

Council of Europe  
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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

# COUNTRY SHEET

## ON YOUTH POLICY

### IN SERBIA



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Context and principles of national youth policy	2
2. Statistics on young people	5
3. Actors and Structures	6
3.1 Public authorities	6
3.1.1 National public authorities	6
3.1.2 Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field	8
3.1.3 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field	8
3.2 Youth welfare services (comprising public and/or non public actors)	9
3.3 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field	10
3.3.1 Youth Councils	10
3.3.2 Youth NGOs	10
3.4 National network(s) for knowledge on youth linking all actors in the field (policy makers, researchers, young people and their organisations, NGOs)?	11
4. Legislation	13
5. National Policy Programmes on youth	15
6. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth	16
7. European Dimension of youth policy	17
7.1 Council of Europe	17
7.2 European Union	17

## 1. Context and principles of national youth policy

Currently, there are approximately 1,5 million of people between the ages of 15 and 29 in the Republic of Serbia. Hence, young people represent a significant part of the population and are the future bearers of change. Therefore, it is necessary to pay enough attention to their needs, attitudes and wishes.

Unfortunately, during the period of mid 80's and 90's under the Milosevic's regime, youth issues and problems were considered as, so to speak, everybody's and nobody's concern. During that period, as a consequence of the social and economic crisis, many problems related to youth emerged: rising and long-term youth unemployment that was strongly related to an outdated system of formal education, the problem of brain-drain, poverty of youth, economic and housing dependence on parents, social exclusion of youth from the decision-making structures, low birth and marital rates, etc.

During the period 2000-2007, the responsibilities for youth in Serbia were under the Department for Youth (2001-2005) within the the Ministry of Education and Sport. This Department initiated a process of development of the National Youth Strategy, but soon the department was dissolved due to the internal reorganization of the Ministry of Education and Sport (now only Ministry of Education). As a consequence, the National Youth Strategy has never been finalised.

During this period, a great number of civic initiatives were undertaken by local NGOs and recommendations from Council of Europe and European Commission were adopted, stressing the fact that the systematic care for young people should be the integral part of each country's strategy, and that young people should be seen as both crucial partners in the decision-making processes and active participants to the social life of their communities. The initiative of Serbian coalition of Youth (*Koalicija mladih Srbije*) - an unofficial umbrella organisation which gathered a few major youth organisations - to publically promote the importance of developing the National Youth Strategy was particularly interesting.

The general impression is that Serbian society seems ready to put in the focus issues such as youth care. Considering this, it was necessary to create the conditions to promote and improve the position of youth, as well as to identify an institutional framework to address numerous youth issues.

The first step was made by adopting the Law of Ministries (State Bulletin of Republic of Serbia, No. 43/07). By that law, the Ministry of Youth and Sport (hereafter referred to as MoYS) was formed and its field of work was defined by article 19. The newly formed Ministry, which was created in May of 2007, has taken the jurisdiction over the responsibilities related to youth and sport that were previously within the Ministry of Education and Sport. With the establishment of the new Ministry,

as a special governmental body to regulate and address youth issues, the institutional framework for work with Youth in Serbia was created, as well as for the development and implementation of a coherent national youth policy.

The National Youth Strategy (hereafter *NYS*) is an overall, cross-sectorial strategy for improvement of quality of life and the overall status of youth in the Serbian society. The *NYS* aims to help young people in Serbia to realize their ideas and needs, systematically resolving numerous youth issues and problems.

### **The general strategic goals of the *NYS* are:**

- To foster the active participation of youth in social life;
- To develop youth cooperation and create the necessary conditions to ensure youth participation in decision-making process, through a sustainable institutional framework on the basis of youth needs, and in a partnership with youth;
- To develop an information system for youth on all level and in all areas;
- To ensure the right to equal life opportunities for every young person and especially young people facing a difficult situation
- To support and validate young talents (talent scholarships and revords)
- To improve the opportunities of spending quality leisure time;
- To develop an open, functional, efficient and just system of formal and non-formal education, which is accessible to all young people and in accordance with the European trends in education as well as the national context;
- To support and stimulate all forms of employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship of youth;
- To improve young people`s safety
- The improvement of youth health, the reduction of health risks, as well as the development of the health protection suited to the needs of young people;
- The empowerment of youth initiatives and actions that support the basic principles of sustainable development and healthy living environment.

Also, the *NYS* defines the establishment of an umbrella organisation of youth organisations; the establishment of national, regional and local youth offices as one of the key instruments for implementation of *NYS*; the establishment of the National Youth Agency, which would deal with international cooperation programs. Besides that, the *NYS* recommends the definition and the adoption of the Law on Youth, the set of youth policies, which will define the meaning and area of work of youth workers, distinction between the youth organization and organization for youth, etc.

The National Youth Strategy was adopted on May 9 2008 (State Bulletin of Republic of Serbia, No. 55/08), symbolically on Europe Day. On 22 January 2009, the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy for the period of 2009-2014 was (also) adopted by the Government (State Bulletin of Republic of Serbia, No. 7/09). In line with *NYS* specific goal, in 2011 the MYS proposed to the Government the adoption of the Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling, which was adopted on March 4 2010 (State Bulletin of Republic of Serbia, No. 16/10). The next big step was the adoption of The Youth Law, which was adopted on 5 July 2011. The adoption of The Youth Law is very important for the finalization of the legal and institutional framework of youth policy in Serbia.

The basic approach of the MYS is that the youth policy should become an integral part of the national political agenda and raise awareness on the problems young people are facing in the Republic of Serbia.

## 2. Statistics on young people<sup>1</sup>

The total population of the Republic of Serbia according to the last Census in 2002 was 7.498.001<sup>2</sup> and the total number of children and young people in 2002 (age range 15-29)<sup>3</sup> was 1.512.646 or 20,2% of the total population. Within this number (1.512.646), in 2002 there were 768.221 boys between 15-29 (10,24% of total population) and 744.425 girls in the same age range (9,93% of total population).

The estimated total population in 2007<sup>4</sup> was 7.411.000. The total number of children and young people (age range 15-29) in 2007 was 1.483.889 (20,023 % of total population).

All available information regarding the statistical database for the Republic of Serbia are published on the website <http://webrzs.statserb.gov.rs/axd/en/index.php>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Statistical office of the Republic of Serbia.

<sup>2</sup> Data on Kosovo and Metohija are excluded.

<sup>3</sup> Different age range is not accessible in Serbian statistics, probably because this age range (15-19, 20-24, 25-29) is adequate for tracking educational and other issues concerning youth.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Statistical Yearbook for 2007.

### **3. Actors and Structures**

#### **3.1 Public authorities**

##### **3.1.1 National public authorities:**

###### **Ministry in charge of Youth:**

Ministarstvo omladine i sporta Republike Srbije / Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia

- Minister of Youth and Sport:

Ms. Snežana Samardžić Marković

- Duration of mandate: 2008 - 2012

###### **Youth department within the Ministry:**

Sektor za omladinu / Sector for Youth

Main tasks of the Sector for Youth:

- Performing the duties of the state administration that are referring to carrying National Youth Policy and National Youth Strategy, as well as action plans and programs for youth;
- Stimulating young people to merge and participate in the social life, as well as protecting their interests and helping them to fulfil their interests;
- To provide guidance to young people and train them for the employment and volunteer work;
- Cooperation with the youth organizations in organizing international youth events in the Republic of Serbia;
- Helping youth organizations in their work and promoting youth organizations;
- Helping youth organizations from the Republic of Serbia to participate in youth events and manifestations on site;
- Stimulating and establishing international cooperation related to youth issues ;
- Monitoring and evaluating the position of youth in Serbia;
- Support the establishment of regional and local youth offices and the development of local youth action plans in cooperation with local self-governments

Number of people who work in the Sector for Youth: at present 9, planed 11

**Assistant Minister responsible for Sector for Youth:**

Ms. Snežana Klačnja

**Contact person in the Sector for Youth in charge for European Youth Policy:**

Ms. Aleksandra Mitrović, member of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Youth

**The Ministry for Youth and Sport can be approached through the website:**

[www.mos.gov.rs](http://www.mos.gov.rs)

E-mail: [kabinet@mos.gov.rs](mailto:kabinet@mos.gov.rs)

**Other national public bodies who are directly involved in youth policies:**

Other ministries have certain responsibilities in resolving youth issues. For example the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the area of formal education. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy are in charge for the area of child day care and pre-school services. For employment and social policy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development are responsible. Other ministries involved in youth issues are the Ministry of Justice (juvenile delinquency), the Ministry of Health (youth health), the Ministry of Culture, Information and Information Society and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Serbian Government Directory can be seen on the website:

<http://www.srbija.sr.gov.rs>

**Parliamentary Board in charge for youth issues:**

Odbor za omladinu i sport Skupštine Srbije / The Youth and Sport Board of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia

Chairperson: Milan Vučković (Democratic Party)

Deputy Chairperson: -

<http://www.parlament.rs/national-assembly/composition/working-bodies/committees.492.html>



### **3.1.2 Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field**

The territorial order of the Republic of Serbia is regulated by the Law on Territorial Organisation and by the Law on Local Self Government<sup>5</sup>. By these laws, basic territorial and local self-government units are municipalities (over the 10.000 inhabitants), towns (over 100.000 inhabitants), the city of Belgrade as a special territorial unit, and two autonomous provinces.

Ministries and provincial public bodies can form district offices representing district centres of state authority. The Republic of Serbia is divided into 29 districts/counties with the city of Belgrade as a special administrative unit. Every district, which is a smaller administrative unit than the region, consists of several municipalities with administrative centres.

The MYS opened six district offices for youth (Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Subotica, Uzice, Valjevo, Nis) and local self government of Belgrade opened also district office in Belgrade.

These district offices coordinate the work of local offices and they are entirely financed by the MYS.

At a provincial level, as an example of good practice, it is important to mention the Action plan for Youth in Vojvodina for the period 2010-2015, developed by the Provincial Secretariat for Sport and Youth. The Provincial Secretariat for Sport and Youth is implementing youth policy in Vojvodina since 2005, although the national youth policy did not exist at that time.

For more information: [http://www.omladina.info/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&Itemid=15](http://www.omladina.info/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=15)

### **3.1.3 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field**

By the new Law on Local Self Government, there are 150 municipalities in Serbia with more than 10.000 inhabitants. According to this Law, municipalities are the main administrative units with local self government.

Although, this Law does not arrange youth policy, many municipalities recognised youth as one of their priorities and developed/adopted Local Youth Action Plans (LYAP) and/or established Local Youth Offices.

Until 2007, the municipalities that have developed the LYAP were Užice, Pančevo, Loznica, Arilje and two belgrade municipalities- Palilula and Novi Beograd, but only two have adopted that plan- Pančevo and Arilje.

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<sup>5</sup> The Law on Territorial organisation of Republic of Serbia (State Bulletin of Republic of Serbia, No. 129/07, 29.12.2007) and The Law on Local-Self Government (State Bulletin of Republic of Serbia, No. 129/07, 29.12.2007)

In addition, there were seven municipalities that, until 2007, formed the bodies (office/fund/club for youth) with main task of conducting programmes for youth in local context- Bečej, Arilje, Pančevo, Loznica, Subotica and the two Belgrade municipalities- Palilula and Novi Beograd.

In order to ensure the implementation of the National Youth Strategy and Action Plan, and bearing in mind the principles of decentralized administration, the MYS has set within the framework of the Strategy the development of local youth action plans and establishment of national, regional and local youth offices as the key instruments for the implementation of the Strategy.

In four years of existence of the MYS, there has been an ongoing process of opening Local youth offices in all municipalities across Serbia as a main mechanism for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy. So far, 120 out of 165 local self-governments recognized the importance of supporting youth on local community level and have opened Local youth office. A Long-term objective of the MYS is that every local self-government in Serbia would establish a youth office and become a reliable partner and a scheme for the implementation of youth policy locally.

Apart from the support for the establishment of local youth offices, the MYS actively increases their capacities for youth policy implementation through the training of coordinators and by supporting the process of preparation of local youth action plans.

Local youth offices are local bodies within municipalities, whose responsibility is to:

- Initiate, develop and implement local youth action plans in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders on the local level and in accordance with the National Youth Strategy;
- Develop networks of youth organisations, NGOs and institutions which deal with the problems affecting young people;
- Provide Information for young people;
- Support youth projects;
- Prepare and implement programmes and activities aimed at young people;
- Provide material and technical support for youth activities;
- Conduct surveys on the local level.

### **3.2 Youth welfare services (comprising public and/or non public actors)**

There are in total 139 Centres for social work in the Republic of Serbia. They are the basic public services providing legal and social protection to children and young people on the local level.

### **3.3 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field**

#### **3.3.1 Youth Council**

By provision of the Law on the System Basis of Education and Upbringing of Youth in Primary and Secondary Schools, primary and secondary schools should have their own Youth Council. The rights of children and students in education include the right of association in different groups and clubs, as well as forming of Youth Councils in the last two grades of primary school and in all grades of secondary school. Most of the Youth Councils in Serbia were constituted in 2003 and 2004, and therefore the largest part of primary and secondary schools has its own Youth Council. However,, there is still no umbrella organisation of Youth Councils in Serbia.

The role and objectives of Youth Councils are<sup>6</sup>:

- 1) Giving opinion and suggestions to the school management, School Board and Council of Parents, as well as to the principals of the school, about the rules of behaviour in school, Annual school Curriculum, leisure and extracurricular educational activities, participation in sport, leisure activities and contests;
- 2) Cooperation between students and teachers;
- 3) Providing information regarding issues of interest for students;

Youth Councils in schools consist of two students from each class of the school. The members and the president of the Council are elected at the beginning of each school year. The Program of Youth Councils is an integral part of the Annual school Curriculum. Youth Councils have the possibility of uniting and building alliances amongst each other.

Although many experts consider Youth Councils as the first step towards the inclusion of youth in society and democratic processes, administrative structures in schools still do not recognise the importance of Youth Councils. Consequently, students are given only advisory or observant role in the decision-making processes. Finally, no budget is provided for the activities of the Councils.

#### **3.3.2 Youth NGOs**

According to the Directory of NGOs made by the Centre for the Development of Non-Profit Sector (CRNPS), there are 138 NGOs in Serbia whose statutes mention youth issues, but the real number is not possible to determine because there is no clear and legislative classification of

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<sup>6</sup> By the Law on the System Basis of Education and Upbringing of Youth in Primary and Secondary Schools

«youth NGOs» and «NGOs for youth». From this number approximately 60 organisations are student and pupils organisations; 43 have local character and there is a considerable number of organisations dealing with minority rights (especially Roma), disabled and unemployed youth, voluntary centres for youth, etc.

Directory of Serbian NGOs: <http://www.crnps.org.rs>

One of the priorities of the MYS is building capacities which would further strengthen the non-governmental sector whose work is related to youth issues, since this is the only way to stimulate a more active inclusion of young people in all spheres of the social life. In that sense, MYS had conducted many open competitions and calls - for NGOs to include them in the process of development of the National Youth Strategy, Action plan and Youth Law, for the implementation of NGO projects (financing and co-financing projects of civil society organizations in the area of youth policy), for capacity building of newly formed youth NGOs and Local Youth Offices, international and technical cooperation and youth research.

Till now, more than 350 youth organizations and organizations dealing with youth were financially supported by MYS implementing around 500 projects/programs for youth.

### **3.4 National network(s) for knowledge on youth linking all actors in the field (policy makers, researchers, young people and their organisations, NGOs)?**

#### **SERBIAN YOUTH UMBRELLA ORGANIZATION**

Serbian Youth umbrella organization is the highest independent representative body of youth in a country. Most European countries and many other countries around the world have their umbrella organizations, which work under different names, mostly as Youth Councils. They are founded and joined by youth organizations (organizations of young people, which work with youth, for youth, and in the interest of youth) in order to achieve general common objectives (to which they could not attain individually), which are the following:

- strengthening the negotiation positions of youth in relation to the State and its youth policies
- improving mechanisms for the participation of youth in decision-making
- improving mechanisms for the representation of global socio-economic, educational, cultural and other interests of young people
- helping youth and youth organizations be more informed
- ensuring greater and more comprehensive information flow
- providing basis for the participation of young people in international forums

## **Mission**

KOMS is the highest independent representative body of youth in Serbia, with a mission to represent the interests of young people by developing partner relationship with the State, intersectoral and international cooperation, encourage active participation of young people in a variety of issues, and promote the organizational development of its member organizations.

## **Vision**

Society in which young people are happy and satisfied with their lives.

The role of KOMS is to achieve the following:

- identify the needs and represent the interests of youth
- provide a platform for dialogue and cooperation, and a forum for the exchange of information, experiences and opinions of member organizations
- promote, encourage and support youth organizing
- be involved in the institutional processes of decision-making important to youth, by means of co-management
- analyse public policies (laws, strategies, budgets, ...) and make amendments to them
- cooperate with similar foreign organizations and represent Serbian youth in instances of international cooperation
- encourage the cooperation of public institutions with youth by means of co-management
- publicly advocate for certain issues at the national level
- contribute to the strengthening of organizational capacities of member organizations

## 4. Legislation

The Action plan for Youth in Vojvodina and the Strategy for Youth Health and Development are other strategic documents, besides the NYS, that can be also directly applied to youth issues.

However, there are few different laws and strategies that partially cover this area. For instance:

- In the area of family protection and child care: The National Action Plan for Children (2004), The Family Law (2004), The Law on Financial Support for Families with Children;
- In the area of medical care for youth: The Strategy for Development of Mental Health, The Strategy for Tobacco Control, The National Strategy for Fight against HIV/AIDS, The Strategy for Improvement of the Position of Disabled People;
- In the area of social protection and safety: The Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003), The Strategy for Development of Social Protection, The Strategy for Fight against People Trafficking, The Law on State Authority on Prevention and Suppression of Organised Crime, The Law on Readmission of Illegal Immigrants in EU, The Action plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), The Law on Fight against Discrimination of Disabled People, The Law on Social Protection, Health Insurance and Financial Support of Families with Children, The Law on Juvenile Offenders and Legal Protection of Minors;
- In the area of employment: The National Strategy for Employment 2005-2010, The Law on Employment and Insurance in the case of Unemployment;
- In the area of education: The Strategy of the Ministry of Education 2005-2010, The Law on the Basis of the System of Education and Upbringing, The Law on Primary Education, The Law on Secondary Education, The Law on Higher Education, The Law on University;
- In the area of sport: The Law on Anti-doping in Sport, the Law on Preventing Violence and Misbehave Conduct in Sport, the Bill on Sports, the Amendments to the Law on Prevention of Violence at Sports Events, etc.

Some of these documents can be found in English language on the website:

<http://www.unhabitat.org.rs>

### National legislation on youth

The legislative framework of youth policy in Serbia consists of two main strategic documents- The National Youth Strategy and The Action plan for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy for the period 2009-2014. The main aim of the Ministry in 2010 was to develop the **Youth Law**. It was adopted on 5 July 2011. The Youth Law has a primary function to provide sustainable basis

for the development of the youth sector, improvement of the position of young people in Serbia and provision of rights, conditions, opportunities and stimulus for growth and development of young peoples potentials. The Youth Law should regulate the existing practice and clearly define addressee of the Law, origins and principles of youth policy, actors, coordinative acting and especially funding. In each and every phase of the Law development, wide consultative process will be organized by the Ministry in order to inform and include young people and other relevant actors in the process.

### **Regional and local legislation on youth**

Autonomous province of Vojvodina enjoy great level of autonomy within Serbia. Especially, the level of the province's [autonomy](#) was increased by the [Omnibus law](#) in 2002. Therefore, the special youth policy was established for youth in Vojvodina.

Action plan for Youth in Vojvodina

[http://www.omladina.info/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&Itemid=15](http://www.omladina.info/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=15) and Local Action Plans in Pančevo and Arilje (presently not available in English)

## 5. National Policy Programmes on youth

Not relevant

### **Action plans i.e. official strategies**

National Action Plan for Children (2005-2015), by Council for Children's Rights of the Government of Republic of Serbia, can be found at:

<http://www.unhabitat.org.yu/publications/documents.htm>

Action Plan for Youth in Vojvodina is available in English on the website:

[http://www.omladina.info/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&Itemid=15](http://www.omladina.info/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=15)



## **6. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth**

### **National level**

Financial resources are assigned from the budget of *MoYS*, through the special Regulations of the Government, by open competition/announced (and) public calls. The budget of the Sector for Youth for purposes of building capacities of youth NGOs and drafting the youth policy have been constantly increased. For instance, in 2007 it amounted to 150 millions of RSD. In 2010 budget of the Sector for Youth was 187,980.million RSD or around 1,8 million euros (0,026% of the overall budget of the Republic of Serbia) and in 2011 it increased to 213,012 RSD or 2,1 million euros (plus 616.602.000,00 for Fund for Young talents) or 0,098 % of the total budget of the Republic of Serbia.

### **Regional level**

Information is not yet available because municipalities do not have legal obligation to assign certain amount of money for youth issues. However, each municipality has a legal obligation under the budget line 481 to allocate resources to the civil sector each year (NGOs, sport and religious organisations and alliances, etc.), but the total amounts of this grant vary from one municipality to other.

## **7. European Dimension of youth policy**

Important international partners in youth policy are The European Commission, The Council of Europe, The UN Country Team on Youth (IOM, ILO, UNDP, UNICEF) and other international organizations such as The German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), USAID Serbia, The OSCE Mission to Serbia, The Youth Build International, The National Democratic institute (NDI), The British Council, The Institute for Sustainable Communities and others.

### **7.1 Council of Europe**

Representatives of MYS are members of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Youth, the Advisory Board and European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYF). The representative of MYS is chairing the CoE Coordination Board on Partial Agreement on Youth mobility and Programs Board on Youth.

Regarding youth policy, through the cooperation with CoE, Serbia accessed to The Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility through Youth Card and The North-South Centre of Council of Europe. MYS is also encouraging young people to be creative and to participate in the open calls of The European Youth Foundation and different activities in The European Youth Centre in Budapest and Strasbourg, by providing information through the website.

In 2008 the MYS organized the conference "Development of Youth policy in SEE" in cooperation with the CoE. In 2009 again in cooperation with the CoE, the MYS organized the European Conference on Youth Mobility and International Training about the active participation of young people.

### **7.2 European Union**

Serbia can participate to Action 2 and 3.1 of the Youth in Action programme. Serbian Organisations can apply directly to the Executive agency in Brussels.

Although in Serbia the National Youth Agency is not yet established, so we cannot participate in the „Youth in Action“ programme directly, support for this program is established through our NGO contact points. Until now, our contact points were NGOs „Let's...“, „Youth House Niš“ and „Balkan Idea“. In the new cycle, the contact points become "Educational Center Kruševac" and „Let's...“.

<http://www.hajdeda.org.rs>

### **Other EU programmes implemented in an important way for youth purposes**

Cooperation with Central European Initiatives (CEI), delegating the member for the task force team in the field of youth intercultural cooperation.