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YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX

MONITORING REPORT OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH 2022

SERBIA, ALBANIA, MONTENEGRO, NORTH MACEDONIA, TURKEY

Impressum

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INSIDE THE REPORT

Introduction

Young people face unique challenges and barriers to participating in society. Many factors may prevent their participation, including a lack of quality jobs, inadequate education opportunities, a high risk of poverty, and the absence of political representatives who would advocate for youth-relevant issues. To better understand and address the potential barriers to youth participation, it is important to have adequate information on the current state of political, economic, and social contexts that significantly shape the opportunities that young people have.

For the seventh year in a row, Youth Hub Western Balkan and Turkey Network of Youth Organizations (YHWBT Network) developed the Youth Participation Index (YPI) to provide a comprehensive overview of opportunities for youth through the lens of 25 indicators of political, economic, and social participation.

The purpose of this annual monitoring report is to give an overview of the political, social, and economic participation of youth in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey through a unique set of indicators.

The Youth Participation Index was developed as a concrete tool for decision-making on policies and programs affecting youth. Policymakers, youth organizations, and other advocates for youth issues can use the index **to gauge the current state and areas for improvement**. Looking back to 2016, when the Youth Participation Index was first created, regular development and publishing of the Index have enabled us **to monitor progress in youth participation in respective countries through the years.** Each of the participating countries, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey, has its own pattern of progress and challenges. YPI enables comparison between them with the aim **of identifying common challenges and possible solutions.**

What we have come to understand is that the advancement of youth participation is not occurring as rapidly as it should. While there are indications of progress over the years, substantial challenges endure. Persevering underrepresentation in political life, exclusion from employment and education, and a high risk of poverty are some of the barriers young people in the region face. Throughout these seven years, significant efforts have been made to improve the availability of youth-specific data (e.g., data on youth in prisons and on youth receiving financial support within the social protection system) and to advocate for changes in policy frameworks in line with the recommendations based on YPI data. Considering the slow pace of change in this domain and the minimal or inconsequential progress observed in many aspects related to youth participation (such as the number of young people in political positions), it is clear that public authorities must intensify efforts to address the low level of youth participation. Filling this gap remains a strenuous challenge, demanding steadfast commitment from institutions. The Youth Participation Index acts as a guiding compass, steering us toward a future where the voice of every young person is acknowledged.

This edition of YPI introduces the most recent data in the field of youth participation for the five countries. As in previous years, YHWBT Network hopes that YPI provides guidelines for the advocacy efforts of civil society organizations and evidence-informed youth policy.

Chapter 1

About Youth Participation Index

WHY IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?

Youth participation can be defined as a **"process of involving young people in institutions and decisions that affect their lives".**[1] Many different reasons and arguments for promoting youth participation have been put forward, from the argument that young people have the right to be treated with respect and, when appropriate, be involved and consulted to referencing a plethora of research results on the **positive effects of participation on both a personal and wider social level.**[2]

Diagram 1 Potential benefits of youth participation

There is a **continuous policy commitment to youth participation** as well. The recommendation of the Council of Europe member states to award high priority to youth participation in their public youth policies was included in the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on citizenship and participation of young people in public life as early as 2006. This document states that "education for participation and providing opportunities for experiencing participation is a prerequisite for the necessary and ongoing improvement of democracy". **The European Union's (EU) Youth Strategy "Youth: Investing and Empowering" 2019-2027**[3] places youth participation at the forefront of youth policy. Member States are invited to encourage and promote inclusive democratic participation of all young people in democratic processes and society, to actively engage them, support youth representations at local, regional, and national levels, and explore and promote the use of innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation. **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**[4] also recognizes the active role of young people as "critical agents of change". The first priority of the UN 2030 Youth Strategy[5] is "Engagement, Participation, and Advocacy: Amplify youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just, and sustainable world"

1 Kiilakoski, T. (2020). Perspectives on youth participation - https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/59895423/Kiilakoski_Participation_Analytical_Paper_final%252005-05.pdf/b7b77c27-5bc3-5a90-594b-a18d253b7e67

2 Ibid.

3 Engaging, Connecting, and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy (COM/2018/269), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0269

4 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

5 Youth 2030 – United Nations Youth Strategy - https://5d962978-9e17-4b96-91be-93983605fae8.filesusr.com/ugd/b1d674_9f63445fc59a41b6bb50cbd4f800922b.pdf

"Europe cannot afford wasted talent, social exclusion, or disengagement among its youth. Young people should not only be architects of their own lives, but also contribute to positive change in society." - EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027

THREE KEY DIMENSIONS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Recognizing the need to improve youth participation in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey, the YHWBT Network developed YPI as a composite index of different dimensions of youth participation: political, economic, and social, providing an overview of the context supporting or hindering youth's active involvement in society. Three dimensions of participation captured by YPI are assessed through a set of carefully chosen indicators (detailed description is available in Annex 1):

- → **The political dimension** refers to the opportunities young people have to get involved in political processes – to be informed on the work of the government, parliament, and municipalities, to participate in youth networks, and to be elected to political positions.
- → **The economic dimension** refers to the degree of inclusion or, to the contrary, exclusion of young people from the labor market. It captures the degree of their activity, employment, and self-employment.
- → **The social dimension** refers to the active participation of young people in social life. It is assessed based on the integration of young people in the community through formal and informal education, as well as through the absence of markers of potential exclusion due to poverty, dependence on the social welfare system, and time spent in prison or correctional facilities.

RATIONALE FOR USING AN INDEX TO REPRESENT YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Using an index as a measure has its advantages, but also some potential caveats.

ADVANTAGES OF USING AN INDEX:

- ✓ **It can summarize complex, multidimensional, youth-specific data;**
- ✓ **It is easier to interpret than many separate indicators;**
- ✓ **It can assess progress over time;**
- ✓ **It provides a mechanism for cross-country comparisons.**

DISADVANTAGES OF USING AN INDEX:

- ✕ **It may send misleading policy messages if it is misinterpreted;**
- ✕ **The choice of indicators is limited to the data that is systematically collected annually and processed in the same way in all countries.**

The main advantages of using an index lie in the fact that it is simple and easy to understand, but the potential risk is that it can be misinterpreted. Thus, it is crucial to ensure that the index does not oversimplify complex issues. To achieve this, the YHWBT Network has decided to prepare annual reports with a detailed interpretation of the index and its implications, taking methodological limitations into account. In addition, the research team from five participating countries was committed to continuously revising and updating the methodology.

List of indicators included in the Youth Participation Index

Indicators of political participation	Percentage of young ministers in government
	Percentage of young deputy ministers in government
	Percentage of young MPs in the parliament
	Percentage of young mayors
	Use of online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process of government and parliament institutions
	Use of online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process within municipalities
	Existence of youth structures (councils, parliaments, and unions) on a national level
	Existence of youth structures (councils, parliaments, and unions) on a local level
Indicators of economic participation	NEET rate
	Youth unemployment rate
	Long-term youth unemployment rate
	Youth labor force participation rate
	Youth employment rate
	Young people who started their own business with the financial support of the state *not used when calculating the Index
	Self-employed young people *not used when calculating the Index
Indicators of social participation	Young people at risk of poverty
	Young people in prisons
	Young people part of the social protection system *not used when calculating the Index
	Dropout from secondary education *not used when calculating the Index
	Young people enrolled in tertiary education *not used when calculating the Index
	Young people graduated from tertiary education *not used when calculating the Index
	Participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks) *not used when calculating the Index
	Share of early leavers from education and training, persons aged 18–24 years
	Population aged 30-34 with tertiary educational attainment level
	Participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)

CALCULATING THE YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX

There are several steps for calculating the Index (more information on methodology is available in Annex 1):

1. **Firstly, missing values of indicators are addressed. A process of Cold Deck Imputation is applied, meaning that the most recent prior value for the indicator is used if data is not available for the previous year. Indicators with insufficient or unavailable data or those for which different methodologies of data collection is used are not included in the calculation of the index.**
2. **All indicators are comparable in scale. Some indicators need to be inverted so that higher values show better performance. In order for indicators to be compared and combined into a single score, researchers**

conduct a process of normalization. Under this process, data for each indicator is scaled using a score of 1 to 100, where 100 represents the target value. The formula: yi = 1 + 99 * (xi - xmin) / (xmax - xmin) is used, where yi represents the normalized score, xi the original score, xmin corresponds to zero, and xmax represents the target score.

3. **In the final step, scores for each dimension of youth participation are calculated by averaging all indicators of that dimension. For instance, the Youth Political Participation Index is calculated by averaging the values of indicators of youth political participation. Lastly, the overall Youth Participation Index is calculated as an average of scores for each dimension of youth participation.**

SETTING THE TARGETS IN THE AREA OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Before presenting the data, it is important to note that, as in previous years, data were compared to the targeted values. These targets were initially proposed by policy researchers engaged in the preparation of this report, drawing from sources such as the EU2020 Strategy, statistics of developed countries, and researchers' assessments, and then further modified over the years of index development.

- → **Most targets for political participation** are based on researchers' opinions of what the desired value of the indicator would be. The only exception is the indicator "percentage of young MPs", which refers to the target set by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Forum of Young Parliamentarians[6], a global organization of national parliaments, to be reached by 2030.
- → Concerning the indicators for **economic participation,** the values of all targets represent the highest registered value among the European Union's countries for the given year (or the lowest one if the lower value is a more desirable outcome). The only exception is the indicator "Young people that started their own business with the financial support of the state," whose target was set based on the researchers' opinions of what the desired value of the indicator would be.
- → **Targets for social participation** represent the highest or lowest registered value among the European Union's countries for the given year (depending on which is a more desirable outcome). Only in the case of the indicator concerning youth in prisons is the target based on the researchers' assessment.

More information on targets is available in Annex 3.

6 The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the global organization of national parliaments, gathering 179 Member Parliaments and 13 Associate Members. More information can be found on website https://www.ipu.org/about-us

Chapter 2

Availability of youth-specific data in the region

To create, implement, and monitor policy measures that effectively tackle the specific challenges young people face and to increase and improve youth participation, it is crucial to make quality data and evidence on youth widely available. Decision-makers, youth organizations, and young people themselves need to have access to up-to-date and reliable youth-specific data.

The aim of the YPI is to provide insight into different aspects of youth participation through a unique combination of indicators. Although the indicators have been chosen so that the data on youth between 15 and 29 years of age can be collected in each country using the same methodology, some of the issues in data availability have persisted over the last seven years. These issues will be discussed in the text that follows and put in the context of EU integration.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA ON YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN 2022

There are no official statistics on important indicators of political participation among young people. The data on youth representation in parliaments and other political positions is collected through desk research conducted by researchers in each of the countries, and thus significant resources need to be allocated to obtain the data. This process mostly consists of checking the official websites of the government, parliament, and municipalities, although in some cases necessary information is not available. Either there is no information about the age of persons appointed to political positions or the websites are not regularly updated when the political structure changes. Concerning the data on the use of online tools, the problem is to identify official social network channels used by the government, parliament, and municipalities as different social networks are used in a non-uniform way. When it comes to data about youth structures at the local level, this data is not available through official institutions at the national level, so it must be collected from the municipalities themselves.[7]

Indicators	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
% Of Young Ministers In Government	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
% Of Young Deputy Ministers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
% Of Young Mps	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
% Of Young Mayors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making of government and parliament	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making of municipalities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/ unions) on the national level	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/ unions) on the local level	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Availability of data for indicators of political participation per country in 2022

7 In Turkey, there is additional difficulty regarding the lack of data at a local level. The reason for this is the fact that Turkey has 2951 municipalities, so the manual counting of online tools and youth networks at the local level is not feasible. To collect relevant information that would help analyze the situation regarding youth political participation at the local level in Turkey, during the last three years, data was collected in 81 city municipalities.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA ON YOUTH ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN 2022

The data on economic participation has been collected using official statistics, which are published annually. The main source for data on indicators of youth economic participation is the Labor Force Survey (LFS), which is conducted in each country by national statistical offices using official methodologies in line with EUROSTAT.

The only exception is the information on young people who started their own business with financial support from the state, measured as the percentage of young people who received subsidies among all applicants. The data regarding this indicator is collected by the official institution in charge of providing subsidies, and this is the only indicator for which it was difficult to obtain information.

It should be noted that from the year 2021 onwards[8] the new methodology of the European Union LFS has been in force. The introduced changes concern the operational definitions of the three labor statuses (employed, unemployed, and those outside the labor force). The new European regulation prescribes that the EU countries shall apply the new redesigned concepts as regards the LFS. This means that the data from previous years is not completely comparable with the data gathered in 2021.

Indicators	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
NEET rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth unemployment rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term unemployment rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth labor force participation rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth employment rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of the state	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Self-employed young people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Availability of data for indicators of economic participation per country in 2022

AVAILABILITY OF DATA ON YOUTH SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN 2022

"The absence of dedicated data on young people in the social welfare context can be attributed to the prevailing perception that young individuals are often identified as integral components of a "family" rather than as autonomous citizens in their own right. Consequently, policies designed to support young people tend to focus on providing assistance to families, and the data collection process itself is informed by this perspective."

The table on the availability of data for indicators of the social dimension of youth participation clearly shows that most obstacles have been encountered in this area, similarly as in previous years.[9] From the very beginning, researchers faced the challenge of choosing an adequate set of indicators for the social dimension so that all countries collect data using the same methodology each year.

8 More information is available at the official website: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/EN/employ_esms.htm

9 In Montenegro, the reason for a lack of data is partly due to problems caused by cyber-attacks, which were initiated against Montenegro at the end of August and September and caused disruptions to public and government services.

The data on young people at risk of poverty comes from a Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), which is being conducted in all countries. The problem with missing data regarding this indicator is that the results of this survey are published after the completion of this report, so the most recent available data is reported.

There have been challenges in collecting comparable data regarding educational status. It was decided to include indicators capturing the dropout rate in secondary education as well as enrollment and completion of tertiary education. Indicators related to the formal education system are usually collected by the national statistics offices. However, the methodology for calculating these indicators somewhat varies between the countries due to the differences in educational systems and the way in which relevant data is being collected. The data regarding education has its limitations since, in most countries, it still cannot be collected by following young people through education until they drop out or graduate, using individual student registers. This represented an obstacle in the calculation of the index of social participation; not only are these indicators not fully comparable for all participating countries, but it is additionally difficult to determine what their target values would be. Thus, it was decided to calculate the index using the education indicators reported in the Eurostat database, including the percentage of early leavers from education and training[10] and the population aged 30-34 with tertiary educational attainment level.

When the Index was first developed, most participating countries did not have data on young people in prisons. Over the past seven years, the system for recording and providing data has improved. The Ministries of Justice in each of the countries now collect the data by age groups, although they still do not publish it on their official websites. Only Turkey still has difficulties when it comes to collecting this type of data, although the percentage of prisoners in the age group 18-34 has been obtained, which is noteworthy progress.

Similarly, efforts are made to change the status quo regarding the data on youth inclusion in the social welfare system, and this year it is available for Serbia and North Macedonia.

Indicators	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
Young people at risk of poverty	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Young people part of social welfare system	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Young people in prisons	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Dropout from secondary education	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Young people graduated from tertiary education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Participating rate in non-formal education and training	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗

Availability of data for indicators of social participation per country in 2022

10 While the dropout rate in secondary education refers to the percentage of enrolled students in secondary education as a share of the total number of graduated students from secondary education, early leavers are defined as individuals aged 18-24 who have at most completed a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the labor force survey. More information is available in Annex 1.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA IN THE CONTEXT OF EU INTEGRATION

Having reliable and transparent statistics is a major request from the EU to all the countries during the pre-accession phase.[11] It is required that the Member States be able to produce statistics based on professional independence, impartiality, reliability, transparency, and confidentiality. Common rules are provided for the methodology, production, and dissemination of statistical information. Negotiations under Chapter 18 relating to statistics include the harmonization of the legal regulations of the candidate country with the EU acquis communautaire.[12] This chapter is considered especially important, as the positive changes resulting from a productive negotiation process will provide better quality, availability, and credibility of data. Reliable and comparable statistics are the preconditions for a successful negotiation.

As candidate countries, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey are undergoing a process of appraisal of their ability to assume the obligations of EU membership, and their progress concerning Chapter 18 on statistics is assessed within annual reports.[13] According to the assessment in the latest reports, as in the previous years, all of the countries are still moderately prepared in the area of statistics. It is assessed that in the case of North Macedonia and Serbia, good progress was made; there was some progress in Albania and Turkey, whereas in Montenegro, progress on the recommendations from the previous year was assessed as limited.

Social statistics, which are relevant for this report, are generally assessed well. The survey on income and living conditions is regularly carried out, and statistics on education are available. It is noted that all of the countries, except Turkey, conduct labor force surveys regularly. According to the report published in November 2023, the Turkish Statistical Institute is yet to provide Eurostat with labor force survey (LFS) data in line with the new acquis.

The next chapters will provide an overview of the Youth Participation Index 2022 and the most recent data[14] on youth political, economic and social participation.

11 European Commission - Chapters of the acquis/negotiating chapters: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/glossary/chapters-acquis-negotiating-chapters_en

12 Acquis communautaire is a "French term referring to the cumulative body of European Community laws, comprising the objectives, substantive rules, policies, and, in particular, the primary and secondary legislation and case law – all of which form part of the legal order of the European Union", https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/acquis-communautaire

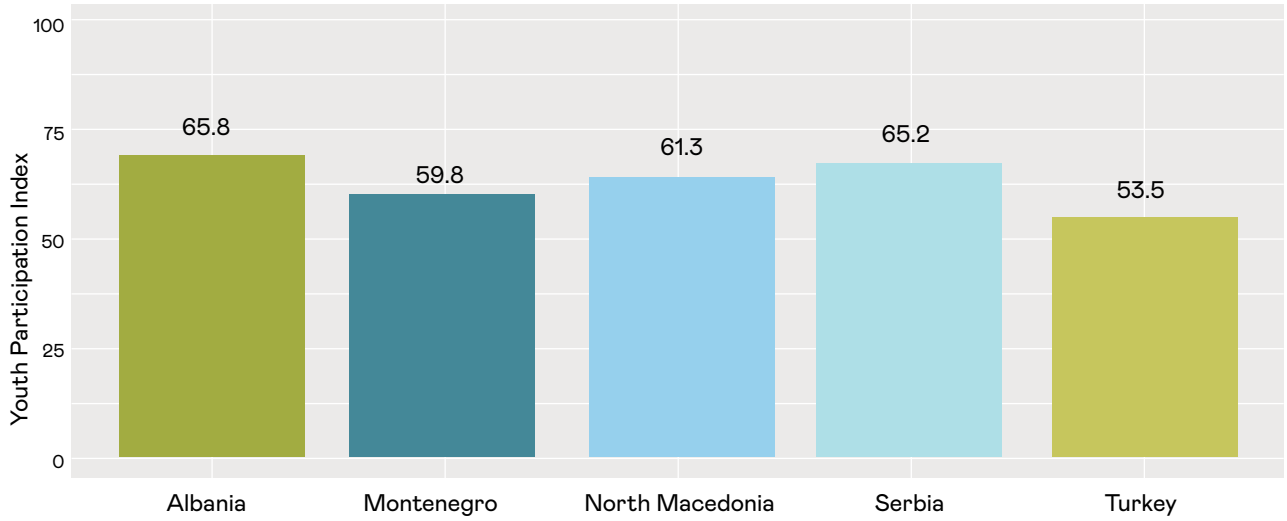
13 More information on the website: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en

14 The program R: R Core Team (2021) was used for data analysis. R: A language and environment for statistical computing R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. URL https://www.R-project.org/. The key package used in the analysis is: Wickham et al., (2019). Welcome to the tidyverse. Journal of Open Source Software, 4(43), 1686, https://doi.org/10.21105/joss.01686

Chapter 3

Youth Participation Index

The Youth Participation Index is prepared based on indicators of economic, social, and political participation. To make the index comparable between countries, only those indicators with available data from all countries were taken into account. The complete list of indicators is available in Annex 1.

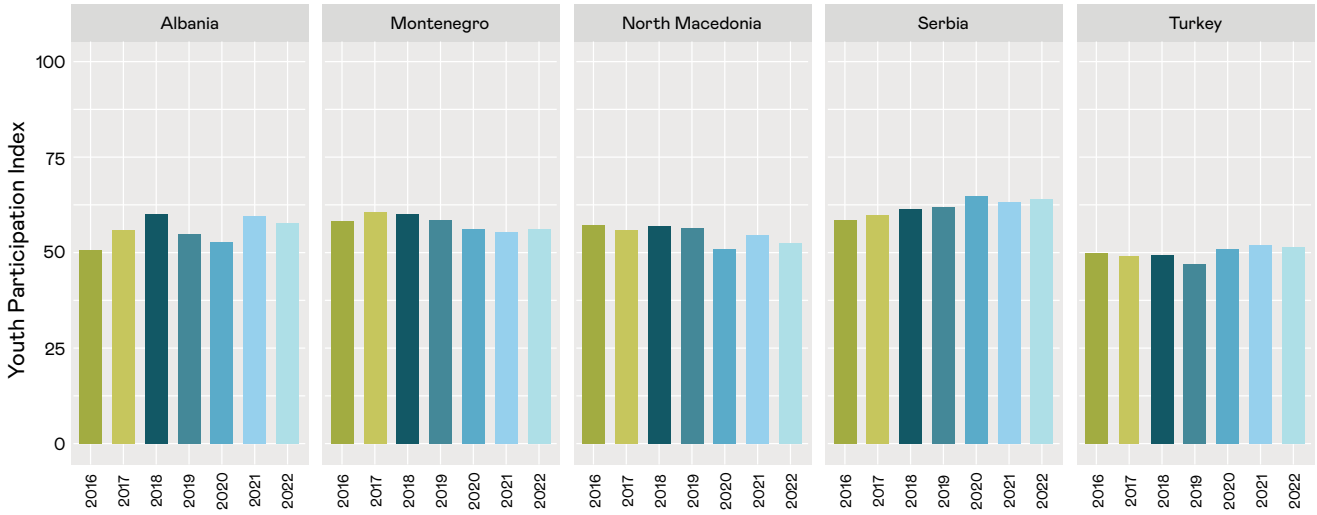


Taking all considerations into account, what can be concluded by looking at the index?

1. The key conclusion is that a substantial difference exists between the current situations in the five participating countries when compared to the targeted value of 100.
2. **Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey are mostly similar in terms of the state of youth participation.** These countries face consistent challenges in engaging young people across political, economic, and social domains. Yet, while the evidence confirms this trend, the specific challenges experienced by youth often differ. The value of YPI for Turkey indicates that young people in this country face some additional challenges.

Due to the changes in methodology and the inclusion of the social participation index in 2021, it is not possible to compare the values of the index of youth participation over the years. This can be done only if political and economic indexes of youth participation are taken into account in the process of calculating the index of youth participation, since they can be calculated for the period 2016-2021. However, when interpreting the data, it should be noted that these two indicators do not provide a complete picture.

Analyses of this data reveal various trends in youth participation over the years in the region. While some instances show signs of improvement, the values of YPI have predominantly fluctuated without substantial shifts. For further interpretation of these trends, insight into how the values of specific indicators have changed over the years is needed.



In the next three chapters, we will look into three different dimensions of youth participation: political, economic, and social participation. In each of the following three chapters, one of the dimensions of youth participation will be covered in more detail. Following the discussion of the most recent data on each of the aspects of participation, recommendations for improving the state of youth participation will be presented.

Chapter 4

A closer look at youth political participation

Young people continue to be significantly marginalized in the political life of the region.

KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS

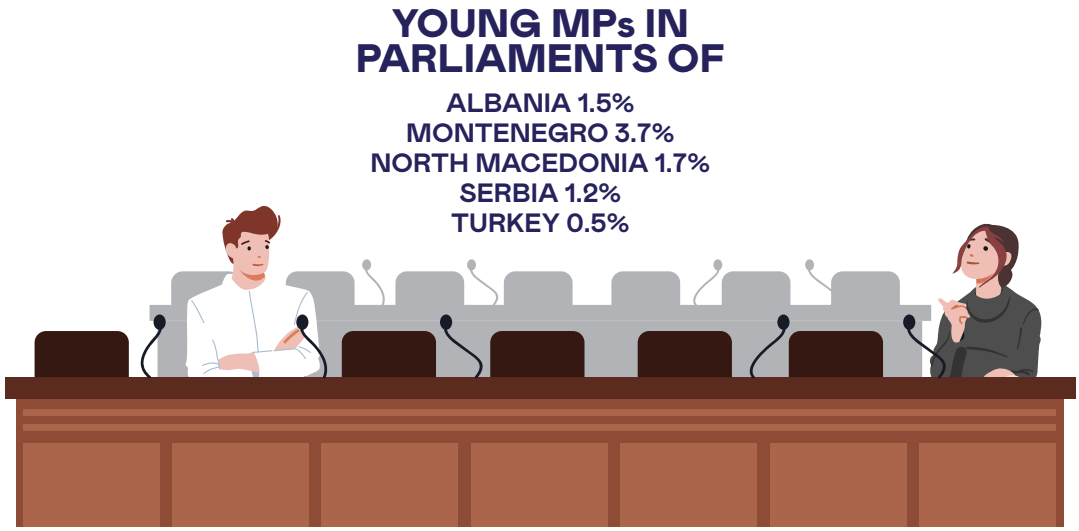
 # The Youth political participation has remained unfavorable over the last seven years. The values of the political participation index in 2022 ranged from around 28 in Turkey to 48 in Albania, which is far from the target of 100. There has been some evidence of progress over the years in Albania, whereas the situation is largely stagnating in Turkey and even deteriorating in Montenegro and North Macedonia.

 # The youth are still vastly underrepresented in political life in all countries. In 2022, young people accounted for between 0.5% of MPs in Turkey and just below 4% of MPs in Montenegro. There were no ministers in government and almost no deputy ministers or mayors under thirty in any of the countries.

 # In all countries, the majority of ministries and parliaments use online tools for informing the public, but this is not the case when it comes to municipalities. Desk research indicates that the use of online tools by municipalities at the local level needs to be significantly improved in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia.

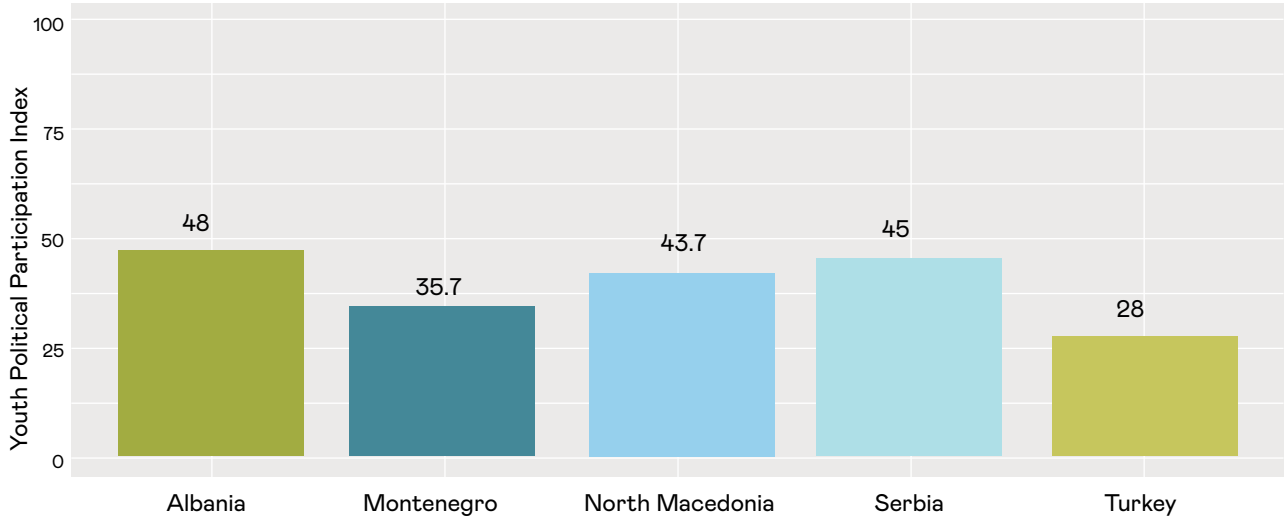
In Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia, **there are established youth structures at the national level,** whereas this is not the case in Turkey or Montenegro.

When it comes to the local level, **the percentage of municipalities that have active youth structures (based on their websites and social network pages) is below 60%** in all countries except Serbia and North Macedonia, which could seriously hinder youth participation in their local communities. Compared to previous years, the percentage of municipalities that have active youth structures has improved in Albania (31 percentage points) and Montenegro (around 18 percentage points).



POLITICAL PARTICIPATION INDEX

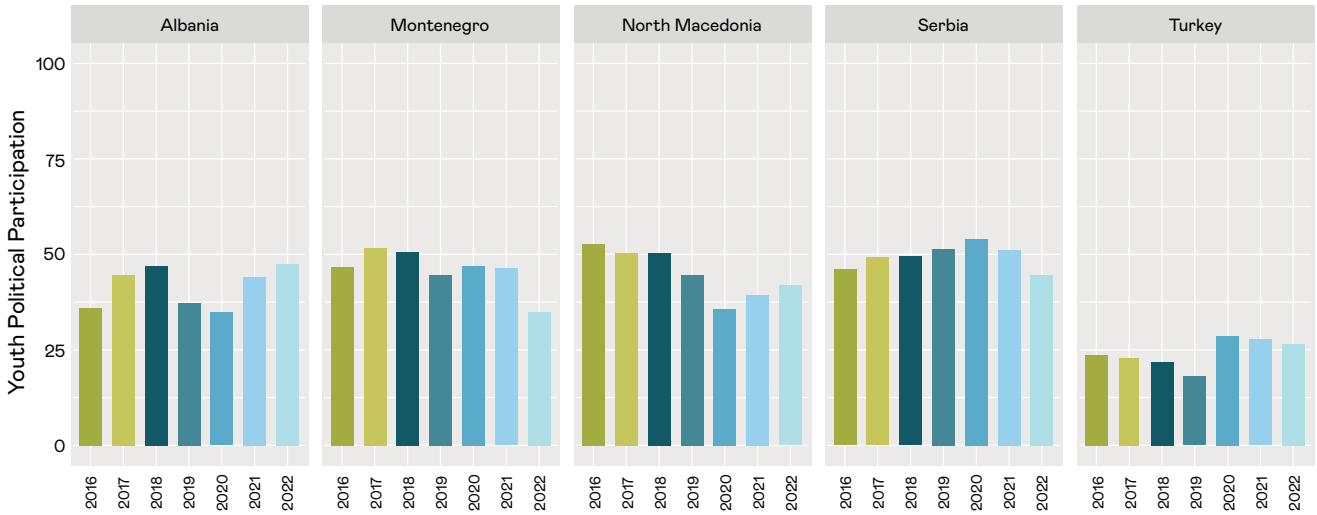
The Political Participation Index comprises indicators of political participation[15] which were collected in all countries: representation of young people in high political positions and in parliaments; existence of youth structures; and use of youth-friendly online tools by decision-makers on a national and local level. The Political Participation Index combines data on these various aspects into one number. Analysis of the 2022 Index values leads to several potential conclusions:



1. Firstly, the state of political involvement in all participating nations remains notably underachieving. The highest index value recorded stands at 48, significantly distant from the target value of 100.
2. Secondly, when evaluating the index and compiled data, the status of political participation in Turkey is notably more alarming than in comparison to other countries, due to the low number of young people in political positions, the absence of youth structures at the national level and the low percentage of municipalities with established youth structures.

15 Values for 2022 were available for all countries. However, it should be noted that the data concerning the local level in Turkey was collected for a sample of municipalities.

What trends can we observe if we look at the value of this index over the years?



It seems that in all countries, opportunities for political participation have varied throughout the years. In some countries, there was a period of decline compared to 2016, followed by a period of improvement (such is the case in North Macedonia), whereas in others, the situation is reversed: progress was followed by stagnation or decline (for instance, in Montenegro). Overall, when comparing the situation in 2022 to 2016, we can conclude that there has been some evidence of progress over the years in Albania, whereas the situation is largely stagnating in Serbia and Turkey and even deteriorating in Montenegro (particularly in the last year) and in North Macedonia (although, judging from the collected data, the situation has started improving in the last two years).

The data suggest that none of the countries are approaching the targeted goal. While observing the index values, some significant trends and patterns emerge. In order to comprehend them, we need additional data.[16] In the following text, all the indicators relating to youth political participation will be consider in more detail.

Young people continue to be severely underrepresented in parliaments and other political positions.

In all participating countries, youth are one of the most underrepresented groups in parliaments. In 2022, young people accounted for between 0.5% of MPs in Turkey and around 3.7% of MPs in Montenegro. That is, even though young people (15-29) account for approximately 16% of the total population in Serbia and 23% in Turkey, they make up less than 5% of members of parliament in the region. Although the situation on the global level is similar (the average share of MPs under age 30 is 2.8%), there are some countries that manage to make their parliaments more inclusive, such as Norway, with close to 14% of MPs under 30 and Germany, with close to 9% of young MPs.[17] Taking this into account, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Forum of Young Parliamentarians, which is a global organization of national parliaments, set a target of 15% of MPs under 30 to be reached by 2030.[18]

16 The table with all data regarding political participation is in Annex 2 of the document.

17 Inter-Parliamentary Union - Youth participation in national parliaments: 2023.

18 The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the global organization of national parliaments, gathering 179 Member Parliaments and 13 Associate Members. More information can be found on website https://www.ipu.org/about-us

19 However, it can be noted that in the last central elections in Albania in 2021, two ministers were appointed with ages close to the youth age range (15-29), respectively being 32 and 31 years old (Minister of State for Entrepreneurship Protection and Minister of State for Youth and Children).

All countries for which YPI was calculated are clearly far from reaching this goal.

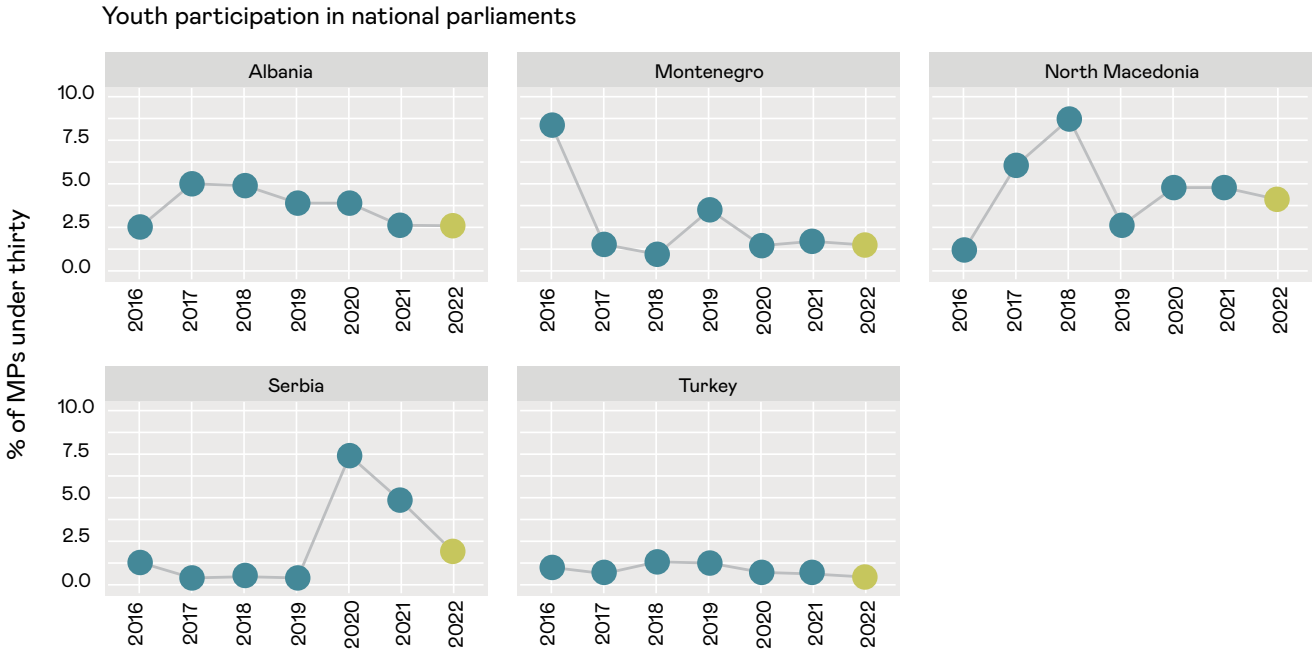
Not only are young people insufficiently represented in parliaments, but they are also not being appointed to other political positions. There were no ministers[19] in government under thirty in any of the countries. Out of all the countries, there were deputy ministers under thirty only in Albania and mayors under thirty only in North Macedonia and Serbia.

> **"Increasing youth participation in parliaments is, first and foremost, an issue of fairness. Young people make up a substantial share of the global population, and, in some countries, they form the vast majority of citizens. They should be able to serve as political representatives as well as engage more broadly with the work of parliament in their capacity as citizens. The fundamental legitimacy of political bodies is called into question when young people cannot run for office or elect one of their own."** - Inter-Parliamentary Union - Youth participation in national parliaments: 2023

Over the last seven years, progress in this area has been very slow, and in some cases, the situation has significantly deteriorated. The largest number of MPs in any of the participating countries was registered in North Macedonia in 2016, when young MPs accounted for 8.3% of all MPs, and in Montenegro, in 2018, when this percentage was 8.6%. These rates suggest that it is possible that the share of young people in national parliaments will be greater than it currently is. In North Macedonia, the percentage of MPs under thirty never exceeded 3% in the subsequent years. In Montenegro, the percentage of MPs dropped to 2.5% in 2019, although it has increased slightly in the following years. Albania also experienced a decline compared to previous years, when this number

19 However, it can be noted that in the last central elections in Albania in 2021, two ministers were appointed with ages close to the youth age range (15-29), respectively being 32 and 31 years old (Minister of State for Entrepreneurship Protection and Minister of State for Youth and Children).

was around 4%, to only 1.5%. In Serbia, an increase in the percentage of MPs under thirty registered in 2020 and 2021 was followed by a sharp decline in 2022, from 7.6% in 2020 to 2% in 2022. On the other hand, in Turkey, this percentage has been consistently low over the years, around 1%. When it comes to the issue of gender balance, in Montenegro, all MPs under thirty are male, whereas in Serbia, men outnumber women among young parliamentarians. In other countries, this is not the case; female MPs either slightly outnumber male MPs (Turkey) or the male/female ratio is 50:50 (Albania and North Macedonia).

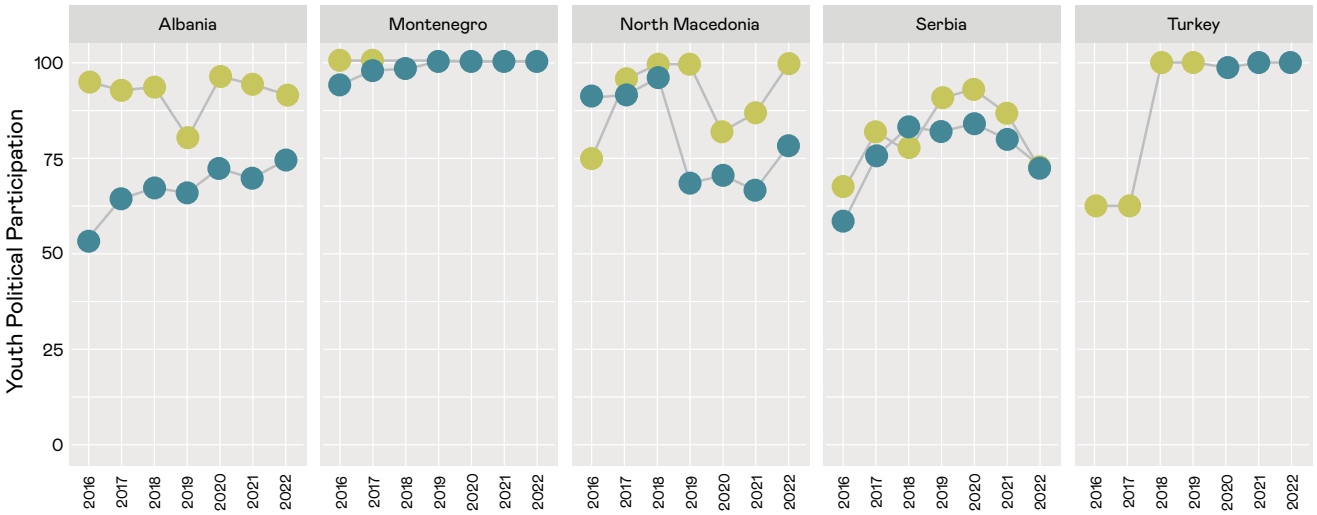


For a young person, becoming a minister or mayor is highly unlikely, judging by the collected data. In all participating countries, there have been no ministers under thirty in the period 2016-2022, and in North Macedonia and Turkey, there were no deputy ministers under thirty in this period as well. In 2022, only in Albania did a young woman hold a position as a deputy minister. Moreover, in Serbia and North Macedonia, young people were appointed as mayors, although in exceedingly rare cases (only one man under thirty of 80 mayors in North Macedonia and two (one man and one woman) out of 162 mayors of cities and municipalities in Serbia). The highest registered percentage of young mayors in any of the countries in the last five years was 6% in Albania in the period from 2016 to 2018, although in the last four years this percentage dropped to zero.

Online tools for gathering information on youth and their participation in the decision-making processes of governments, parliaments, and municipalities are still not fully utilized.

The results of the desk research in 2022 indicated that in all countries, the majority of ministries and parliaments use online tools - websites, Twitter, and Facebook accounts, which is important for enabling youth participation. In Montenegro, this percentage has been 100% each year since 2016, whereas Turkey managed to reach 100% in 2018 and has maintained that score. In these two countries, the use of online tools at the local level is also at the highest possible level.[20] The use of online tools at the national level in North Macedonia has reached 100% again in 2022, after two years when this use was at a lower level. The use of online tools at the local level in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia needs to be improved, as around one-quarter of municipalities do not use these tools.

Use of online tools on the national and local level (in %) over years
GREEN - NATIONAL LEVEL / BLUE - LOCAL LEVEL



Youth structures are absent in many municipalities in the region.

Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia have established youth structures at the national level, whereas this is still not true for Turkey.

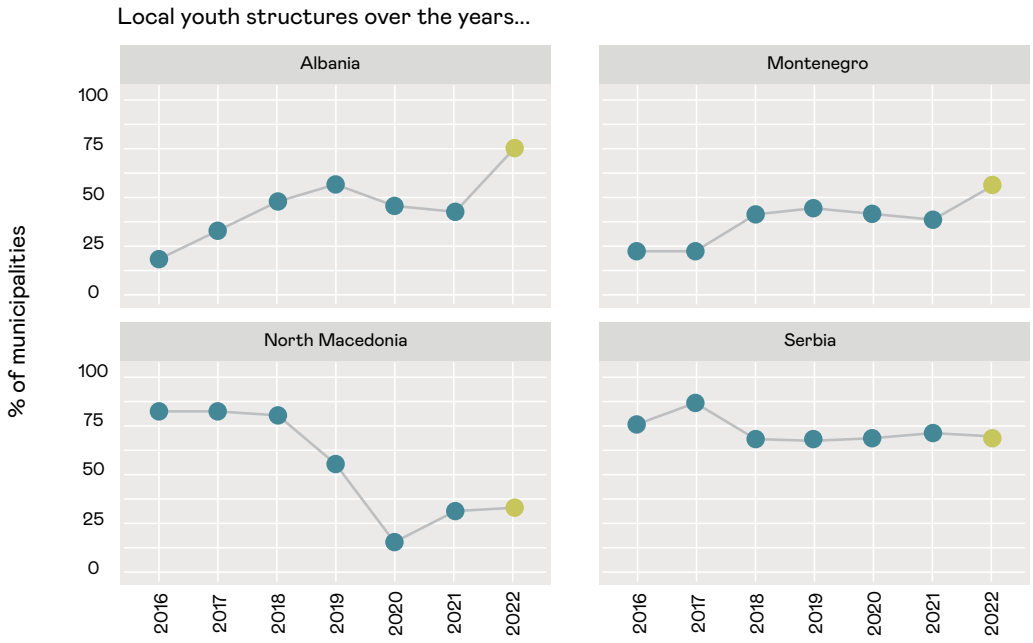
Indicators	Existence of youth structure (councils / parliaments / unions) on the national level	Existence of youth structure (councils / parliaments / unions) on the local level (in %)
Albania	✓	74
Montenegro	✗	56
North Macedonia	✓	31
Serbia	✓	70
Turkey	✗	15

In Montenegro, the youth structure did not exist in 2022, although it did in the previous years. A delay in the preparation and adoption of a new Youth Strategy in Montenegro after the expiration of the previous one, which covered the period 2017-2021, led to the absence of a youth structure on the national level in 2022. The new strategy was adopted in October 2023, leaving a gap without a valid strategy in place during 2022 and most of 2023. Consequently, the Council for Youth was not established in 2022. Without the Council for Youth, and with a small number of local youth councils in municipalities, there have been challenges in coordinating and aligning various efforts related to youth participation across different sectors and organizations.

20 It should be taken into account when comparing the data, that data from Turkey was collected on a sample of municipalities rather than examining all municipalities like in other countries, which was needed due to the large number of municipalities.

The situation in Albania has changed compared to the previous period, as the approval of Law No. 75/2019 "For Youth", has contributed to the creation of youth structures at the national level, such as the National Youth Agency, National Youth Council, and National Youth Congress.

In Turkey, in 2013[21], there was an amendment to the Decree Law that established a legal basis for the National Youth Council. In the following years, negotiations and technical preparations were carried out to establish it in 2019, but, it has not been achieved to this day. One significant step forward was that the GOFOR Youth Organizations Forum, established with the support of the Community Volunteers Foundation and Youth Services Centre, became a member of the European Youth Forum with observer status in 2019.



When it comes to the local level, the percentage has improved in Albania (31 percentage points) and in Montenegro (around 18 percentage points). The significant improvement in Albania may be attributed to the adoption of Law No. 75/2019 'For Youth', pursuant to which all municipalities have the duty to establish official local youth structures in the form of local youth councils. On the other hand, in Turkey, only 12 out of 81 city municipalities established a youth council in 2022, despite a regulatory framework adopted in 2006 providing a solid legal basis for the representation of youth assemblies at the city level.[22]

In North Macedonia, the decrease in the number of local youth structures was significant in 2020. The situation began improving in 2021, but in 2022, it remained mostly unchanged. The municipalities are obliged by the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies to establish local youth structures.

In Serbia, the current situation is more favorable when it comes to local youth structures than in other participating countries. In the last five years, the percentage of municipalities with established local youth structures has been stable at around 70%. However, this means that young people in many municipalities still lack adequate support.

21 Information is available in the text published at: https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/turkiye/12-national-youth-law

22 Since data for Turkey at the local level has been collected only for 2020 and 2021, using different methodologies due to the large number of municipalities, the progress over time could not be assessed.

Chapter 5

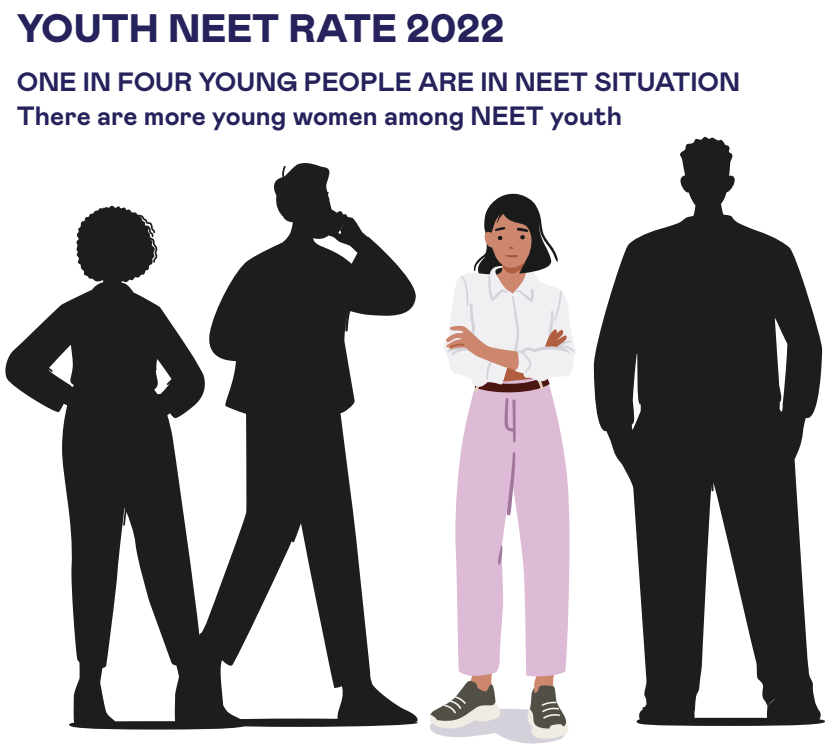
A closer look at youth economic participation

Young people continue to grapple with employment challenges observed in earlier years, with a high number facing long-term unemployment and a substantial portion not engaged in employment nor education and training.

KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS

 # The state of economic participation in all the countries involved remains a cause for concern. The highest registered value of this index in 2022 was 77, significantly lower than the target value of 100. The values of the economic participation index in 2022 ranged from around 65 in North Macedonia to 77 in Serbia. Based on the collected data, it seems that after a period of stagnation or decline in the values of indicators of youth position in the labor market with the start of the pandemic in 2020, there has been no further significant deterioration.

 # In most of the participating countries, one out of every four young people is neither in employment nor in education or training. Young women more often find themselves in this situation. The difference is particularly prominent in Turkey, where it amounts to almost 22 percentage points.



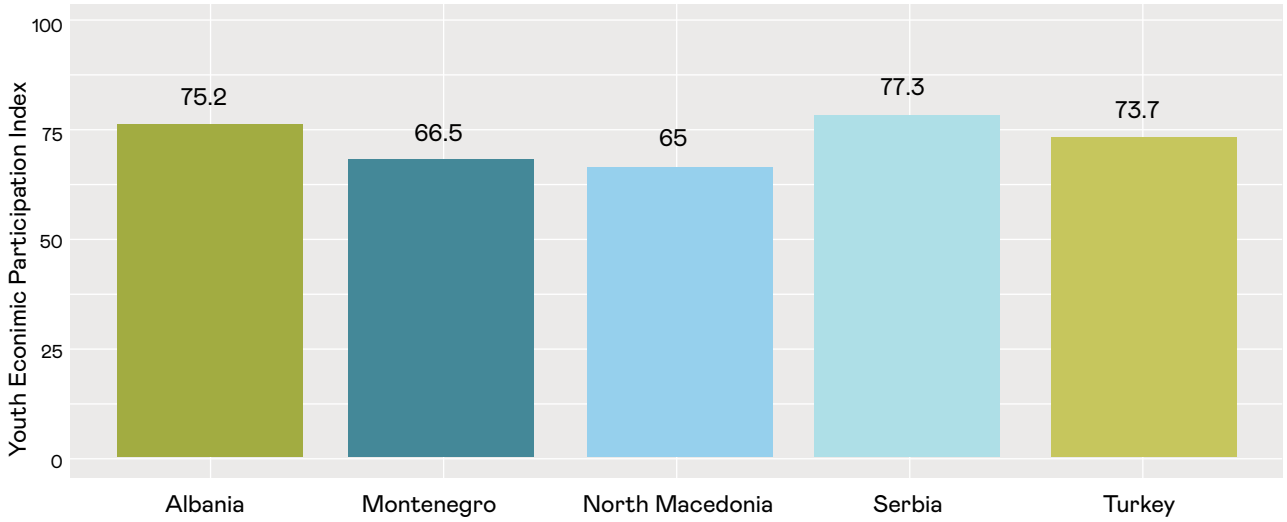
 # The issue of youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge. In Albania, Serbia and Turkey, the percentage of unemployed youth amounts to about 20%; in North Macedonia 28% and in Montenegro 32.5%. A significant number of young people have been unemployed for longer than 12 months.

 # Significant disparities in activity rates between young men and women persist. Activity rates ranged from 46% in North Macedonia to 55.5% in Albania.

 # Not many young people, particularly young women, choose self-employment. In 2022, the percentage of self-employed young people varied from around 6% in North Macedonia and Turkey to approximately 17% in Albania. Data on young individuals who apply for state support for self-employment is still not readily accessible.

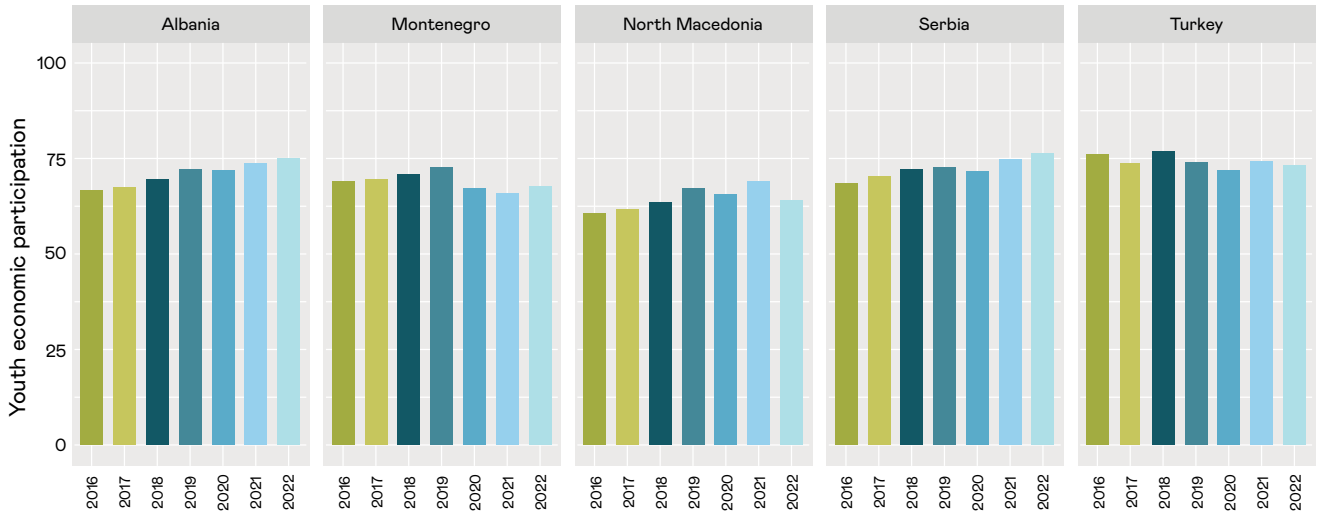
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION INDEX

The Index of Economic Participation summarizes information on several indicators of the inclusion of young people in the labor market: the NEET rate, youth activity rate, and youth unemployment. The values of the index of economic participation in 2022 offer several important insights:



1. Similarly, to the situation with political participation, the economic engagement of young people in all participating countries still lags behind its potential. The highest index value registered was 77, falling short of the desired target of 100.
2. From the data collected, it appears that the economic participation of young people shows a relatively consistent pattern across Serbia, Turkey and Albania. The situation appears to be a bit more concerning in Montenegro and North Macedonia, which display the highest rates of youth unemployment among all participating countries.

We can observe several trends if we look at the value of this index over the years. Firstly, it seems that after a period of stagnation or decline in the values of indicators of youth position in the labor market with the start of the pandemic in 2020, there has been no further significant deterioration. The only exception is Montenegro, where the situation has worsened rapidly since 2020 and has yet to recover. Secondly, when we look at the changes in the last seven years, it seems that the situation has been improving in Albania and Serbia, whereas it has remained largely unchanged in Turkey. In North Macedonia, there has been a noticeable improvement over the years; however, the situation took a downturn in the most recent year.



For a deeper examination of these index values, a comprehensive analysis of the indicators associated with the economic dimension of youth participation will be provided in the following text.

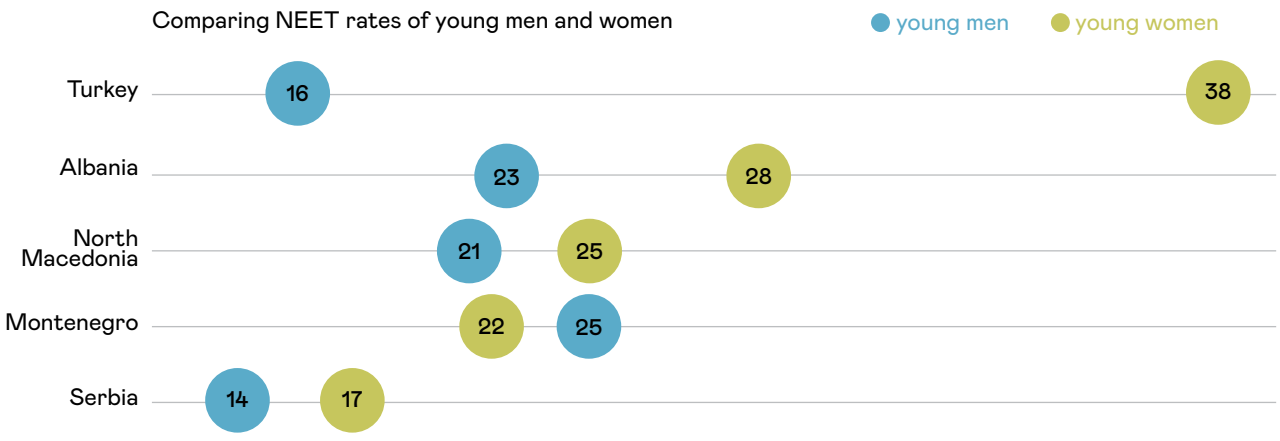
An overview of the economic indicators shows improvement compared to the previous years. However, significant challenges persist, including a high share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training (neither formal nor non-formal) and a significant percentage of unemployed youth, of whom many have been unemployed for longer than 12 months.

23 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en

In most countries, approximately **one in four young people is neither in employment nor in education or training.** The only exception is Serbia, with the lowest NEET rate of around 16%, closest to the EU-27 average of 11.7%. All five countries participating in the YPI are still far off meeting the EU-level target set by the European Union[23], stipulating that the share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training should be less than 9 percent by 2030. Although all countries in 2022 register progress compared to the year before, the comparison of NEET rates in 2016 and 2022 does not show significant differences.

How have NEET rates changed in the last 7 years?

The gender gap in NEET rates still calls for attention. When analyzed according to gender, most countries display the same pattern: the NEET rate is lower for young men than for young women. In 2022, this was the case with all countries participating in YPI except Montenegro. The difference is particularly prominent in Turkey, where it amounts to almost 22 percentage points. Gender-based division of labor and early marriage continue to be vital problems for young women in Turkey, resulting in their exclusion from employment opportunities. Many young women not participating in the labor force identify household duties as the primary reason, a factor notably absent among men.



In most countries, youth unemployment rates have decreased in the last seven years; however, youth unemployment remains a severe problem. In 2022, youth unemployment rates in all participating countries have decreased compared to the previous year. In Montenegro, the youth unemployment rate increased sharply during the years of the pandemic, but recovered in 2022 (from 32.5% in 2021 to 25.4% in 2022). Still, it is the highest youth unemployment rate registered in the participating countries, along with North Macedonia, where this rate was 25.2%.

In Montenegro and Turkey, there have been significant gender differences in youth unemployment. The unemployment rates were higher for young women than for young men in Turkey (22.3 compared to 14.6). A completely different trend was registered in Montenegro, where the unemployment rate of young men (29%) was higher than for young women (22%). In other countries, the differences were not so prominent.

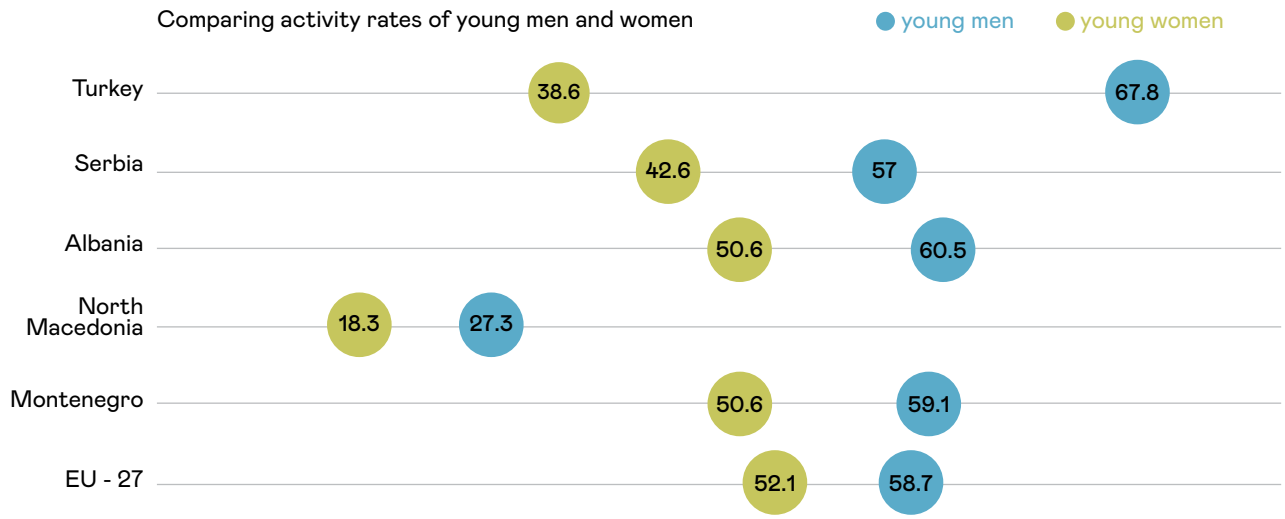
In 2022, youth employment rates varied from around 34% in North Macedonia to close to 41% in Serbia and Montenegro and 44% in Albania and Turkey. These rates are still lower than the EU average of around 49%. In Montenegro, the youth employment rate has increased significantly compared to the previous year (41% in 2022 compared to 30% in 2021), and now is similar to the values registered before the start of the pandemic. In all other countries, youth employment rates have slightly increased compared to the year before. It should be noted, however, that even when there is progress in reducing youth unemployment, that does not necessarily mean that youth are employed in quality jobs. For example, researchers have noted that in Turkey, **precarious and short-term working practices are common among young people.**

Many young people in the region remain unemployed for longer than 12 months, which may put them in danger of becoming marginalized in the labor market. The situation in most countries is worrying, especially in North Macedonia. This rate is lowest in Serbia at around 6%, which is closest to the EU 27 average of 3%.

The share of long-term youth unemployment in most countries is different for men and women. For example, in Montenegro, the long-term unemployment rate for young men was 16%, compared to 12% for young women. In contrast, the share of long-term unemployed people was higher for young women (24.3%) than for young men (14.6%) in Turkey. In Albania and in Serbia, the long-term unemployment rates were almost the same for young men and women.

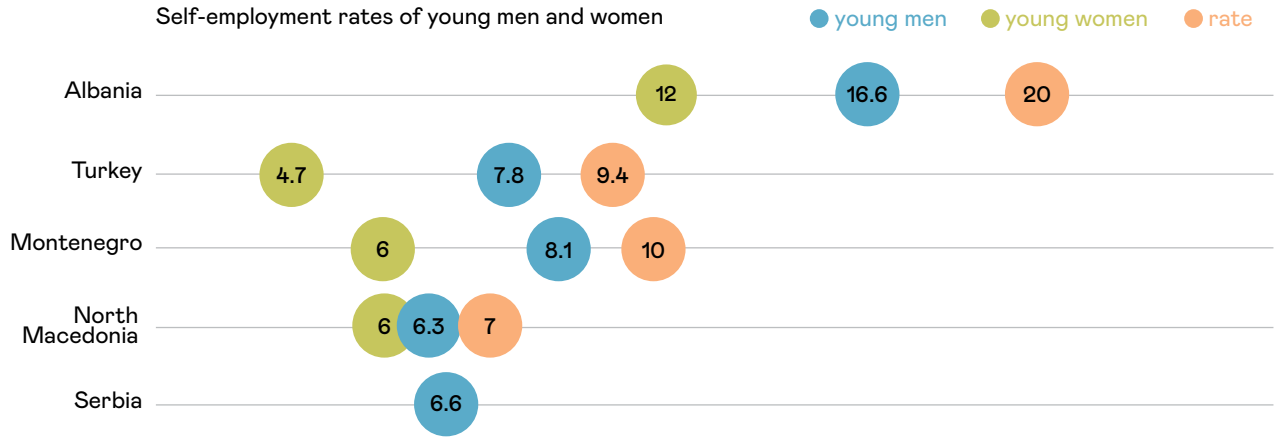
Striking differences in activity rates among young men and women persist over the years. Labor force participation rates ranged from 46% in North Macedonia to 55.5% in Albania. Most countries register stagnation or a slight increase in activity rates. The exception is North Macedonia, where the youth activity rate decreased for 8.6 percentage points between 2021 and 2022.

As in previous years, significant gender gaps persist in all countries. **It is much more likely for young men to be active in the labor market than young women.** The largest gender gap was in Turkey where the activity rate for young men was 29 percentage points above that for women, while the smallest gap was recorded in Montenegro - for 8.5 points higher for young men.



Self-employment is still not the most frequent choice, especially for young women. In 2022, Albania had the highest share of self-employment among young people (17%), whereas North Macedonia had the lowest share (6%).

The gender gap is also considerably high among self-employed youth. **In 2022, young men in all countries except Serbia, were nearly twice as likely to be self-employed as young women.** The most prominent gender gap has been observed in Albania, where the self-employment rate for young men was 8 percentage points above that for women.



When it comes to the percentage of young people who received subsidies to start their own business among all applicants, in Serbia, approximately 1 in 3 applicants (28%) and in North Macedonia, 1 in 4 applicants (24.5%) were successful in applying for state support. However, in Albania, it is registered that only 4.5% of applicants received subsidies. In Montenegro and Turkey was not possible to obtain the data for this indicator, similarly to previous years, that makes calculation of this indicator partial.

Chapter 6

A closer look at youth social participation

Young people's social participation in the region is a concern, as evidenced by high poverty risk rates and a considerable number of young men in prisons.

KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS

For the second time since the creation of the Youth Participation Index, a Social Participation Index was calculated for participating countries. This presents a clear snapshot of youth social participation, making it easy to compare across participating countries and establishing a framework for tracking future trends in this particular area. Based on the data collected, the social participation of young people in all participating countries is not reaching its optimal level. **The highest registered value is 81, that is still beneath the desired target of 100.** Based on the collected data, the state of youth social participation is similar in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, whereas the situation is somewhat more worrying in Turkey and Albania. It should be noted that there are still significant challenges in obtaining data related to the social participation of young people.

 # The dropout rates from secondary education don't reveal notable concerns that require attention, possibly due to the methodology applied for calculating this indicator. **Early school leaving remains a significant issue in Albania and Turkey.** In 2022, similar to previous years, **the rates of completion of tertiary education were below 30% in all countries.** Among people aged 30–34 years, around 33% (in Albania and in Turkey) and 39% (in Montenegro and North Macedonia) of the population had completed at least one level of tertiary education, indicating large differences among the countries in this respect.

 # Still, many young people are at risk of poverty. In Serbia, in 2022, this rate was 19.8%, while in Turkey and Montenegro, this rate was 23.3% and 23%, respectively. Similar percentages were registered in Albania and North Macedonia in previous years.

YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF POVERTY

ALBANIA *24.2%
MONTENEGRO 23%
NORTH MACEDONIA *24.4%
SERBIA 19.8%
TURKEY 23.3%

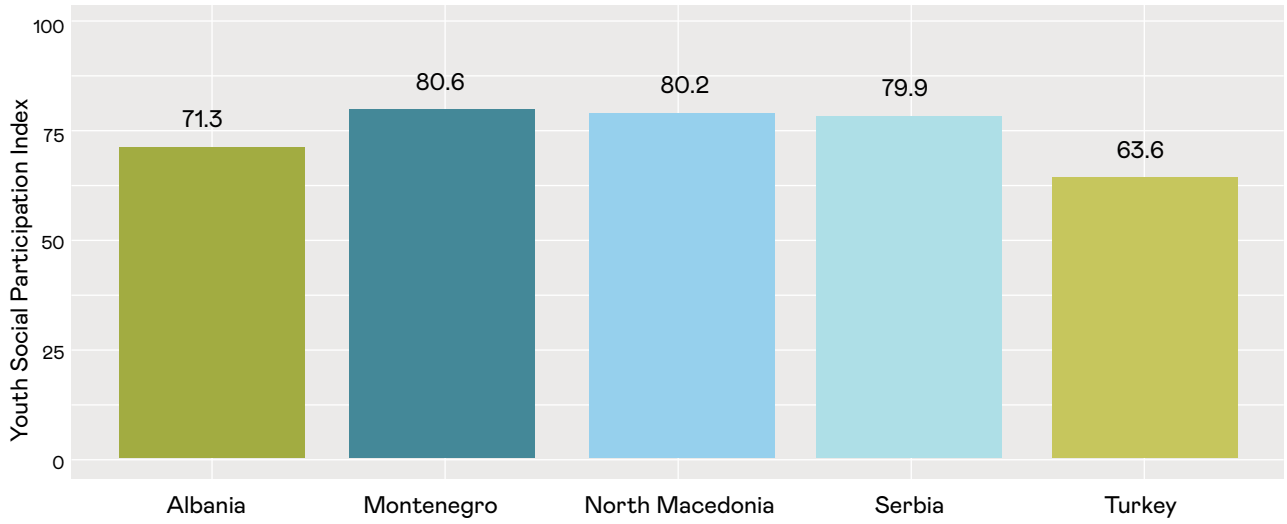
*last available data from 2021

 # Around one-fifth of the population receiving financial support through the social protection system were young people in Serbia and one-third in North Macedonia. In Montenegro and Turkey, data regarding this aspect of social participation needs to become available.

 # Approximately one third of people in prisons are young people in participating countries. The majority of young people in prisons are young men.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION INDEX

For the second time since the creation of the Youth Participation Index, a Social Participation Index was calculated. Indicators that have been included in the calculation of the Social Participation Index are: the at-risk-of-poverty rate; the percentage of youth in prison; the share of early dropouts from education and training for persons aged 18–24 years; the percentage of population aged 30-34 with tertiary educational level; and the participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks).



Based on the findings from the Social Participation Index, two key conclusions become evident:

1. Similar to political and economic participation, the social involvement of young people in all participating countries is yet to reach its full potential. The highest registered index value is 81, which falls below the aimed target of 100."
2. From the gathered data, it seems that the status of youth social participation displays a comparable pattern in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. However, the situation appears relatively more concerning in Turkey and Albania. This is mostly due to the higher share of early school leavers, a lower percentage of the population aged 30-34 with a tertiary educational attainment level than in other countries and a lower participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training.

The values of the Social participation index are similar compared to the previous year, which can be largely attributed to the lack of up-to-date data in this area. To understand the values of this index, we need to look at the indicators of the social dimension of youth participation and their values in more detail.[24]

The participation of young people in formal and especially non-formal education needs to be improved. Judging from the data on young people who have not completed secondary education, the majority of countries do not have a significant problem. Namely, the dropout rate was below 3% in all the countries for which data was available. Looking at the indicator concerning early school dropouts (i.e., people aged 18–24 who had completed, at best, lower secondary education and who were not involved in further education or training),[25] it can be concluded that North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia have already met the EU-level target, which stipulates that the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9% by 2030. In Albania and Turkey, however, the proportion of early leavers from education and training among persons aged 18-24 was around 18% and 22%, respectively, far off from the target.

When it comes to the statistics concerning tertiary education, the enrollment rate varied from only 17.5% in North Macedonia to 57.4% in Serbia. Although most countries register high rates of young people enrolling in tertiary education, the percentage of young people graduating from tertiary education was relatively low, amounting to 24.9% in Albania and being below 20% in all the other countries. **As in previous years, participating countries registered more young women enrolling in and completing tertiary education than young men.** The largest gender gap in enrollment rates was registered in Montenegro (where the enrollment rate for young women was 11 percentage points above that for men), while the largest gender gap in completion rates was registered in Albania (8 points higher for young women).

Indicators	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
Early school leaving	17.5	3.6	5.7	5.0	26.7
Percentage of population 30-34 with completed tertiary education	32.1	38.4	39.7	35.2	33.1

Note: The data for Serbia refers to 2022; for other countries, the data refers to 2021 or 2020, since the data for 2022 was still not available in the Eurostat database for all countries at the time of drafting this report.

24 The table with all data regarding economic participation is in Annex 1 of the document.

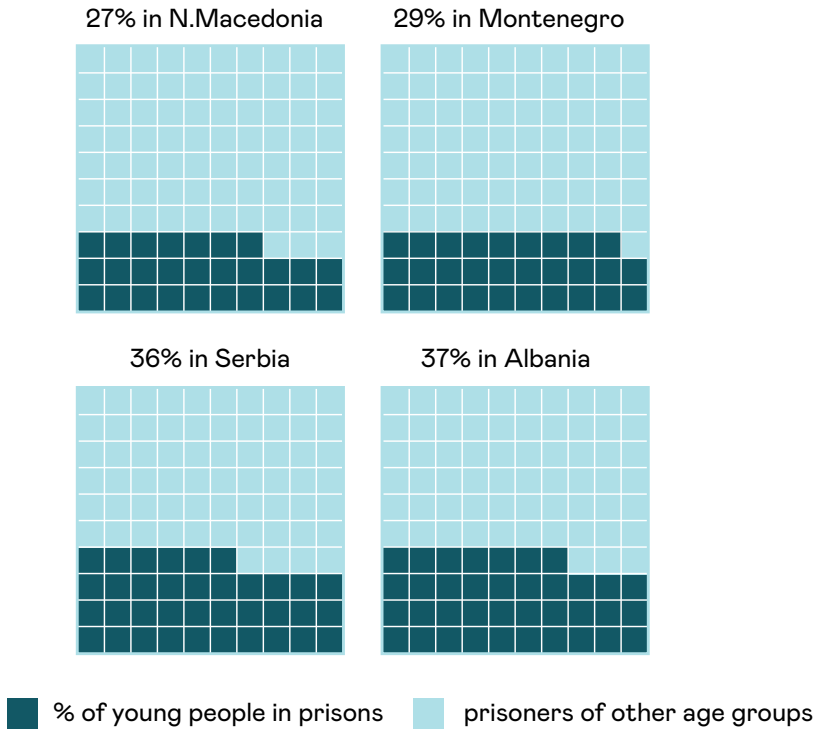
25 It should be noted that data for 2022 was available only for Serbia at the time of writing this report, thus, for other countries data for 2021 was reported and used in the calculation of the index.

As mentioned in the methodological note on data availability, when interpreting the rate of youth participation in education, it is important to highlight that there are some methodological differences regarding the indicators. Therefore, it was decided to also look at the population aged 30-34 with a tertiary educational attainment level.[26] Among people aged 30–34, around 33% of population in Albania and Turkey and around 39% in Montenegro and North Macedonia had completed at least one level of tertiary education. This is slightly lower than the EU average: just over two-fifths (42.8%) of the EU population have a tertiary level of education. Young women are more likely to attain a tertiary level of education. For instance, in Serbia, the share of the population aged 30-34 who attained tertiary education was 13 percentage points above that of men.

Recognizing the importance of non-formal education for young people, in 2019, researchers decided to include an additional indicator that could shed some light on youth participation in this type of education and training. At the time of drafting this report, only the data for Serbia and the data for Montenegro were available. Only 4% of young people in Serbia and 3.2% in Montenegro reported that they participated in non-formal education and training in the last four weeks. When we look at the participation rates in both formal and non-formal education in the last four weeks, we can see that they vary from 36% in Albania[27] to 50% in Serbia. For comparison, this rate amounts to 65.9% in Slovenia.

In most countries, approximately one in four young people is at risk of poverty. Similarly, as in previous years, due to the timing of the SILC Survey results release, it was not possible to obtain value for this indicator for all the countries. In Serbia, in 2022, this rate was 19.8%, 5.4 percentage points lower than the previous year. In Turkey and Montenegro, this rate was 23.3% and 23%, respectively, similar to the previous year.

In 2022, data about **the number of young people who receive financial support as a part of the social support system** was available for North Macedonia, where this rate was 29.2%, and Serbia (21%), similar to the previous year. Other countries still face difficulties in calculating this indicator.



26 It should be noted that data for 2022 was available only for Serbia at the time of writing this report, thus, for other countries data for 2021 was reported and used in the calculation of the index.

27 Some values for this indicator were obtained in 2020 and 2021.

More than a quarter of people in prisons are young people. In 2022, young people made up approximately one-third of all prisoners in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and North Macedonia. Compared to the year before, a slight increase in the percentage of prisoners who are below 30 was registered in Montenegro (4.3 percentage points higher) and in Serbia (12.5 percentage points higher). We could take a different approach by looking at the share of young people in the total population, which is between 16% and 23% for these countries. Based on this data, it seems that young people make up a larger share of the prison population than the total population. This indicator's values for Turkey are still not available. However, it is possible to obtain data for the age group 18-40 which could provide an approximate picture of the situation in Turkey, although it is not comparable with other countries. The percentage of prisoners in this age group was 65%.

When it comes to data on incarcerated young people, it should be noted that for all countries where this data is available, there is a major difference in the number of imprisoned young men compared to young women. **The percentage of young women in prison varied from as little as 0.3% in Albania to 2.7% in Turkey.**

YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRISON POPULATION

ALBANIA 36.9%
MONTENEGRO 29%
NORTH MACEDONIA 27.4%
SERBIA 35.8%
TURKEY no data available

Chapter 7

Youth participation – a look back

The Youth Participation Index clearly shows that young people in Western Balkan and Turkey face many barriers to participation. Underrepresentation in political life, lack of employment as well as education and training, staying unemployed for a long time, and being at risk of poverty are realities experienced by many young people in the region. We decided to look back and identify key setbacks and major improvements in each of the three dimensions of youth participation over the last seven years of collecting and interpreting data.

Despite some improvements, there has not been significant continuous overall progress. Looking back on these seven years, researchers identified some of the key setbacks and barriers to youth participation. In the area of political participation, the authors of this report find that the **underrepresentation of young people in political positions** is a key challenge that persists for several reasons, one of which is young people's lack of trust in decision-making processes. In Turkey, for instance, reports from local civil youth council members highlighted issues regarding the election and operations of these councils, underscoring the urgent need for independent youth assemblies that operate democratically and include local non-governmental organizations.

Long-term youth unemployment is a critical issue that could have long-term negative consequences. Inconsistency between labor market needs and the educational system, strict demand from employers for hiring individuals with prior work experience and the increase in the informal economy are some of the identified potential causes of youth unemployment high rates.

Barriers to youth entrepreneurship due to the scarcity of support schemes exclusively directed at young people, are pressing as well.

High rates of young people at risk of poverty and the lack of adequate measures targeting this problem are two of the key persistent challenges over the years in the area of social participation. One additional challenge which impacts all areas of youth participation, is the absence of a policy framework in the area of youth. In recent years, this has been a challenge for Montenegro, leading to a policy vacuum and impacting the direction and priorities of youth-related initiatives and programs on a national and local level. Regular reviews and updates of youth strategies and other policy documents are essential to providing a clear framework for the development of youth participation.

However, there have been some noticeable improvements. In the area of political participation, researchers consider the **accessibility of online information and the improvement of youth structures** as two of the main advancements. In Albania, for example, there has been an increase in the number of youth structures at the local and national level, brought about by the legal changes. Similarly, in Montenegro, the adoption of local action plans and the development of local youth services were assessed as important steps forward, as they promoted community-specific approaches and encouraged youth participation in decision-making processes that directly impacted their immediate surroundings.

Over the years, most countries have registered visible improvements in the economic participation of young people, which researchers attribute to the adoption and enforcement of reforms and strategies oriented to improve the position of young people. For instance, in North Macedonia, **lower NEET and youth unemployment rates** are considered to be related to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee measures. The aim of these measures is to provide young people who are not employed, not in education or training, with quality employment opportunities, continuous education or training and internships within four months of completing school or becoming unemployed.

In the area of social participation, an example of progress is the **number of young people enrolled in tertiary education increase** in Albania, over the years. Researchers attribute it to higher number of campaigns promoting the importance of education and the dispersion of faculties that allowed proximity and access to these institutions.

Youth participation – a way forward

It is evident that there have been some notable advancements in youth participation over the years, due to various measures - from the improvement of legal frameworks and policy measures to raising awareness campaigns. However, the situation is still far from the major progress. In the following text, some of the key recommendations for improving youth participation in the region will be presented.

I RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE ABSENCE OF YOUTH–SENSITIVE DATA

Ensuring access to youth-specific data and changing the practices of institutions in this regard is vital in planning measures to improve youth participation. A set of recommendations to tackle significant challenges concerning the lack of youth-specific data encompass suggestions from previous years that remain unimplemented, along with new recommendations prompted by changes in data accessibility in the last year of monitoring.

The institutions need to start collecting youth-sensitive data in the field of economic, social and political participation as it is legally defined. It is crucial to collect gender-disaggregated data, which could indicate a need for different, tailored-made support to young men and women.

While notable progress has been made over the years, it remains evident that national statistical agencies and other relevant authorities must intensify their efforts to gather more data specifically focused on youth. A systematic collection of high-quality data is necessary to formulate well-informed policies and supportive measures for the youth, especially the vulnerable groups of them. In particular, it is highly recommended to:

- → Data related to the **share of young people receiving financial support through the social protection system** compared to the total number of people receiving this type of support **should be monitored and regularly reported.** Ministry or other national institution in charge of data on beneficiaries within the social protection system in Albania, Montenegro, and Turkey should disaggregate data by age and start analyzing the number of young people receiving financial support. In North Macedonia and Serbia, data for this indicator should be regularly produced and published.
- → **Data on young people who started their own business with the financial support of the state** compared to all young people who applied for this

support **should be regularly reported.** As countries enact policy measures to stimulate self-employment, this indicator would serve as a valuable resource for understanding the success rates of young individuals applying for subsidies. It is also important in devising plans to enhance the support system for young entrepreneurs. Institutions in charge of providing this type of financial support in Montenegro and Turkey need to start collecting the data on young people who apply for the subsidies. In Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, data for this indicator should be regularly produced and published.

→ **Data on young people in prisons** compared to the total population of people in prisons **should become available** in Turkey for the age group 15-29 and continue to be readily available in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

→ **Data on youth participation in non-formal education and training needs to be regularly collected** by national statistical offices in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.

Data concerning youth should be easily accessible.

In some cases, the lack of publicly available youth-sensitive data meant that data had to be collected through official requests to institutions. In many instances, additional desk research and efforts by researchers were needed in order to collect the necessary data. Also, some of the publicly available data was still difficult to find on official websites (especially for the age group 15-29) and was not presented in a youth-friendly manner. This means that young people and other stakeholders face significant difficulties when trying to obtain the statistics they need to make informed decisions. Thus, the recommendation is that data concerning youth should be easily accessible.

→ **Public statistical offices should dedicate a section to collect statistics concerning young people on their websites.** This would make it easier for anyone interested in youth-sensitive data, from policymakers to youth organizations and young people themselves, to obtain it. Since all countries have national policies relevant to youth, in this way, all those involved have direct access to relevant data. This also sends a clear message that statistics on youth are important and need to be taken into account.

An example of a section collecting statistics from a range of other domains on which data is available segregated by age can be found on the Eurostat website: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth

This process can also be connected with the monitoring of achievement of targets set by the Agenda 2030 concerning youth. The example of the data visualization platform "Youth SDG Dashboard" used to track youth indicators across different targets can be found on the website: https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-sdg-dashboard/

In Albania, National Programme for Official Statistics 2022–2026 of Albania establishes the requirement to report robust indicators on youth (age 15-29 years) and in order to achieve this a dashboard to provide real-time data on socio-demographic indicators has been designed: www.instat.gov.al/en/children-and-youth-official-statistics/

→ **National institutions should strongly encourage the release of datasets obtained via publicly supported research studies involving youth in an open format as open data.** This is important as it allows researchers to explore available data and conduct secondary analyses. Young people themselves could be encouraged to carry out youth research using these datasets and to participate in the creation of data-informed youth policies.

One example of using the data to better understand the situation and inform policy decisions is the publication of youth justice annual statistics for England and Wales: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2021-to-2022. Data is presented in a clear and informative way in multiple formats, including infographics. Open data is made available.

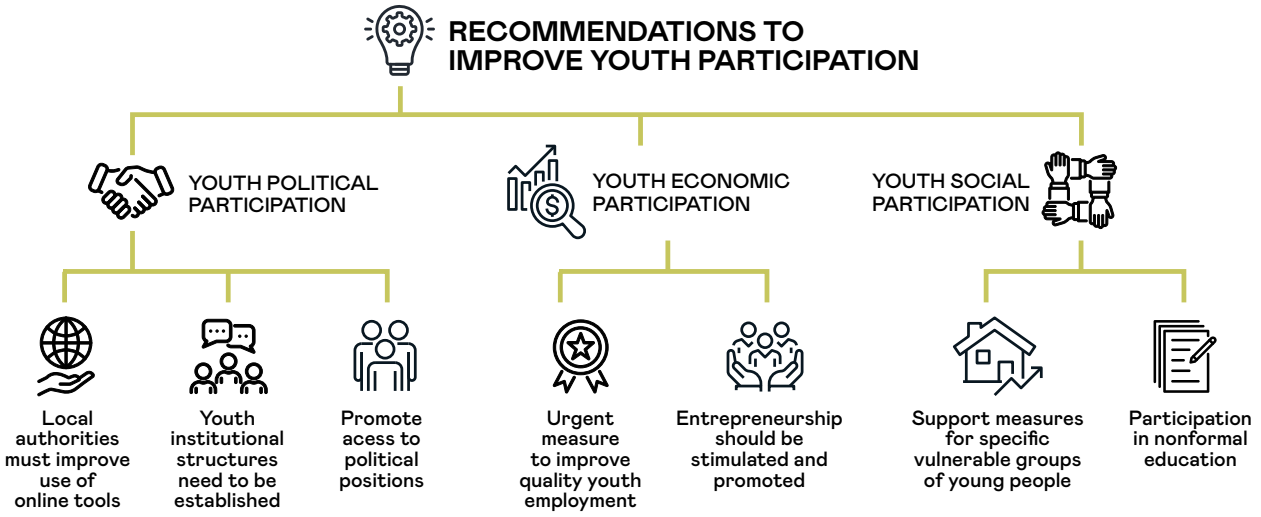
→ **Data on young people holding political positions should be easily available on the websites of national parliaments and clearly communicated,** including the age of all of the Members of Parliament and the number of MPs under thirty. The websites need to be regularly updated.

One positive example of presenting data on young MPs, disaggregated by gender and different parties, can be found at the following address: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7483/

→ **Institutions in charge of youth at the national level need to collect data on youth structures at the local level.** In the process of Index preparation, this type of data is collected by contacting municipalities or through desk research. However, it is necessary that national institutions have this type of data readily available in order to plan adequate policy measures.

II RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THE LOW LEVEL OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Youth participation matters and the issue of youth disengagement continues to be a major problem faced not only by the Western Balkan region and Turkey but also by modern democracies in the EU.[28] Based on the results of the YPI, the opportunities for the participation of young people in the decision-making process in the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey need to be improved.



RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Governments, parliaments, political parties and youth organizations in the region should apply strategies to improve youth access to political positions.

Young people continue to be vastly underrepresented in national parliaments and other political positions such as mayors, deputy ministers or ministers. The situation regarding their representation in political life has not improved over the years, creating a necessity for urgent action. According to the report on global youth participation in parliaments,[29] improving youth representation can strengthen the legitimacy of parliament, achieve greater fairness in access to political decision-making, contribute to better policymaking and potentially help young people uninterested in politics to trust political institutions again.

Governments, parliaments, political parties and youth organizations should adopt strategies to increase the number of young people in political positions, especially the number of MPs, which can include the following:

28 Kitanova, M. (2019). Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2019.1636951

29 Inter-Parliamentary Union (2019). Youth participation in national parliaments, https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/youth-empowerment

- → **Raising awareness about the importance of youth participation in politics;**
- → **Introducing youth quotas, i.e. reserving seats in parliaments to ensure youth presence;**
- → **Establishing youth caucuses in national parliaments to promote youth issues in public policy.**

Since some of the countries are facing elections in the upcoming period, this is an opportunity to advocate for the greater presence of young people in political positions.

Local authorities must improve the use of online tools in order to improve communication with young people.

Governments, parliaments and municipalities should strive towards ensuring the use of online tools for providing information as a precondition for establishing communication between policymakers and young people and meaningful youth political participation. Bearing in mind that young people mostly use social networks as channels of communication, all relevant institutions must have official websites as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts. The YPI 2022 shows that this is still not the case in all participating countries. The use of online tools at the local level by municipalities needs to be significantly improved in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia. Public institutions should use user-friendly online tools to post relevant information and establish interactive spaces and responsive feedback channels to ensure the meaningful participation of young people.

Youth institutional structures (councils, parliaments, and unions) that ensure the participation of young people in the decision-making process must be established in Turkey and Montenegro at the national level and in a greater number of municipalities in all participating countries.

Despite significant efforts, Turkey has still not developed mechanisms for involving young people in the decision-making process at the national level in the form of youth structures. Examples of other participating countries that have established this mechanism show that this can be achieved, so youth organizations need to continue their advocacy efforts in this direction.

At the same time, many municipalities do not have active youth structures (based on their websites and social networking pages). Even in those countries with established youth structures, it is necessary to ensure that they function in an adequate way. It is necessary to advocate for the opportunity to build youth councils, parliaments and unions to ensure the participation of young people in the decision-making process at the national and local levels. Moreover, it might be useful for youth organizations to:

- → **Advocate that local youth structures adopt clear strategies to carry out their work;**
- → **Enhance the cooperation of municipalities for the creation of these structures;**
- → **Prepare relevant resources and tools, including a review of best practices to facilitate and unify the way these structures are organized**

and function in all municipalities;

→ **Advocate for regular assessments and monitoring mechanisms to track the performance and impact of these youth structures.**

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING YOUTH ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Urgent measures for reducing youth unemployment and the number of young people without a job or outside of education need to be implemented in all countries. Gender differences in this area need to be addressed.

The situation concerning indicators of the position of young people in the labor market has not significantly changed. Even though there is some evidence of progress in certain countries, the situation in the region is still worrying and lagging behind many other EU countries.

→ Although in most countries, after a period of stagnation or decline in the value of indicators of the position of young people on the labor market with the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, there was no further significant deterioration, **public institutions should implement measures such as improving active labor market policies and training and retraining programs.**

→ **Significant gender differences in the labor market** persist, especially concerning activity rates, which **need to be addressed,** especially in Turkey, where differences are most prominent, but in other countries as well.

In all countries, it can be recommended to:

→ Use the benefits of cooperation between public institutions and youth organizations, which can contribute to reaching young people in vulnerable situations and sharing information on existing measures;

→ Include young people and youth organizations in the process of creating and evaluating these measures.

Entrepreneurship among young people, especially young women, should be stimulated and promoted by providing adequate and continuing administrative, legal, technical, and mentorship assistance and financial support.

Data on youth entrepreneurship suggest that not only do a relatively small number of young people choose self-employment as an option but also that those who choose it may lack adequate support. This was the case with some of the countries in this year's report, but it is also worrying that in Montenegro and Turkey, data on the percentage of young people who received subsidies to start their own business among all applicants cannot be obtained. As for all other issues, it is necessary to have quality data to plan adequate measures. In preparing policy responses concerning youth entrepreneurship, special attention must be given to young women since they opt for self-employment to a much lesser degree than young men.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING YOUTH SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Participation of young people in non-formal education and training should be encouraged; early school leaving in Albania and Turkey should be addressed.

The engagement of young individuals in non-formal education and training is notably inadequate and low, needing attention from the respective youth policies in each country. Many civil society organizations are actively involved in offering this form of education and could provide valuable insights for potentially effective policy measures.

Although the situation concerning early school leaving is not severe in the majority of participating countries, this is not the case with Albania and Turkey, which need to be recognized through youth policies. Even though in other countries dropout rates from secondary education and the percentage of early school leavers is not high, this still needs to be addressed, as young people from vulnerable groups are usually at much greater risk of not completing primary and secondary education.

Public institutions should commission research to develop new support measures for specific vulnerable groups.

The alarming number of young people at risk of poverty leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to improve the situation of young people in vulnerable positions as soon as possible. In each of the countries, a significant number of young people are at risk of poverty. At the same time, information on young people in the social welfare system is lacking in the majority of countries, making it difficult to completely understand the situation. Many young men are incarcerated, which should lead to questions about whether there are other alternative measures that could have been implemented. Public authorities in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey should commission research studies to better understand the situation of this vulnerable group of young people, factors contributing to this situation and policy measures that can be effective. It can be recommended that this research be conducted by young researchers engaged via public call.

Annex 1

Methodological notes

In 2016, the year when the YPI was launched, a set of indicators for inclusion in the first Youth Participation Index was chosen based on an analytical process comprising extensive desk research and expert consultations. Over the years, they have been slightly altered and there are currently 25 indicators in total across three domains of youth participation in the Index, with the indicators and sources listed in the table below.

ASPECT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION	INDEX INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	Young ministers in the government, M/F	The percentage of young ministers in government is calculated as the percentage of young ministers under the age of 29 divided by the total number of ministers.	The official website of the government
	Young deputy ministers in the government, M/F	The percentage of young deputy ministers in government is calculated as a percentage of deputy ministers under the age of 29 divided by the total number of deputy ministries.	The official website of the government
	Young MPs in the parliament, M/F	The percentage of young MPs in Parliament is calculated as a percentage of MPs under the age of 29 divided by the total number of MPs.	The official website of the national parliament
	Young mayors, M/F	The percentage of young mayors is calculated as percentage of majors under the age of 29 divided by the total number of majors.	State Commission of Elections or the official websites of Municipalities
	On-line tools for information and participation in the decision-making process of government and parliament	Percentage of ministries and parliaments that have online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process (website, Facebook page or Twitter) divided by the total number of ministries and parliaments.	Social network sites of ministries/ parliament
	On-line tools for information and participation in the decision-making process of municipalities	Percentage of municipalities that have online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process (websites, Facebook page, Twitter)	Social network sites of municipalities
	Existence of youth structures (councils, parliaments, unions, and offices) on a national level	Yes/No	Ministry or other national institution in charge of Youth
	Existence of youth structures (councils, parliaments, unions, and offices) on a local level	Yes /No. If yes, also the percentage of municipalities that have youth structures (councils, parliaments, unions, and offices)	Municipalities

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	NEET rate	The NEET rate is the percentage of the population aged 15-29 who is not employed and not involved in further education or training.	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)
	Youth unemployment rate	The youth unemployment rate is the unemployment rate of people aged 15 - 29 as a percentage of the economically active population of the same age (the total number of people employed and unemployed).	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)
	Long-term youth unemployment rate	The long-term youth unemployment rate is the share of persons aged 15-29 who have been unemployed for one year or more in the active population in the labor market of the same age.	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)
	Youth Labor force participation rate	The participation rates for the number of persons aged 15-29 in the labor force as a percentage of the total population of the same age.	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)
	Youth Employment rate	The number of employed persons aged 15-29 as a percentage of the total population 15-29.	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)
	Young people who started their own business with financial support from the state	The percentage of persons aged 15-29 who received subsidies among those who have applied.	National institution in charge of giving subsidies.
	Self-employed young people	The share of self-employed persons aged 15-29 as a percentage of the total self - employed population 15+	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	Young people at risk of poverty (at-risk-of-poverty rate)	The share of people aged 16-29 with an equalized disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equalized disposable income after social transfers.	National Statistical Office (Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC))
	Young people in prisons	The number of persons aged 15-29 in prisons as a percentage of the total number of people in prisons.	National institution in charge
	Young people who are part of the social welfare system	The number of persons aged 15-29 who receive financial support in Social Protection System as percentage of the total number of people receiving this support.	Ministry in charge of Social Welfare
	Dropout rates from secondary education	The percentage of enrolled students in secondary education as a share of total number of students who have graduated from secondary education.	National Statistical Office
	Young people enrolled in tertiary education	The percentage of young people enrolled in tertiary education as a share of the total number of young people.	National Statistical Office
	Young people who have graduated from tertiary education	The percentage of young people who have graduated from tertiary education as a share of the total number of enrolled young people.	National Statistical Office
	Participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)	The share of people aged 15 to 29 who had participated in non-formal education or training in the last 4 weeks.	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)
	Share of early leavers from education and training, persons aged 18–24 years	Early leavers are defined as individuals aged 18-24 who have completed, at most, a lower secondary education and were not engaged in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the labor force survey.	Eurostat
	Population aged 30-34 with tertiary educational attainment level	The share of the population aged 30-34 years who have successfully completed university or university-like (tertiary-level) education.	Eurostat
	Participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)	The share of people aged 15 to 29 who had participated in formal or non-formal education or training in the last 4 weeks.	National Statistical Office (Labor Force Survey)

When interpreting the Index, the following methodological guidelines should be taken into account:

1. This report follows the methodology established in the 2021 edition of YPI, so the results are not comparable with previous editions of YPI.
2. Data on the use of online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process of municipalities and the existence of youth structures (councils, parliaments, unions, and offices) on a local level in Turkey is collected on a sample of municipalities, unlike in other countries where it was gathered for all municipalities.
3. In the cases of the following indicators, data was not available for 2022, and thus values registered in 2021 or 2020 were used in index calculation: share of early leavers from education and training, population aged 30-34 with tertiary education attainment level and participation rate in formal and informal education and training for Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Turkey; data on the at-risk of poverty rate for Albania and North Macedonia.
4. Indicators on young people who started their own business with the financial support of the state and self-employed young people were not used in the calculation of Index due to a large amount of missing data and differing methodologies in collecting data.
5. Indicators on young people within a social protection system, dropout rates from secondary education, young people enrolled in tertiary education, young people who graduated from tertiary education and participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks), were not used in the calculation of Index due to a large amount of missing data and differing methodologies in collecting data.
6. In calculating the economic participation index for the period 2016-2020, the same target values were used as when calculating the value of the index in 2021 and 2022. The target values are based on the data collected by Eurostat in 2021.
7. It should be noted that from the year 2021 onwards, the new methodology of the European Union LFS has been in force, which means that the data from the previous years is not completely comparable with the data gathered from 2021.

Annex 2

Data collected in the process of preparing this report for 2016-2022 for each of the participating countries

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	COUNTRY	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Young ministers in government	Albania	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Montenegro	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	North Macedonia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Serbia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Turkey	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Young deputy ministers in government	Albania	0.0%	3%	3.0%	7.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
	Montenegro	4.4%	5.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	North Macedonia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Serbia	1.0%	1.0%	5.0%	5.0%	1.0%	1.6%	0%
	Turkey	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Young MPs in the parliament	Albania	2.1%	4.91%	4.9%	4.0%	4.0%	2.1%	1.5%
	Montenegro	1.2%	6.0%	8.6%	2.5%	4.9%	4.9%	3.7%
	North Macedonia	8.3%	1.7%	1.2%	3.3%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%
	Serbia	1.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	7.6%	5.2%	2%
	Turkey	0.9%	0.9%	1.3%	1.3%	0.85%	0.85%	0.5%
Young mayors	Albania	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Montenegro	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	North Macedonia	1.3%	1.3%	0.8%	0%	0%	1.3%	1%
	Serbia	2.5%	2.43%	0.60%	0.60%	1.80%	0.62%	1.2%
	Turkey	0.29%	0.29%	/	0%	0%	0%	0%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process of government and parliament institutions	Albania	95.0%	91%	93.3%	79.3%	98,0%	94.0%	90.0%
	Montenegro	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	North Macedonia	72.5%	94.1%	100.0%	100.0%	81.2%	87.0%	100.0%
	Serbia	68.0%	78.55%	77.50%	91.25%	92.14%	86.90%	74.1%
	Turkey	61.80%	61.80%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process within municipalities	Albania	52.0%	66%	67.2%	66.0%	74,0%	72.1%	76%[30]
	Montenegro	96.0%	99.0%	99.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	North Macedonia	90.0%	90.0%	96.8%	69.5%	71.6%	66.2%	77%
	Serbia	61.0%	75%	84.75%	83.18%	85.20%	81.20%	73.5%
	Turkey	90.00%	90.00%			99.57%	100.0%	100.0%
Existence of youth structures (councils, parliaments, and unions) on a national level	Albania	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Montenegro	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0%
	North Macedonia	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Serbia	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Turkey	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Existence of youth structures (councils, parliaments, and unions) on a local level	Albania	18.03%	34.6%	49.0%	57.4%	46.0%	43.0%	74.0%
	Montenegro	22.0%	23.0%	41.0%	45.0%	41.0%	37.5%	56.0%
	North Macedonia	78.5%	78.5%	77.0%	53.0%	15.0%	30.0%	31.0%
	Serbia	77.5%	85.9%	69.7%	67.9%	67.3%	70.4%	70.3%
	Turkey					20.99%	17.3%	14.8%

30 Note from the researcher: Twitter is not commonly used in Albania (very low usage), and it doesn't really measure the actual presence of online tools. If Instagram was taken into account, this percentage would be 93%.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	COUNTRY	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
NEET rate	Albania	30.0%	29.70%	28.6%	26.6%	27.9%	26.1%	25.2%
	Montenegro	22.3%	21.4%	21.0%	21.3%	26.6%	26.5%	23.2%
	North Macedonia	31.3%	31.1%	29.8%	24.5%	26.2%	24.3%	22.8%
	Serbia	22.3%	21.70%	20.10%	19%	20%	18.8%	15.9%
	Turkey	27.8%	27.5%	27.6%	29.5%	32%	28.4%	27.2%
Youth unemployment rate	Albania	28.9%	25.9%	23.1%	21.5%	20.9%	20.9%	20.7%
	Montenegro	28.8%	26.5%	26.0%	22.3%	30.7%	32.5%	25.4%
	North Macedonia	40.6%	39.2%	37.0%	30.5%	29.6%	28.3%	25.2%
	Serbia	29.8%	26.70%	24.50%	21.50%	20.5%	20%	17.1%
	Turkey	17.2%	17.7%	17.8%	22%	21.7%	20%	17.4%
Long-term youth unemployment rate	Albania	16.7%	13.8%	13.1%	11.5%	11,4%	11.6%	12.5%
	Montenegro	18.7%	18.5%	15.7%	13.8%	17,4%	18.3%	14.1%
	North Macedonia	29.5%	28.9%	26.3%	21.1%	21.1%	20%	37.9%
	Serbia	15%	11.4%	10.1%	8.7%	7.6%	6.3%	5.9%
	Turkey	3.2%	3.4%	3.4%	4.6%	4.9%	27.2%*	19.0%*
Youth labor force participation rate	Albania	45.7%	45.8%	50.1%	52.5%	52,1%	52.5%	55.5%
	Montenegro	49.5%	48.7%	48.5%	51.1%	45.1%	44,4%	54.9%
	North Macedonia	48.1%	49.7%	49.1%	49.4%	47.6%	54.6%	46.0%
	Serbia	47%	47.2%	47.7%	46.5%	44.8%	50.0%	50.0%
	Turkey	51.3%	52.3	52.7%	53.2%	48.50%	51.3%	53.4%
Youth employment rate	Albania	32.4%	33.8%	38.5%	41.2%	41,2%	41.5%	44.0%
	Montenegro	35.2%	35.8%	35.9%	39.7%	31.3%	30%	41.0%
	North Macedonia	28.6%	30.2%	30.9%	34.4%	33.5%	33.1%	34.4%
	Serbia	33.2%	34.9%	36.4%	36.90%	36%	40.0%	41.5%
	Turkey	42.5%	43%	43.3%	41.50%	37.9%	41.1%	44.1%
Young people started their own business with financial support of the state	Albania	54.50%	0.0%	0.0%	26.0%	3,0%	2.6%	4.5%
	Montenegro							
	North Macedonia	47.7%	0.0%	13.7%	22.3%	23%	18.9%	24.5%
	Serbia	23.3%	19.50%	20.5%	24.35%	26.0%	28.8%	28.0%
	Turkey	22.62%						
Self-employed young people	Albania	29.00%	18.3%	0.9%	7.8%	18.5%	17.9%	16.6%
	Montenegro	9.0%	8.4%	5.8%	4.0%	8.6%	6.8%*	8.1%
	North Macedonia	6.0%	7.3%		1.6%	0.4%	2.7%	6.3%
	Serbia	0.6%	2.76%	6.8%	6.87%	6.0%	6.6%	6.6%
	Turkey				2.8%	6.65%	3.1%	7.8%

31 This data is received by official institution. However, it differs from values registered by Eurostat in previous years.

32 This data is collected using a different methodology, comparing self-employed young people with the total number of employed young people.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	COUNTRY	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Young people at risk of poverty	Albania		25.7%	26%	26.2%	24.4%		
	Montenegro	27.9%	26.2%			26,6%	23.1%	23.0%
	North Macedonia	23.9%	25%	25.2%	24.6%	24.4%		
	Serbia	29.6%	27.2%	26%	24.4%	22.9%	25.2%	19.8%
	Turkey	23.10%	21.9%	21.7%	22.1%	23.2%	23.4%	23.3%
Young people in prisons	Albania	36.54%	46.00%	47.7%	34.8%	30,0%	36. 9%	36.9%
	Montenegro	31.1%	33.2%	52.2%		23,2%	24.7%	29.0%
	North Macedonia	0.20%		31.4%	25.3%	27.8%	27.2%	27.4%
	Serbia	32.70%	27.7	26.5%	24.9%	25.9%	23.3%	35.8%
	Turkey	63.00%				65.14%	48.0%	65.0%
Young people part of the social welfare system	Albania						24.3%	
	Montenegro							
	North Macedonia					29.7%	28.63%	29.2%
	Serbia	18.97%	18.16%	18.1%		24.0%	22.3%	21%
	Turkey							
Dropout from secondary education	Albania	3.70%	3.35%	3.2%	2.6%	1,8%	1.5%	
	Montenegro	5.50%	5.4%	4.6%	5.0%	2,3%		2.6%
	North Macedonia		2.30%	1.40%	0.5%	0.6%		0.85%
	Serbia	1.10%	1.30%	1.40%	1.10%	0.80%	0.81%	1.2%
	Turkey				28.70%*	26.70%*[33]		22.1%*
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	Albania	22.4%	21.4%	22.5%	21.6%	20,9%	21.5%[34]	22.0%
	Montenegro	33.90%	34.5%	33%	54.2%	32,3%	43.0%	31.9%
	North Macedonia		28.90%	14.50%	38.8%	13.4%	13.4%	17.5%
	Serbia	50.70%	54.20%	54.70%	54.70%	54.70%	56.2%	57.4%
	Turkey	40.53%	42.43%	45.60%	44.10%	43.40%	44.4%	44.7%
Young people graduated from tertiary education	Albania	21.48%	25.19%	26%	26.7%	25,0%	26%	24.9%
	Montenegro	12.86%	14.51%	14.59%		45,43%	16.5%	13.8%
	North Macedonia		11.50%	16.50%	15.2%	11.9%	13.4%	15.2%
	Serbia	20.00%	19.70%	18.10%	18.13%	17.60%	17.10%	16.6%
	Turkey			9.57%		10.56%	12%	10.9%
Self-employed young people	Albania							35.9%*[35]
	Montenegro			2.8%	1.30%			3.2%
	North Macedonia	2.3%	1.9%	2.0%	2.8%	1.9%		
	Serbia	3%	2.8%	2.3%	2.40%	1.3%	4.4%	4.0%
	Turkey	5.3%	5.5.%	6.9%	6.50%	4.4%		

33 This data refers to early school leavers.
34 This data refers to people aged 18-29 enrolled in tertiary education compared to total number of young people aged 18-29.
35 This data is received by official institution.

Annex 3

Overview of targets

INDICATORS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	TARGET PERCENTAGE
Young government ministers	5% (Source: researchers' assessment)
Young MPs	15% (Source: Target set by Inter-Parliamentary Union Forum of Young Parliamentarians)
Young mayors	6% (Source: researchers' assessment – based on highest percentage registered in the process of index calculation)
Young government deputy ministers	10% (Source: researchers' assessment)
Online tools for information and participation in decision-making of government and parliament	100% (Source: researchers' assessment)
Online tools for information and participation in decision-making of municipalities	100% (Source: researchers' assessment)
Existence of youth structures at local levels	100% (Source: researchers' assessment)
Existence of youth structure at the national level	100% (Source: researchers' assessment)
INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	**TARGET PERCENTAGE**
NEET rate	5.5% (Eurostat, 2021)
Youth unemployment rate	5.2% (Eurostat, 2021)
Long-term youth unemployment rate	0.5% (Eurostat, 2021)
Youth Labor force participation rate	83.0% (Eurostat, 2021)
Youth employment rate	77.0% (Eurostat, 2021))
Young people who started their own business with the financial support of the state	60% (Researchers' assessment)
Self-employed young people	14.9% (Eurostat, 2021)
INDICATORS OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	**TARGET PERCENTAGE**
At-risk-of-poverty rate	8.60% (Eurostat, 2021)
Percentage of youth in prison	21.0% (Researchers' assessment)
Share of early leavers from education and training, persons aged 18–24 years	2.40% (Eurostat, 2021)
Population aged 30-34 with tertiary educational attainment level	62.5% (Eurostat, 2021)
Participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)	66.0% (Eurostat, 2021)

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX

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