of Pehchevo and Shtip.

Also, two Local Youth Strategies have been adopted in this region, that is, in the municipalities of Kochani and Shtip. In both municipalities, we are talking about strategies that were created before the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies was adopted, and both strategies apply to the period 2019-2023.

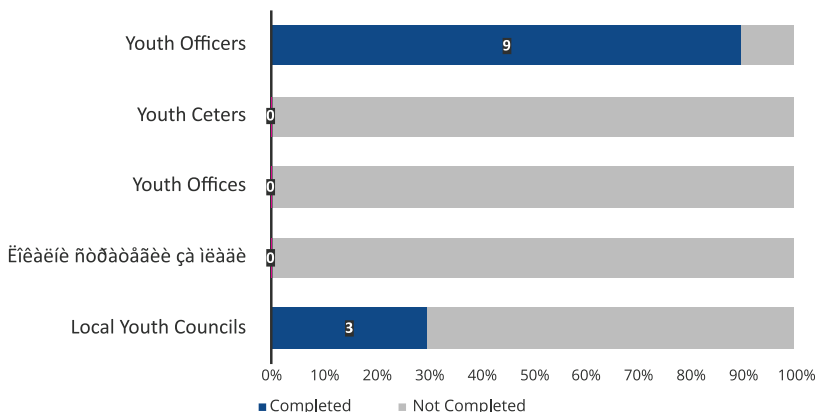
In this region, 91% of the municipalities have appointed a youth officer, that is, in 10 out of a total of 11. In the region, only Karbinici remains to appoint a youth officer.

According to the received data, two youth centers have been opened in this region, i.e. in Probishtip and Shtip, and they are managed by the organizations GRIT Citizens Association - Probishtip (Probishtip Municipality), Local Community Development Foundation - Shtip (Shtip Municipality) respectively.

In this region, there is no youth office, but the Municipality of Zrnovci claims that there is. Based on the decision made by the municipality, it is an office assigned to the needs of the local youth council, and not in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

SOUTHEAST REGION

The Southeast Region includes a total of 10 municipalities, that is, the municipalities of Bogdanci, Bosilovo, Valandovo, Vasilevo, Gevgelija, Dojran, Konche, Novo Selo, Radovish and Strumica.



The municipalities of Bosilovo, Valandovo and Gevgelija are the only municipalities in the Southeast Region that have established local youth councils.

In this region, to date, none of the legally-defined policies for youth have been adopted, that is, Local Youth Strategies are still missing.

With respect to youth services, just like the trend at the national level, the obligation to appoint youth officers has been met to the highest degree. In this particular region, we are talking about 9 youth officers appointed, out of a total of 10 in the region.

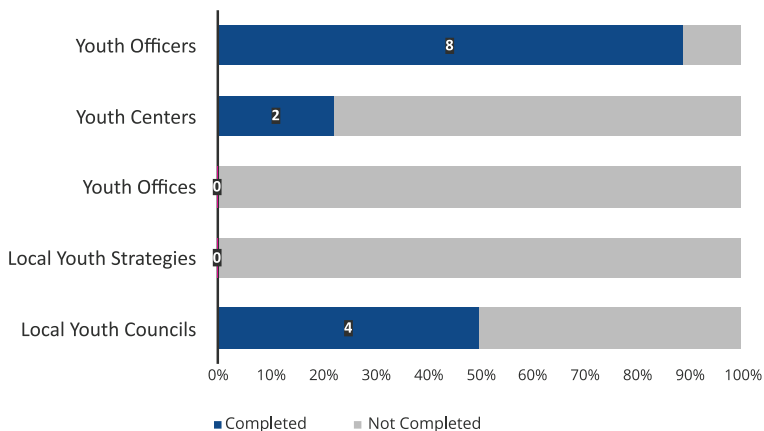
In this region, according to the data from the research, a youth office was established in the municipality of Novo Selo, but according to the answer from the municipality, we can conclude that it is an office space assigned to the youth officer, including other municipal officials.

Regarding the youth centers, only in this region the municipality of Strumica gave a positive answer about the existence of a youth center, but from the publicly available data²⁰ we can conclude that the youth center is still under construction and will be opened soon. Here it is also important to note that with respect to the youth center, the municipal council has already adopted a decision on its establishment.

VARDAR REGION

The Vardar region includes the following nine municipalities, i.e. Veles, Gradsko, Demir Kapija, Kavadarci, Lozovo, Negotino, Rosoman, Sveti Nikole, and Chaska.

²⁰ MojaOpština.mk: The ground floor of the municipal building in Strumica is transforming into a Youth Center (available at <https://mojaopstina.mk/14422/%D1%81%D1%83%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D1%81%D1%82/>)



This region has established the largest number of local youth councils, in 4 out of a total of 9 municipalities. In this particular case, we are talking about the municipalities of Veles, Gradsko, Negotino, and Sveti Nikole.

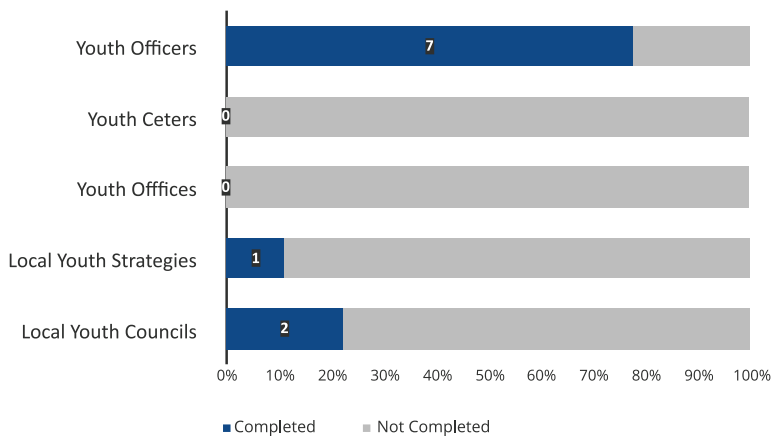
Despite the larger number of local youth councils, in this region, no Local Youth Strategy has been adopted in any of the municipalities.

In terms of services for young people, as well as strategies, there is no youth office in any of the municipalities. In contrast to this data, in 8 out of a total of 9 municipalities, a youth officer has been appointed. The only municipality that has not appointed a youth officer is the municipality of Rosoman.

Two youth centers have been opened in this region, i.e. in the municipalities of Veles and Kavadarci, and they are respectively managed by the organizations Local Development and Democracy Foundation "Focus" and the partner organization Scout Squad "Dimitar Vlahov" - Veles (Municipality of Veles), and the Youth Association – Creative - Skopje in partnership with the Council for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency - SPPMD (Municipality of Kavadarci).

PELAGONIA REGION

The Pelagonia region includes 9 municipalities, namely Bitola, Demir Hisar, Krivogashtani, Krushevo, Mogila, Prilep, Resen, Novaci and Dolneni.



Two local youth councils have been established in this region, in the municipalities of Bitola and Prilep. In the same region, only one Local Youth Strategy has been adopted, in the Municipality of Krushevo. As in the previous cases mentioned above in the monitoring report, it is a strategy that was adopted before the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and it is adopted for the period 2019-2023.

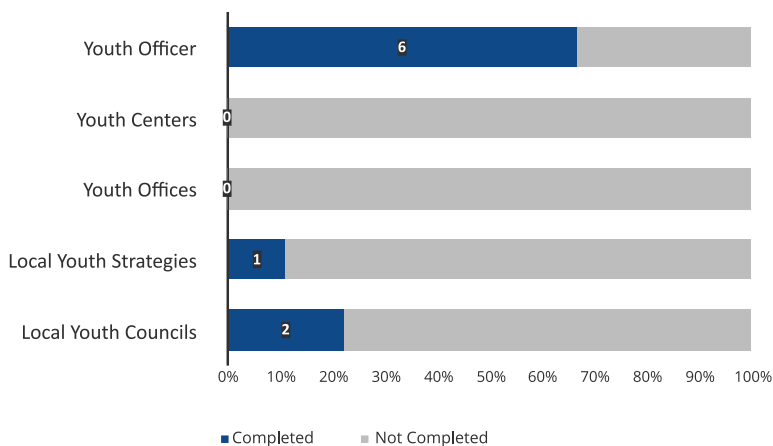
In terms of the situation with implemented youth services, in this region as in the others, the highest level of implementation is marked by the appointment of youth officers. In the Pelagonia region, 7 officials have been appointed from a total of 9 municipalities, that is, there are no youth officers in the municipalities of Dolneni and Krivogastani.

According to the collected data, the municipality of Bitola answered affirmatively to the question of whether there is a youth office in the municipality, but as a verification of the answer, they attached the document naming the youth officer and assigning him the role of managing the youth office.

Also, not a single youth center has been opened in this region.

POLOG REGION

Polog Region is divided into nine municipalities, and it includes the following municipalities, Bogovinje, Brvenica, Vrapcishte, Gostivar, Zhelino, Jegunovce, Mavrovo and Rostushe, Tearce and Tetovo.



Regarding the establishment of local youth councils, only two have been established in this region so far, namely in the municipalities of Bogovinje and the municipalities of Mavrovo and Rostushe. The formation procedure is ongoing in Tetovo, Gostivar and Tearce.

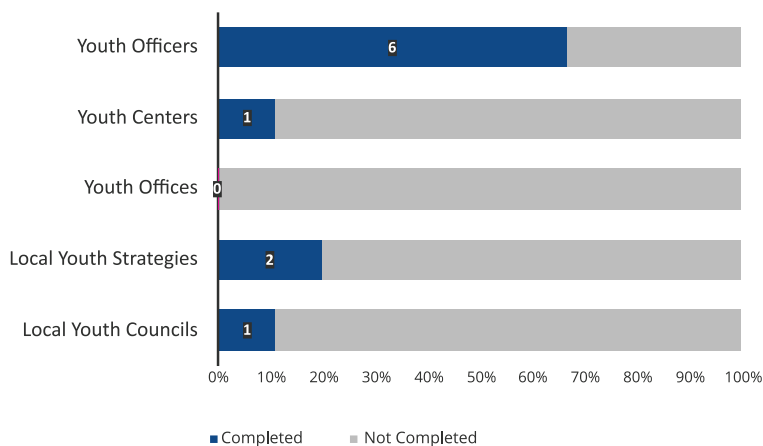
From the aspect of youth policies, the Municipality of Tearce has adopted a Local Strategy for Youth Development in the Municipality of Tearce, 2022-2026, and they have already adopted an Action Plan for 2024.

From the point of view of youth services, there is still no youth office in any municipality of this region, but the Mavrovo and Rostushe Municipality still responded affirmatively, attaching the document naming the youth officer and assigning him the role of managing the youth office. In addition to the lack of youth offices, there is still no youth center open in this region.

Finally, a youth officer has been appointed in 6 out of a total of 9 municipalities in this region, that is, the municipalities of Vrapcishte, Jegunovce and Zhelino have not fulfilled this obligation.

SOUTHWEST REGION

The Southwest Region includes 9 municipalities, namely, the municipality of Vevchani, Debar, Debrca, Kichevo, Makedonski Brod, Ohrid, Plasnica, Struga, and Centar Zhupa.



When it comes to mechanisms for youth participation, in this region only the Municipality of Ohrid has established a local youth council. In this region, Local Youth Strategies have been adopted in two municipalities, i.e. in the municipality of Kichevo and in the municipality of Ohrid. In the specific case in Kichevo, it is a strategy adopted before the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and it was valid for the period 2017-2022, and in Ohrid, it is a strategy that refers to the period 2021-2026.


Additionally, regarding youth services, there is no youth office in this region, but it is necessary to point out that the municipality of Makedonski Brod claims that the office where the youth officer works is chosen as the youth office.

In this region, the only Municipality that has opened a youth center is the Municipality of Ohrid, and it is managed by the SEGA Coalition.


The municipalities of Vevchani, Debrca and Plasnica are the only municipalities that have not appointed a youth officer in this region, and based on this data, the obligation has been fulfilled in 6 out of a total of 9 municipalities.




CONCLUSIONS




Young people and youth organizations remain low on the agendas of the authorities, considering that 3 years after the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, a large part of the foreseen mechanisms for youth participation and youth services have not yet been implemented;




Municipalities continue to show little interest in implementing the legal obligations to establish a local youth council, youth office and/or youth center, except in terms of appointing a youth officer (79% of municipalities have a youth officer);




From the aspect of the implementation of mechanisms for youth participation, the National Youth Assembly, consequently the National Advisory Body for Youth Policies have not yet been established, and there are only 19 municipalities with Local Youth Councils, which represents only 23% of the total number of municipalities;



The process for adopting the National Youth Strategy, as an obligation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, although delayed, will be finalized during 2023. A novelty in the strategy compared to the previous one is that the strategy includes a new area, that is, security and non-violence;



In 11 municipalities, consultations were conducted with young people on the Local Youth Strategy, and in 7 municipalities the Local Youth Strategy was adopted, that represents only 8% of the municipalities. Only 4 municipalities have created and adopted an action plan;



Establishing an office represents one of the biggest challenges in the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies. Municipalities do not understand the role of these offices, and as such have considered the physical offices where the youth officer is stationed, or additionally spaces that they allocate for the use of local youth councils. Only one municipality has properly established a youth office;



So far, there are youth centers in 7 municipalities (9% of all municipalities), namely in the following municipalities: Centar, Kumanovo, Probishtip, Shtip, Veles, Kavadarci, and Ohrid. They are managed by youth organizations, organizations for youth or umbrella youth organizations.



The implementation of the Law dominates in the urban areas, and is lacking in the rural areas. A positive example is the municipality of Probishtip, which, despite the smaller number of inhabitants, allocated funds to open a youth center



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



The deadline has expired, and a research center for topics related to youth has not been established in the Agency for Youth and Sports;



Based on the data obtained, the conclusion is that in 2022, only 7 municipalities allocated specific funds for the implementation of the law on youth participation and youth policies;



Based on the planned budgets for 2023, 13 municipalities allocated funds for the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies;



In the law itself, there are ambiguities regarding which authority belongs to which stakeholder, and this in itself contributes to the delayed implementation, inadequate implementation or non-implementation of part of the provisions of the law.

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 Sport 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 to 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 the 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.



ANEXES

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO THE MUNICIPALITIES

1. Has a Local Youth Council been established in the municipality?
2. If yes, how many members does the council have?
3. Has a Local Youth Council been established in the municipality?
4. Note- If yes, share the formation decision
5. If yes, how many members does the council have?
6. Note - If yes, share the formation decision.
7. Is there a call for members?
8. Note - Please share the call and a link to the call post as an attachment.
9. If a Local Youth Council has been established, provide a list of the members and indicate what form of youth organization the members of the council come from?
10. Have consultations been carried out on the Local Youth Strategy?
11. Has the youth strategy been adopted?
12. Note - If yes, please share the strategy attached.
13. Have action plans for the strategy been created?
14. Note - If yes, share the action plan.
15. If it has not been adopted, if and when is the process planned to start?
16. Has an office for youth been established within the Municipality?
17. Note - If yes, share the decision for its formation in attachment.
18. Has a Youth Center been established in the municipality?
19. Note - If yes, please share the decision on its formation in attachment.
20. If a Youth Center has been established, have programs been created?
21. Note - If yes, share the Youth Center program.
22. If a Youth Center is established, is it run by an organization?
23. Note - If yes, please list the organization?
24. Has a youth officer been appointed in the municipality?
25. Note - If yes, share the decision on his appointment.
26. How do they consult young people when creating the budget for 2023?
27. Please provide us with a record of recommendations/proposals for the 2023 budget submitted by young people and youth organizations?

28. Did the Youth Council participate in the debate on creating the budget for 2023?
29. List of proposals and recommendations that the Youth Council gave for the 2023 budget.
30. How much funding is allocated/planned for the Youth Council?
31. Total number of planned Budget for 2022. How much for the Youth Council, how much for the Youth Center and how much for the Youth Office?
32. Total number of planned Budget for 2023. How much for the Youth Council, how much for the Youth Center and how much for the Youth Office?

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација

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