

# Youth policy in Serbia



Conclusions  
of the Council of Europe  
International Review Team

Dunja Potočnik  
Howard Williamson

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



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# Executive summary

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**T**he International Review Team (IRT), constituted and co-ordinated by the Council of Europe, had the pleasure of being invited by the Republic of Serbia to carry out a review of youth policy at the invitation of State Secretary Mr Nenad Borovčanin. The Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sport (MoYS) expressed its wish to tailor a new national youth strategy in accordance with international standards and, in part, on the basis of the judgments and perspectives of a team with expertise in youth policy, as well as youth work, youth research and wider youth practice. The review consisted of two visits organised by the MoYS and insights gathered through studying documentation provided by the ministry prior to the first visit. The first visit and the documents provided led to a focus by the IRT on seven priority issues of youth policy in Serbia: 1) education; 2) employment; 3) information, access to rights and visibility; 4) participation; 5) social inclusion; 6) health and safety/security; and 7) mobility. There may be other important issues outside the parameters of these seven priorities but, rather than “spreading the butter too thin”, the IRT sought to concentrate its attention on those issues that it considered to be the most significant, and challenging, in the lives of young people and in relation to the policies directed towards them.

The IRT recognises and acknowledges the tremendous efforts undertaken by the state, in the course of less than a decade, to improve the status of youth in Serbia by devising clear policy guidelines and putting in place corresponding structures and practices at the national, regional and local level. Since the establishment of the MoYS in 2007 several crucial reforms have taken place and young people in Serbia now have the opportunity to escape the invisibility engendered by the paternalistic attitudes of the former structures that dealt with youth affairs. Alongside these substantive reforms there has also been an attempt to introduce monitoring and evaluation systems around youth policy development and implementation. However, the numerous indicators (700) elaborated by the National Youth Strategy (NYS) have not been adequate for the task of monitoring and improving the unfolding youth policy. An open panel with youth organisations during the IRT’s second visit concluded that only 20% to 30% of the NYS has been implemented satisfactorily. Respondents asserted that the Local Action Plans, on which the concrete delivery of the strategic goals have largely hinged, have been implemented to an even lesser degree, mainly due to inadequate adaptation of these plans to the needs of young people and the lack of financial and infrastructural prerequisites for operationalisation at the local level.

Despite the commendable and sometimes impressive progress in the youth field over the past seven years, this review has produced conclusions on seven cross-cutting issues at the heart of youth policy in Serbia that suggest there are serious obstacles to the further development and implementation of a coherent youth policy:

- ▶ centralisation and politicisation;
- ▶ transparency;
- ▶ civic versus traditional structures;
- ▶ horizontal and vertical communication;
- ▶ weaknesses in intersectoral co-operation;
- ▶ fragmentation of the youth field and resources;
- ▶ lack of sustainability.

Following the elucidation and discussion of these obstacles, and in the spirit of a critical constructive approach to the review, the IRT also provides recommendations directed towards both governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations in the field of youth.



# Acknowledgements

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**T**he International Review Team would like to express thanks for the invitation and warm welcome extended by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sport Nenad Borovčanin and his team, led by Snežana Klašnja, Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Youth and Sport and Aleksandra Mitrović Knežević, Head of Department for Strategy and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia. We are thankful for the help provided during the preparation process, especially for the enormous effort put into translation and the provision of key youth policy documents before the first visit. Our work was supported and enabled by a high-quality programme, and a warm atmosphere and spirit of co-operation. We are indebted to those associated with the Ministry of Youth and Sport who accompanied us and, less formally, provided further explanation and clarification of Serbian youth policy. We would also like to thank those from other governmental bodies, especially the experts from the ministries and representatives of regional and local self-government.

The IRT also extends its thanks and appreciation to the members of youth organisations who so vividly depicted youth status and attitudes in Serbia for our benefit, as well as the complex trajectories undergone in recent years by both actors and institutions in Serbian youth policy.

We would also like to express our thanks to Ms Antje Rothmund, then Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade (though now Head of the Youth Department within the Council of Europe Directorate-General for Democratic Participation and Citizenship in Strasbourg), for the hospitality she extended to us, both formally and more socially, on several occasions during our two visits to Serbia.



# List of abbreviations

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AP	Autonomous Province
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CSO	civil society organisation
EU	European Union
EYRICA	European Youth Information and Counselling Agency
IRT	International Review Team
KOMS	Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije (National Youth Council)
LYC	Local Youth Council
LYO	Local Youth Office
LYOC	Local Youth Office Co-ordinator
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sport
MESTD	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
NAPOR	Nacionalna Asocijacija Praktičara/ki Omladinskog Rada (National Association of Youth Work Practitioners)
NES	National Employment Service
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NYS	National Youth Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SUS	Student Union of Serbia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YiA	Youth in Action
EVS	European Voluntary Service
YC	Youth Council – Advisory body to the Government



# Introduction

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## BACKGROUND AND FOCUS

According to the 2011 census Serbia has a population of 7.12 million, with just over 1.3 million young people (18.4% of the population) aged between 15 and 29.<sup>1</sup> The Republic of Serbia is located at the crossroads of central and South-Eastern Europe, sharing borders with Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania through the disputed region of Kosovo.<sup>2</sup> In 2006, after Montenegro voted in a referendum for independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, Serbia became a stand-alone sovereign state. Serbia’s trajectory towards European Union (EU) membership has been fraught with difficulties largely stemming from the multiple transitions undergone since 1990: from socialism to capitalism, from authoritarianism to democracy, and from war to peace. EU accession negotiations were launched in January 2014, after a Stabilisation and Association Agreement entered into force on 1 September 2013.

Contemporary Serbians, including its young people, still feel the burden of the country’s socialist past and the break-up of Yugoslavia. Despite democratic changes undergone since 2000, young people in Serbia continue to suffer from adverse political and economic circumstances. Youth exclusion from the labour market and financial autonomy is very often accompanied by youth exclusion from decision-making processes. In this regard, young people in Serbia:

share certain features of their status and everyday lives with their counterparts in other post-socialist countries: high unemployment, precarious labour markets, scarce housing, collapse in social security systems that leaves them with no institutional “safety net”, high reliance on family resources, which is supported by the state, thereby shaping a particular post-socialist type of sub-protective (familistic) transitional regime. On the other hand, specific features stem from a particular social context of two phases of anomic post-socialist transformation during the last two decades in Serbia: *blocked transformation* in the 1990s and *prolonged transformation* since political changes in 2000 (Tomanović et al. 2012: 297, emphasis original).

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1. The officially used age range for youth.
  2. All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

EU membership negotiations began in January 2014, but Serbia continued to struggle with political and economic consolidation, a situation exacerbated by the prolonged economic crisis.

Aside from political life, economic activity in Serbia has suffered the most, and young people are strongly and usually negatively affected by labour market developments. Although the Human Development Index for Serbia has gradually increased,<sup>3</sup> unemployment is still on the rise (20.8%),<sup>4</sup> with a youth unemployment rate of 51.2% and absolute poverty rate of 10%. Completion of elementary school is reasonably satisfactory (96.6%) but the high school completion rate is 83.3%. However, due to the slow pace of educational reforms, and the non-adjustment of the curricula to labour market needs, the Serbian labour market is marked both by a high level of long-term unemployment and significant levels of unemployment among a highly skilled workforce. South and south-west Serbia remain the most economically and socially deprived regions; the more developed north offers greater possibilities to young people, while the south lags in economic development and infrastructure. This is especially evident in the mostly rural and agricultural context of the south, which in turn drives migration of young people to urban centres, namely Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Subotica and Kragujevac, which together comprise almost 50% of the Serbian population. Nevertheless, even though young people may move to urban centres for studies or employment, many fail to obtain the jobs they want and return to their rural homes, triggering a kind of vicious circle of unrealised life goals.

The most recent study on the status of youth in Serbia (Tomanović et al. 2012) provides detailed insights into the factors that contribute to the blocked perspective of young people in Serbia. The opening data point to the slightly better status of young people in Serbia today in comparison to 2003, as there are now fewer unemployed (23.8% v. 31.5%) and more employed (49.9% v. 34.8%), while the number of students has decreased (26.3% v. 33.7%) (2012: 81). However, the possibilities for youth autonomy are still limited. Over a third (37.5%) of young people do not have an independent source of funds (such as support from parents, sometimes through remittances from friends and relatives abroad), a similar proportion (36.5%) rank below the national average in terms of the resources they possess and a further fifth (16.6%) are on a par with the national average (2012: 56). The inadequacy of their financial resources influences the expectations of youth with regard to parental financial support; almost 50% of youth aged 19 to 20 expect their parents to completely support them, 20% expect partial support and another fifth would like to be financially independent (2012: 58). The other cohorts (up to age 29) have lower expectations with regard to parental financial support, although the great proportion of young people still live with their parents. Almost three quarters (72%) of the youngest cohort (aged 19 to 20), two thirds of those aged 24 to 25, and just over half (51.5%) of the oldest cohort (aged 29 to 30) live with their parents. It should also be added that 37% of Serbians

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3. Serbia is ranked 77 out of 187 countries. Available at [www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2014/07/24/serbia-ranks-77-out-of-187-countries-in-human-development-index-/](http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2014/07/24/serbia-ranks-77-out-of-187-countries-in-human-development-index-/), accessed 18 August 2015.

4. National Statistical Office.

aged 34 to 35 (thus not falling within the Serbian classification of youth) also live with their parents. Interestingly, a great proportion of youth who declare themselves to be financially completely independent still live with their parents. Two thirds of these are in the youngest cohort (19 to 20), 60% in the 24 to 25 age group and 43% in the oldest cohort (20 to 30) (2012: 61). Economic dependence is most obvious among young people with only primary education (81%), those with vocational education (58.7%) and youth with general secondary education (58.7%), while “only” just over half (52.5%) of highly educated youth rely on parental support (2012: 60). As for the non-financial aspects of expectations from parents, 47% of youth expect help in finding a job, 28.6% in finding housing, 65% in obtaining an educational degree, and around 30% in raising their own children (2012: 71).

This comprehensive survey also included usage of media and the level of social and political participation of youth. The data show that Serbia is one of the least developed countries in terms of Internet usage in Europe, with only 39% of the population accessing it, while broadband Internet is present in only 28% of homes (2012: 175). This leaves a significant proportion of youth without accessible sources of information. Of the 6.2% of youth who do not have access to any media (printed or electronic), 27.3% of them work in agriculture, 25.3% are unskilled or semi-skilled workers, 15.8% are housewives, 3.2% are skilled workers, 2% are students, 1.8% are administrative workers, and 1.3% identified themselves as professional specialists (2012: 180).

Taking into account both passive<sup>5</sup> and active<sup>6</sup> modes of activity, the level of political activity stands at 52.2% for young men and 47.8% for young women. The level of political activity is 19.2% within the youngest cohort, 32.5% in the middle and 27.4% among the oldest (2012: 187). The authors of the study created an index of social activism, which resulted in the conclusion that 6.2% of youth are socially active, 18.8% partially passive and 78.9% completely passive (2012: 201). This indicator shows the importance of further improvement of processes of co-management and communication with young people, which should eventually result in a sense of ownership over political and policy processes and accomplishment among young people. This statement is supported by insights on an index of social satisfaction (2012: 209), which identified 14.8% of youth as completely dissatisfied, 40.5% as partially dissatisfied, 34.9% as partially satisfied and only 9.6% as completely satisfied. Low levels of satisfaction motivate many young people to consider leaving the country, with an increase in those who are thinking about such a move. More young people considered leaving the country in 2011 in comparison to 2003 – 53.2% v. 46.8% (2012: 217). The most important reasons for considering leaving the country are: low life standard (24.6%), lack of any perspective (15.2%), safer life abroad (9.6%), unemployment (8.6%), schooling (5.6%) and political reasons (0.6%). Asked about the reasons for migration, only 35.8% of youth in Serbia said they do not want to leave the country. Serbia therefore faces serious challenges related to brain drain. In summary, it is clear that at least for these reasons, in the eyes of young people, Serbia lacks a positive perspective on its future.

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5. Standing for election as a candidate.

6. Voting in political elections.

Political interest and the engagement of policy actors on youth issues and “youth policy” is a relatively new development in Serbia. Although there were modest initiatives earlier, the key point in the evolution of youth policy can be traced back to the establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sport<sup>7</sup> (MoYS) in 2007. This was followed by the establishment of support structures, document production, and action planning and implementation of the milestones of contemporary youth policy in Serbia. The Department of Youth<sup>8</sup> at the MoYS works in the following areas: the development and implementation of youth policy, strategy and programmes; encouraging youth participation; supporting volunteering; co-operation with youth organisations; supporting youth groups and events both nationally and internationally; monitoring the role of young people in Serbia; and promoting the development of youth policy, youth offices and youth work at the regional and local level.

The National Youth Strategy<sup>9</sup> (NYS, Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a) was the first step towards ensuring systematic attention to the problem of youth status and supporting young people in different spheres of social life. The NYS determines the attitude of the state towards young people, a possible role for youth in society, and the means of establishing more collaborative relationships with relevant stakeholders. It also identifies opportunities, responsibilities and institutional mechanisms for youth. The strategy defines a very broad framework for its implementation and evaluation, encompassing more than 700 indicators. However, such a large number of indicators may imply a lack of clarity and lead to difficulties in application.

The NYS is supported by the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2009-2014<sup>10</sup> and by guidelines for its implementation at the local level.<sup>11</sup> The strategic goals towards youth are also expressed in the Law on Youth (2011),<sup>12</sup> which was formulated through a broad participatory process. These two pivotal documents marked a new era of youth policy in Serbia by requiring the establishment of local youth offices (LYOs) across the country and committing significant human and financial resources to the realisation of numerous policy initiatives. As a result, the entire youth field gained greater recognition, especially with regard to the recognition of youth work and setting quality standards. However, due to drawbacks and shortfalls in policy implementation, young people still do not feel ownership over youth policy, their voices are often not heard, and resources are not used optimally.

In the light of the aforementioned observations on recent developments in the youth field in Serbia, the goals of the Council of Europe international review of youth

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7. Available at [www.mos.gov.rs](http://www.mos.gov.rs), accessed 18 August 2015.

8. Available at [www.mos.gov.rs/omladina/?lang=lat](http://www.mos.gov.rs/omladina/?lang=lat), accessed 18 August 2015.

9. Available at [www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia\\_2008\\_National\\_Youth\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia_2008_National_Youth_Strategy.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

10. Available at [www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia\\_2009\\_Action\\_Plan\\_Youth\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia_2009_Action_Plan_Youth_Strategy.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

11. Available at [www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia\\_2012\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Local\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia_2012_Youth_Policy_Local_Guidelines.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

12. Available at [http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/Serbia\\_2011\\_08\\_09\\_-Zakon\\_o\\_mladima\\_ENG\\_final.pdf/6341a7a7-ba81-4d19-a882-3e80542a09c6](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/Serbia_2011_08_09_-Zakon_o_mladima_ENG_final.pdf/6341a7a7-ba81-4d19-a882-3e80542a09c6), accessed 18 August 2015.



policy in Serbia were to provide a constructively critical observation of Serbian youth policy, and to contribute to improvements in the following areas:

- ▶ the creation of a body of knowledge that could serve as a basis for evidence-based policy making;
- ▶ the identification of weak links in intersectoral co-operation, especially with regard to policy implementation;
- ▶ the promotion of examples of good practice in policy making and implementation;
- ▶ the development of purposeful and effective youth policy at the national, regional and international level.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the international review followed the Council of Europe framework procedures (see Williamson 2008), and included two one-week visits (in April and September 2014) by a team constituted from the fields of youth policy, youth practice and youth research. Prior to the visits extensive desk research was done by the International Review Team, both on the basis of materials provided by the MoYS and through various websites elaborating on youth policy and research in Serbia. Documents available in English prior to the first visit included the following:

- ▶ Strategy of Career Guidance and Counselling in the Republic of Serbia (2007);
- ▶ The National Youth Strategy (2008);
- ▶ The Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2009-2014 (2008);
- ▶ “Annual report on the progress in National Youth Strategy implementation 2009/2010” (2010);
- ▶ Law on Youth (2011);
- ▶ “Implementation of the National Strategy for Youth on the local level: youth office standards and competences of youth office coordinators” (2012);
- ▶ “Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy for Youth 2011-2012” (2012);
- ▶ “Report on the implementation of the Strategy of Career Guidance and Counselling in the Republic of Serbia 2010-2012” (2012);
- ▶ “Report on the implementation of the Strategy of Career Guidance and Counselling in the Republic of Serbia 2012-2013” (2013).

The first visit in April 2014 included interviews and panels with the representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Sremski Karlovci,<sup>13</sup> with an emphasis on gaining in-depth insights into the institutional framework of youth policy in Serbia and intersectoral co-operation.

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13. The map of Serbia in Figure 1 marks all municipalities included in the IRT's two visits.

Figure 1: Map of Serbia with municipalities visited by the International Review Team



The first visit raised many issues of interest for the members of the IRT and generated a long list of additional questions that were communicated to the Serbian institutions so as to better prepare for the second visit. Aleksandra Mitrović Knežević of the MoYS provided an extremely comprehensive and helpful set of answers. The list of 41 questions addressing 15 different actors in Serbian youth policy is appended to this report.

The second visit in September 2014 was focused on the more subtle and grounded mechanisms of youth policy implementation, targeting the policy domains of education, employment and health and safety/security, and encompassing institutions and organisations from Belgrade, Kikinda, Niš and Smederevo. An extensive list of institutions and organisations visited during the international review is also appended to this report, as is the programme of both visits.

The Council of Europe international review of national youth policy in Serbia was discussed during a National Hearing in Belgrade in February 2015, after which various amendments were made (on account of corrections, comments and criticism conveyed at the National Hearing and through feedback from the MoYS). Possibly the most common response, expressed in different ways in relation to different issues, related to the level of expectation attached both to the goals of the National Youth Strategy of 2008 and the capacity of the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Expectations have arguably been raised significantly beyond the human and financial resources of the MoYS and of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the youth sector; it may therefore be more important to celebrate what has been achieved in youth policy in a relatively short space of time than to criticise shortfalls in progress! We hope and believe, however, that our criticisms of youth policy in Serbia, within and beyond the work of the MoYS, are constructive and provide useful avenues for reflection and development. The final draft of the international review was presented for ratification at the International Hearing to the Joint Council on Youth of the Council of Europe Youth Department in Budapest in April 2015.



# Chapter 1

## Framework and main actors of youth policy in Serbia

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### YOUTH POLICY IN SERBIA

**M**acroeconomic instability and the consequences of post-communist and post-conflict transition contributed to the increase in traditional and paternalistic attitudes in Serbia, even among young people. Such social trajectories made young people highly vulnerable to further disturbances in the system and called for urgent changes in youth policy making and implementation. In response, the Serbian Government formulated a participatory national youth policy in 2007, following the establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MoYS). Prior to the MoYS there were five different offices addressing (to some extent) youth issues. This structure was not conducive to the effective functioning of the youth sector. The first step of the newly created ministry was the launching of a broad-based participatory process – involving more than 16 000 young people – for the purpose of drafting the first National Youth Strategy (NYS) in 2008. An inclusive approach to youth policy making continued with the Action Plan of 2009, and the Law on Youth in 2011 that included more than 1 490 young people from all over the country and from different organisations and institutions. Overall, as proclaimed during the first meeting of the International Review Team (IRT) at the MoYS, 10 000 to 20 000 young people annually have direct participation in activities supported by the ministry and around 100 000 are directly informed about those activities.

The institutional framework of national youth policy should ideally lead to both efficient and effective youth policy conceived and delivered through what has been *de facto* a “co-management” process. According to the definition by the Council of Europe,<sup>14</sup> co-management:

involves representatives from youth non-governmental organisations (NGOs) sitting down in committees with government officials who together then work out the priorities for the youth sector and make recommendations for future budgets and programmes.

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14. Available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/coe\\_youth/co\\_management\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/coe_youth/co_management_en.asp), accessed 18 August 2015.

Many Council of Europe member countries proclaim co-management as a guiding principle in youth policy making. However, it should be noted that to date, only Lithuania has (albeit rather temporarily, in the late 1990s and early 2000s) adopted a co-management process for the governance of youth policy development and implementation. Nevertheless, the collaborative, consultative and inclusive process adopted by the Serbian authorities in the late 2000s is considered by many to have been an exemplary case of participatory youth policy making (Denstad 2009).<sup>15</sup>

## MAIN ACTORS IN YOUTH POLICY

A multi level portrait of youth policy governance in Serbia is presented in Figure 2. The institutional framework presented mainly follows the structure prior to the 1990s, when almost all the states of the former Yugoslavia had the same system of youth work. This system was, however, subsequently developed by the introduction of the elements typically present in the member states of the Council of Europe – such as youth councils and youth offices. At the top level of this framework there are governmental institutions, including the Youth Council (YC)<sup>16</sup> – the supreme advisory body to the government on youth issues – and the governmental Fund for Young Talents (“Dositeja”). The Youth Council of the Autonomous Province Vojvodina and local youth councils (LYCs) have a similar role as advisory bodies to regional and local self-government, thereby forging a link from the national to the local level and acting as a bridge to the local youth offices (LYOs) as one of the key focal points in youth policy implementation. Civil society is seemingly less complex and in general terms consists of three main actors bringing together youth organisations<sup>17</sup> and organisations for youth:<sup>18</sup> KOMS (Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije) or the National Youth Council, which is the umbrella association of youth; NAPOR (Nacionalna Asocijacija Praktičara/ki Omladinskog Rada), or the National Association of Youth Work Practitioners; and the recently established National Association of Local Youth Offices, which mediates between LYOs on one side and governmental bodies and civil society on the other.

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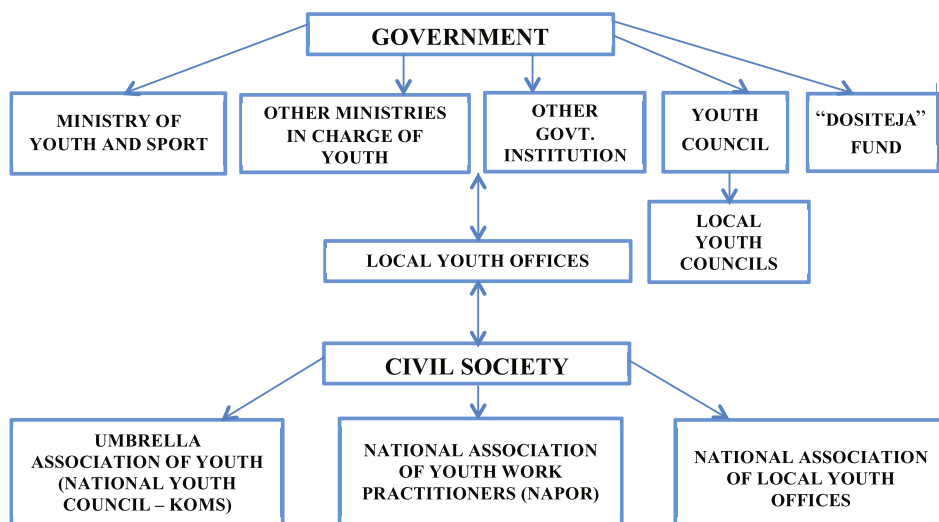
15. Indeed, the *Youth policy manual* (Denstad 2009) is a thinly veiled case study of Serbia.

16. In order to distinguish between the Youth Council (advisory body) and the National Youth Council (KOMS) we shall use the acronyms YC for the former and KOMS for the latter.

17. Organisations having a majority of young members and working in the interests of youth.

18. Organisations acting in the youth field, but which are not required to have a majority of young members.

**Figure 2: Diagram of institutional framework of national youth policy**



The progress that has been achieved through the MoYS is supported by a number of other institutions such as the regional (Autonomous Province, or AP) Youth Council mentioned above, local youth councils and local youth offices. The YC has a specific role in cross-sectoral co-ordination and the harmonisation of activities at the national level. Moreover, youth councils can also be established on the regional and local level. The YC consists of the following representatives:

- ▶ representatives of the MoYS;
- ▶ representatives of other ministries dealing with youth;
- ▶ the AP secretariat responsible for youth;
- ▶ relevant experts in the youth field;
- ▶ representatives of youth associations;
- ▶ representatives of LYOs;
- ▶ representatives of national minorities;
- ▶ young people, who comprise at least one third of the YC. The selection of the NGO member of the YC happens via an open call by the MoYS. Applications have to be supported by two recommendations.

## LOCAL YOUTH OFFICES

One of the crucial steps in the building of infrastructure for promoting and implementing strategic goals in the field of youth has been the creation of LYOs almost as soon as the MoYS began work. Their role was further consolidated by the subsequent Law on Youth. Table 1 presents the working structure and working hours of 147 LYOs

throughout Serbia.<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that 103 were established after 2009, with the enactment of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Youth 2009-2014 (Ministry of Youth and Sport 2009a). It should also be noted that the capacity and number of LYOs, together with their geographical coverage and compatibility with the number and the needs of young people, are points that were not completely grasped by the members of the IRT. Arguably, they need attention from the Serbian institutions and organisations dealing with youth, in the interests of ensuring an equitable “youth offer” throughout the country.

Moreover, at the National Hearing, the attention of the IRT was helpfully drawn to its apparent oversight of the position and role of regional youth offices and how they might bridge the interface between central and local administrations in the future. One extremely valuable observation emerging from a Local Youth Office Co-ordinator (LYOC) following the National Hearing was that, though often forensic in its attention to detail, the international review report did not sufficiently register the significance, or potential significance, of the regional youth offices:

Since 2009 there were five (later four) regional youth offices in Serbia, but their role and concrete presence in the structure of the ministry was not so strictly defined till today – they were a “communication-bridge” between the Ministry of Youth and Sport, and local youth offices.

In the last six years, I had good communication with the regional youth office – I found its existence very useful on the practical level: “regionals” gathered information about activities of local youth offices and transmitted them to the ministry (and the reverse), they provided useful data on the regional level, and were much more mobile than the personal staff in the respective ministry. Beyond this personal view, regional youth offices for sure had some impact on the youth policy – was the impact good enough? Could regional offices improve communication between ministry and local offices of youth? Are they politicised as well, as the local youth offices are? What is the concrete effect of their existence on the youth policy? Your objective analysis of the role of regional youth offices in the Serbian youth policy could be helpful in further formulating of their existence – do we need them, or do we not?

The data show that 72% of LYOs (106) have a stable structure, relying on full-time employee(s), only two have both full-time employees and part-time volunteers. A significant proportion (21 LYOs) did not provide transparent data on their workforce, which may be due to the changes that some offices are currently undergoing.

**Table 1: Structure of local youth offices (by number of offices)**

No data on volunteers/employees	21
No employees/volunteers	1
Full-time employees	106
Part-time employees	5
Full-time employees + part-time volunteers	2
Full-time volunteers	12

19. The data were provided by the MoYS upon request after the first visit.



The needs of young people are quite specific compared to those of the general population; young people more often engage in leisure activities that serve them for learning and building personalities. Therefore, and taking into account lengthy school/university hours, one would expect youth offices to be open in the afternoon and possibly at the weekend (which is often the case in youth provision elsewhere). However, as shown in Table 2, this is not the case in Serbia and there are inconsistencies in the data provided. In terms of general working hours, none of the LYOs reported working after 6 p.m., while eight reported working after 6 p.m. with youth. Only three offices have longer working hours during the weekends, including for both the general public and youth, while 124 LYOs have general working hours compatible with that of full-time work on weekdays. Further, there are no full-time working offices open to the general population during the weekends and only two are open to young people. LYOs working part-time represent a minority. The last significant category of working time relates to “optional” working hours that depend on planned activities, encompassing 96 offices available to the public and 102 available to youth during the weekends. There are 20 offices that are closed to the general population on weekends, and 13 that are closed to youth. Such a landscape of youth office provision seems to fall short in ensuring reliable sites for information and services to young people, or serving as pivotal meeting points for young people and youth workers. Young people from rural municipalities are especially disadvantaged as the LYOs in their municipalities rely on more modest financial and human resources and therefore have less potential to respond regularly to young people’s needs and aspirations.

**Table 2: Working hours of local youth offices**

Type of working hours	General working hours		Working hours dedicated to youth	
	Workday	Weekend	Workday	Weekend
Longer hours (after 6 p.m.)	0	3	8	3
Compatible with full-time working hours (8 hours)	124	0	104	2
Part-time	2	7	3	4
Optional (depending on activities)	0	96	11	102
Closed	0	20	0	13
No data	21	21	21	23

#### **The case of Youth Club “Palilula”**

“Palilula” was the first LYO founded in Serbia, even before the establishment of the MoYS, in 2006. Today it works as a youth club, serving the needs of youth in the biggest municipality in Serbia. It covers an area with around 140 000 young people, 16 primary and 7 secondary schools, and 14 faculties. Social and financial problems are very pronounced in the area, with more than half the residents from rural communities and 7% to 10% of the population being Roma. However, since “Palilula” is registered as a youth club, and not as a youth NGO, the level of financial resources allocated from the national and local government is lower than it would be. A large proportion of the available resources goes to employ

two full-time workers and one part-time employee, who are employed through appointment by political parties. Space is a major problem for the club, which limits its aspirations to offer more diverse programmes to young people. Currently there is an emphasis on cultural activities (e.g. “Palilula olimpijada culture”, or the “Palilula Cultural Olympiad”) and on providing language courses (with 300 participants and around 2 000 to 3 000 applicants each year). The club co-operates closely with NAPOR, the MoYS, the Red Cross and social services.

**The burning issue:**

Limited financial resources and space do not allow for the introduction of a new spectrum of activities, keeping current activities focused on education and culture.

**The case of the Sremski Karlovci LYO**

Sremski Karlovci is the second smallest municipality in Serbia, with 8 367 inhabitants, of whom 3 640 are young people (including 2 500 students from other municipalities). The whole of Vojvodina has only two LYOs, which cannot provide services to all interested young people. Young people in Sremski Karlovci face five major challenges: i) the non-existence of youth media; ii) a low level of finances provided for youth activities, because Sremski Karlovci does not belong to the “fourth group” of municipalities (i.e. those eligible for more substantial state funding); iii) high levels of youth unemployment; iv) a significant outflow of young people from the town; and v) great ethnic diversity – there are 21 national minorities speaking six different languages.

The specificity of the economy of Sremski Karlovci strongly affects the local youth as the municipality is among the least developed in Serbia and is not entitled to significant state financial support. The local economy relies mainly on tourism and its status as a national park, while industry is almost completely prohibited in the area. Sremski Karlovci is one of the best-known university towns, and over a third of its population are young people whose needs and aspirations are frequently not met. There is a strong clerical influence in the town, which is most evident in opposition to the introduction of sex education into school curricula. Three major actors in youth policy can be recognised in Sremski Karlovci: local government, the LYO and the Red Cross. The LYO, financed by the local self-government, has established a Local Action Plan, but there are no financial resources for its implementation.

**The burning issue:**

The synergy of traditional social relations and institutions (like the Church) and low economic prospects cannot productively support the needs of the young population residing in this area. Moreover, the financial classification of the municipalities (and the subsequent allocation of resources) exacerbates structural problems. Only municipalities belonging to the least developed “fourth group” are eligible for additional financial support from the state. The level of development is judged by the development of the entire county in which a municipality is located, which means that a very poor municipality located in a rich county would be ineligible for state support.

The IRT became increasingly aware that most Local Youth Office Co-ordinators (LYOCs) are appointed on the basis of their engagement with a political party, typically the political party governing the municipality. Such a process of nomination and recruitment of young professionals working with and for young people inevitably brings into question the level of their youth work competences. Those working in the youth field in Serbia are not unaware of this issue and the professionalisation of the staff of LYOs has been one of the priorities since they began to be set up. To date, 53 LYOCs have completed the second level of training as youth workers (organised by the local self-government), meaning there are now, officially, 53 professional youth workers in Serbia. However, this number is still very small and comprises less than one third of all active LYO co-ordinators.

The professional background of those working in the LYOs is very diverse. There are 96 youth office co-ordinators with a university degree while others ended their education at secondary level. The LYO in Novi Sad is the only one co-ordinated by a youth worker and trainer with a Master's degree in youth work. The management of the LYOs and a code of conduct for their co-ordinators is regulated through the guidelines provided in the document "Implementation of the National Strategy for Youth on the local level: youth office standards and competences of youth office coordinators".<sup>20</sup> Adding value to the professionalisation of those working in the youth NGO sector and the youth sector is the responsibility undertaken by NAPOR, whose work has resulted in the accreditation of 38 of 47 participants to date.

Although there are evident efforts directed at the professionalisation of LYOCs, their appointment remains politically influenced. The IRT became aware that it was unusual to meet LYOCs who had not been politically appointed and whose mandate could ensure sustainability and efficacy in youth policy development and implementation. Kikinda was one such exception. The IRT also learned that the young members of the LYCs are predominantly politically active, as with the Niš Youth Council, where every single member was also an active member of one of the ruling political parties. Nevertheless, LYCs are endeavouring to ensure greater transparency in their work by providing open public sessions so that members of youth NGOs can be engaged in discussions without necessarily committing to formal active participation.

## YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND ORGANISATIONS FOR YOUTH

The data provided by the MoYS indicate that 836 youth organisations and associations are registered in Serbia. Specifically, there are 493 youth organisations, 328 organisations for youth and 15 associations. The difference between "youth organisations" and "organisations for youth" is based on the number of young people in the membership. If an organisation has less than two thirds of young members (age 15 to 29), it is an organisation for youth. If it has two thirds or more young

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20. Available at [www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia\\_2012\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Local\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia_2012_Youth_Policy_Local_Guidelines.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

members, then it is a youth organisation. The list of registered organisations and associations, with detailed information on them, is available on the official website of the MoYS, updated once a month.

KOMS (Krovna Organizacija Mladih Srbije)<sup>21</sup> is the umbrella association of youth organisations in Serbia, and represents 81 member organisations. It is a member of the European Youth Forum.<sup>22</sup> It began modestly in 2003 with only five organisations, but by 2006 had become a powerful advocacy body co-operating with other NGOs and governmental bodies and now it employs three people in its secretariat. Its mission is to represent the interests of young people through developing a partnership with the state, inter-agency and international co-operation, encouraging the active participation of young people, and the organisational development of its members. KOMS is dedicated to empowering youth organisations through networking and training and through the provision of evidence-based policy supported by publishing. Its projects have included mobilising the youth vote, training on youth policy and advocacy, awareness campaigns, youth research, and youth participation at events. It is estimated that 150 000 young people are reached indirectly through KOMS' actions every year. The funding of their activities, infrastructure and staff at the secretariat is project based, supplemented by membership fees. KOMS is trying to lead inclusive policy making via invitations to the members of the unions and political parties to be involved in consultative processes. One of the peculiarities (one might say a striking anomaly) of youth policy in Serbia is that KOMS is not a member of the Youth Council (YC) – the highest governmental advisory body on youth – although it is consulted on all relevant youth-related processes, especially by the MoYS.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, according to those involved with KOMS, other governmental bodies (with the exception of the MoYS) often fail to include them in consultative processes, despite their apparent intention to do so. However, the productive relationship established between KOMS and the MoYS has made it possible for the latter to act as an intermediary agent and arrange meetings with other ministries and governmental bodies. This notwithstanding, the lack of direct representation of the interests of KOMS' members with other ministries does call into question the reality and efficacy of the proclaimed “co-management” process in Serbia.

Group “Hajde da”<sup>24</sup> is a leading (indeed, internationally renowned) youth NGO in the field of training and education, bringing together 26 youth trainers educated in Serbia and abroad. “Hajde da” was instrumental in the early advocacy for youth policy in Serbia, convening a training seminar in Belgrade in 2002. Nowadays, apart from its place in the training field, it is a prominent actor in international co-operation and a contact point for the Erasmus+ programme<sup>25</sup> in Serbia.

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21. Available at [www.koms.rs](http://www.koms.rs), accessed 18 August 2015.

22. Available at [www.youthforum.org](http://www.youthforum.org), accessed 18 August 2015.

23. This somewhat strange situation is likely to be discussed and addressed in the near future; it is also useful to note that, currently, there are two individuals on the Youth Council who are members of KOMS, though they are involved in the YC in other capacities.

24. Available at [www.hajdeda.org.rs/02\\_o\\_nama/index.htm](http://www.hajdeda.org.rs/02_o_nama/index.htm), accessed 18 August 2015.

25. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm), accessed 18 August 2015.

Another significant organisation is Evropski omladinski centar,<sup>26</sup> a member of KOMS. It is in charge of the European Youth Card<sup>27</sup> and its work, supported by five full-time employees, provides services to 700 000 card holders in Serbia.

NAPOR (the National Association of Youth Work Practitioners), established in 2009, is one of the major actors in the professionalisation of the non-governmental youth sector in Serbia. It comprises 90 associations (80 full members and 10 associate members) that can bring together around 200 youth workers at the national level. NAPOR conducts training for youth workers and awards their accreditation, adding to the recognition of youth workers as professionals. The process is guided and governed by a handbook for accreditation (NAPOR 2009) and the Council for Ethical Questions.

The Student Union of Serbia<sup>28</sup> (SUS) is an umbrella association of all student associations – a representative body of university students based on non-governmental principles. Their funding is project based, without a stable source of government funding. Its presidency is currently elected on a one-year mandate, up to a maximum of four years. The students active in this association insist on avoiding political influence on their decisions – this is enshrined in a rule that politically active students cannot be members of the association. However, as the IRT learned during its first visit when it met with the representatives of the SUS, it is relatively widespread practice for deans and professors to try to influence students during student elections. When it comes to policy making and implementation, the students' level of influence is quite low although they do have a signed agreement with the government that requires the students to be consulted during the policy making process. Recently, SUS opposed the content of the new Law on Higher Education,<sup>29</sup> though its longstanding efforts to introduce a law on student organising has not (yet) brought about the desired results.

At the time of the IRT's visits to Serbia, the National Association of Local Youth Offices was on the verge of strategic change through the establishment of a politically neutral secretariat which, it was hoped, would serve to bypass and neutralise the party political and bureaucratic influences that have prevailed to date as well as bring stability to the current arrangements. The secretariat is composed of professionals in development and youth issues, and not only administrative personnel. In that capacity the secretariat has four levels of co-ordination and work: 1) local – with the LYOs; 2) regional – with the regional co-ordinators of the MoYS; 3) national – with different ministries responsible for youth issues; and 4) international – by building strong links with organisations from abroad and establishing partnerships that will keep the association institutionally and financially stable and autonomous.

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26. Available at [www.eyca.org/card/countries/53/serbia](http://www.eyca.org/card/countries/53/serbia), accessed 18 August 2015.

27. Available at <https://www.eyca.org>, accessed 18 August 2015.

28. Available at [www.sus.org.rs](http://www.sus.org.rs), accessed 18 August 2015.

29. Available at [www.uns.ac.rs/st/zakon/zakonVisokoObrazovanjelSPRVKE.pdf](http://www.uns.ac.rs/st/zakon/zakonVisokoObrazovanjelSPRVKE.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

## YOUTH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Table 3: Policy framework at national, regional (AP Vojvodina) and municipal level

LEVEL / CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS	AUTHORITIES	BASIC DOCUMENTS	BODIES FOR STRUCTURED DIALOGUE	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<p>Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (the board in charge of youth)</p> <p>Government (the MoYS and the ministries responsible for specific areas within the youth sector)</p>	<p>National Youth Strategy</p> <p>Law on Youth</p> <p>Number of governmental strategies for health, sport, education, career guidance, employment, economic development, sustainable development and human rights</p>	<p>Youth Council (starting from 2014)</p>	<p>KOMS</p> <p>NAPOR</p> <p>National Association of Local Youth Offices</p>
<b>AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE VOJVODINA</b>	<p>Regional administrative body responsible for youth</p>	<p>Action Plan for Youth Policy in Vojvodina (2010-2014)</p>	<p>Council for Youth of Autonomous Province Vojvodina (starting from 2012)</p>	<p>Regional youth organisations and associations that are members of the regional Youth Council</p>
<b>MUNICIPAL</b>	<p>City/municipal administrative body responsible for youth – local youth office</p>	<p>Local Action Plan for Youth</p> <p>Local Action Plan for Employment</p>	<p>City/municipal Youth Council</p>	<p>Youth organisations and associations that are members of the Local Youth Council</p>

Table 3 provides additional insights into the interrelationship of authorities, the basic documents that govern the youth sector, and governmental and non-governmental organisations at the national, regional and local level. A special case is the Autonomous Province Vojvodina, whose level of independence provides it with the opportunity both to follow the main policy directives established at the national level, and at the same time to shape, more independently, some of the processes in its area. The Provincial Secretariat for Youth and Sport in

Vojvodina<sup>30</sup> is a leading administrative body in the field of youth, whose undertakings are to a great extent supported by local NGOs like the European Youth Centre of Vojvodina.<sup>31</sup>

The National Youth Strategy (NYS), formulated in 2008, is a key document. It paved the way for the adoption of the Law on Youth, provided the framework for the establishment of an umbrella organisation of youth associations and helped in the further structuring of the local youth offices. The core principles of the strategy are in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia<sup>32</sup> and guiding international documents such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights,<sup>33</sup> which should, in turn, ensure the recognition of youth potential and a sense of ownership over policy development. The strategy elaborates on 11 guiding principles of youth rights and prosperity that served as the basis for its guiding objectives, and resulted in a list of concrete measures and the identification of those institutions in charge of their implementation. These guiding objectives are:

- ▶ encouraging young people to participate actively in society;
- ▶ developing youth co-operation and providing conditions for their participation in decision-making processes through the sustainable institutional framework, based on the needs of young people and in co-operation with youth;
- ▶ establishing a system of youth information at all levels and in all areas;
- ▶ achieving the right to equality of opportunity for all young people in society, and especially for those who live under difficult conditions;
- ▶ encouraging and evaluating the extraordinary results and achievements of young people in different areas;
- ▶ improving opportunities for youth to spend quality leisure time;
- ▶ developing an open, effectual, efficient and justifiable system of formal and non-formal education accessible to all young people, in line with global educational trends and the educational context in the Republic of Serbia;
- ▶ encouraging and stimulating all forms of employment, self-employment and youth entrepreneurship;
- ▶ improving the conditions for a secure life for young people;
- ▶ conducting preventive programmes and improving youth health in order to decrease health risks and developing a youth-friendly health protection system;
- ▶ empowering young people to undertake initiatives and activities in line with the basic goals of sustainable development and a healthy environment.

The concretisation of these measures and obligations is elaborated in detail in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2009-2014. The

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30. Available at [www.vojvodina.gov.rs/en/provincial-secretariat-sports-and-youth](http://www.vojvodina.gov.rs/en/provincial-secretariat-sports-and-youth), accessed 18 August 2015.

31. Available at <http://eycv.org>, accessed 18 August 2015.

32. Available at [www.srbija.gov.rs/cinjenice\\_o\\_srbiji/ustav.php?change\\_lang=en](http://www.srbija.gov.rs/cinjenice_o_srbiji/ustav.php?change_lang=en), accessed 18 August 2015.

33. Available at [www.un.org/en/documents/udhr](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr), accessed 18 August 2015.

Law on Youth, adopted in 2011, covers the majority of topics set out in the Action Plan: I) Basic Provisions; II) National Youth Strategy; III) Associations Implementing Youth Activities; IV) Youth Council, Office and Agency; V) Financing of Programmes and Projects of Public Interest in the Youth Sector; VI) Implementation Monitoring; and VII) Final and Transitional Provisions. The delivery mechanisms for the strategic goals outlined in the NYS and NAP are further outlined in the Law on Youth by prescribing their implementation at the regional and local level through regional and local self-government (regional authorities and municipalities), which should formulate their local youth action plans and provide the financial resources (with the national government) for all related processes and stakeholders. Usually there are 10 open calls annually for the implementation of the NYS and 25 calls for each county resource centre. Resource centres, one for each county, relatively independently manage the financial resources allocated from the national government, thereby contributing to the shaping of youth policy implementation at the regional and local level.

At the first meeting at the MoYS it was explained to the IRT that a Local Youth Action Plan had been adopted by 145 (out of a total of 167) local municipalities in Serbia, as well as by the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The MoYS is the primary institution in charge of implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the national level. Evaluation is undertaken each year, with 2009 as the starting year for annual reports that require the reporting of results on strictly specified indicators related to each activity of the Action Plan. There have been two revisions to the implementation of the strategy – in 2011<sup>34</sup> and 2012.<sup>35</sup>

Since the establishment of the MoYS, and the subsequent production of key documents on youth policy in Serbia, the practice of conducting research on youth status and needs prior to the adoption of new documents has been entrenched. The preparation of local youth action plans is very frequently included in this practice, being preceded mostly by large-scale quantitative surveys on several thousand young people.<sup>36</sup> Although the work of LYOs should be developed in relation to these local youth action plans, there are still 13 LYOs that have not produced local youth action plans, mainly for financial reasons. More frequently there are cases of LYOs that do have a Local Youth Action Plan, but no implementation strategy. One example is the LYO in Belgrade, which is in a transitional stage since it has recently been incorporated into the Secretariat for Youth and Sport of the City of Belgrade.

National and local government clearly need to allocate financial resources for the implementation of local youth action plans, but it is evident that there is often a shortfall, possibly as a consequence of a lack of political will. As already noted, major economic disparities among the regions in Serbia have resulted in the division of municipalities into four groups by level of economic development, and financial help

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34. Available at [http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3087112/Reviews\\_on\\_youth\\_policies\\_SEE\\_EECA\\_Serbia\\_2011.pdf/2978f717-0adb-4170-b79e-d1765251dcd8](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3087112/Reviews_on_youth_policies_SEE_EECA_Serbia_2011.pdf/2978f717-0adb-4170-b79e-d1765251dcd8), accessed 18 August 2015.

35. Available at [www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia\\_2012\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Review.pdf](http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Serbia_2012_Youth_Policy_Review.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

36. A survey in Smederevo included 3 000 young people aged 15 to 19 and 3 000 between 19 and 30 years of age, while Niš municipality conducted a survey with a sample of 2 000.



is directed only to the fourth group of municipalities. As this group comprises 46, or 27.5% of all municipalities, financial help is very often limited and is sometimes equivalent to only a few thousand euros per year, which is patently inadequate. The MoYS is, however, allocating financial resources to youth organisations through public calls,<sup>37</sup> which at the same time funds youth projects and provides training in project management and reporting on the project results.

Despite such challenges, it must be said that the MoYS and all supporting bodies and organisations have taken significant steps in a relatively short time in improving the status of youth in Serbia. Nevertheless, the IRT's understanding of the evolution of youth policy in Serbia is that the initial momentum and trajectory, characterised by an inclusive approach and an aspiration to implement a co-management approach to decision making, have steadily diminished, resulting in an inability to establish effective intersectoral communication and co-operation, and the persistence of a top-down approach in the implementation of new policy directives. This is especially evident in the seven areas selected, through a process of dialogue between the Serbian authorities and the IRT, as the core of this review of youth policy in Serbia:

- ▶ education;
- ▶ employment;
- ▶ information, access to rights and visibility;
- ▶ participation;
- ▶ social inclusion;
- ▶ health and safety/security;
- ▶ mobility.

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37. Available at [www.mos.gov.rs/dokumenta/omladina/konkursi/?lang=lat](http://www.mos.gov.rs/dokumenta/omladina/konkursi/?lang=lat), accessed 18 August 2015.



## Chapter 2

# Review topics

The perspectives on youth status and aspirations presented by Tomanović et al. (2012), together with the discussions held and materials obtained during two IRT visits to Serbia, provided the basis for identifying the seven priority issues that lie at the heart of this report. All data and insights collated by the IRT suggested that these issues are among the most pressing in Serbia, not only in establishing a framework for young people to lead productive and purposeful lives, but also in making Serbia a more prosperous and stable society.

### EDUCATION

#### Institutional framework and educational policy in Serbia

Figure 3: Institutional framework of the educational system in Serbia

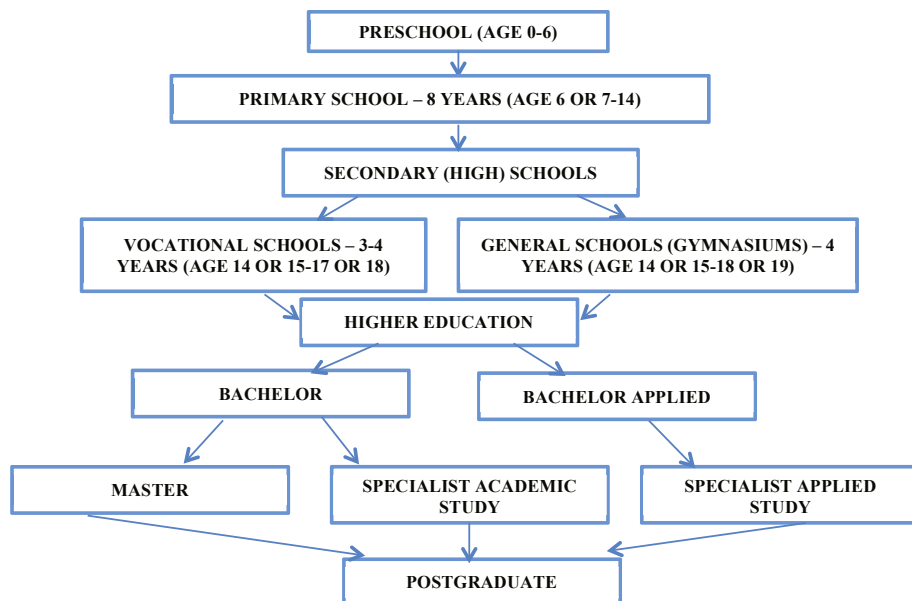


Figure 3 is a diagram of the educational system in Serbia. As the IRT directly encountered only part of the primary school level and two examples of vocational schools, this section will not elaborate on the whole system.

According to the latest PISA<sup>38</sup> results, 15-year-old students in Serbia consistently score well below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average despite the progress Serbia has made in the field of educational reform and quality control. Out of the 65 countries whose pupils were tested in three categories, Serbia ranked 43rd in mathematics, 44th in reading and 46th in science. The country's overall ranking dropped one spot, although Serbian students scored two to seven points better on the test than did their predecessors in 2009. In response, Serbia has initiated a series of reforms throughout the educational system, primarily through new documents and strategies. The pivotal document for youth education in Serbia – the Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia by 2020<sup>39</sup> – defines the mission of the education system in the Republic of Serbia as providing the basic foundation for life and the development of the individual, society and state through knowledge. The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy<sup>40</sup> specifies individual activities (actions) defined through the objectives and priorities of the strategy; it has developed methods of implementation, timelines, key activity implementers and activity leaders, as well as instruments for monitoring progress, and procedures for reporting and evaluating the effects of envisaged strategic measures.

A survey conducted by the Regional Research Promotion Programme in the Western Balkans<sup>41</sup> (2011: 3-4) provides insights into the process of educational reform in Serbia and its results. The focus of the study was on three educational reforms: new in-service training of teachers, school development planning and inclusive education. The nationally representative sample of schools in Serbia comprised 151 schools with 1 824 educators (150 principals, 267 school counsellors and 1 407 teachers). The results suggest that educators in Serbia believe they have had little impact on the way in which education policy has been formulated. They believe that the Ministry of Education has not tried hard enough to take into consideration their views with regard to the biggest problems in Serbian education. Furthermore, a significant number of educators do not think that the ministry obtained a sufficient overview of the state of affairs in the education system before it initiated the reforms. According to the respondents, the main reasons for initiating the reforms were both professional and political in nature, while the needs and goals of educators, parents and the general public have had lesser impact. Very few respondents regard the reforms as successful, with more than half feeling their expectations were not met.

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38. Available at [www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

39. Available at [www.vtsnis.edu.rs/StrategijaObrazovanja.pdf](http://www.vtsnis.edu.rs/StrategijaObrazovanja.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

40. Available at [www.erisee.org/sites/default/files/akcioni\\_plavoni13nov.pdf](http://www.erisee.org/sites/default/files/akcioni_plavoni13nov.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

41. Available at [http://rpp-westernbalkans.net/en/research/Completed-Projects/New-Social-Disparities-and-Social-and-Economic-Change/Images-of-Educational-Changes-in-Serbia--Reflecting-the-Past--Envisioning-the-Future/mainColumnParagraphs/0/text\\_files/file0/IMAGES%20OF%20EDUCATIONAL%20CHANGE%20IN%20SERBIA.pdf](http://rpp-westernbalkans.net/en/research/Completed-Projects/New-Social-Disparities-and-Social-and-Economic-Change/Images-of-Educational-Changes-in-Serbia--Reflecting-the-Past--Envisioning-the-Future/mainColumnParagraphs/0/text_files/file0/IMAGES%20OF%20EDUCATIONAL%20CHANGE%20IN%20SERBIA.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

### **The case of Palilula primary school**

- ▶ Generally, pupils at Palilula school are from a lower social background; out of 3 000 parents only 106 have university education. However, the educational prospects of Palilula municipality are improving; if pupils from school enrol in university they go on to graduation in 90% of cases. At secondary school level, 20% of pupils go to general schools, 30% to the four-year vocational schools and 50% to the three-year vocational schools.
- ▶ Out of 1 500 pupils 230 are from the Roma minority, who have classes in both Roma and Serbian languages. The school has two Roma assistants and good co-operation with the social workers, especially in cases where pupils do not attend school regularly.
- ▶ The institution of “school assistants”, designed to support teachers, does not meet the demand in Belgrade; out of 50 requests for assistants, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MESTD) has granted only 20.
- ▶ There are especially strong bonds between pupils and teachers; according to the latest survey 66% of pupils first ask for advice from their teachers, as compared to 22% who ask their parents first.
- ▶ In terms of safety issues at school, problems with truants and drug and alcohol abuse are more pronounced than problems with Roma pupils.
- ▶ Sexual education is still a sensitive issue and there is a strong need to raise the awareness of teachers and staff. This was illustrated by the response of a teacher to a question about how teachers deal with pupils who question their sexual orientation: “Fortunately not. They did anatomy in the biology classes.”
- ▶ Palilula municipality is among the poorer municipalities in Belgrade and this is reflected in the outdated and underdeveloped infrastructure at school. Currently the school is not running any European projects; some extra funds are raised by renting space to sport clubs.

### **The burning issue:**

The lack of financial resources is among the most difficult challenges to achieving better standards in educational institutions in Serbia. There are also structural problems, such as a lack of recognition of the importance of providing “school assistants”, or the absence of programmes that could ease the transition from childhood to adolescence, such as sexual education.

Vocational and technical education in Serbia is well developed and includes a network of around 330 secondary vocational schools with about 250 three- and four-year course profiles in 12 sectors. Four-year secondary vocational schools are more appealing to students than three-year ones, although the latter often provide more stable job prospects. While the four-year programmes provide the possibility to continue one’s education at university and thus attract more students, the three-year programmes – perhaps paradoxically – appear to be in decline as a result of

decreasing interest. Since the Serbian economy is still to a large extent reliant on heavy industry, enrolment in the longer programmes does not relate to the labour market's needs. It is to be noted that a lack of career guidance and professional orientation, which is usually made available only at age 13 or 14, makes Serbian youth less able to make productive and purposeful decisions regarding their future careers.

**The good practice example: the case of Technical-Mechanical School “May 15” in Niš**

The “May 15” school is oriented towards technical sciences such as machinery and computer machinery. Its practical orientation also lies with student companies active at school – the BWS Company (Boomerang Wooden Sword), established in 2011 and supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and three other projects on machinery and renewable energy. The next project will build solar panels in the school courtyard, supporting this region's efforts in renewable energy production. The school and its students are prizewinners in numerous competitions despite the fact that past trends in Serbia suggest that their mainly rural origin should pose a barrier to their success.

Since the turn of the millennium, Serbia has faced a transformation in its higher education sector with the establishment of private universities and non-formal educational institutions. MESTD data state there are 46 000 new university graduates in Serbia each year. However, around 70 000 highly educated people are looking for a job, and there are more than 200 000 students at the universities, although around 40% of them do not complete their studies, and many of those who do so take far longer than what is prescribed officially.

According to the “Skills 2020 Serbia” report (European Training Foundation 2014),<sup>42</sup> there is a discrepancy between the learning outcomes of certain study programmes, the higher education studies being undertaken by graduates and the needs of the Serbian labour market. There is no professional needs assessment for academically educated citizens (i.e. there is no institution to deal with this in a qualified and professional manner), and no detailed analysis of the level of education required by employees. There is no institution systematically tracking and addressing in a reliable way the current mismatch between graduate qualifications and the skills required, and, in addition, forward-looking projections of skills needs in Serbia. All study programmes have defined the outcomes for the purpose of accreditation, but the problem remains – they are not co-ordinated with the requirements of the labour market and the country's long-term needs.

## **Scholarships and career guidance**

The study on the status of youth in Serbia (Tomanović et al. 2012) notes that only 1 in 10 respondents was a state grant holder; secondary school loans and scholarships

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42. Available at [www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/98D99C80A3828FA3C1257D95003CF5F9/\\$file/FRAME%20Skills%202020%20Serbia.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/98D99C80A3828FA3C1257D95003CF5F9/$file/FRAME%20Skills%202020%20Serbia.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

were less frequent (2.2% and 5.4%) than high school loans and scholarships (10% and 7.9%), which implies stronger state support at the university level than at high school level (2012: 100). Regarding educational aspirations, 30% of respondents state they have completed their education, 31% do not have any idea about their future prospects, 14.9% plan for further education in their current place of residence, while 16.2% plan to migrate to other Serbian towns and 7.5% plan to go abroad (2012: 105). When asked about the reasons for not continuing with their education, 19.6% state financial reasons, 23.9% say they are not interested, 12.1% say that they do not need any further education, while less than 1% left education for employment (2012: 106).

In an attempt to increase the possibilities for young people to access higher education, the Serbian Government established the Fund for Young Talents “Dositeja” in 2008. The fund provides financial support through scholarship programmes conducted throughout the year, including:

- ▶ scholarships to top Serbian postgraduate students in EU and European Free Trade Association countries and at the world’s leading universities. Up to 12 000 euros a year may be awarded to a maximum of 500 students, and awards are allocated separately for each academic year;
- ▶ scholarships to top students at universities in the Republic of Serbia, for a maximum of 1 200 students. The amount awarded is about 250 euros per month and scholarships are awarded for a period of 10 months, or one academic year;
- ▶ prizes to high school pupils for outstanding success achieved in competitions in the Republic of Serbia and abroad – the awards range from 200 to 2 000 euros.

All grantees of the “Dositeja” fund are required to sign a contract with the Fund for Young Talents that obliges them to work in Serbia, after they complete their studies, for a period of five years across eight years. According to data kept by the “Dositeja” fund for the 2008 to 2010 period, grantees usually find employment within six months of graduation. On average, 60% of “Dositeja” grantees have successfully found employment, 30% are still studying and 10% are unemployed. According to data provided by the MoYS, to date only three or four grantees have given their scholarships back because they found a better job abroad. This would appear to suggest a relatively low rate of brain drain, contrary to some data sources<sup>43</sup> that reveal a steady increase in the numbers of highly educated young people leaving the country.

The Centre for Career Guidance and Counselling of the “Dositeja” fund was founded in 2010 and it works with Serbian students who study in Serbia or abroad. In 2010, there were 1 600 participants in 100 training events. Around 4 000 students are regularly kept informed of the centre’s activities via daily, weekly and monthly newsletters. The establishment of this centre is in line with the Strategy of Career Guidance and Counselling in the Republic of Serbia,<sup>44</sup> adopted in 2005. This strategy

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43. MESTD indicates that around 2 000 researchers left Serbia in the last decade.

44. Available at [www.mos.gov.rs/mladisuzakon/attachments/article/390/SKVS-eng.pdf](http://www.mos.gov.rs/mladisuzakon/attachments/article/390/SKVS-eng.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

is linked to the Serbian National Strategy for Employment,<sup>45</sup> the Vocational Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia,<sup>46</sup> the Strategy for Adult Education Development,<sup>47</sup> the NYS and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2009-2014.

Unfortunately, Serbia's careers guidance system does not correspond to the needs of the labour market. As noted, careers guidance is arguably provided too late. Careers guidance is connected primarily to the services of the National Employment Service (NES) (though it is also delivered within university faculties, schools and LYOs), which makes it less likely that labour supply and demand will be successfully matched. The Serbian Government has attempted to overcome these disadvantages by participating in international projects that could add value to the existing system. The European Training Foundation "Skills 2020 Serbia",<sup>48</sup> mentioned above, aimed at elaborating a strategic orientation on skills development, instead of coming up with a qualitative or quantitative list of skills. The IRT was persuaded that some real progress may accrue from this, and similar experiences, in the not too distant future. Serbia is still in the process of restructuring its educational system and careers guidance system,<sup>49</sup> and skills forecasting and the matching of labour supply and demand represent only part of the reforms necessary.

## Cross-cutting issues in education

### Roma education

In Serbia, like in most east European countries, the poor situation of Roma<sup>50</sup> is worsened by difficulties in access to education and low rates of completion. Roma are underrepresented at all education levels compared with their peers: only 66% of Roma children attend primary school (compared with 94.4% of other children in Serbia), and the dropout rate is extremely high (50%), especially for young Roma women, usually occurring shortly after a child's 12th or 13th birthday. Only 14% of young Roma men and 6% of young Roma women attend secondary school (compared with

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45. Available at [www.ombudsman.osobesainvaliditetom.rs/attachments/016\\_Nacionalna%20strategija%20za%20zaposljavanje.pdf](http://www.ombudsman.osobesainvaliditetom.rs/attachments/016_Nacionalna%20strategija%20za%20zaposljavanje.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

46. Available at [www.zavodsz.gov.rs/PDF/Strategija%20razvoja%20strucnog%20obrazovanja%20u%20Republici%20Srbiji.pdf](http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/PDF/Strategija%20razvoja%20strucnog%20obrazovanja%20u%20Republici%20Srbiji.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

47. Available at [www.zavodsz.gov.rs/PDF/Strategija%20razvoja%20obrazovanja%20odraslih%20u%20Republici%20Srbiji.pdf](http://www.zavodsz.gov.rs/PDF/Strategija%20razvoja%20obrazovanja%20odraslih%20u%20Republici%20Srbiji.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

48. Available at [www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/98D99C80A3828FA3C1257D95003CF5F9/\\$file/FRAME%20Skills%202020%20Serbia.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/98D99C80A3828FA3C1257D95003CF5F9/$file/FRAME%20Skills%202020%20Serbia.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

49. At the National Hearing, further documentation was provided that reflected such developments and commitments. See, for example, the GIZ report on a project aiming to "establish a functional and sustainable system and programme of professional orientation for students of the final years of primary school, secondary school students and young people under 30" (GIZ 2014).

50. The terms "Roma and Travellers" are being used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand, a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.



88.9% of others), while only around 1% of young Roma continue to university level. These findings are supported by the results of the survey on the status of young people in Serbia (Tomanović et al. 2012), especially in the field of education. Roma educational accomplishments leave them with very limited prospects for further education and employment, placing them on the very margins of society. Only 12% of young Roma plan to continue their education (in comparison with 38.6% of the total population), while 29.3% do not have any plans regarding education, and 58.7% say they have finished with education. Nevertheless, some efforts have been made in relation to strengthening the inclusion of Roma in the education system, and there are provisions to promote further education for this group in the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)<sup>51</sup> and in the NYS.

## Civic education

The Law on Basis of the Educational System<sup>52</sup> in the school year 2001/02 introduced civic education into primary and secondary schools, parallel to the introduction of religious education. This reform came at a time when new political streams and aspirations were seeking to bring about a European and democratic transformation in Serbia. However, at MESTD, the IRT learned that civic education is not obligatory.<sup>53</sup> In the first grade of primary school, parents decide whether their children are going to take religious or civic education and current data show that demand is evenly split.<sup>54</sup> Teaching about all religions is not included in religious education, though some reforms are planned in this direction. It was suggested to the IRT that civic education and religious education have developed a somewhat antagonistic relationship, producing tensions between those who promote the importance of a religious upbringing and those who are in favour of raising citizens aware of their rights and duties. Moreover, these antagonisms risk contributing to the marginalisation of one or both subjects, resulting in a lack of motivation on the part of both teachers and pupils to take part in classes.

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51. Available at [www.romadecade.org/article/decade-action-plans/9296](http://www.romadecade.org/article/decade-action-plans/9296), accessed 18 August 2015.

52. Available at [www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_osnovama\\_sistema\\_obrazovanja\\_i\\_vaspitanja.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_osnovama_sistema_obrazovanja_i_vaspitanja.html), accessed 18 August 2015.

53. However, following the National Hearing, the CSO Civic Initiatives outlined its responsibility for the introduction of civic education in formal education and noted it is “now en route to advocate for obligatory civic education”. It provided an additional note: “Civic education exists as an elective course, with the choice to attend this class still depends on the parents’ preferences or the potential initiative of younger adolescents (ages 15-18), and it is a choice between civic education and faith classes. Evaluation of the subject is descriptive (active/not active/very active), which negatively influences the relation of the students towards the subject in the sense of obligation to attend class. What worries the most is the fact that no social science covers civic initiatives (specifically asking questions, launching and initiating campaigns and resolving issues) within Belgrade University, so this kind of knowledge can only be obtained through the role of a practitioner in some civil society organisation or by studying foreign literature on the topic, which also is a form of informal education. Civic education can be taught by any teacher, regardless of the subject they generally teach, if such a decision is made by the School Principal, which is often used to fill in class quota for different subject teachers and leads to bad quality of civic education offered to students.”

54. Data presented by the MESTD.

## Sexual and/or health education at schools

When asked about sexual education in schools, the MoYS representatives informed the IRT that it is incorporated in civic education and biology. This conveys a certain lack of understanding of youth needs and the importance of raising awareness of sexual health and emotional relationships among youth. However, the IRT learned that the Ministry of Health and MESTD have agreed on a programme of health education in schools starting from 2014 – 160 teachers and 160 health workers will be trained to deliver this programme and will develop its curricula. Vojvodina has arguably progressed further than most of Serbia when it comes to sexual education. Its health education project on reproductive health during the school year 2013/14 included 1 200 students in 10 schools in Vojvodina. Pupils in the second grade had the opportunity to learn about their reproductive health through extracurricular education. These topics (and many others) were covered with help from specially trained educators (students of medicine and psychology). For the purpose of evaluation, monthly reports from the educators were compiled, though the IRT was not appraised of their conclusions.

## Non-formal education

Non-formal education or learning is usually associated with civil society organisations (CSOs), and Serbia is no exception in this respect. The most prominent actors in youth non-formal education are located in the NGO scene, which blossomed in the early 1990s. While its focus in the early days was mostly linked to recuperation from the war and post-war damage (typical programmes and campaigns revolved around peace-building and conflict resolution, as well as human rights and youth participation), today the NGO landscape is shifting its focus to areas such as the acquisition of new skills and fostering competent and competitive citizenship. Today, youth civil society is more or less stable, with relatively well-established actors and processes and with increasing awareness of the importance of recognition. NAPOR, for example, has since 2009 achieved several significant milestones in the recognition of non-formal learning and youth work in Serbia:

- ▶ the adoption of guidelines for quality assurance of youth work;<sup>55</sup>
- ▶ the development of standards of qualifications<sup>56</sup> in youth work on three levels:
  - assistant in youth work;
  - co-ordinator of youth work;
  - specialist for youth work;
- ▶ the development of mechanisms for the validation of acquired competences in relation to the above-mentioned qualifications;
- ▶ the development of standards of youth work;

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55. Available at <http://napor.net/images/pdf/osiguranje%20kvaliteta%20programa%20omladinskog%20rada.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2015.

56. Available at <http://napor.net/images/pdf/kvalifikacije%20i%20klasifikacija%20or.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2015.

- ▶ the development of curricula for youth work;
- ▶ the creation of the Ethical Code of Youth Work.<sup>57</sup>

Non-formal learning is gaining increasing recognition not only in terms of activities within civil society, but also in the field of practical skills that are considered important for the youth labour market. A study<sup>58</sup> conducted by NAPOR in 2013 and 2014 and financed by USAID postulates that the competences acquired in non-formal education in youth work are very important for the employability of young people, since these competences (personal, interpersonal and work related) are what employers look for. Ten competences from the tested competence framework are important for all jobs, while the other six competences are seen as significant depending on the position applied for. Of particular importance for employment, regardless of the position sought, are communication, learning and development, followed by self-management, personal organisation, willingness to take responsibility, teamwork, conflict management, entrepreneurship and problem solving. These results are consistent with insights at a European level, elaborated in a European Commission Expert Group report (2012).<sup>59</sup>

**The Wall-E fest in Kikinda** <http://senph42.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/wall-e-fest-2013.html>

This festival of science and arts, held in the primary school “Jovan Popović” in Kikinda, was initiated by the LYO in Kikinda in 2013. It was a great success, adding value to the local community, especially to children and parents interested in hands-on learning, science experiments and art. The LYO then passed responsibility for the festival on to the school and it was anticipated that the school would ensure sustainability in the longer term. However, the festival was not held in 2014 for organisational and financial reasons.

**The burning issue:**

The wishful thinking of youth organisations hoping to establish a self-sustaining system to fulfil youth needs beyond those not listed under “basic” – such as scientific education or competitions – may fall short if not sufficiently embraced and financially supported by local or national governmental institutions.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Youth in the labour market in Serbia

The transition from education to employment is commonly regarded as the most important in the life trajectory of youth. In recent years, young people have faced

57. Available at <http://napor.net/images/pdf/etiki%20kodeks%20u%20omladinskom%20radu.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2015.

58. Available at [www.lokalnirazvoj.rs/upload/YouthEmployment/SrAttachment/2014-09/Study\\_Of\\_The\\_Impact\\_Of\\_NFE\\_In\\_Youth\\_Work\\_NAPOR\\_April\\_2014.pdf](http://www.lokalnirazvoj.rs/upload/YouthEmployment/SrAttachment/2014-09/Study_Of_The_Impact_Of_NFE_In_Youth_Work_NAPOR_April_2014.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

59. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2014/documents/report-creative-potential\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2014/documents/report-creative-potential_en.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

dramatic changes as they enter working life, as a result of globalisation, technological innovations and transformations in occupational structures. Extremely competitive labour markets have created a demand for additional qualifications, knowledge and skills, and led to involvement in flexible work arrangements and changing occupations and career trajectories. However, the position of young people in different societies in this respect has been influenced significantly by the type of overall youth transitional regime in place. The transition from education to work of Serbian youth is especially unfavourable because of the huge structural obstacles that have led to high levels of overall (and especially youth) unemployment in the last two decades.

In Serbia, inactivity rates are highest amongst youth. Together with women, Roma, low-skilled individuals with secondary education or less, and people with disabilities and multiple vulnerabilities (ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds), young people are the most disadvantaged in the labour market and the least employable. The discrepancy between labour market supply and demand is one of the key causes of youth unemployment in Serbia (Tomanović et al. 2012: 122), especially when it comes to long-term unemployment. The average duration of youth unemployment is 47 months, with longer female than male unemployment (53 v. 41 months). Inactivity is also increasing: 35% of unemployed respondents stated they are currently not looking for employment (42% of girls and 27% of boys). Prospects for young people out of education and employment<sup>60</sup> are very uncertain as Serbia does not have the technical capacity to track this group and therefore will probably face difficulties in conceiving specifically targeted measures and implementing the Youth Guarantee.<sup>61</sup> Youth prospects in the labour market are additionally jeopardised by the grey market and the prevalence of non-regulated work in Serbia. The Labour Force Survey does not keep data for 15 to 29-year-olds involved in this kind of work, but there are figures for the general population older than 15, which indicate that 20.5% of the active population is engaged in informal employment. Such a context would imply the need for a set of structural reforms designed to link the educational system and labour market actors, and the Serbian Government has indeed initiated some processes in this regard. However, some reforms have been blocked by counterproductive decisions by local authorities that have autonomy over decisions on enrolment quotas at the secondary level. The same applies to the university level, where universities have considerable autonomy and do not show willingness to regulate their enrolment quotas in accordance with labour market needs. Instead, Serbia has witnessed a boom in studies in the humanities and social sciences in the last 20 years, leaving youth with qualifications in these areas but few prospects in the labour market.

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60. Tomanović et. al (2012) state that 25.1% of young people in Serbia are out of education/training and employment, compared to the EU average of 13.8%.

61. Through the Youth Guarantee, established by Council Recommendation 2013/C 120/01, EU countries endorsed the introduction of a new approach ensuring that all young people under 25 who have finished their education or/and are unemployed can avail themselves of a concrete programme of additional education or entry to the labour market within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The programmes offered can include a job, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education, to be based on each individual's needs.

According to the NES, in 2013 there were 20 102 unemployed persons of Roma ethnicity in Serbia, of whom 10 150 are women, and 7 441 are aged 15 to 30. Roma constitute 2.87% of the total number of unemployed persons registered with NES. In terms of educational level, 19 850 of the registered Roma are unqualified (have primary or lower-secondary education), 2 167 people have upper-secondary education, while only 85 of those registered have higher education qualifications. The limited participation and formal education of the Roma population remains a major obstacle in activities aimed at increasing their employability and employment. Measures focused on improving Roma employability include further education and training, public works, encouraging employers to employ persons of Roma ethnicity, and providing support for self-employment.

The failure of the main actors in the labour market (e.g. employers, social partners, ministries in charge of the economy and the labour market, and public and private employment services) to improve the position of young people undermines prospects for the whole of Serbian society. Data on the status of young people in Serbia (Tomanović et al. 2012) show that the limited possibilities in the labour market cause young people to become cynical about the capacity and willingness of NES to help them find a job. The data reveal that young people are clearly reluctant to look for a job through the service – almost half (47.6%) of the unemployed were not even registered with NES (2012: 123), while only 20% of respondents regularly used its services. When looking for a job young people prefer vacancies close to their place of residence (53.5%), and 31.3% prefer a job only in the place of residence. Just 14.9% would consider job offers outside their current place of residence.

## Employment policy and active labour market measures

NES has developed a complex system of incentives for youth labour market inclusion. The trends in reach and engagement over a five-year period are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Number of young unemployed taking part in the active labour market measures of the National Employment Service (2009-2013)**

Active labour market measures	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Training for active job search – ATP1	21 481	19 100	21 861	21 848	19 220
Club for job search	1 918	2 220	2 324	2 544	2 351
Self-efficacy training – ATP 2	300	281	366	457	513
Job fairs	21 528	22 310	21 566	24 475	19 569
Interns and volunteers	15 589	17 175	10 728		
Professional Practice			6 551	2 427	1 960
Practical knowledge programme				93	68
Trainings	1 789	1 964	2 391		
Labour market training				611	137
Training at the request of the employer				654	135
Functional Basic Education for adults				1 437	1 111

Active labour market measures	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Educational programmes for entrepreneurship development	3 652	3 622	3 064	2 819	304
Subsidies for self-employment	798	516	957	505	631
Subsidies for new entrepreneurs	1 326	1 752	2 446	481	650
Public works		1 752	1 565	2 154	304
Wage subsidies for disabled people without work experience					83
Support measures for people with disabilities					18
Total	68 381	70 692	73 819	60 505	47 054
Total 2009-2013	320 451				

Table 4 shows that more than 320 000 young people were included in active labour market measures over the observed period. Many of these measures were concerned with improving youth labour market skills. Yet, as a result of the prolonged economic crisis and structural issues, it is questionable whether such measures can bring quick and efficient relief to young people in terms of improving their position in the labour market and their economic prospects. One argument in support of this gloomy prognosis derives from the panel discussion held during the second visit of the IRT to Serbia “Care about youth in Kikinda”, which revealed that out of 6 000 young persons registered with NES, 900 went through training, but only 80 found employment. With a success rate of less than 10% in securing entry to the labour market, questions of efficiency and effectiveness are inevitably raised with regards to the high investment rate and low return rate of these measures.

Part of the reason for the lack of success of active labour market measures can be found in a mismatch of labour market supply and demand. This mismatch starts in the education sector, the outdated curricula of which do not correspond to the needs of contemporary business. It would be unjust, however, to say there have been no significant steps directed at matching skills with labour market demand.<sup>62</sup> Sectoral

62. The following note was submitted to the IRT after the National Hearing:  
 “From March 2002 to April 2013, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* was supporting Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in their efforts to reform secondary vocational education in the field of economics, law and administration. Five new educational profiles were developed in line with labour market needs (business administrator, financial administrator, bank clerk, insurance clerk and commercialist) and implemented in 53 secondary schools throughout Serbia. The essence of these profiles was practical training based primarily on education in virtual companies (where students simulate real business processes) and in-company training. Profiles were structured for two options: to prepare young people for full-time employment or for further education. From April 2013 onwards the focus has been changed towards the modernisation and promotion of three-year technical profiles by introducing elements of dual training adjusted to the conditions in Serbia. The project advises Serbian partners in developing a co-operative, demand-oriented vocational education and training model. Under the leadership of the MESTD, the project initiates and moderates dialogues between all relevant stakeholders. Apart from involving the business community in the design of the co-operative education model, the focus lies on facilitating provision of

councils<sup>63</sup> have recently been introduced in Serbia, with the aim of identifying the skill requirements of different sectors of the labour market. The project Skills 2020 Serbia<sup>64</sup> emphasises that some surveys indicate:

that companies face difficulties with respect to their workforce, due to a lack of knowledge and skills, a shortage of workers in some professions and a lack of work experience on the part of employees with higher education. In addition, the companies' perception is that schools do not prepare students for certain professions. Ideally, their staff should have technical and social skills, foreign-language abilities, and more information and communication technology skills. Employers want staff with better communication, negotiation and persuasion skills, as well as a willingness to learn and to undergo professional development, and showing more motivation, and the ability to work as a team (i.e. stronger soft/transversal skills).

Finally, it is important to mention that the system of incentives for improving youth status in the labour market needs further consolidation and clearer guidelines as there are evident inconsistencies and they have had limited success. One element that should be on the priority list for consolidation is the Youth Guarantee, since its implementation in Serbia has taken a slightly strange course: the "One stop service for youth" within the Youth Guarantee is being developed by the MoYS, not the Ministry of Labour or the MESTD. Still, judging from the past commitment of the MoYS and the complexity of tasks it has already performed, it may in fact prove to be a highly productive and efficient co-ordinator of this programme.

## Entrepreneurship

According to Tomanović et al. (2012), around 20% of young people in Serbia would like to become entrepreneurs, against an EU average of 40%, and there are some initiatives directed at supporting such youth. Education for entrepreneurship is not, however, a part of the curriculum, although Serbia took part in a project seeking to develop entrepreneurial learning. This was part of a European Training Foundation and South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning project.<sup>65</sup> For that, there was a Memorandum of Understanding on entrepreneurial education among 18 institutions, and student companies were fostered in more than 200 secondary schools, but funding for its future has been questionable. Entrepreneurship is regularly taught only at the secondary vocational schools of economics and related

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sufficient and structured in-company training for students and on creating positive examples of public-private partnerships. Three technical occupational profiles, locksmith-welder, electrician and industrial mechanic, have been introduced according to the new model in eight schools in Serbia. Teachers, headmasters and mentors (in-company trainers) in companies are extensively further trained in order to prepare them completely for implementing the modernised curricula. The project aims at creating and testing a model which enables faster response of the education system to the labour market needs."

63. Available at [www.zuov.gov.rs/sektorska-veca/?lng=lat](http://www.zuov.gov.rs/sektorska-veca/?lng=lat), accessed 18 August 2015.

64. Available at [www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/98D99C80A3828FA3C1257D95003CF5F9/\\$file/FRAME%20Skills%202020%20Serbia.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/98D99C80A3828FA3C1257D95003CF5F9/$file/FRAME%20Skills%202020%20Serbia.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

65. Available at [www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/ETF\\_and\\_SEECEL\\_reinforce\\_cooperation\\_on\\_entrepreneurial\\_learning\\_EN](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/ETF_and_SEECEL_reinforce_cooperation_on_entrepreneurial_learning_EN), accessed 18 August 2015.

high schools or universities.<sup>66</sup> Although the state aspires to increase the numbers of young entrepreneurs, current measures – promoted mostly by NES – are treated as self-employment measures and are primarily tailored to those who are recognised as marginalised youth. In this way, financial obstacles, coupled with a lack of understanding of the required measures, prove once again to be a major element in the failure of the state to comprehend the complexity of youth status and youth vulnerability.

### **The case of the Business Incubator Centre in Niš**

The Business Incubator Centre (BIC) in Niš is the biggest of its kind in Serbia (6 000 sq m). It provides its services for free. It is non-profit and project based and provides a space to rent, infrastructure and training to entrepreneurs (in marketing strategies and conceiving business plans). Concrete projects that it has developed have included: i) the re-qualification of women who have been out of the labour market for a long time (e.g. sewing); ii) practical (hands-on learning) training after secondary school; iii) the establishment of a company for welding; and iv) projects in organic agriculture. The needs of the local community correspond to the Niš BIC's offers since the Niš economy is organised around small businesses. However, the sustainability of the Niš BIC is in doubt since the owner (the City of Niš) does not want to fund it from 2015 on. It claims that it is "a waste of money".

#### **The burning issue:**

Despite publicly acknowledged recognition of the importance of entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurship in general for the recovery of the Serbian economy, local and regional government may have different perspectives and their goals may not comply with the goals proclaimed at the national level. In other words, the case of the Niš BIC demonstrates a low level of recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship for local development, where such infrastructure and resources are regarded as costs rather than as tools for development.

The gap in entrepreneurial education is being bypassed and compensated for by some international projects, such as the Youth Education Centre project.<sup>67</sup> This has a broad focus, from encouraging young people to become actively engaged in seeking jobs, to promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship among youth. The project involved 300 young people, aged 17 to 28, offering seminars focused on motivational training, meeting legal regulations and business planning. University

66. The following note was submitted to the IRT after the National Hearing:  
"Entrepreneurship was introduced in curricula of secondary vocational schools of economy within the framework of the project 'Reform of vocational education in Serbia', financed by the German Government and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. This project is one of three dealing with youth-related matters. The others are 'Professional orientation in primary schools in Serbia' and 'Strengthening of structures for youth empowerment and participation in Serbia'."

67. Available at [www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/39872944.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/39872944.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.



students in particular seem to be active in entrepreneurial endeavours in Serbia. According to the information the IRT received at a panel with CSOs in Niš, there are around 100 student enterprises supported by ENKA<sup>68</sup> and around 100 start-ups organised around “Protecta”.

## INFORMATION, ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND VISIBILITY

### Are young people in Serbia well informed?

Young people in Serbia face increasing challenges, exacerbated by contradictory and ever-changing information. In such a situation access to reliable and quality information is a prerequisite for the autonomous and productive life of young people, and it cannot be achieved without the close co-operation of governmental and non-governmental sectors. The IRT noted the high demand for the introduction of media courses in NAPOR’s training courses for accreditation. Nevertheless, the NAPOR curriculum does not contain specific modules such as media training, though NAPOR does organise additional sessions about the use of social networks, how to promote projects in the community, and how to address the media. Moreover, some modules do cover parts of public relations (in relation to, for example, important actors in the community, and donor conferences). NAPOR announced that during 2014/15, a revision of the accredited curriculum would take place through a wide consultative process, and if media training within this process comes up as a priority it will become part of the curriculum. KOMS is also not organising any training activities related to media and youth, though it emphasised its efforts in developing sustainable relationships with the media and in raising support for programme initiatives on communication between youth NGOs and the media. As far as the standards of youth work programmes are concerned, NAPOR’s and KOMS’ standard on intersectoral co-operation is focused on public relations and the visibility of action taken within the community. This involves partnership and co-operation with all relevant stakeholders and media coverage of youth work programmes and the challenges that young people are facing.

A research study conducted by the LYO in Novi Sad in 2013 on exploring youth information was designed to determine the level of youth information needs. The study was carried out via the Internet, through online questionnaires completed by young people between 15 and 30 years of age. The poll had nine questions, of which two were general questions concerning age and sex and others were about informing young people about the NGO sector. The LYO study emphasises the need of young people to access information in the fields that are relevant to them; 95% of young people surveyed said they would like there to be a place/office in Novi Sad to obtain all the information they needed. In fact, all research on youth information invariably points to this conclusion and underlines the point that active engagement in informing young people – on matters from employment and health, through rights and justice, to leisure and travel – is a significant area of youth work. When asked about the availability of information, young people in most cases stated that

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68. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enka\\_%C4%B0n%C5%9Faat\\_ve\\_Sanayi\\_A.%C5%9E](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enka_%C4%B0n%C5%9Faat_ve_Sanayi_A.%C5%9E).

they considered information to be insufficiently available, primarily in the areas of: i) studies and seminars abroad; ii) the rights of young people; iii) help for groups with special needs (i.e. mental and physical disabilities); and iv) job-seeking. In these areas, over 50% of young people concluded that information is not sufficiently available, and between 32% and 38% of young people agreed that it is partially available.

Young people in Novi Sad listed the Internet, friends, parents, newspapers and TV as the most frequent sources of information. There is not enough information in the fields that are relevant to young people according to 58% of young respondents, and 77% believe that information in general, for young people, is not sufficiently available. It is important to emphasise once again that, in response to the specific question "Do you wish there was a place where you could get all the information you need?", a striking 95% of young people said "yes", while only 5% said "no". This is a major indicator of the needs of young people in Serbia and should attract the attention, and exercise the minds, of both governmental and non-governmental organisations.

## **Mechanisms of youth information and access to rights**

The Open Society Foundation Serbia and Ipsos Puls conducted a survey on youth media usage in 2012<sup>69</sup> on 313 respondents aged 12 to 29. According to the data, TV was the most frequently used media (66%), followed by the Internet (22%), daily newspapers (9%) and other sources (30%). On a daily basis, TV was used by 77% of respondents, the Internet by 45%, daily newspapers by 36%, radio by 34% and weekly magazines by 6%. The Internet was available to 87% of respondents at home and in total 78% of young people used it to access information. Most young people were interested in weather forecasts (58%), Serbian politics (52%), sport (51%), tourism (44%), local news (43%), social issues (41%), the entertainment industry (40%), culture (38%), world politics (31%), service information (information on traffic, opening hours of institutions and organisations, the times of concerts and events) (30%), the economy (25%) and "other" areas (6%).

The data listed above refer to sources of information youth use in their everyday life, sources that are not necessarily connected with their specific needs as young people. Youth policy actors in Serbia should be aware of this and raise awareness of the serious and long-lasting consequences for young people of limited access to information on their capacity to make informed choices and decisions. Regarding the latter, it would be expected that the LYOs and youth clubs provide what is called "generalist youth information",<sup>70</sup> which is user-centred and provides information tailored specifically to the needs of users. However, as can be seen in Table 2 (above), a significant proportion of the 147 LYOs in Serbia do not have working hours that correspond to the spare time of young people. Moreover, many of these LYOs are located in the official buildings of municipalities, which jeopardises any "user-friendly" concept and may discourage young people from asking for information. The second

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69. Available at [www.mc.rs/upload/documents/saopstenja\\_izvestaji/2012/120712\\_IPSOS-koriscenje-novih-medija.pdf](http://www.mc.rs/upload/documents/saopstenja_izvestaji/2012/120712_IPSOS-koriscenje-novih-medija.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

70. Available at <http://eryica.org/page/generalist-youth-information>, accessed 18 August 2015.

possible setting in which youth may seek information or help – the youth club – is still not a typical form of youth organising or youth work in Serbia. According to the information received by the IRT, it would require serious restructuring and re-allocation of financial resources and working space to develop youth clubs. Even if this is not likely to happen in the near future, due to the severe economic crisis and Serbia's lack of financial resources, it should be noted that one strong argument in favour of establishing youth clubs is the opportunity to learn from parallel good practice examples at the European level and to make use of the knowledge and skills possessed by support structures such as the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA),<sup>71</sup> the European Youth Card Association (EYCA),<sup>72</sup> the European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC),<sup>73</sup> and the newly formed Professional Open Youth Work in Europe (POYWE),<sup>74</sup> as well as European funding schemes.

### **Outputs of governmental and civic sector action in youth information: (In)Visible youth**

In 2005, with the objective of increasing the visibility of youth and improving their access to information, ERYICA member organisations formulated a set of 12 indicators for the assessment of national youth information policies (ERYICA 2005).<sup>75</sup> These indicators address the basic prerequisites that every youth information centre should fulfil:

- ▶ active governmental role allowing for independent management of the information centre;
- ▶ provision of effective youth information legislation;
- ▶ stable funding and staffing;
- ▶ equal access for all regardless of background;
- ▶ assurance of regional and local dimension;
- ▶ evidence-based policy implemented in the course of the work of the information centres;
- ▶ continuous innovation in working processes;
- ▶ direct participation of young people in devising working programmes for the information centres;
- ▶ assurance of cross-sectoral co-operation;
- ▶ assurance of quality control and monitoring;
- ▶ skilled youth workers engaged in training;
- ▶ diversity in the delivery of information tailored to the needs of broad groups of youth.

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71. Available at <http://eryica.org>, accessed 18 August 2015.

72. Available at [www.eyca.org](http://www.eyca.org), accessed 18 August 2015.

73. Available at [www.ecyc.org](http://www.ecyc.org), accessed 18 August 2015.

74. Available at <http://poywe.org>, accessed 18 August 2015.

75. Available at [http://eryica.org/files/Indicators\\_National\\_Policy\\_2005\\_EN.pdf](http://eryica.org/files/Indicators_National_Policy_2005_EN.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

These appear to be a long way away. Young people in Serbia will probably have to wait some time before efficient structures for general youth information are in place that will produce greater visibility of youth and provide satisfactory access to information. Almost 10 years on from their formulation, the 12 indicators listed above are still a “work in progress” in Serbia despite a high demand – and evident need – for direct channels for the provision of youth information, especially ones that would directly engage young people and make them proactive. This requires more concerted efforts on the part of the public authorities (both local and national) and the civil sector. National and local government should direct their actions towards providing financial and infrastructural prerequisites for media training and media usage among youth CSOs and LYOs. On the other hand, the youth CSOs need to pay special attention to:

- ▶ providing education and training on media engagement, both to their members and to young people more generally;
- ▶ raising awareness about the importance of direct representation of youth voice, especially at the local level;
- ▶ establishing networks between media and young people in order to enable young people to communicate their messages instantly, without mediators.

## PARTICIPATION

### Youth participation in Serbia

There are no exact data on youth participation, only data presented on the basis of youth research (Tomanović et al. 2012). The IRT was informed that the MoYS is currently conducting research on the main problems and needs of young people and that this research is based, mainly, on Eurostat youth indicators. On the basis of available information, the lack of youth participation is striking when one considers the legacy of the 1990s and early 2000s and the vibrant political and NGO scene of that time. In fact, being involved in politics today has considerable negative connotations in Serbia, often reflecting the fact that many young people make decisions about their political activism based on the “instrumental” benefits of their engagement, with respect to improving routes to desirable employment or securing better prospects for education (Tomanović et al. 2012).

Findings from the study on youth in Serbia also pointed at different processes underlying this lack of participation:

**political-citizenship transitions** of young people in Serbia have some general, and some specific, features. The general features are common with those of young people in other societies and result from the lack of social expression of this social group's political interest due to its heterogeneity and unstable position within the public sphere. A specific trend in Serbia is one of “self-exclusion”, embodied in the attitude: “There is nothing I can do about it.” This is the result of young people's realisation of the problems and their expressed dissatisfaction, which is itself the consequence of nonexistence and undeveloped institutional mechanisms, but also distrust in institutions and orientations towards individual practice and self-support or “coping strategies”. (Tomanović et al. 2012: 319)

Distrust of institutions is accentuated by the fact that not every young person can be politically active in Serbia. It seems that this sphere is the preserve of more highly educated young people or young people from better socio-economic backgrounds, notably those living in urban settings. The more diverse political scene and better organisational infrastructure in urban centres means that young people from rural areas have correspondingly lower opportunities for political participation.

Another aspect blocking youth prospects for political participation is a strong gender bias. The IRT agenda during the first visit included a meeting with representatives of the youth sector of political parties. Three parliamentary parties sent representatives, all of whom were male. When asked about gender (im)balance in their political party, these representatives agreed that on average 75% of the membership is female, but 70% of leadership roles are filled by men.

During these discussions, the IRT witnessed a striking disconnect between political agendas and youth policy. The NYS was not a topic raised spontaneously by any of the represented political parties, at least not until it was introduced by the IRT, at which point the political representatives asserted that 75% of young people in Serbia “do not have a clue there is the NYS”. Asked about the role of young people in political parties, the representatives suggested that they were mostly used for the distribution of promotion materials during campaigns. Although the parties’ representatives tried to convey the efforts made by them to improve youth political status, the IRT drew the firm conclusion that many priority youth issues – as expressed by youth NGOs (e.g. information, career counselling, health, safety and protection) – have not yet made their way onto the political agenda. This was especially evident in the case of sexual education and the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community: only one parliamentary party in Serbia supports this community.

This void at the formal political level is being filled, to some extent, by several international organisations seeking to foster youth participation in Serbia. Although their contribution to youth civil society is considerable, they function almost exclusively at the university level:

- ▶ AISEC<sup>76</sup> (an international platform for young people to discover and develop their potential so as to have a positive impact on society);
- ▶ AEGEE<sup>77</sup> (European Students’ Forum);
- ▶ BEST<sup>78</sup> (Board of European Students of Technology);
- ▶ EESTEC<sup>79</sup> (Electrical Engineering Students’ European Association);
- ▶ IAESTE<sup>80</sup> (International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience);
- ▶ ELSA<sup>81</sup> (the European Law Students’ Association).

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76. Available at <http://aiasec.org.rs>, accessed 18 August 2015.

77. Available at [www.aegeens.org.rs](http://www.aegeens.org.rs), accessed 18 August 2015.

78. Available at <http://best.rs>, accessed 18 August 2015.

79. Available at <http://eestec.etf.bg.ac.rs>, accessed 18 August 2015.

80. Available at [www.iaeste.ac.rs/site](http://www.iaeste.ac.rs/site), accessed 18 August 2015.

81. Available at [www.elsa.org.rs](http://www.elsa.org.rs), accessed 18 August 2015.

One aspect of youth activism that is omnipresent in contemporary Serbia – volunteering – continues to face a lack of official structuring and legislation. According to both KOMS and the Provincial Secretariat of AP Vojvodina, youth volunteering in Serbia is not adequately regulated by the Law on Volunteering.<sup>82</sup> Since 2011, there has been growing dissatisfaction with the current law among youth NGOs, with public calls for revision of the legislation, but it seems that supportive and facilitative regulation of volunteering in Serbia is not a priority at the moment.

## Participation in youth policy

Since its very beginning, the MoYS has invested considerable effort into improving youth participation, both through national mechanisms and international support. To this end, it has co-operated with international partners on the project “Strengthening the structures for youth empowerment and participation”,<sup>83</sup> which aims to establish structures for youth empowerment, youth participation and conflict transformation at national, regional and municipal level from 2005 to 2014. The project was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ). It was launched nationwide in 2005, and has engaged primarily in conflict transformation and youth policy. It advises the MoYS and its regional offices on the development and decentralised implementation of Serbian youth policy. Its activities include the development and review of local youth action plans together with youth co-ordinators and relevant municipal employees, the drafting and establishment of national standards for LYOs, and professional and management training for co-ordinators. The MESTD as well as schools and vocational associations play key roles in implementing conflict transformation programmes. CSOs, too, are increasingly active in youth empowerment and receive project support. All measures are intended to give young people greater opportunities to become socially and politically engaged and to promote democratic behaviour and tolerance. The results achieved include mediation programmes, such as a programme for school parliaments that has been accredited and has been introduced in 200 schools so far. The schools are now carrying out the mediation programmes through the Serbian Teachers’ Association, independently of the project, while other national and international organisations are using these programmes as well. As a result, school parliaments, where pupils are given a chance to resolve conflicts constructively, have been made mandatory.

A normative and structural framework is now in place in the youth policy sector. Of the 147 LYOs that have been established so far, 120 have developed action plans that their local municipal parliaments have approved and supplied with budgets. Of these, 91 received support directly from the BMZ project. Following review and adjustment of their action plans, the majority of the activities planned are now being carried out. The youth co-ordinators have recognised the usefulness of drawing up action plans and making use of them to lobby other donors and their local communities.

In relation to youth participation the IRT draws several conclusions:

- ▶ civic education is still not an obligatory subject at schools: currently pupils and students choose between religious education and civic education;

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82. Available at [www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_volontiranju.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_volontiranju.html), accessed 18 August 2015.

83. Available at [www.giz.de/en/worldwide/21213.html](http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/21213.html), accessed 18 August 2015.

- ▶ there is strong antagonism between politically active youth and youth active in civil society;
- ▶ the inclusion of young people who are not members of political parties into decision making at national, regional and local level is not systemic and very often exists only at the level of the MoYS;
- ▶ youth organisations are not adequately interconnected: the youth NGO landscape is fragmented, which results in a waste of human and financial resources.

### **The civil sector and LYOs: The case of Kikinda**

In terms of the recognition of civil society, Kikinda is a rare case. The LYOC here was not affiliated to any political party and yet had had quite a long mandate (10 years). Kikinda does not have a youth club, though there was one from 2006 to 2008, financed from abroad. CSO representatives, when asked about their capacity to start a new youth club without relying on state resources, said it was not possible as “everything is top down”. Kikinda used to have a youth strategy, but no budget dedicated to youth; now a new Local Action Plan is being drafted with 84 experts and young people. Its priorities will be establishing “a one-stop shop” and meeting point for young people, with an emphasis on employment and mobility.

#### **The burning issue:**

Kikinda was one of a number of sites where the IRT learned about the organisation of LYOs. Atypically, Kikinda’s LYOC appeared to be sufficiently divorced from the vagaries of local politics to be able to sustain her position and drive forward a youth work agenda. This was, however, an exception that proved the rule: most LYOC appointments are heavily penetrated and influenced by politics, which does not allow for the efficient interconnection of local self-government and civil society. The most persistent, obstructive issue that impedes greater collaborative development that might be sustained over time is the fact that the vast majority of LYOC belong to one of the ruling political parties. The membership of local youth councils is also, to a great extent, composed of active members of political parties, compounding the problem.

Serbia has not yet introduced distinctive legislation that would oblige national, regional and local government to include CSOs, interested citizens or other interested parties in consultations on new legal acts. Nevertheless, the NYS and NAP emphasise the need to provide channels for youth participation in decision making and for partnership between governmental bodies and youth. Additionally, the Law on Youth, in Article 16, states that:

at the proposal of the Ministry and in accordance with the regulations governing the work of the Government, the Government shall form a Youth Council as an advisory body initiating and harmonising activities related to the development and implementation of Youth Policy and proposing measures for its improvement. ... Representatives of young people shall make up no less than one-third of the Youth Council membership.

The concern remains, however, that politically active youth continue to constitute the membership of the YC, in effect not allowing young people active at the level of civil society to participate in this advisory body.

Recommendations to CSOs emphasise a strong need for the development of a joint platform for co-operation with local, regional and national government. Alongside this process, youth CSOs should improve their quality assurance and youth visibility by fostering new skills acquisition, especially in the field of communications and leadership skills.

Key recommendations to the regional and local government include:

- ▶ enabling the participation of non-politically active youth in decision making, especially in LYCs;
- ▶ better co-ordination of local youth action plans, operational plans and annual budgets;
- ▶ establishing local youth clubs/centres as a place for the provision of youth information, education and non-formal learning, and the expression of initiative and creativity;
- ▶ developing the means for more effective youth information and giving youth a voice to directly express themselves in the local and regional media.

## **Youth cultural consumption and production**

The NYS (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 23) reveals that high culture contexts (such as going to the theatre, visiting museums and art galleries, or attending concerts of classical music) are the least popular activities among Serbian youth. Around 50% of secondary school children in Serbia have never gone to a theatre or visited a museum, while 15% said their only opportunity had been through school. Older youth consume these cultural events to an even lesser extent (only around 3% to 4%), and only about 2.5% of young people are involved in creative and artistic work in Serbia. The most common form of cultural consumption is watching TV (95% of youth watch 2 to 3 hours of TV daily) and listening to music, followed by going to the cinema and popular music concerts. The data suggest that young people rarely read books or newspapers, and 37.6% of secondary school children are not members of a library. However, Serbian youth is not homogenous in terms of cultural consumption and production; they are usually differentiated by their socio-economic background and achieved status. Young people from more favourable social backgrounds, whose parents are highly educated, youth residing in urban areas, university students and young experts are at the forefront of the cultural scene in Serbia. Here it should be emphasised that the cultural scene created and consumed by this segment of young people mainly belongs to “high” culture – such as theatres, concerts and book clubs.

Having learned of the relatively low rate of cultural consumption and participation in Serbia, the IRT can confirm that for youth here, even more than for youth in economically more prosperous and politically more stable countries, participation in youth culture and active and free engagement in cultural activities are among the basic prerequisites for nurturing creativity and innovation in young people (de



Wachter and Kristensen 1995), which will add value to society (Fornäs, Lindburg and Sernhede 1995).<sup>84</sup> It is usual for official structures to provide youth with infrastructure and finances that enable the expression of their needs through culture (Williamson 2012),<sup>85</sup> often supported by formal legislation. In Serbia, as the IRT learned at the Ministry of Culture and Information, the strategy of cultural development up to 2020 has not yet been adopted. According to the answers received from the ministry, its existing priorities in the youth field are as follows:

- ▶ research and creative work;
- ▶ young talent;
- ▶ expert and continuous work with young people;
- ▶ independent youth cultural production;
- ▶ licensing of experts who work with young people.

Attention is also paid to the funds for minorities, with a recent example given of 12 Roma from 12 municipalities being educated for work in media and then relocated back to their municipalities in order to enrich the local media and cultural scene.

However, according to the Ministry of Culture and Information, prospects for youth culture development are often blocked by the low level of co-operation between the ministry and the LYOs. Moreover, there is no interministerial system of information for young people and it seems that different governmental bodies do not co-operate sufficiently in the youth field when it comes to culture and information.

One of the positive examples of synergy between culture and information was the TV show *I want you to know*,<sup>86</sup> co-ordinated by the Youth Office Belgrade<sup>87</sup> and produced for “Studio B” TV. Its aim was to inform and educate young people through entertaining content, covering a wide area of topics relevant to youth – from mobility, ecology, education, training, employment and volunteering – to the promotion of young talented experts, artists and scientists. Unfortunately, the show lasted only from 2010 to 2012. No explanation for its termination was provided to the IRT.

## SOCIAL INCLUSION

### Youth inclusion policy in Serbia

In Serbia, socially excluded young people are concentrated in rural areas, although their presence is increasing in Belgrade due to the migration of youth looking (usually unsuccessfully) for a job. The concentration of economic, political and cultural life in the capital and several major cities leaves the young in rural areas and smaller towns with no prospects of becoming active citizens in various sectors of society.

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84. Sweden promotes this more than most.

85. Williamson (2012) provides the example of the youth Happi centre in Helsinki, which offers a wide range of cultural content and activities for youth.

86. Available at [www.kancelarijazamlade.rs/vest/hocu-da-znas](http://www.kancelarijazamlade.rs/vest/hocu-da-znas), accessed 18 August 2015.

87. Available at [www.kancelarijazamlade.rs/o-nama/o-kancelariji](http://www.kancelarijazamlade.rs/o-nama/o-kancelariji), accessed 18 August 2015.

Apart from geographic location, belonging to an ethnic minority is a key factor in the low prospects of some young people. This is especially evident in the case of young Roma, who make up almost half of the most significantly excluded young people in Serbia. Social exclusion in this case goes hand in hand with labour market exclusion, which results in serious deprivation and invariably contributes to their disinterest in public engagement. Roma have been defined as marginalised in a number of national policy documents: the Poverty Reduction Strategy for Serbia,<sup>88</sup> the NYS and the Strategy for the Enhancement of the Position of Roma in the Republic of Serbia.<sup>89</sup> Although Roma are the subjects of many strategic documents, such as the NYS and the new Inclusion Strategy, they are still often omitted from the drafting process. In one particular context visited by the IRT, exclusion from core activities of the LYO was also evident. The IRT also learned that only one Roma is sitting on the national committee against hate speech, which, given historical and contemporary hostilities towards Roma on the part of other sections of society, would appear to be hardly proportionate or sufficient.

Roma are marginalised in many respects – economically, educationally, spatially and socially. According to the data of the Serbian Statistical Office,<sup>90</sup> Roma constitute 5% of the total population, while young Roma represent almost 6% of youth. According to the 2014 Serbia country report,<sup>91</sup> although Serbian officials argue that the position of the Roma people has improved thanks to the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, discrimination against Roma is still prevalent in employment, education, health care and housing. A large number of Roma do not have personal documents, 62% of Roma children have never attended school or have dropped out prematurely, while 72% of the 593 Roma settlements in Serbia are not legal, with inhabitants often subject to forced evictions (BTI 2014: 11).

The Strategy for the Enhancement of the Position of Roma in the Republic of Serbia defines the basis for improving the lives of Roma and narrowing the gap between the Roma population and other populations. The document also creates a basis for identifying and applying affirmative action measures, primarily in the areas of education, health, employment and housing. The Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy for Youth 2009-2014 covers 12 areas: education, housing, employment, health, culture, media and information, social welfare, access to personal documents, political participation, fighting discrimination, gender equality and the status of internally displaced persons and returnees upon readmission agreement.

There are 17 registered Roma youth organisations in Serbia, of which only 12 are active, and only two or three have a predominantly youth membership. It was anticipated that an association of Roma NGOs would be established soon. Roma representatives expressed to the IRT their concerns about lack of capacity, financial resources, equipment and space, and on its visit to the Roma settlement in Palilula

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88. [www.seio.gov.rs/documents/national-documents.230.html](http://www.seio.gov.rs/documents/national-documents.230.html), accessed 9 October 2015.

89. Available at [www.inkluzija.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Strategija-SR-web-FINAL.pdf](http://www.inkluzija.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Strategija-SR-web-FINAL.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

90. Available at <http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite>, accessed 18 August 2015.

91. Available at [www.bti-project.org/uploads/tx\\_itao\\_download/BTI\\_2014\\_Serbia.pdf](http://www.bti-project.org/uploads/tx_itao_download/BTI_2014_Serbia.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

the IRT learned that their local NGO has applied for funding from MESTD but has, so far, met with no success. At the time of the IRT visit its lease for a very modest, but important, building was running out, without any apparent prospect of a solution.

There are around 800 000 people with disabilities in Serbia, or 10% of the population. They face stigma and limited social support. The vulnerability of this group and its marginalisation is evident from the fact that over 70% of people with disabilities live in poverty and only 13% have access to employment. Their progress has been very slow, and it was only in 2003 that the public authorities in Serbia recognised for the first time that people with disabilities are a vulnerable group requiring extra assistance. In 2010, an employment quota system was brought into effect, requiring employers to hire at least one person with disabilities for every 20 to 50 employees, and to hire another person with disabilities for every 50 additional employees. There have also been some improvements in access to education and culture, but young people with disabilities continue to be on the margins of social and political life. The Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia is currently under revision and the results are expected to be publicly available soon. The last available report dates back to 2007,<sup>92</sup> when little attention was paid to the needs of youth with disabilities. At that time, children with disability were in focus, whereas youth were mentioned only as one of the groups under specific sub-topics tackling disability in general.

In terms of the overall orientation of Serbia towards achieving an inclusive society, several strategies for the development of education introduce the concept of social inclusion as a specific approach and as a strategic direction. It connects persons with physical and developmental disabilities, people with learning disabilities and people from underprivileged backgrounds and disadvantaged social groups, emphasising their full right to quality education, and to an education that takes account of the specificity of their disability. The fundamental strategic goal in education is a comprehensive approach that ensures social inclusion. Some significant developments in inclusive education have, indeed, taken place through various projects designed to build the capacity of schools to implement inclusive practices. The basis of a quality assurance system has been developed, with mechanisms for evaluation and self-evaluation of schools, as well as several handbooks and guides about inclusive education and the development of an inclusive culture and practice in educational institutions. Scholarships are increasingly awarded to students from different vulnerable groups. Moreover, co-operation and co-ordination among social welfare, education and health care systems is taking place on issues of inclusive education.

## **Social protection and youth**

The Strategy for the Development of Social Protection<sup>93</sup> specifically mentions youth only in two paragraphs dealing with young people who are accommodated in state

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92. Available at [www.epravna.gov.rs/eusluge/opis\\_usluge?generatedServiceId=1218&alphabet=lat](http://www.epravna.gov.rs/eusluge/opis_usluge?generatedServiceId=1218&alphabet=lat), accessed 18 August 2015.

93. Available at <http://inkluzivno-obrazovanje.rs/files/Strategija-razvoja-socijalne-zastite-cirilica.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2015.

housing. This was a matter of concern to the IRT and raised a number of questions for the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. A meeting with the ministry illuminated various aspects of social policy development in Serbia. As regards measures tackling youth social inclusion, the ministry is regulating and monitoring the following activities:

- ▶ “independent housing” developed in 40 municipalities as a preparation for returning to the community after being in foster care;
- ▶ “independent housing” for young people with Down syndrome or autism;
- ▶ early prevention activities through a “family assistant”, connecting centres for social policy, family and community.

Data about beneficiaries of social care in 2011, which were provided by the Republic Institute of Social Welfare, revealed there were altogether 170 201 young recipients of social care benefits. The most vulnerable group – those young people at risk of poverty, severely materially deprived and living in a household with low work intensity – comprises 9.3% of the young population in Serbia. Against the international threshold for defining poverty (below 60% of national median equalised income), 15.5% of young people aged 15 to 24 are living in poverty.

The development of social services for youth in Serbia depends to a great extent on regional or local finances, resulting in an uneven spread of provision among different municipalities. The most prevalent social service is day care for youth with developmental problems or disabilities, while independent housing communities are less common. These services are usually provided by public organisations, although civil society is slowly establishing itself as a prominent care provider. Nevertheless, the financial resources of civil society very often lack sustainability. As a result, social care services provided by civil society are usually timebound and project based.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY/SECURITY

### Health and youth policy in Serbia

The Strategy for Youth Development and Health in the Republic of Serbia<sup>94</sup> is the main document for regulating youth health in Serbia. It is based on the basic principles and values outlined in international documents dealing with the development of public health and health development of children and youth, including the Millennium Development Goals<sup>95</sup> and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>96</sup> It was developed in step with key national documents such as the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction,<sup>97</sup> the NYS, the National Action Plan for Children,<sup>98</sup> the National

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94. Available at [www.unicef.org/serbia/Strategy\\_for\\_Youth\\_Devel\\_and\\_Health\\_in\\_Serbia%281%29.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/serbia/Strategy_for_Youth_Devel_and_Health_in_Serbia%281%29.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

95. Available at [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals), accessed 18 August 2015.

96. Available at [www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

97. Available at [www.seio.gov.rs/documents/nacionalni-plan-akcije-za-decu-vlade-republike-230.html](http://www.seio.gov.rs/documents/nacionalni-plan-akcije-za-decu-vlade-republike-230.html), accessed 18 August 2015.

98. Available at [www.minoritycentre.org/library/nacionalni-plan-akcije-za-decu-vlade-republike-srbije](http://www.minoritycentre.org/library/nacionalni-plan-akcije-za-decu-vlade-republike-srbije), accessed 18 August 2015.

Strategy for Combating HIV/AIDS,<sup>99</sup> and the National Strategy for Mental Health.<sup>100</sup> The main objective of Serbia's Strategy for Youth Development and Health is to promote preventive health action among youth. The NYS also lists youth health as a paramount issue, devoting an entire section to it and stating among its objectives the protection and improvement of health, decreasing health risks, and developing a youth-friendly health protection system.

Two main groups of young people have been identified as particularly at risk by the Strategy for Youth Development and Health: youth with disabilities, and vulnerable and marginalised groups including youth without parental care, the homeless, youth in institutions for social rehabilitation, the poor, members of national minorities, youth in need of special support and refugees. Youth health policy is implemented by the Ministry of Health in conjunction with a number of institutions that are directly responsible for the provision of health services for young people, as outlined by policy. According to the Strategy for Youth Development and Health, these include: i) primary health care providers (*dom zdravlja*); ii) student polyclinics catering for registered students up to 26 years of age; and iii) paediatricians for youth up to 19 years of age.

## Overview of youth health

Young people face numerous physical and mental health risks on the road from childhood to adulthood. Enabling young people to successfully confront those risks is key to any successful youth strategy. The Ministry of Health conducted studies on youth health in 2009 and 2013, though the results from 2013 were not available during the IRT visits.<sup>101</sup> Following a request by the IRT after its first visit, the minister provided the 2009 data in June 2014. Among the primary health challenges that young people face are smoking, abuse of alcohol, drug use, and abuse and/or neglect, while injury resulting from accidents remains the leading cause of death. Youth also suffer from higher rates of mental and behavioural disorders, including addiction, depression and suicide, than the general population. According to data from the Statistical Office of Serbia, in 2007 the suicide rate per 100 000 among young people aged 15 to 29 was 9.0. The highest rate per 100 000 was in the age group 25 to 29 years (11.7), and the lowest in the age group 15 to 19 (4.3).

When it comes to sexual and reproductive health, young women in particular report low rates of contraceptive use, leading to a concomitant increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). According to health statistics (derived only from health care institutions in the state sector), the specific rate of induced abortions for females aged 15 to 29 in 2007 was 11.3%. The highest rate was in the age group 25 to 29 (17.7%) and the lowest rate was in the age group 15 to 19 (3.6%). In 2008, young (age 15 to 29) HIV positive people comprised 17% of the total living with HIV.

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99. Available at [www.batut.org.rs/download/publikacije/Strategija%20o%20HIV%20infekciji%20i%20AIDS-u%20-%20srpski%20jezik.pdf](http://www.batut.org.rs/download/publikacije/Strategija%20o%20HIV%20infekciji%20i%20AIDS-u%20-%20srpski%20jezik.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

100. Available at [www.zdravlje.gov.rs/tmpmz-admin/downloads/zakoni1/Strategija%20Razvoja%20Zastite%20Mentalnog%20Zdravlja.pdf](http://www.zdravlje.gov.rs/tmpmz-admin/downloads/zakoni1/Strategija%20Razvoja%20Zastite%20Mentalnog%20Zdravlja.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

101. The newest data were released in October 2014, in cyrillic. Available at [www.batut.org.rs/download/publikacije/IstrazivanjeZdravljaStanovnistvaRS2013.pdf](http://www.batut.org.rs/download/publikacije/IstrazivanjeZdravljaStanovnistvaRS2013.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

The proportion of the young population affected by other STIs ranged from 8% for syphilis to 26% for Chlamydia, 29% for hepatitis B, 40% for hepatitis C and 66% for gonorrhoea. All registered data (those reported to medical professionals) indicate the limited nature of sexual health awareness among young people and the urgent need for more robust personal and social education (including health education) to be incorporated firmly into the school curriculum as regular practice in both primary and secondary education.

## Preventive measures and youth clinics

Health care for young people is provided by youth health centres (primary centres), of which there are 158 in the Republic of Serbia. Counselling for young people (aged 10 to 19) has been set up in 67 of these institutions, with trained specialist paediatricians, gynaecologists, general medical doctors, psychologists, social workers and visiting nurses. Counselling centres are open every day and implement health educational activities for adolescents and young people up to the age of 19<sup>102</sup> in the following areas: reproductive health, proper nutrition (combating obesity), prevention of substance abuse and domestic violence, prevention of behavioural disorders, and the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. At the moment young people cannot get tested for STIs anonymously, with the exception of testing for HIV and hepatitis at student polyclinics.

Counselling is also conducted through workshops, both through the training of peer educators and individual education. In hospitals in Serbia, from 2010 to 2013, the Ministry of Health supported the education of health workers in order to adopt a new approach for hospitalised children and adolescents through the project "Hospital, friend of children and families" (in co-operation with the NGO Partnerships in Health Serbia and Partnerships in Health Switzerland with the staff of the Children's Center at Johns Hopkins Hospital).

The IRT had the opportunity to witness the functioning of the youth health system in Serbia at a meeting at the Health Centre in Niš,<sup>103</sup> which has the second biggest department for children and youth. It has developed health campaigns targeting youth, with over 500 workshops held each year. Group health education usually starts at age 15, and continues until the age of 19. Health provision for students (there are 30 000 students in Niš) is organised around individual counselling. The only anonymous health counselling is related to HIV. The three major youth health challenges identified by medical staff in the Health Centre were: i) drug abuse (alcohol, cannabis); ii) nutrition; and iii) mental health. Additional health provision takes place at the Cultural Centre in Niš,<sup>104</sup> which offers a free psychological counselling programme, available to all age groups. Most frequently, young people present with problems related to school, family and addiction. Anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder are the most frequent disorders encountered.

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102. In Serbia individuals younger than 19 can usually access health advice at health centres (*dom zdravlja*). For regular university students health counselling is provided via student polyclinics (up to age 26). Young people not studying or older than 26 are eligible to get advice through health centres.

103. Available at [www.domzdravljanis.co.rs](http://www.domzdravljanis.co.rs), accessed 18 August 2015.

104. Available at [www.skc-nis.com](http://www.skc-nis.com), accessed 18 August 2015.

The main standard on health protection in Serbia prescribes that one medical doctor cover 1 600 patients or 1 500 young people. The Law on Patients' Rights Protection<sup>105</sup> allows those aged 15 and over to give consent for medical procedures and access all personal records and documentation. Medical insurance is state funded for everyone under 19. Medical insurance for students (age 19 to 26) is also state funded for all regular students. Compulsory preventive check-ups are conducted for young people every second year from 10 to 18. Control check-ups for young people older than 19 are provided at age 20 and 22, and for those between 23 to 33 every five years. Those younger than 30 have a right to three cancer check-ups in total. Girls older than 15 are entitled to a preventative gynaecological check-up once a year. At least four medical examinations are available in the course of pregnancy.

All these measures are clearly beneficial to youth health status, although many do not appear to be particularly tailored to the needs of young people. This is especially evident in the functioning of the "youth-friendly clinics", which in fact do not provide open, constant, individualised and anonymous access for young people. Rather, they work on an appointment system and with larger groups of youth, resulting in the strong probability that many youth may feel reluctant to seek help this way. The continuing reticence over the introduction of broad-based personal, social and health education (including sex education and sexual health education) to regular school curricula, as noted above, is another drawback of youth health policy in Serbia. Some developments with regards to this have been announced recently by the MoYS and the Ministry of Health, but the influence that continues to be exercised by conservative structures (such as the Orthodox Church) on decision-making bodies inevitably raises doubts about the feasibility of introducing such subjects.

## **Youth safety/security policy measures**

The NYS (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 33) states that "young people are among the most common victims but also committers of crime". Furthermore, it asserts:

Young people are prone to violence in the family, in partnership relations, at school, in the media, at different institutions for placement, care and upbringing, in the community and at work, both from older people responsible for upbringing and educating youth, including the family, as well as from their peers. Young people are often victims of violence because of their sexual or political orientation, because of belonging to an ethnic, religious or national group. Also, new technologies such as mobile phones and internet create new forms of violence.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),<sup>106</sup> as many as 40% of young people in Serbia have been exposed to peer violence at least once. Young people at school have also been subject to mockery and insults (23%), threats and intimidation (5%), as well as shouting, teasing and mockery (10%). Many young students also report being the subject of teacher-led violence, with as many as 28%

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105. Available at [www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/lat/pdf/zakoni/2013/1283-13Lat.pdf](http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/lat/pdf/zakoni/2013/1283-13Lat.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

106. Available at [www.unicef.rs/files/nasilje-u-skolama-za-web.pdf](http://www.unicef.rs/files/nasilje-u-skolama-za-web.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.

of students complaining of teachers hurling insults and ridicule and a further 13% complaining of threats and intimidation. Although thorough research has yet to be done on this topic, there is mounting evidence that new forms of media – such as social media sites or Internet chat rooms – offer a new outlet for youth bullying.<sup>107</sup>

Violence among peers is more and more common in Serbia (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 35). Around 65% of students are victims of violence among peers at least once in three months, while 44% of students remember having personally experienced violence during their school years. The last 10 years have brought a change in approach to managing youth safety issues, with initiatives moving towards a “whole community approach” in prevention and mediation. This involves engaging all relevant actors – educational institutions, governmental and non-governmental associations – in order to establish “safety nets”. The National Strategy on Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse<sup>108</sup> is one of the milestones in the measures being taken against violence and abuse, coupled with the bylaw on protocol of acting in institutions as an answer to violence, abuse and neglect,<sup>109</sup> which prescribes clear procedures in prevention and intervention in cases of violence and abuse at educational institutions. It also defines ways of conceiving an annual plan for violence prevention, the establishment of teams for child protection, the responsibilities of employees, pupils and parents, and the functioning of the external network of institutions – such as social centres, the police and health centres.

The MESTD has recognised the importance of fostering youth safety, especially at schools. It initiated the establishment of a unit for violence prevention with support from UNICEF in 2012. Moreover, the programme “Schools without violence”,<sup>110</sup> which set up an SOS phone line in 2005, today encompasses 274 (out of 3 578) schools in Serbia. The majority of preventive measures and accompanying legislation are, however, tailored towards the protection of children; young people are often still neglected in specifically targeted measures. Instead, youth are more likely to be subject to procedures for dealing with adult perpetrators of violence and crime, which can result in longer-term damage to, instead of reform of, young people. As the NYS states (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 35), young people accommodated in residential institutions (correctional institutions or orphanages) are also exposed to peer violence,<sup>111</sup> and although some steps towards decentralisation, and the humanisation of living conditions in those environments, have been made over the course of the last decade, the present state of certain institutions providing young people with residential accommodation is still unsatisfactory with regard to infrastructural, material, technical and staffing capacities. Furthermore, young people are often held in those institutions for too long, isolated from the local community and society at large, thus diminishing their chances of integration into society.

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107. Serbia is implementing a No Hate Speech campaign, available at <https://sr-rs.facebook.com/negovorurnrnznje>, accessed 18 August 2015.

108. Available at [www.cpd.org.rs/ddownload/\\_params/file\\_id/2039.html](http://www.cpd.org.rs/ddownload/_params/file_id/2039.html), accessed 18 August 2015.

109. Available at [www.paragraf.rs/propisi/pravilnik\\_o\\_protokolu\\_postupanja\\_u\\_ustanovi.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/pravilnik_o_protokolu_postupanja_u_ustanovi.html), accessed 18 August 2015.

110. Available at [www.unicef.rs/skola-bez-nasilja.html](http://www.unicef.rs/skola-bez-nasilja.html), accessed 18 August 2015.

111. See Riepl and Williamson (2009) for a comparative study of different forms of peer violence.



## Incentives and organisations improving youth mobility in Serbia

The Council of Europe and its North-South Centre<sup>112</sup> have enabled Serbia to access the Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through the Youth Card,<sup>113</sup> while the NYS has devised several instruments for cultivating and promoting youth mobility. These efforts were supported by the Youth in Action Programme (with Serbia having the status of a Neighbouring Partner Country), the SALTO-YOUTH contact point in Serbia (“Hajde da”),<sup>114</sup> and Euraxess Serbia.<sup>115</sup> More recently, Serbia has been taking part in the Erasmus+ programme, with the NGO “Hajde da” remaining a contact point for this programme.

The Serbian universities that participated in the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects are the University of Belgrade, the University of Novi Sad, the University of Kragujevac and the University of Niš. There were over 150 places for joint Erasmus Mundus Master’s degrees and some 40 joint PhD programmes for which students could apply within Erasmus Mundus Action 1. All these programmes lead towards joint or multiple diplomas. In the last seven years, more than 400 students from Serbia have been awarded scholarships to attend Erasmus Mundus joint Master’s and PhD courses at prestigious EU universities. The educational levels for which grants through the Erasmus programme were awarded is as follows: Bachelor’s level 56%, Master’s level 26%, PhD level 14% and postdoctorate level 4%. Institutions from Serbia also participated in four small Erasmus Mundus projects aimed at the improvement and promotion of the European Higher Education Area, co-ordinated by prominent universities in the EU (University of Bordeaux 1; Technical University of Vienna; “La Sapienza”, University of Rome; and the Catholic University of Porto).

The NGO “Hajde da” provided data on their overall activities from 2007 to 2013 in relation to both the EU Youth in Action (YiA) and European Voluntary Service (EVS) programmes:

- ▶ 45: number of organisations, institutions and youth offices accredited for EVS in Serbia;
- ▶ 317: total number of supported projects in Serbia on a centralised level in YiA programmes where organisations from Serbia were applicants;
- ▶ 8 500: total number of participants from all countries participating in YiA in 317 approved projects in Serbia;
- ▶ 770-910: the expected number of young people included in the EVS in seven years;
- ▶ minimum 1 000: number of projects in which organisations from Serbia were partners;
- ▶ minimum 5 000: number of young people from Serbia who participated in 1 000 projects in which organisations from Serbia were partners.

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112. Available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre), accessed 18 August 2015.

113. Available at [www.eyca.org](http://www.eyca.org), accessed 18 August 2015.

114. Available at [www.mladiuakciji.rs](http://www.mladiuakciji.rs), accessed 18 August 2015.

115. Available at [www.euraxess.rs/sitegenius/topic.php?id=251](http://www.euraxess.rs/sitegenius/topic.php?id=251), accessed 18 August 2015.

In co-operation with the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia, Foundation Tempus has established the Erasmus Mundus alumni network for present and former students who have received Erasmus Mundus scholarships. The aim of setting up the network was to mediate in establishing contacts between potential employers in Serbia and Erasmus Mundus students and graduates. Currently, the Erasmus Mundus alumni network in Serbia has 563 members. Recent plans for future action include the launch of an initiative for the organisation of internships in the public sector.

## Mobile youth in Serbia

The NYS (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 10) states that the:

bad economic and social situation among youth, lack of adequate infrastructure, slow reforms in society and limited freedom of movement in the region contributed to spreading xenophobia and resulted in the ignorance of a number of mobile youth.

The adverse situation regarding mobility is worsened by poor economic prospects; this is backed up by data that indicates 20% of young people have not had a chance to travel anywhere, not even on vacation. Despite this, 80% of youth in Serbia expressed their wish to be mobile (mainly for touristic reasons), but only 15% have the opportunity to be mobile on a regular basis. International mobility is even lower – 49% of youth have not had a chance to travel abroad even once in the last five years prior to the survey (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 10).

Internal migration in Serbia is generally from smaller municipalities to larger towns, mostly for studies and/or employment. The majority of young people do not return to their homes after receiving a university diploma; rather they enter a vicious circle of underpaid jobs and unfulfilled aspirations. The NYS (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 23) indicates that of all municipalities in Serbia, only 28 have had a small increase in population in recent years. These trends will probably become even more pronounced in the light of further data showing that 52% of youth are considering moving abroad, 35% are thinking about going somewhere else within the country, and 13% do not know precisely what their plans are, but express certainty about moving somewhere else. Some estimates suggest that 500 000 young people have left Serbia since the 1990s, and MESTD has recorded 2 000 researchers who have left Serbia in the past decade.

In Serbia, the dissatisfaction of highly educated youth with their position as a new reserve army of labour, coupled with the unstable political situation, is evidently leading to increased brain drain. Young people in Serbia on average wait for a job for six years (Tomanović et al. 2012), and their aspirations to move abroad have transferred from the private to the public sphere, expressed through public protests and organised groups (e.g. the Facebook group Let's leave Serbia, or *Napustimo Srbiju*). According to the World Economic Forum<sup>116</sup> and USAID,<sup>117</sup> Serbia was 141 out of 144 countries as far as the brain drain is concerned, in 2013.

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116. Available at [www.weforum.org](http://www.weforum.org), accessed 18 August 2015.

117. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/serbia-CDCS-2013-2017.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2015.

It should be noted, however, that Serbia has traditionally been a “source” country, partly thanks to the politics of “soft boundaries” during the socialist period, which resulted in quite a large diaspora. To better manage communication with its diaspora, the Serbian Government has put in place a special Department for Diaspora within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>118</sup> This department prioritises maintaining an active relationship with Serbian nationals living abroad. The Law on Diaspora<sup>119</sup> was adopted in 2009 and it changed the legal standing of the Serbian diaspora. The law prescribes the creation of a diaspora database, with the aim of collecting information on a voluntary basis, with protection of confidentiality. The question is whether the brain drain can be reversed into a brain gain in the near future, since current prospects promise little in the way of brighter futures for those young people who remain in Serbia.

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118. Available at <http://www.mfa.gov.rs/sr/index.php/konzularni-poslovi/dijaspora/dijaspora-opste?lang=lat>, accessed 18 August 2015.

119. Available at [http://dijaspora.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Zakon\\_o\\_dijaspori.pdf](http://dijaspora.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Zakon_o_dijaspori.pdf), accessed 18 August 2015.



## Chapter 3

# Cross-cutting topics of youth policy in Serbia

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**T**he IRT identified seven cross-cutting topics of youth policy that currently present a significant hindrance to efficient policy making and the implementation of effective youth policies:

- ▶ centralisation and politicisation;
- ▶ transparency;
- ▶ civic versus traditional structures;
- ▶ horizontal and vertical communication;
- ▶ weaknesses in intersectoral co-operation;
- ▶ fragmentation of the youth field and resources;
- ▶ lack of sustainability.

### CENTRALISATION AND POLITICISATION

Based on a superficial overview of youth policy decision making, the strategies defining the priorities in youth policy and the structures for its implementation, one might conclude that Serbia has a well-conceived youth policy with instruments for delivery that are potentially both efficient and effective. However, the efficacy of its youth policy is in fact highly questionable because major youth policy decisions are still made at the central/national level, with the exception of AP Vojvodina, which displays a relatively high level of independence from the central government. Even Vojvodina, however, suffers from some of the rudimentary problems and routine challenges that exist elsewhere, such as the politicisation of the LYOs and LYCs. The politicisation of the youth sector, mostly in relation to the management and administration within LYOs, raises doubt about the productivity (impact and effect) of local youth policy implementation. The majority of LYOCs come from one of the ruling political parties and are elected or appointed to this position directly by the local self-government in agreement with political parties. The Youth Council – the supreme advisory body on youth to the Serbian Government – also suffers from a high degree of politicisation, and its local counterparts (LYCs) are also to a great extent composed of politically active youth.

## TRANSPARENCY

Difficulties in the flow of information and the lack of inclusion of youth in policy development and implementation indicate a lack of transparency. Despite the NYS recommendation on inclusive policy-making processes,<sup>120</sup> transparency has not been operationalised either through the Law on Youth or through the action planning of the NYS. This has allowed governmental bodies to make decisions regarding the inclusion of youth in policy making and monitoring on an ad hoc basis, often choosing “less complicated” options. Lack of transparency is also evident at the level of the allocation of financial resources; the IRT could not get reliable information on whether or not there is a publicly available database listing the individual and organisational grantees of the local and national government.

## CIVIC VERSUS TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES

During its two visits, the IRT became conscious of the high degree to which traditional structures, such as the Orthodox Church, continue to penetrate Serbian society, including with regard to youth policy. One cannot help noticing the religious icons on the walls of the primary and secondary schools, as well as university facilities. Religious symbols were also visible in some LYOs, ostensibly to keep youth in Serbia in touch with their traditions. This is not an inherently bad thing, except for the fact that young people routinely criticise traditional structures for being significant barriers to youth prospects. Religion still plays a major role in Serbian society, and is present in people’s lives from very early childhood through religious education. In adolescence, however, young people are negatively affected by the Church’s opposition to the introduction of personal, social and health education (including sex education and sexual health education) within regular school curricula. Another concern derives from the characteristically close co-operation of the regional and local self-government with the Church; the IRT was told that this often resulted in limitations and restrictions on youth leisure time and cultural activities.

## HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL COMMUNICATION

The IRT feels that there are many difficulties in establishing information channels between different levels of government and between government and civil society. The flow of information is thus limited. The highly centralised policy of the past clearly continues to take its toll by suppressing opportunities for regular communication and by pushing people (sometimes committed actors in the youth field) to the margins of policy making and implementation. The hope for change promoted by

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120. The NYS (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2008a: 7), as one of its strategic goals, lists the following: “To develop youth cooperation and to provide conditions for the participation in decision-making processes through the sustainable institutional framework, based on the needs of young people and in cooperation with youth.”

the idea and early vision of co-management has disappointed a majority of actors in the youth field fighting for an inclusive youth policy. However, there is still some hope of achieving a more inclusive and efficient youth policy through the Structured Dialogue with youth,<sup>121</sup> a process taking place at the European level in a more or less well-structured and stable manner, even if in Serbia it is still undergoing preparation. When asked about the inclusion of Serbia in the Structured Dialogue, the MoYS explained that they actively participated in the training organised by the Western Balkans Institute in a consortium with six national youth councils from the region and supported through the EU's Youth in Action programme. This aimed to prepare 48 young people for participation in the process established for Serbia's contribution to the EU Youth Report in 2015. It also envisages that Structured Dialogue consultations will be held in both traditional mode (consultations within LYOs and through three networks – KOMS, NAPOR and the National Association of Local Youth Offices) and through more modern approaches (online consultations through social media and all available mailing lists, e.g. the mailing list of partner Evropski omladinski centar contains 50 000 email addresses). The ministry is also organising regular monthly consultations with the representatives of the three networks mentioned above, discussing with them all relevant issues in the youth policy field.

## INTERSECTORAL CO-OPERATION

There is still no clear legal and institutional framework for interministerial co-ordination and stakeholder engagement in the preparation and implementation of youth policy in Serbia, although the Law on Youth and the NYS define modes of co-operation between governmental and non-governmental structures. The lack of an overall strategic framework was one of the biggest concerns expressed at the last meeting between the IRT and a panel of youth. The same charge was levelled at intersectoral co-operation, which remains wishful thinking in Serbian youth policy as the line ministries that are expected to deliver elements of the NYS (e.g. education, health or employment) are under no strict obligation to include youth in consultative processes or to allocate funds to ensure the implementation of the activities listed in strategic documents. Intersectoral co-operation exists in Serbian youth policy only to a small degree, but it relies heavily on the relatively modest resources of the MoYS. This ministry has proved to be highly competent and proactive in managing youth policy decision making and implementation, but there are certain limits to the extent to which it can, as a "lone rider", succeed in shaping a comprehensive youth policy for Serbia. In order to conceive and implement a youth policy to bring the status of Serbian youth closer to that of their European peers, the MoYS needs more robust support from all governmental bodies. It also needs the trust and confidence, and the support that flows from this, from the NGO sector, which – at the start of the "youth policy" process during the 2000s – displayed a high degree of commitment, motivation and engagement, and an eagerness to actively take part youth policy development, implementation and evaluation. That collaboration now appears to be on the wane.

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121. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/dialogue\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/dialogue_en.htm), accessed 18 August 2015.

## FRAGMENTATION OF THE YOUTH FIELD AND RESOURCES

A great deal of criticism has been directed at the weaknesses of governmental bodies in Serbia regarding youth policy decision making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. However, civil society must also shoulder some of the blame. A relatively low degree of networking in the youth civil sector seems to stem from a fear of losing privileged access to scarce resources. Youth organisations often do not co-operate on projects that are basically of the same nature and have the same goals, leading to duplication of effort and a waste of time and resources. Existing co-operation is mainly focused on ad hoc projects and campaigns and often relies on personal relations between project leaders and NGO co-ordinators. Moreover, the MoYS and other governmental bodies have not demonstrated their capacity to stimulate co-operation between youth organisations and often do not recognise the potential of their joint actions. This failing is most often expressed in the public calls for funding youth actions, which are fragmented and do not consider the bigger picture.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, governmental bodies and local self-government are also to be blamed for poor co-operation and co-ordination, and responding to their own political and administrative priorities rather than constructing a more strategic approach to addressing the multifaceted needs of young people in Serbia.

## SUSTAINABILITY

A lack of sustainable and transparent sources of funding is another major obstacle to efficient youth policy implementation and monitoring. LYOs, often located within the premises of local self-government and thus insufficiently youth and user-friendly, struggle with scarce infrastructural and financial resources. Participants at the open panels with youth organisations expressed their concern over local self-government and the way it bypasses its responsibility to provide infrastructure and financial resources for the efficient running of LYOs. The typical arrangements for the running of LYOs are strongly implicated in their weak responsiveness to everyday youth needs, with some offices being available to young people for only a couple of hours per day.

The sustainability of youth organisations is a primary concern because there is no reliable, continuous source of finances from national, regional or local levels. An additional concern lies in the rather widespread practice of NGOs of relying on public funding to a great extent while missing out on possible opportunities to apply to private or international funding agencies. The IRT gained the impression that many youth NGOs, with some striking exceptions, are happy to be financially dependent on the MoYS and close to the local self-government, which inevitably limits their ability to speak independently on youth policy issues and advocate youth interests. Arguably, the youth civil sector is anxious about reaching maturity and losing its support from the MoYS. The IRT also got the impression that youth policy is more frequently a problem-solving tool rather than a tool for empowering young people.

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<sup>122</sup>. According to the youth NGO representatives present at the round table on the last day of the IRT's second visit to Serbia.



In other words, it seems that youth CSOs still do not possess enough confidence, capacity and determination to advance the youth agenda independently and advocate for the place of young people as indispensable partners in youth policy making and implementation. To borrow a line (and turn it into a question) from a very different context, youth organisations in Serbia have to decide for themselves whether they want to be heads of a movement or arms of the state (Irving, Maunders and Sherrington 1995).



# Conclusion and recommendations

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**S**erbia has taken several important steps towards the realisation of a coherent and inclusive youth policy, aiming high at establishing a participatory process, through co-management, for its formulation, development and implementation. However, implementation has proven to be a stumbling block, and the participatory process is now restricted to consultation processes via public and online forums and youth taking part in working groups at some ministries (mainly the MoYS). The other significant obstacle to achieving an inclusive and well-functioning youth policy lies in the lack of monitoring and evaluation. Some steps towards establishing monitoring and evaluation systems have been taken through the indicators devised by the NYS, although the process of monitoring implementation through the use of over 700<sup>123</sup> indicators makes it difficult to discern whether or not desired results have been achieved. The participants at the open panel with youth organisations estimated that only 20% to 30% of the NYS has been implemented to a reasonably satisfactory degree, and the situation is worse in relation to the outcomes of the Local Action Plans designed to support young people and respond to their needs at the level of local self-government. Young people appeared resigned to the idea that Local Action Plans often do not correspond to youth needs, despite the fact that they are at least in part meant to be based on surveys undertaken in order to delineate youth status and aspirations. Instead of providing a concise synthesis and interpretation of the data acquired, local self-government stands accused by many young people of simply copying guidelines from the national strategies and action plans,<sup>124</sup> despite the fact that Serbia is burdened by high differentiation among various regions and municipalities.

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123. England experimented with a suite of public service targets in the mid-2000s. Yet there were only some 200 to span the whole of the public sector (each local authority had to prioritise around 80), of which relatively few were specific to young people. These were, however, sufficiently indicative of success or a lack of it across key policy domains in youth policy: preventing first-time entrants to the youth justice system; reducing the number of school exclusions; increasing the number of young people in public care remaining in education beyond the statutory school leaving age; delaying the age of first use of an illegal drug; or delaying the age of first sexual intercourse. Such indicators had been distilled from swathes of research knowledge and evidence: they may still not have been precise, but they were “good enough” to determine whether the trajectory of youth policy was promoting opportunities and reducing risks, or not.

124. This is not an uncommon phenomenon across many countries – planning assumptions that have to be made at central government level are often viewed at municipal level as a prescriptive framework that has to be complied with, however much local realities suggest a very different pattern and balance of operational activity.

Besides youth participation, education and employment are clearly the most difficult and challenging areas of youth policy. There is little doubt that labour market and education policies should be more closely connected with economic development and should reflect the needs of the market economy, particularly in terms of labour mobility (including the development of a flexible labour market) and matched supply and demand with the labour market (in terms of knowledge and skills). There is a need to establish a permanent, systemic and multisectoral mechanism for forecasting and monitoring labour market demands, which would ensure greater harmonisation between the education system and active employment policy measures on the one hand and the needs of the economy on the other. In this respect, stronger political will is needed to introduce a flexible education system to meet labour market demand and satisfy employers' needs. Another obstacle in fostering relations between labour market supply and demand is connected to the underdeveloped system of recognition of non-formal education, which at the moment exists only at the level of NGOs and is not sufficiently recognised by employers. Along with this process, identification of the skills required by the labour market is crucial in order to plan education policies and vocational training programmes.

The IRT has compiled a list of recommendations for governmental bodies in the field of youth at the national, regional and local level. These recommendations flow from the "fault lines" in Serbian youth policy detected during the review:

- ▶ active and consistent commitment to a co-management approach to youth policy development and implementation;
- ▶ inclusion of all interested youth in consultative processes at national, regional or local level;
- ▶ establishing a system of regular and transparent monitoring and evaluation of youth policy implementation;
- ▶ decentralisation of decision making implemented at the local level and improving the autonomy and competences of regional and local self-government in managing youth policy processes;
- ▶ co-ordination of local youth policy inputs in order to conceive local youth action plans that reflect the local realities of youth status and aspirations;
- ▶ de-politicisation of the management of the YC, LYCs and LYOs;
- ▶ assuring capacity building of state officials in the field of youth;
- ▶ building user- and youth-friendly infrastructure for youth at the local level, and locating it outside local self-government premises, preferably by converting currently standard LYOs into places more like youth clubs, or "hubs" – spaces where all young people feel encouraged to make a contribution – from which a spectrum of youth policy and youth work aspirations can be achieved.

Recommendations directed at youth CSOs include:

- ▶ maintaining pressure on governmental bodies through clearly and concisely expressed aspirations;
- ▶ consistent and collective advocacy for a formal and institutionalised role in youth policy implementation;

- ▶ keeping focus on youth interests and needs and trying to avoid politicisation of actions;
- ▶ improving networking and sharing of resources among partner organisations;
- ▶ contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of youth policy formulation and execution;
- ▶ making more frequent and proactive use of media, giving a voice not only to “mainstream” but also to highly disadvantaged youth – Roma, youth with disabilities, economically deprived youth and young people from rural communities.



# Appendices

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## PROGRAMME OF VISITS

### First visit

#### April 2014

**6 April** Arrival in Belgrade, informal meeting of the IRT with hosts and introduction to the agenda of the visit

#### **7 April** Ministry of Youth and Sport

10.00-13.30 Session about the activities of the Ministry of Youth and Sport/Sector for Youth, short introduction to each segment of work and new developments in the youth field

- ▶ Welcome session, Nenad Borovčanin, State Secretary for Youth
- ▶ Overview of the activities of the Sector for Youth, Snežana Klašnja, Assistant Minister
- ▶ Overview of the activities of the Sector for Sport related to the youth field, Dragan Atanasov, Assistant Minister
- ▶ International Cooperation, Aleksandra Knežević, Head of Group for International Cooperation
- ▶ Local Youth Policy and work of Local Youth Offices, Zorica Labudović, Head of Department for Cooperation with Youth Offices and NGOs
- ▶ Fund for Young Talents, Miloš Radosavljević, Co-ordinator of the Working Group of the Fund for Young Talents
- ▶ Centre for Career Guidance and Counselling of the Fund for Young Talents, Milica Mičić, Belgrade Open School
- ▶ Comparison between youth policy indicators from the National Youth Strategy and indicators defined by the Council of Europe

14.30-15.30 Meeting with the representatives of the Youth Council

15.30-16.30 Meeting with the representatives of the National Association of Youth Offices

Dinner at the hotel and free time

## **8 April** Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

10.00-11.00 Session about the activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, interconnected with youth policy, meeting with the State Secretary, Muhedin Fijuljanin and his associates

11.10-12.00 Session about the activities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, interconnected with youth policy, meeting with the Assistant Minister, Ljiljana Dzuver and her associates

12.10-13.00 Session about the activities of the Ministry of Health, interconnected with youth policy, meeting with the State Secretary/Assistant Minister

14.30-15.30 Session about the activities of the Ministry of Culture and Information, interconnected with youth policy, meeting with the State Secretary, Gordana Predic, and her associates

15.30-16.30 Meeting with the National Youth Council/KOMS

16.30-17.30 Meeting with Evropski omladinski centar

## **9 April** Sremski Karlovci

09.30-12.30 Activities in Sremski Karlovci

- ▶ Meeting with the Local Youth Office Co-ordinator, guided tour through historical town
- ▶ Tour through and meetings in Eco Centre Sremski Karlovci (bearer of the Council of Europe's "quality label")

14.30-17.30 Activities in Novi Sad

- ▶ Visit to the Provincial Secretariat for Sport and Youth, meeting with the Secretary for Sport and Youth
- ▶ Visit to the National Association of Youth Work Practitioners (NAPOR), meeting with their representatives
- ▶ Visit to the Local Youth Office of Novi Sad

## **10 April** Belgrade

10.00-11.00 Meeting with representatives of NGO "Hajde da", contact point for the Erasmus+ programme, with the participation of the national co-ordinator of the programme, Marija Filipovic-Ozegovic from the Tempus office

11.30-12.30 Tour through and meetings in Local Youth Office Belgrade/Info Room

15.00-16.00 Presentation of the No Hate Speech online campaign

16.30-17.30 Roundtable with Roma youth organisations

17.30-18.30 Roundtable with youth sectors of the political parties

## **11 April**

10.00-11.00 Visit to Youth Club Palilula

11.30-12.30 Meeting with the representatives of the Student Union of Serbia



15.00-16.00 Closing meeting with Nenad Borovčanin, State Secretary for Youth and his associates

**12 April** Debriefing of the International Review Team

## **Second visit**

**September 2014**

**7 September** Arrival in Belgrade and preparations of the International Review Team

**8 September**

9.30-11.00 Visit to the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade, meeting with Antje Rothmund, Head of Office

11.00-13.30 Open panel with civil society at the Council of Europe Office

15.00-16.30 Smederevo – Introduction to the work of the Local Youth Office and meeting with local self-government

16.30-18.00 Panel discussion with representatives of the Local Youth Office, local self-government, civil society organisations, local institutions dealing with youth, media

**9 September Niš**

9.30-11.00

- ▶ Visit to business incubator and meeting with employment-focused civil society organisations
- ▶ Visit to the technical school “May 15”

11.00-13.00 Visit to the health centre, meeting with civil society organisations related to health

15.00-16.30 Panel discussion with representatives of the Local Youth Office, local self-government, civil society organisations, local institutions dealing with youth (health, employment, safety), media

16.30-18.00 Meeting with the Member of the City Council for Youth and team

**10 September Kikinda**

9.30-11.00 Panel discussion “Care about Youth in Kikinda – Challenges and achievements in the fields of health and employment”

11.30-13.00 Visit to the Economic and Trade High School

13.00-14.30 Visit to the free counselling programme of the Cultural Centre

16.30-18.00 Visit to Local Youth Office and its employment programmes

**11 September Belgrade**

9.30-11.00 Visit to the agricultural high school “PK Beograd”, Krnjača

11.30-13.00 Visit to Palilula primary school

15.00-16.30 Visit to the Roma settlement in Palilula and meeting with local Roma civil society organisations

16.30-18.00 Visit to the INFO ROOM (6th floor of Beogradjanka), meeting with representatives of the National Association of Local Youth Offices, KOMS, NAPOR

## **12 September** Belgrade

9.30-13.00 Debriefing of the International Review Team

15.00-16.30 Meeting at the Ministry of Youth and Sport, debriefing

## **LIST OF IRT QUESTIONS FOLLOWING THE FIRST VISIT**

### **The Ministry of Youth and Sport**

1. It would be very nice if we could receive some more info on “participatory policy making” – description of a process and some recent (in last five years) examples of this practice.
2. In the light of question 1 – during our first meeting at the ministry we were told there is a programme called “youth rule”. Is it possible to get some explanation – or description of this term – what it refers to and how it is implemented?
3. At our first meeting 10 bilateral agreements (+2 upcoming) in the field of youth were mentioned. Is it possible to receive a list of countries and fields/sectors included?
4. We were told there are around 700 youth organisations + organisations of youth + associations of youth organisations. Is it possible to get an accurate number of organisations in each of these categories?
5. A list of 19 Eurostat indicators that could be immediately implemented in the Republic of Serbia was mentioned. Is it possible to receive this list?
6. We were told there is an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) project that funds co-management between the ministry, youth NGOs and local offices. Is it possible to receive a brief description of this project and description of a co-management process?
7. We would like to learn something more about future steps in evaluation of the National Youth Strategy (whether there are any changes to the current process).
8. Youth volunteering was mentioned on several occasions and we know there is a Law on Volunteering, but we also heard there were some disputes about the entry procedure for young people who would like to volunteer. Are there any plans to make amendments to the current law?
9. Local Youth Offices seem to have a very complex and diverse structure and practices. Is it possible to receive a table containing the following information for each youth office: 1. Number of employed (part-time and full-time); 2. Opening hours and days per week; 3. Hours when young people can freely come and ask for advice.

10. What are the plans for implementing structured dialogue with youth?
11. Is it possible to receive data on youth political participation, if possible by region?
12. Info on whether all governmental bodies keep a transparent (publicly available) database of grant holders in the youth field.
13. Are there any data on gender equality in political participation (active and passive) of young people?

### **“Dositeja” fund**

14. Success rate (in finding employment in the six months after graduation) of young people financed by the "Dositeja" fund, if possible by their professions since 2008 (per year).

### **The Ministry of Science, Education and Technological Development**

15. Data on attendance of civic and religious education by grades (both for primary and secondary schools) and by region in the last five years (per year).
16. Rate of completion of primary, secondary and higher education among young Roma in the last five years (per year).
17. Rate of students in secondary vocational education who take part in hands-on learning within the employer premises (dual system) in the last five years (per year).
18. We would like to know whether there are any plans for the introduction of sex and relationship education into official curricula in the entire Republic of Serbia.
19. Is it possible to receive data on brain drain, if possible by region and by profession in the last five years (per year)?
20. How much of primary and secondary school curricula is subject to change on a local level?

### **The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**

21. The share of young people (per age group, if possible) who fall into the category of poverty in the last five years (per year).

### **The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and/or Employment Service**

22. We would like to know whether the educational institutions (secondary schools and universities) follow recommendations on enrolment quotas given by the Employment Service. In other words, we would like to receive info on recommendations on quotas for the 20 most recommended and 20 least recommended professions in secondary schools and universities (20 each). Along with these data we would like to receive info on real enrolment quotas for the 20 most recommended and 20 least recommended professions in secondary schools and universities (20 each). If possible, we would like to ask for data for the last five years.

## **The Employment Service**

23. Unemployment rate of young Roma in last five years (per year).
24. We learned there is an IPA project on skills forecasting and we would like to know something more about it.
25. Is there any estimate of youth participation in the “grey market”?
26. No. and share of unemployed youth taking part in the labour market measures (per measure) in the last five years (per year).
27. When is the new report on the National Employment Plan due?
28. What is the response rate of the employers’ survey in the last five years (per year)?

## **The Ministry of Health**

29. We would like to receive data from the 2006 and 2013 surveys on the status of youth health.
30. We are interested in “youth-friendly clinics” – what does this term encompass? Do they exclusively work with groups of children and youth who come by appointment with schools? Are there any youth-friendly clinics which actually have an open door policy for young people to come and ask for advice on a wide range of health issues?

## **Autonomos Province Vojvodina**

31. Is it possible to receive more info on the sexual education programme – No. of schools/students/trainers, geographical coverage, monitoring and evaluation?
32. We would like to learn more about the process of Local Youth Programme evaluation in the AP.
33. How is volunteering organised in AP Vojvodina? According to which documents, and who is monitoring youth volunteering?

## **NAPOR**

34. We would like to know whether NAPOR has concrete plans for inclusion of media training in their trainings for accreditation.

## **KOMS**

35. We would like to receive descriptions of any activity related to youth training on media (media message content, presentation, delivering and communication with media).

## **Local Youth Office in Novi Sad**

36. A research study on youth information in Novi Sad was mentioned and we would like to receive some data on this survey.

### **Local Youth Office in Belgrade**

37. Is it possible to receive a list/description of inclusion activities for young Roma and the no. of Roma per activity included in them in the last five years (per year)?
38. Is it possible to receive a framework for the office's new strategy?

### **Erasmus programme**

39. Data on young people included in the youth mobility programme per programme per year.

### **"Hajde da"**

40. Info on the no. of young people included in mobility programmes per programme per year.

### **Secretariat of municipalities – Marko Pavlović**

41. What is the model of organising a "neutral secretariat"?



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In the late 2000s, Serbia impressed many in the youth field by creating almost the perfect storm in shaping its national youth strategy. As a result of widespread consultation with youth organisations and representatives, the carefully constructed strategy secured strong political support and a significant level of professional consensus.

But the true test of any youth strategy lies in its implementation. Political support can diminish, regional and local infrastructure and professional development can fail to keep pace with the aspirations of national action plans and targets, and line ministries may not give the level of priority to the youth agenda that was initially anticipated. Changing political administrations and less favourable economic circumstances can exacerbate this situation.

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