

# **Evaluation of the National Youth Strategy (2008) in the Republic of Serbia and Action Plan 2009 – 2014**

**January 2015**

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Commissioned by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia  
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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AP – Action Plan for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy (2009 – 2014)  
CeSID – Center for Free Elections and Democracy  
EU – European Union  
EVS – European Voluntary Service  
GINI – The GINI Coefficient or Index  
GNI – Gross National Income  
HDI – Human Development Index  
IDP – Internally Displaced Person  
ILO—International Labor Organization  
IOM—International Organization for Migration  
KOMs—Umbrella Organization for the Youth of Serbia (the National Youth Council)  
LGBTQI—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, Intergender  
LLL – Lifelong Learning Program of the European Union (2007 – 2013)  
LSGU – Local Self-Government Unit  
MERD—Ministry of Economy and Regional Development  
MIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs  
MoC – Ministry of Culture  
MoESTD – Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development  
MoFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
MoJ – Ministry of Justice  
MoYS – Ministry of Youth and Sport  
NES – National Employment Service  
NYS – National Youth Strategy  
OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe  
PYAP – Provincial Youth Action Plan of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina  
RSD – Republic of Serbia Dinars  
SIPRU – Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (Government of the Republic of Serbia)  
SNS – Serbian Progressive Party  
SPI – Social Progress Index  
STI – Sexually Transmitted Infection  
UNDP – United Nations Development Program  
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund  
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund  
USAID – United States Agency for International Development  
YDI – Youth Development Index  
YiA – Youth in Action Program of the European Union (2007 – 2013)

## Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible to prepare this report without the cooperation and support of many people. We would like, in particular, to thank Snezana Klasnja, Assistant Minister for Youth, for giving the evaluation her political and moral support, the staff of the Ministry of Youth and Sport for its cooperation and for making all information requested available, Marija Rakovic and Jovana Ubiparip at UNFPA for their assistance and support and Howard Williamson for his expert advice and good ideas. Furthermore, we would like to thank the many representatives of local youth offices, youth committees, local self-government units, provincial secretariats for youth, regional coordinators, local youth coordinators, youth organizations, community organizations and foundations, youth clubs and initiatives, researchers, youth policy experts, national representative and umbrella organizations, departments of government, governmental and non-governmental agencies and international organizations for their willingness to contribute to the evaluation with input and feedback.

Yael Ohana & Marija Bulat  
23 January 2015

## Introduction

The present document is the final report of the evaluation of the National Youth Strategy (NYS) of the Republic of Serbia, adopted in 2008, and its Action Plan (AP) 2009 - 2014, conducted by [Yael Ohana](#) & [Marija Bulat](#) for the [Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia \(MoYS\)](#) and the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#) in Serbia between September and December 2014.

The purpose of this report is to present the main findings of the evaluation team about the implementation and impact of the National Youth Strategy from the national through local levels, its conclusions and a series of recommendations interpreted from those. It is intended to provide a systematic overview of achievements and shortcomings, factors supporting and hindering implementation and clues to the potential impact of actions conducted under the National Youth Strategy and its Action Plan. *This version of the report is 'Draft 1 – For Discussion' at the open participation validation meeting, to be held in Belgrade on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December. It does not include the planned executive summary, the recommendations or all completed annexes. These shall be included in the final version to be published in January 2015.*

This report has seven chapters, as follows:

- the present **introduction** to the evaluation project;
- a 'then and now' exploration of the **context of the youth sector in Serbia** in which the National Youth Strategy has been developed and implemented;
- the **main findings** of the evaluation from several perspectives (what was implemented, fulfillment of objectives, key pillars of action, main fields of intervention, performance criteria, international principles);
- **conclusions** the evaluation team interprets from these findings;
- a series of key recommendations for addressing key shortcomings and challenges of youth policy development and implementation raised by the evaluation
- a section providing **links to additional information** relevant to the evaluation
- one **appendix** in a separate document.

### ***The evaluation project***

The MoYS initiated this evaluation of the NYS adopted (2008) and its AP (2009 – 2014) in July 2014 by approaching UNFPA to provide technical support for the process. One international consultant ([Yael Ohana](#)) and one national consultant ([Marija Bulat](#)) were recruited from the UNFPA Consultant Roster to form the evaluation team and began their work in September 2014.

The evaluation was commissioned with several purposes in mind, as follows

- to identify results and achievements of the Strategy;
- to evaluate the level of implementation of the National Youth Strategy and of the Action Plan, particularly the extent and effectiveness of the economic, financial, human and technical inputs have been used to produce the results;
- to identify factors that facilitated or hindered the generation of such results and achievements, including partnerships, capacity development and technical support generated for implementation;
- identify good practices and lessons learned with the respect to the fundamental principles stated in the Strategy (for example, non-discrimination, equal opportunity, respect for youth as equal citizens, encouragement of youth participation and collaboration, inter-sectoral approach to youth needs);
- to suggest recommendations for the development of the new National Youth Strategy;
- to serve the planning efforts of non-governmental organizations and development partners active in the youth sector in Serbia.

In terms of scope, the evaluation covers the period from 2008 through 2014, national through local implementation and impact, the five main priority areas of the Strategy, was conducted nationwide and attempted to address all the target groups of the Strategy, notably institutions responsible for the implementation of the youth policies, youth workers, youth organizations and young people aged 15 – 30.

In terms of approach, and considering the limited evaluation and monitoring of the NYS and AP conducted through the implementation period, the evaluation was planned to be summative, although relevance for the implementation of the new National Youth Strategy (2015 – 2025) has been a factor in the development of the recommendations.

The evaluation methodology focuses on four key dimensions, as follows:

- evaluation according to the **eleven stated objectives** of the NYS, taking into account sub-objectives and key actions;
- evaluation in relation to the five thematic priorities of the NYS, those being ***education and information; health and social protection services; economic opportunities; participation of youth in public life and active citizenship; and institutional capacity***;
- evaluation of national through local level implementation according to transversal performance criteria, specifically ***relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and leadership***
- and evaluation according to key to international principles / standards in youth policy, specifically ***a human rights based approach, inclusivity, gender-responsiveness, a participatory approach, comprehensiveness, a knowledge- and evidence-base, adequateness of resourcing, accountability***.

The evaluation was conducted from August to December and comprised the following activities in order of implementation:

**Project description:** Preparation of a complete project description for discussion and acceptance by the commissioning partners (UNFPA and MoYS) outlining the main lines of what the evaluation would focus on and how.

**Stakeholder mapping:** The evaluation team conducted an in depth analysis of actors and stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of the NYS, as well as those with an interest in its implementation, mapping stakeholders against the specific objectives of the NYS they were most concerned with, either as implementers or watchdogs.

**Desk review:** The desk review focused on finding aggregate evaluation material directly bringing together results about the implementation and the impact of the strategy.

**Field visit:** The field visit took place from 8 – 16 November and included Belgrade, Eastern and Southern Serbia and Vojvodina, a total 9 cities and towns in both rural and urban settings and face-to-face meetings with approx. 80 institutions and organizations of the Serbian youth sector.

**Additional consultations and requests for information:** to clarify open points with stakeholders who could not attend the field visit meetings or to access additional data (full list of stakeholders that participated in the evaluation is hyperlinked).

A **Stakeholder Survey** was conducted in the period from early October to late November 2014, to assess the perception of the level of implementation of the eleven objectives of the NYS among key stakeholders. The **collection and analysis of documentary materials** was conducted on an ongoing basis through the entire evaluation project.

An open participation **validation meeting** was held on December 8 2014 to discuss the main findings and conclusions of the draft evaluation report with any concerned stakeholder, with strong turnout on the day. A further **feedback form** was made available from 9 – 20 December 2014 so that anyone unable to attend the meeting with something to further to contribute could do so, although

participation was weak. The complete database of documents and materials consulted during the evaluation can be accessed in the evaluation [archive](#).

## Challenges encountered during the evaluation

Before elaborating on the challenges encountered during the evaluation, it seems appropriate to introduce a couple of caveats to the contents of this section. Mention of the specific Serbian context in which the evaluation took place has to be made here. The NYS is one of just a limited number of governmental strategies that have gone as far as implementation, and a comprehensive 'culture' of evidence-based policy making, implementation and evaluation are yet to emerge across the governmental sector. It is commendable that this evaluation has been commissioned, whatever the challenges it faced, and notwithstanding their impact on the scope and depth of the evaluation that was possible. Furthermore, the evaluation has sought to avoid 'laying blame' for any constraints experienced, on because it acknowledges the interconnectedness of responsibility for the NYS that goes well beyond the MoYS and youth organizations.

This evaluation suffered from the **absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation** of the different measures implemented under the NYS over the entire period of Strategy implementation (2008 – 2014), although initially the development and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation framework were initiated. Quantitative evaluation and monitoring data is unavailable for most aspects of the Strategy implementation, with the exception of grant making through the larger programs undertaken, and almost no qualitative evaluation data has been collected. Furthermore, the data available for different years has been collected using different methods and is only comparable to a very basic extent.

Furthermore, and even though the NYS was developed with respect to latest research on the **situation and needs of young people in Serbia** available at the time of Strategy development, the matter of assessing NYS impact has been complicated by the fact that a **comprehensive baseline study was not made in preparation of the development of the NYS**, nor was one available at the time of conducting the evaluation. Hence, it is difficult to establish the extent to which specific aspects of the situation of youth, as identified in 2007, have changed. And, even if such a study was in place and regularly updated throughout the strategy period, impact assessment in this area is notoriously problematic, because it is practically impossible to establish cause-effect relationships between a specific intervention (which includes only some young people) and changes in the quality of life of young people in general.

This is not to say there is no relevant statistical information being collected about young people, nor to say that there is no relevant research being conducted. Rather, the crux of the challenge represented by the above is the **lack of systematic use of the information that is routinely collected and available as part of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework**. This issue and its reasons (including questions of capacity and resources) are addressed in more detail in the evaluation findings and conclusions chapters.

A further challenge was the **timing of the evaluation** in relation to two other key processes: the development of the new Youth Strategy and the Council of Europe review of youth policy in Serbia. The fact that the new strategy was in preparation before either this evaluation or the Council of Europe review of youth policy were completed caused anger and frustration among many stakeholders in the youth sector. This situation challenged the legitimacy of the evaluation, in that at least two stakeholders refused to participate as a way of registering their protest to those responsible for the decision to develop the new strategy before an evaluation could be completed. Furthermore, the overall atmosphere in the youth sector at the time of conducting the evaluation was one of relative resignation, as evidenced by the fact that many stakeholders questioned what the point of conducting the evaluation was given that it could not formally influence the content of the new Strategy. In the course of the evaluation, however, senior staff at the MoYS recognized this frustration and demonstrated understanding for it, with the result that the adoption of the new



strategy was delayed to allow for the recommendations of the evaluation to be considered and integrated before its formal adoption.

The **general participation rate of stakeholders in the evaluation was disappointing**. The stakeholder survey yielded 52 responses out of a potential respondent group of more than 1000<sup>1</sup>. Similarly poor turnout at roundtable meetings organized during the visits to the regions was observed among invited Local Youth Offices, Local Municipal Administrations, and CSOs in the larger regional centers. This is likely the result of several factors including the lateness with which stakeholders, particularly those in Government, received invitations to participate in the evaluation, the general atmosphere of resignation and disenchantment among civic actors mentioned above, a lack of interest in youth in some sectors, not enough active promotion of the evaluation and the fact that it took place at a very busy time of the year, among others.

Another challenge relates to the **quality of participation in the evaluation**. The level of preparedness of the stakeholders that did take part left a lot to be desired. While for the most part the evaluation met with candor and a willingness to engage, several key stakeholders have either cancelled or not shown up to the meetings foreseen with the evaluation team during the field visit or have come unprepared to discuss specific objectives for the implementation of which they were co-responsible. While some of those concerned later submitted documentation the team could use for the report, there is a very large difference between the depth of perspective a face-to-face meeting can provide when interrogating specific issues, challenges and shortcomings and reading a document prepared for the demonstration of achievements. The evaluation finds that some governmental actors whose functions related directly to transversal issues addressed by the Strategy seem either not to be aware of, or seem not to be in a position to consider their issues from a youth perspective. This was obvious in the general lack of information these agencies demonstrate in relation to the youth age bracket 15 – 30 and specific sub-groups of concern to the evaluation. The most recent change of government (March – June 2014), as a result of which extensive staffing changes were made across governmental departments with implementation responsibilities for the NYS (beyond the MoYS) has certainly contributed to this.

Finally, the **resources and time available to the evaluation, although not negligible were nevertheless, not adequate to the objective of involving large numbers of NYS end beneficiaries, i.e. young people**. Several ‘focus group’ style meetings were held including young people who were involved in projects that received funding from the MoYS, and visits were made to youth clubs, a youth information center and several local youth offices, where young people were gathered by relevant intermediaries to discuss the NYS with the evaluation team. Nevertheless, this does not constitute large-scale participation of young people who have been reached by the NYS and the perspectives revealed by such meetings are necessarily those of the more ‘active youth’ touched by the NYS, given that most of those met were volunteers or leaders in their youth work context.

## ***Background contextualizing the Serbian Youth Sector and the National Youth Strategy (2008)***

### **Vision, basic principles, key needs of youth and priorities of the NYS 2008**

The [NYS adopted in 2008 presents its vision for youth](#) as follows:

*Young people in Serbia in the 21st century are active and equal participants in all areas of social life and they have equal rights and possibilities for the full development of their potential. This refers to their active role in family life, education, employment, health and overall social life. Young people obtain new knowledge and experiences, make friendships and compete with their*

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<sup>1</sup> This number is calculated on the basis of the size of the stakeholder group in some way involved in the development of the new NYS.

*peers from all over the world, but they also return to their country where they implement all gained knowledge actively, hard working and responsibly, and achieve a quality life.*

The strategy has been elaborated in consideration of 10 key principles that can on the one hand be interpreted from the values underlying the above quoted vision, and on the other hand, can be derived from values stated in several key national and international documents, especially:

- the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia
- the Universal Declaration on Human Rights
- the Council of Europe's Conventions on Human Rights
- the Fundamental Freedoms and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The NYS 2008 and its Action Plan 2009 – 2014 attempt, through their stated objectives, specific goals and measures outlined, to emphasize

- **respect for human rights** of young people regardless of gender, race and nationality, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, social status, disability by providing equal opportunity in line with young people's own needs, choices and capabilities;
- **equality** of young people by underlining the importance of equal opportunities, access to information, personal development, lifelong learning, and employment considering young people's concerns and needs, and by emphasizing respect of gender equality, non-discrimination, freedom, dignity, safety, personal and social development of young people;
- **responsibility** of those who work with young people and of young people themselves;
- **availability** of youth specific resources, services and programs by emphasizing the importance and necessity of recognizing youth competence and potential as a social resource, and of dedicated youth health services, leisure time programs and inclusive education;
- **solidarity** between generations and among youth and their peers in the perspective of democratic citizenship, non-violence and tolerance;
- **cooperation** among youth and their peers by emphasizing freedom of self-organization on local, national and international level;
- **active youth participation** in decision-making processes and in activities that contribute to building a better society by emphasizing access to rights, space, means, and specific support for their use;
- **interculturalism** by emphasizing respect for differences in all areas of human life, tolerance, intercultural dialogue among youth, and the development of readiness, understanding and care for common values;
- **lifelong learning** by emphasizing the promotion of competence development, including values knowledge and skills, through a linking of formal and non-formal education, and the development and certification of quality programs for formal and non-formal learning;
- **evidence based-strategy development** by emphasizing that strategic concepts, principles and activities refer to accurate and relevant data resulting from youth studies and research.

In consideration of several of the above principles, most especially the last relating to the **knowledge basis for youth strategy**, the NYS was developed with respect to the latest research on the **situation and needs of young people in Serbia** available at the time of Strategy development. It should be noted, however, that this situation analysis is not a comprehensive study of the situation of youth in Serbia, in the form of a data-centric baseline study. Rather it provides a 'broad strokes overview' of the situation in several areas of strategic importance for the stakeholders involved in the NYS development process. These are: active participation in society, institutional framework for cooperation, organizing and participation in decision making, information, life chances and risks of social exclusion and inequality, extraordinary results and achievements, quality of leisure time: cultural consumption and sports activities, formal and non-formal education, youth employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship, safety, health, environment and sustainable development. While a valid decision to approach the situation analysis, it remains partial, as although it duly provides evidence for why these issues need to be addressed and can be understood as needs of young people, the situation of youth as demonstrated by data as such has not led the choice of priorities included in the Strategy. This point will be discussed at a later stage of the report.

## The Republic of Serbia - Key Youth Relevant Data in Brief

As mentioned, no dedicated baseline study of the situation of young people in Serbia is currently available, and this evaluation had neither the intention nor the resources to be one. Nevertheless, a few key pieces of information about the Republic of Serbia and its youth sector at the time of writing are useful for contextualizing the NYS and the evaluation team's findings in regard of the level of its implementation and impact.

According to data generated by international institutions and independent think tanks, the Republic of Serbia

- had GNI per capita (Atlas Method) of US \$5,730 in 2013 (Source: [World Bank](#));
- ranked 77 out of 187 countries and territories (with a score of 0.745) on the Human Development Index in 2013 (Source: [UNDP](#));
- scored 29.62 on the [GINI Index](#) in 2010 (Source: [World Bank](#));
- scored 70.61 on the [Social Progress Index](#) in 2014 (Source: [Social Progress Index](#));
- scored 42 on the [Corruption Perception Index](#) in 2013 (Source: [Transparency International](#));
- scored 25.05 on the [Press Freedom Index](#) in 2014 (Source: [Reporters Without Borders](#));
- and was categorized as a semi-consolidated democracy (with a rating of 3.64 out of 7) in the 2014 [Nations in Transit Report](#) (Source: [Freedom House](#)).

Under the [2011 Youth Law](#) of the Republic of Serbia, 'youth' is defined as people aged 15 – 30. According to the Population Survey ([SORS 2011](#)), people aged 15 – 30 numbered 1,419,328 persons or 19.74% of the population. According to the same data, the share of the population aged 15 – 30 has dropped by 1.8% between 2002 and 2011. This decline might be attributable to the low birthrate on the one hand, and increased migration of young people out of Serbia, essentially mirroring developments in other parts of Europe. Furthermore, young people are unevenly distributed across the country. Migration within Serbia, whereby young people move to larger towns and to the capital in search of study and work opportunities unavailable in their rural communities, has increased the pace of population ageing in many rural localities. In isolated rural parts of Serbia, it is common that the only 'youth' present are children of primary school age, and technically, most of these do not fall under the remit of the NYS.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of the situation, challenges and attitudes of youth in Serbia, the following select indicators provide a snapshot:

- **Youth Development:** 0.70 (55 out of 170 countries) (Source: [Commonwealth Youth Programme](#));
- **Literacy:** Both sexes (15-24 years of age): 99.27% (Male: 99.29%; Female 99.25%) in 2011 (Source: [UNESCO](#));
- **Secondary School Enrolment:** Both sexes net (15 – 24 years of age): 90.44% (Male: 89.56%; Female: 91.37) in 2012 (Source: [UNESCO](#));
- **Early school leavers:** 8.5% in 2011 ([SORS 2011](#)); lower than the EU average in 2011 at 13.5% (Source: [EU Youth Report](#)).
- **Tobacco use:** Both sexes (13-15 years of age): 10.4% (Male: 10.8%; Female: 9.6%) in 2010 (Source: [WHO](#));
- **Unemployment:** 40.4% for the age range 15 – 30, in April 2013 (Source: [SORS 2011](#), [Labor Force Survey 2013](#)), almost double the 2012 EU average of 23% (Source: [EU Youth Report](#)).
- **HIV Prevalence Adult (15 – 49 years) in 2013:** 0.05% (Source: [UNAIDS](#)) with new infections being common among young people 15 – 30.
- **NEETs:** 25.1% among 15 – 24 year olds (Source: [SORS 2011](#), [Labor Force Survey October 2012](#)), while the EU average in 2012 was 13% (Source: [EU Youth Report 2012](#))
- **Entrepreneurship:** 20% of young people in Serbia consider starting their own business, according to a [survey by CeSID conducted in 2012 entitled 'Položaj i potrebe mladih'](#)

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Country Team Serbia, [Common Country Assessment, Serbia Draft 5 of September 2014](#), in preparation of UNDAF, approved by the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

([Situation and needs of youth](#)). [Eurobarometer](#) (2011) showed up to twice that many young people in the EU would consider setting up their own business.

## The Youth Sector in Serbia

A bit of [history](#) to get started. While efforts to institutionalize the youth sector and youth policy in Serbia go back to the very early 2000s and many of the key actors in that period were drivers for subsequent efforts, it was in 2007 that Serbia launched its process to develop and adopt a National Youth Strategy, thereby establishing a Ministry of Youth and Sport (MoYS) with responsibility for the implementation and oversight of the resulting Strategy. In 2008, the MoYS drafted Serbia's first National Youth Strategy, with the participation of youth policy experts, civil society organizations, government agencies and Ministries in other sectors, and consulting several thousand young people. In 2009, a National Action Plan, that laid out the activities through which the Strategy was to be implemented and a series of indicators for its evaluation was adopted, with effect until the end of 2014. And, in 2011 Parliament adopted a national Law on Youth with effect from 2012, the very first in Serbia's history.

The process that led to the establishment of the youth policy framework described above was a major breakthrough for the Serbian youth sector, and was recognized in European youth policy making circles as a model, for the facts that it was **took an exemplarily participatory approach**, including all categories of stakeholders in the youth policy making and giving significant space to young people themselves, it recognized **youth civil society as the key driver of the initiative and a key partner in the process** to develop the NYS; it sought to and succeeded in **establishing youth specific legislation** (the Youth Law of 2011), in theory creating a basis on which youth policy could develop irrespective of regular changes of government; and it recognized and took significant account of **international standards** including key human rights documents and the emerging European consensus on principles for youth policy. If prior to the civil society initiative to establish the NYS and MoYS, youth was not on the political agenda and did not exist in the public consciousness as an important 'issue', the situation in 2014 looks very different. In fact, today something that one can recognize as 'a youth sector' now most definitely exists in Serbia.

At the time of writing (November 2014), the main actors and stakeholders of the youth sector in Serbia could be identified using the following categorization:

<b>Executive branch</b>	<p>The <a href="#">Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)</a></p> <p>The <a href="#">Provincial Secretariat for Youth and Sports in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina</a><sup>3</sup></p> <p>136 Local Youth Offices</p> <p>4 Regional Coordinators, with support functions to the Local Youth Offices)</p> <p>A number of LSGUs with local secretariats for youth (often combined with sports).</p>
<b>Legislative branch</b>	<p>Over 100 Local Youth Committees (Parliamentary Standing Committees on Youth with advisory functions) in cities around Serbia, of which 46 are functional</p> <p>Provincial Committee on Youth in the Autonomous Region of Vojvodina</p>
<b>Civic sector</b>	<p>800 youth specific CSOs (with local through national level reach) registered in the integrated records of the MoYS, with a significantly larger number registered in the 'business registry' of the Republic of Serbia</p> <p>An unknown number of CSOs that operate programs for youth and using the workforce of youth volunteers but which are not 'youth exclusive'</p> <p>An unknown number of 'non-formal' youth groups<sup>4</sup></p> <p>3 representative 'platforms' of national organizations: <a href="#">KOMs</a>, the National Youth Council (established in 2010) and recognized by the <a href="#">European Youth Forum</a>; a</p>

<sup>3</sup> This is a unique structure in Serbia, with no equivalent in other regions, essentially mirroring the MoYS in terms of role and function, but on the Provincial level.

<sup>4</sup> Youth non-formal groups are small un-registered associations of young people. They receive occasional project support through NYS funding schemes and other sources open to them, running activities with and for small groups of young people at their own initiative.

	<p>platform of national and other youth work promoting organizations, <a href="#">NAPOR</a> (established in 2009), and a platform to represent the interests and concerns of Local Youth Offices, the National Association of Local Youth Offices (established in 2012). An unknown number of youth, school and university students' councils and parliaments around the country<sup>5</sup></p> <p>At least two Community Foundations, the Step Forward Community Foundation for the Timok Region and the Obrenovac Youth Foundation. More information: <a href="http://www.zainicijativa.org/">http://www.zainicijativa.org/</a> and <a href="http://oyf.rs/">http://oyf.rs/</a> respectively.</p> <p>An unknown number of city-funded and independent youth clubs and centers, including one that has achieved the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centers, the Eco Center Sremski Karlovci</p>
<b>International actors</b>	<p>Serbia benefits from the presence of several key international actors and foreign donors, whose grant-making and operational programs include youth related objectives or youth as beneficiaries or target groups of specific programs, including <a href="#">UN agencies</a> (IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP), the European Union (Erasmus+), <a href="#">the Council of Europe</a>, <a href="#">Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH</a>, <a href="#">United States Agency for International Development (USAID)</a>, the <a href="#">British Council</a>, Embassies and external funding mechanisms of the Kingdom of Norway, Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Italy, Kingdom of the Netherlands.</p>
<b>Researchers and independent experts</b>	<p>Serbia still lacks an identifiable youth research community, in the sense that the country does not benefit from a specific independent and impartial institution with both social and formal recognition for conducting quantitative and qualitative youth and youth policy research, evaluation and monitoring. Nevertheless, a lot of youth research is being done in and about Serbia and its youth and youth sector, many professionals of the sector are doing and publishing research, and several are involved in both international youth and policy research networks. Several of the international actors mentioned above regularly engage in research, although it appears that much is published in English and not all of it is known to and used by other actors of the sector.</p>

Furthermore, the youth sector in 2014 Serbia is framed by a diverse canon of legislation and strategic documents, many of which have been developed since the adoption of the NYS and the creation of the MoYS.

Table 2: [Select legislation and strategic documents in force in the youth sector](#)

Document name	Reference & Date
National Youth Strategy	Official Gazette of RS", No. 55/2008
Action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the period 2009 – 2014	Official Gazette of RS, No.7/2009
The Strategy of Career Guidance and Counseling with the Action Plan for a period 2010-2014	Official Gazette of RS, No. 16/2010
Law on Youth	Official Gazette of RS, No. 50/2011
Regulation on the content and manner of keeping Uniform records of associations of young people, associations for young people and their federations	Official Gazette of RS", No. 50/2011
Regulation on financing and co-financing programs and projects of public interest in the youth sector	Official Gazette of RS, No. 8/2012 and 11/2013
Founding Resolution of the Fund for Young Talents	Official Gazette of RS, No 71/2008, 44/2009, 37/2011, 19/2012, 86/2012, 102/2012, 56/2013, 87/2013 and 114/2014.
Youth Employment Policy and Action Plan 2009 – 2011 (a mid-term policy framework)	Prepared under the technical assistance of the ILO

<sup>5</sup> Some of these structures are members of regional and / or national platforms of students' organizations, including one that is a member of the [Organizing Bureau of School Students' Unions in Europe \(OBESSU\)](#).

Youth Health and Development Strategy	Official Gazette of the RS, No. 55/2005, 71/2005 and 101/2007
National Program for the Health Care of Women, Children and Youth	

Furthermore, other 'non-youth specific' legal and strategic documents interact with the youth specific legislative and strategic framework, in some cases filling gaps and in some cases overlapping or duplicating with its provisions. Such documents include the [Law on Local Self-Government](#) of 2007, [Law on Associations](#) of 2009 and the [National Employment Strategy 2011-2020](#).

In theory, these legislative and strategic documents should complement and support each other to achieve common and specific objectives for youth, including those outlined in the NYS. At the same time, several differing definitions of youth exist in the legislation of the Republic, there appears to be little harmonization among items of Republican legislation with specific youth references, and among the different strategies with youth specific objectives,<sup>6</sup> as well as little impact of MoYS efforts to coordinate implementation with other Ministries, even with those which are specifically responsible for key aspects of the NYS, although some 'formal' mechanisms exist and are prescribed by the NYS.

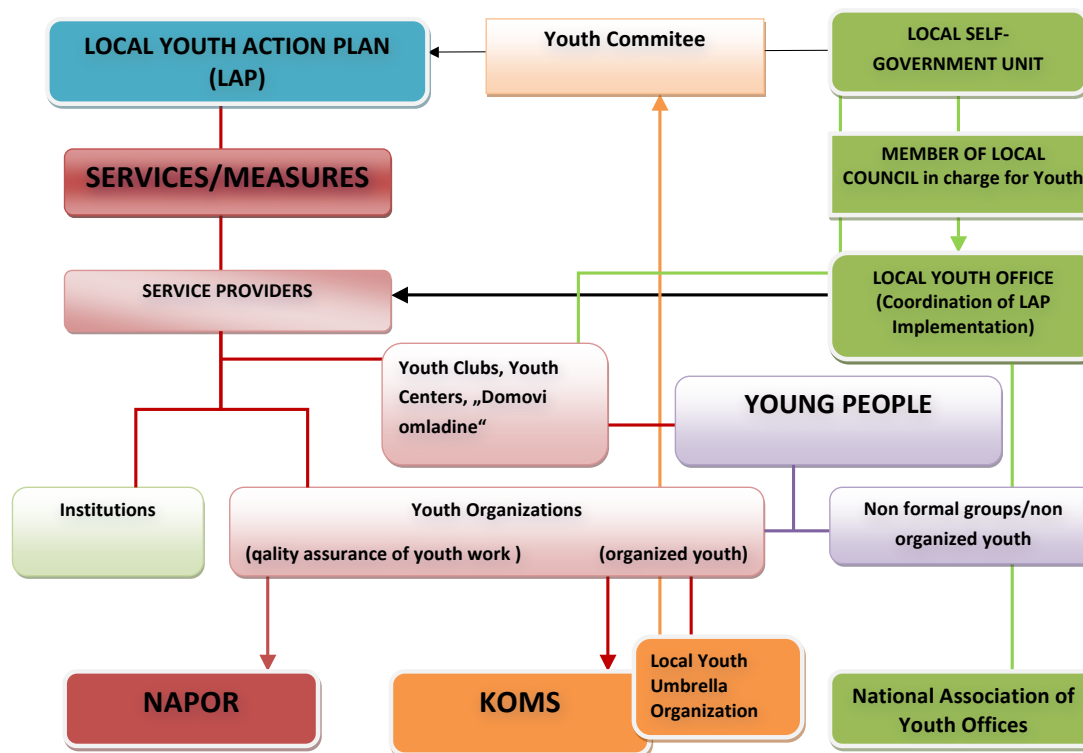
According to [documentation provided by the MoYS](#), the formal relationships in the Serbian youth sector can be represented as follows:

LEVEL	AUTHORITIES	BASIC DOCUMENTS/ YOUTH	BODIES FOR STRUCTURED DIALOGUE	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>Assembly of the Republic of Serbia</b> (the board in charge of Youth)  <b>Government</b> ( Ministry of Youth and Sports + ministries responsible for specific areas within the youth sector)	National Youth Strategy, Law on Youth  Number of governmental strategies regarding to health, sport, education, career guidance, employment, economic development, sustainable development, human rights, etc.	Youth Council (2014)	Umbrella association of youth (NYC) Professional associations (NAPOR)  National Association of Local Youth Offices
<b>PROVINCIAL</b>	Provincial administrative body responsible for youth	Action Plan for Youth Policy in Vojvodina (2010-2014)	Council for Youth of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2012)	Youth Organizations and associations ( Provincial Youth Councils)
<b>MUNICIPAL</b>	City / municipal administrative body responsible for youth (LYO)	Local action plan for youth + LAP for employment	City / Municipal Youth council	Youth Organizations and associations (Local Youth Councils)

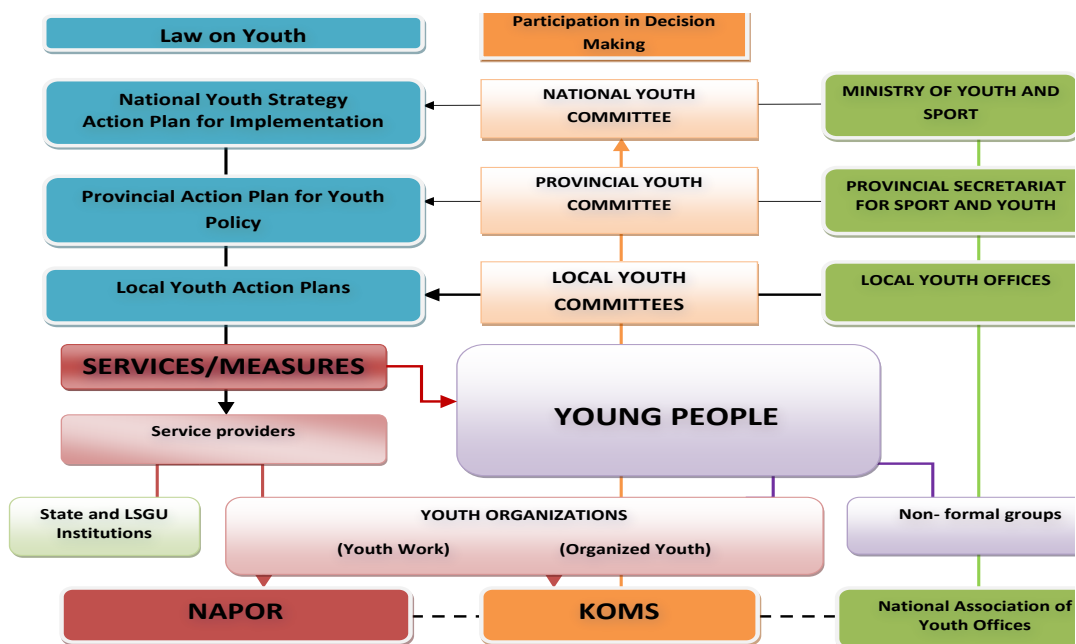
<sup>6</sup> An outline of various definitions of the youth age category as expressed in various Republican legislative documents can be consulted in Tanja Azanjac Donatella Bradic Djordje Krivokapić Marlene Spoerri Tatjana Stojic, [Youth and Public Policy in Serbia](#), Youth Policy Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2014, p. 54-55, Table 4. An evaluation of coordination and intersectoral cooperation are addressed in Findings and Conclusions chapters.

KOMS (the National Youth Council) has developed the following schemes to describe the relationships in the Youth Sector on the local and the national levels:

#### The Local Level



#### The National Level



In these diagrams it is interesting to note the positioning of young people, especially at the local level, which are positions somewhat to the margins. This is of course just a visualization of relationships, but the fact that the young people of Serbia are not at the very center and all other actors related to



them and from them, says something about the conceptualization of the place of young people in the institutional framework of the youth sector. It would be interesting to conduct such a visualization exercise again, starting with young people at the center and working one's way outward.

### **'Then and Now': 2007 and 2014?**

Observing the youth sector in 2014, we can readily see several key differences between its state of development, situation and position today and that of 2007, when the initiative to establish the MoYS and NYS emerged. Although the extent to which these differences are attributable to the implementation and impact of the NYS is difficult to assess, as many external factors are also at play (EU integration, reforms in other sectors, etc.), it is nevertheless worth noting some key areas where such differences are visible as a means of contextualizing the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

In the first place, it can be observed that the **institutional framework** of youth policy in Serbia has become significantly **more complex**, with the creation of new structures for governance and policy implementation through the NYS and Local Youth Action Plans (LYAPs), where such exist, among others, acknowledging the very different youth sector realities around the country. Furthermore, with the development and progress of the new institutional framework, many legal provisions have changed or been amended, impacting directly on the sustainability of youth sector actors. This is particularly visible in the legal provisions for associations and local self-governments, both of which will be treated in more detail in later chapters.

Secondly, the **youth sector**, like any other sector of government, is **vulnerable to the vagaries of politics in Serbia**. In actual fact the MoYS has demonstrated remarkable resilience during its existence since 2008, having survived three changes of government without being disbanded or merged into another sector, education for example. However, these constant changes have an important impact on the continuity of work of the Ministry to implement the NYS. Challenges have included the moratorium on hiring to the public service, effectively making it impossible for the MoYS to meet the headcount that was planned for it under the NYS, the necessity of hiring additional support staff on temporary or service contracts, frequent changes of management of NYS implementation and a kind of 'brain drain', as staff, often experienced in youth specific work, are moved or rotated out of the Ministry, and new political appointees arrive, and oftentimes large differences between budgets allocated to specific NYS projects and what would actually be needed to fulfill their objectives, leading to differences between what was planned and what actually happens. These challenges will be addressed in more detail in later chapters of the report.

Thirdly, a certain kind of **'generational change'** can be observed among **actors of the youth sector, particularly in civil society**. The generation of activists that made up the 'movement' to establish the new institutional framework has 'grown up', and is moving on, often out of the youth sector, into areas that provide them with more sustainable livelihoods, even if they would prefer to develop as youth sector professionals and even if many continue to demonstrate civic engagement and remain in voluntary positions. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of youth activists and those leading youth organizations today take something of a different approach than their predecessors, having developed in a youth sector that has always had a MoYS. There is a sense that the youth 'movement' seems to have gotten a bit lost, most probably because youth civil society lacks a 'unifying goal', which until the adoption of the NYS and establishment of the MoYS was present.

If anything, and in the estimation of many civil society actors themselves, key organizations in youth civil society have come to be positioned as service providers, executing the objectives of the NYS through funding streams provided by the MoYS, and to an extent also conceptualizing their role as such rather than as one of interest representation.<sup>7</sup> Actors of civil society, and observers of the

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<sup>7</sup> Several authors have written about this dynamic, by which heads of movements transition into arms of state action, in relation to civil society in Central and Eastern Europe and youth civil society in Australia, notably Joerg Forbrig, *The Nexus Between Civil Society And Democracy: Suggesting a Critical Approach*, published in: Reichel, Walter (Ed.): *Political Priorities between East and West. Europe's rediscovered wealth – What the accession-*



development of the civic sector in Serbia, including the governmental bodies charged with supporting its development, speak about many complex challenges: dependence, independence, cooptation, corruption, lack of capacity, lack of sustainable resources and lack of social recognition as key partners in policy-making, even where formal mandates have been established. These questions will be further discussed in later chapters.

Fourthly, since 2007 **youth policy has become a 'hotter topic' on the international agenda, and the 'soft power' or 'conditionality of international integration**, for example, through the EU accession process, **has become more important in Serbia**. In 2007/8, at the inception of the NYS and MoYS, youth policy development in Serbia could be seen as an 'indigenous' project, even if admittedly it was much inspired and pushed on by the international experiences of key members of the 'youth movement' and civil servants with an appreciation for international cooperation. In 2014, we see a more diverse picture of panorama of drivers in youth policy development. On the one hand, there are the international actors and donors, whose own youth agendas have become more urgent wholly independent of the Serbian reality (for example, through global youth related developments in the UN system). On the other, we can see that the MoYS has developed a reputation as being both a willing and competent partner in the context of EU integration related projects, and that the adoption of *acquis communautaire* in Serbia is having an impact on the approach the MoYS and other government actors are taking to youth issues and challenges. The impact of this process in relation to the implementation of the NYS, and its ambivalence for sustainability of the youth sector, will be discussed in later chapters.

Finally, and certainly importantly, it must be noted that **the social and democratic development of the Republic of Serbia since 2007 has had important effects on the prospects of the NYS to reach its goals and achieve its desired impacts**. If 2008 represented a 'bumper year' for economic growth in Serbia, and there was much optimism that this would translate into social and democratic gains, including for youth, the global economic crisis has since put paid to such optimism. [Living standards have fallen](#) and it is reported that young people demonstrate insecurity and a lot of pessimism when it comes to their 'life prospects', with more and more dreaming of emigration or placing all their hopes in a civil service job. Furthermore, there is growing concern in some circles about the consolidation of democracy in Serbia. In the last elections (March 2014), the nationalist-populist [Serbian Progressive Party won the largest share of the vote and formed a government](#). [Local and international actors of civil society and independent media accuse the current government of seeking to exclude independent and dissenting voices from the public discourse and governance](#). While Serbia's overall democracy score in [Freedom House's Nations in Transit](#) reporting has improved slightly from 3.68 in 2007 to 3.64 in 2014 out of 7 (on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the best possible score and 7 representing the worst). Yet, key indicators have deteriorated. [For example, on the independent media indicator, Serbia's score has dropped from 3.50 in 2007 to 4.00 in 2014 and on the judicial framework and independence the score has dropped from 4.25 in 2007 to 4.50 in 2014. The corruption score has also only marginally improved since 2007, from 4.50 to 4.25 in 2014](#), although the [EU says corruption remains a major stumbling block for Serbia's accession](#). These developments have visibly influenced the capacity and space for key actors of the youth sector to implement NYS objectives in areas of the NYS related to youth well-being and youth participation in decision-making, among others, and will be further discussed in later chapters.

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candidates in Eastern and Central Europe have to offer. (No. 2. May 2002), pp. 79-103. Available online at: <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/jforbrig1.pdf> and Terry H. Irving, David Maunders and Geoff Sherington, *Youth in Australia: Policy, Administration and Politics*, July 1995, Macmillan Co of Australia.

## Evaluation Findings

### *Introduction*

As mentioned in the introductory chapter to this report, the process of developing the NYS was exemplary in many respects, taking a participatory approach and considering youth needs and concerns central to the identification of priorities.

The NYS and its Action Plan are, therefore, extremely ambitious. In total the NYS contains 11 umbrella objectives. Each of these, has between up to 10 specific objectives and each of those has another several measures outlined. The implementation of each objective was expected to involve a number of Ministries and government agencies, as well as non-governmental and international partners. These are all mentioned in the NYS document. The Action Plan runs to almost 300 pages, containing a huge number of specific measures and an even larger number of indicators for the achievement of the objective and the success of the measures planned.

However, it must be pointed out that even if most of these are numerical, it has proven beyond the capacity of the MoYS and many of the implementing partners to monitor progress and achievement of objectives on their basis (this specific point will be treated in the findings and conclusions section in some more detail). Aside from the fact that it is beyond of this evaluation, this lack of monitoring data is the primary reason for which it is not possible to make a complete and comprehensive overview of every single activity that has been implemented under the auspices of the NYS and the Action Plan.

Nevertheless, a basic overview of key areas of intervention (the kind and level of activity conducted), as compared to specific objectives, is possible. This chapter on evaluation findings attempts to provide such an overview combined with evaluation considerations for each major objective and strategic pillar of the strategy. This section has been developed on the basis of reports and figures provided by the MoYS, testimony from the field visit, the content of the stakeholder survey, information provided by key stakeholders (in some cases on the basis of their own shadow reporting), specific inputs from international partners and desk review materials. While it can never be fully comprehensive, this approach assumes that the confrontation of different perspectives presented by different stakeholders and in different sources can provide a reliable picture of what has been done and to which effect.

This chapter of the evaluation contains the following sections

1. a **presentation of key data about implementation of the NYS** linked to summary **evaluation of the implementation of the NYS by objective** (in table format in Appendix 1), looking at what is known about measures taken and investments made in each of the 11 areas (irrespective of what was initially planned and laid out in the Action Plan), considering the priority given to each in relation to the stated situation analysis, identifying results and looking at eventual challenges or shortcomings;
2. an exploration of the **extent and level of implementation in 5 key sectors addressed by the Strategy** (access to education and information for young people; health and social protection services for young people; economic opportunities for young people; participation of youth in public life and promotion of active citizenship; institutional capacity in the youth field, considering barriers to implementation of related objectives);
3. an exploration of the **extent and level of implementation the key instruments employed by the NYS** (Local Youth Offices, Fund for Young Talents, Grant-making, Youth Information, International Cooperation);
4. an **evaluation by key performance criteria** (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and leadership) at the national, provincial and local levels;
5. an **evaluation according to international principles** (c.f. the Baku commitment);

6. and finally **an evaluation of impact**, attempting to summarize main findings from the previous sections.

### ***Implementation of the NYS – key data and evaluation by objectives***<sup>8</sup>

This section attempts to provide an overview of key data pertaining to the implementation of the NYS. It is linked to a summary of measures undertaken in fulfillment of each objective and sub-objectives of the NYS, which also contains brief evaluative comments. Together, they provide context to the findings presented in sections 2 – 5 of this chapter.

## **NYS Implementation by Numbers**

### **National level projects**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Breakdown by goals</b>	<b>Total (2009 – 2013)</b>
<b>MoYS spending on operational projects (2009-2013)</b>	Goal 1: 439.151.953,53 RSD Goal 2: 152.185.323,94 RSD Goal 3: 58.011.055,01 RSD Goal 4: 25.713.378,18 RSD Goal 5: 8.713.153,10 RSD Goal 6: 54.466.325,31 RSD Goal 7: 35.420.948,19 RSD Goal 8: 59.240.543,95 RSD Goal 9: 21.141.381, 71 RSD Goal 10: 70.461.524,03 RSD Goal 11: 14.211.823,51 RSD	938.717.410,46 RSD
<b>Number of projects conducted by the MoYS (2009 – 2013)</b>	Goal 1: 363 Goal 2: 112 Goal 3: 74 Goal 4: 28 Goal 5: 11 Goal 6: 117 Goal 7: 43 Goal 8: 68 Goal 9: 30 Goal 10: 95 Goal 11: 28	969
<b>Participants of MoYS projects (direct)</b>	Goal 1: 142 116 Goal 2: 37 362 Goal 3: 21 664 Goal 4: 6 442 Goal 5: 1 300 Goal 6: 261 370 Goal 7: 5 904 Goal 8: 10 087 Goal 9: 7 718 Goal 10: 18 491 Goal 11: 5 729	518,183

<sup>8</sup> At the time of finalizing this report in January 2015, [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com) currency converter quoted 1 USD = 103.014 RSD and 1 Euro = 122.120 RSD.

Description	Breakdown by goals	Total (2009 – 2013)
Participants of MoYS projects (indirect)	Goal 1: 148 340 Goal 2: 70 256 Goal 3: 49 369 Goal 4: 8 780 Goal 5: 52 200 Goal 6: 43 126 Goal 7: 39 037 Goal 8: 22 860 Goal 9: 45 948 Goal 10: 84 444 Goal 11: 14 590	578,950

Mladi su Zakon	
Year	Total amount given out in grants in RSD
2010	19.746.638,90
2011	39.896.334,46
2012	46.421.524,61
2013	53.934.142,50
2014	51.171.302,50
All years	211.169.942,97

Fund for Young Talents		
Year	Total number of stipends	Total amount of investment in RSD
2009	1843	443.159.000
2010	1982	468.024.000
2011	2117	511.922.000
2012	2409	618.655.000
2013	2528	634.430.000
2014	2803	665.352.000
All years	13682	3.073.120.000

Grant-making to CSOs, from National Level not including LYO and Municipal calls for projects	
Total number of projects	934
Year	Total disbursed in project grants
2007	149.979.594,06
2008	233.861.957,35
2009	152.917.918,54
2010	118.852.783,44
2011	122.689.426,62
2012	112.259.557,22
2013	156.075.406,69
2014	133.681.274,22
All years	1.180.317.918,14

### ***Institutional Framework***

From 2009 – 2013 the MoYS conducting the following key activities to develop the institutional framework of the youth sector in Serbia:

Year	Activity
2009	Provision of support for the establishment of NAPOR Establishment of the working group for the implementation of the NYS, with 2 revisions noted in the Official Gazette in 2013 Adoption of the Youth Employment Policy and Action Plan (2009 – 2011)
2010	Adoption of Career Guidance Strategy in 2010 with the participation of Ministry of Education and Ministry for Economy and Regional Development

2011	Support for the establishment of the National Youth Council (KOMs) Establishment and adoption of the Law on Youth
2012	Support for the establishment of the Offices
2013	2 revisions to the provisions for the Working Group for the Implementation of the NYS published in the Official Gazette
2013/14	Establishment of the 'Youth Committee' (advisory board to the MoYS on NYS and youth issues)
2008 – 2013	Support to accredited Youth in Action Contact Points

## Local Youth Office Infrastructure

In September 2014, the Ministry of Youth and Sport invited LSGUs to participate in a survey about local youth policy. Further, LYOs were requested to self-evaluate their work, the results of which were checked for accuracy and assessed by the Regional Youth Office coordinators.

According to the [summary of the survey](#), and at the time of writing (November / December 2014) there were:

- 136 active Local Youth Offices (meaning that they have a Local Youth Coordinator and organize some activities for young people;
- 66 Local Youth Coordinators whose position exists in the job classification of the municipality (LSGU), although not all these positions are filled;
- 70 Local Youth Coordinators who work on some other contractual basis or as volunteers, and/ or whose job description is not exclusively youth related;
- 79 Local Youth Offices with budget lines from the municipal budgets allocated for program activities for youth; Other LYOs get funds from the MoYS, other donors, realize activities in partnership with local youth CSOs, etc.;
- 5 Local Youth Offices accredited for European Voluntary Service;
- 44 Youth Clubs<sup>9</sup> associated with LYOs;
- 130 adopted Local Youth Action Plans;
- Over 100 Youth Committees (equivalent of a Local Assembly Standing Committee on Youth, essentially an advisory body), of which 46 are functioning;
- 4 regional coordinators to support the capacity development and coordination of LYOs and LYCs (employed by CSOs receiving grants from the MoYS for this purpose).

Further in relation to projects and investments:

- The MoYS financed 388 projects with a focus on the implementation of Local Youth Action Plans (LYAP) were financed to the tune of 1.3 million euros from the State budget;
- International partners (IOM, GIZ, USAID, British Council, UNICEF, OSCE, UN Joint projects) funded 10 multi-annual projects focusing on LYO capacity building and implementation of different activities for young people living in local communities.

## International partnerships and cooperation, including multi-annual projects

- Over 100,000 young people were reached by co-operation projects between the MoYS and international partners for the implementation of the NYS between 2009 and 2014. Some projects are ongoing;
- With 317 submitted and approved projects amounting to 5.5 million euro in the period from 2008-2013, Serbia has become regional (SEE) leader in the number of submitted and approved projects to the Youth in Action program of the European Commission;

<sup>9</sup> The definition of youth club is fluid and the calculation of the number of youth clubs has been inferred from the answers received to several questions in the survey. Survey respondents were asked whether they have a space separate from the youth office premises in which they conduct youth activities, a manager of the club, a program of activities, etc.

- More than 65,000 young people in Serbia have been reached through different actions (trainings, round tables, info days, national portal [www.mladiuakciji.rs](http://www.mladiuakciji.rs)) to inform young people about EU programs, especially Youth in Action (2008-2013);
- 45 organizations from Serbia are accredited for European Voluntary Service (including 5 LYOs)
- Serbia is a leader in the number of projects approved by the European Youth Foundation, which annually disbursed 250-300,000 euros of project funding for the last several years.

Project name	Partners	Time frame	Investment	Results
Support to national efforts to promote youth employment and migration management	UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, IOM	May 2009 – June 2012	8 million USD (Youth Employment Fund ~ 2.3 million USD)	<p>Provided ALM measures to disadvantaged youth</p> <p>Raised awareness about the position of disadvantaged young people, youth employability and youth information</p> <p>Developed participative and inclusive practices of YOs.</p> <p>Provided technical assistance for implementation of the Strategy for Career Guidance and Counselling</p> <p>Youth Employment Fund (YEF) established benefiting 2806 disadvantaged young women and men (1784 received job related training, 184 self-employment, 157 PWD job creation, 681 work placement)</p> <p>6 YOs capacitated for peer career informing</p> <p>2 voluntary programmes on education and career information</p> <p>1 inclusive youth club</p> <p>17 Youth Info Points</p> <p>14 promotion activities related to education and employment reaching over 800 young people</p> <p>Over 200 disadvantaged youth used peer career informing, 170 gained skills needed for employment through non-formal education</p>
PBILD youth component	UNDP, UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, ILO, IOM	October 2009 – March 2013	474,413 USD	<p>Local institutions dealing with youth were capacitated and many programs and activities implemented with the aim of increasing social inclusion and better cooperation of youth from Pcinja and Jablanica districts.</p> <p>A network of Youth Offices, Youth Clubs, Volunteering Services, programs and projects was established</p> <p>11 YOs supported and 2 new YOs formed</p> <p>10 non-formal education and youth participation projects implemented in partnership between YOs and local NGOs and institutions, involving 2,000 young people of all ethnicities directly and 6,000 young people indirectly</p> <p>4 new Youth and 3 Volunteering Services implementing over 10 volunteering programs were established</p> <p>Information services, as well as career counseling services were established in YOs</p>
Professional orientation in Serbia	GIZ	2011 – 2015	4 million EUR	<p>119 LYOs established professional orientation and career info services</p> <p>257 trained trainers</p> <p>194 students in internships</p> <p>993 services for youth realized</p> <p>60 secondary schools involved in project activities</p> <p>58,583 informed youth</p> <p>200 trainings</p> <p>6074 young people trained</p> <p>43 local Professional Orientation teams active</p>

Project name	Partners	Time frame	Investment	Results
School without Violence	UNICEF Ministry of Education, Science and Technical Development (MoESTD)	October 2005 – ongoing	7 million RSD	Encompassing 274 elementary and secondary schools (25), 17,000 teachers and 229,000 students, parents & representatives from circa. 90 relevant institutions from the local communities Basic programme ideas are embedded in the legal acts and by-laws regulating violence prevention in the educational system SOS line for violence reporting during the school year was opened in 2011 10 schools involved in the component of prevention of the digital violence 50 schools introduced the component of gender based violence prevention Interactive SwV website was developed and still active Promotion of sports, fair play, healthy lifestyles, bringing together many government, non-government and international actors.
Program for Economic Security	USAID 33 LSGUs	2008 – 2013	24 million USD (USAID) 165,000 USD (LSGUs)	128 LYO Coordinators trained on entrepreneurship and PR 1831 youth trained on entrepreneurship 33 Local action plans for youth entrepreneurship developed and implemented 18,078 direct beneficiaries 860 youth completed internships 2 university career guidance centers established
Empowerment of human capital in Serbia through active Youth participation	IOM with financing from Italian MoFA	September 2008 – December 2011	1.1 million EUR	20 workshops for Local Youth Coordinators (ToT) 220 workshops 4000 youth participated 20 best mini-youth projects from workshops supported with grants
Strengthening of Structures for Youth Empowerment and Participation	GIZ	2010-2014	Specific information not found	Supported 91 municipalities in the creation of LYAPs Developed methodology for Revision of Local action plans and supported over 100 LYOs in revision process Developed and supported the implementation of “Guidelines for standards for Youth Office and competencies of Youth Office coordinators” Capacity building of competencies for over 100 coordinators for implementation of Standards Supported the establishment of an Association of Local Youth Offices 5 pilot projects for inclusion of vulnerable youth implemented in 10 municipalities: Anti-discrimination program, Inclusive peer coaching, Inclusive peer education, Affirmative actions and Info services. Pool of trainers for Local action planning and revision of local action plan is created More than 200 schools and more than 25 local Youth Offices with 2000 pupils/young people and 450 experts have participated in the program of school/peer mediation Crisis intervention program that dealing with traumatized people when crisis appears in school attended over 1200 participants.

Project name	Partners	Time frame	Investment	Results
Youth in Decision Making	Provincial Secretariat in AP Vojvodina Serbian Parliament	2010-2014	379.650,00 EUR	25 different projects involving training and awareness raising around (anti-) discrimination, national minorities, gender perspective, (in) security, internships at AP Secretariat for Youth and Sports Vojvodina, for various target groups including marginalized youth, LYCs, LYOs, young journalists and Parliamentarians
Supporting mainstreaming principles of nondiscrimination and inclusion in youth policies at the national and local levels	OSCE Mission in Serbia LYOs and CSOs in Serbia	June 2014 – December 2014	23 470 EUR	112 Local Youth Offices Coordinators and 12 Youth CSO representatives developed competence for work with vulnerable groups and to recognize discrimination in local communities Development, publication and promotion of the <i>Guide on Working with Vulnerable Groups and Non-Discrimination Principles</i>

## ***Overview of measures implemented under NYS Objectives and Sub-objectives***

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a complete overview of measures undertaken under all 11 NYS objectives and their sub-objectives, along with some assessment information.

## ***Extent and level of implementation through key instruments of the NYS***

### **Introduction**

This section introduces the evaluation's assessment of the extent to which and level of implementation of the key instruments used by the MoYS, other levels of governance and international partners to implement the NYS in Serbia.

It covers:

- Local Youth Office Infrastructure
- Regional / Provincial level implementation
- Fund for Young Talents
- Grant-making
- Youth information
- International partnerships and co-operation

The MoYS and the infrastructure it has created and the partnerships it has initiated appears prominently in this section as it was de facto the lead agency with responsibility for the implementation of the NYS. However, the interaction between the MoYS and other actors of the youth sector actively involved in implementation (for example, CSOs), as well as their responsibility for specific dimensions of implementation, are also interrogated.

### **Local Youth Office Infrastructure**

One of the most important steps forward in the development of the institutional framework, and if we are honest, the capacity, of the youth sector in Serbia since the adoption of the NYS, is the institutionalization of the Local Youth Offices all over the country, and the creation of the role of Local Office Coordinator. This is acknowledged as an important achievement of the NYS and the MoYS, no matter which stakeholder is asked, local, national or international.



Article 18 of the [Law on Youth](#) defines the Local Youth Office as follows:

For the purposes of providing conditions for active involvement of young people in the life and activities of the social community, empowerment of young people, providing support to the organization of various social activities of young people, learning and creative expression of young people's needs, a local self-government unit may, within the scope of its authority, needs and capacity, establish a Youth Office. The Youth Office shall be funded from the budget of the local self-government unit, and other sources in accordance with the Law. The activities referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be implemented on the basis of Strategy and local youth action plans.

The LYO infrastructure, and activities to develop its reach and effectiveness have received extensive investment from both the state and international partners. Summary [figures for the scope and scale of the LYO infrastructure](#) currently in place have been introduced above. In the period since the adoption of the NYS, 388 projects with a focus on the implementation of the Local Youth Action Plans (LYAP) were financed to the tune of 1.3 million euros from the State budget.

A further 10 multi-annual projects for the development and capacity building of the LYOs were financed by international partners (IOM, GIZ, USAID, British Council, UN<sup>10</sup>), amounting to a sum exceeding 12 million EUR<sup>11</sup>. These projects focus on building cooperation with municipalities and LSGUs around youth issues, providing professional and technical support to LSGUs to establish Youth Offices, training Local Youth Office Coordinators, assistance in preparation of LYAPs, financing LSGU projects, [establishing and publishing standards for the functioning of LYOs and for the competence of LYCs](#) and providing assistance to LYOs in establishing a national platform to represent their interests and concerns to the national level (The National Association of Local Youth Offices).

Yet for all these achievements, there are significant problems and challenges in the way that the local infrastructure is working, across a great number of LYOs around Serbia. These can be summarized as follows (in no particular order of importance):

**Status, mandate and profile of Local Youth Coordinators:** LYCs that are on service contracts or that work on a voluntary basis have significant capacity issues and challenges to do their work effectively. They have no job security, are often poorly paid and protected and are vulnerable to the vagaries of political change and infighting that plague LSGUs in Serbia. Too often their capacity to do their work with youth depends the favor they find with the political powers that be, often making it a case of cooperate or move on. Many LYCs that work on civil service contracts have been politically appointed, or at least are perceived to have been by the wider local youth community, some have no youth specific competence, and are mistrusted by young people. Although these problems of status, mandate and profile of LYCs cannot to be the rule in all cases, such situations were encountered in many, if not most of the localities visited during the field visit, and were reported by other stakeholders as common around the country.

**Technical, administrative and budgetary issues related to LYOs and LYCs:** The LYO system and the LYC as its representative to youth in the locality experience a significant number of constraints on the work they are supposed to do to implement the LYAPs in place. These include but are not limited to resource penury at the municipal level; resources for youth are often budgeted but then not allocated might be are often not allocated, or only part is allocated; the LYAP is seen by LSGUs as an alternative vehicle for delivering essential services rather than as a holistic and integrated policy approach; there is an ongoing ban on municipal recruitment and hiring, complicated and de fact stopping the formalization of LYC positions in the classification. A further point of concern for some stakeholders, especially among the civic actors, relates to the legacy of youth structures and property that remains

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<sup>10</sup> Peacebuilding and Inclusive Local Development (PBILD) is a UN Joint Program, which works towards inclusive, peaceful and sustainable development in South Serbia. In co-operation with a number of national partners, there are six specialized UN agencies implementing the Joint Program; UDP, UNICEF, ILO, IOM, UNHABITAT and UNHCR.

<sup>11</sup> This is the evaluation's own calculation based on figures provided by the MoYS and relevant agencies.

from the Communist period. Governmental authorities at the local and national level continue to dispose of property, such as the *Dom Omladine*, but often they do not dispose of resources for their re-development and plans for their use are often limited to commercialization. Yet, such property could be well used by young people and youth organizations within an overall strategic plan for the development of dedicated youth spaces, youth clubs and youth civic engagement in cities where such property is currently unused.

**Relations between LYOs, local youth civil society and young people:** In many cases, there exists significant mistrust between LYOs, local youth civil society and young people who all see each other as politically influenced or corrupt, and see themselves as the victims of political infighting. A service provision often reigns, with youth organizations accepting this role to survive, but essentially giving up on their important role as representatives of the interests and concerns of young people to those in positions of power and decision-making. The impression this evaluation gets from the experience of the field visit is that cooperation really only works when all stakeholders are aligned politically, or when youth civil society agrees to drop demands for 'power-sharing' over youth issues in order to get on with the daily work.

**Local politics:** On the one hand, this evaluation holds that youth issues continue to be rather marginal at the local level around Serbia, essentially because those seeking election at the local level cannot see the advantage of taking an active interest in young people's issues, because in many of the smaller localities the resident young people are not able to vote. On the other, young people have the reputation for being both disenchanted with politics and of taking no interest in politics, except when they see a chance to gain employment or some other advantage as a result of their engagement. The stable ground needed for building a culture of cooperation between local decision-makers and structures of decision-making and young people is largely missing. In a number of localities there is no cooperation whatsoever between the local authorities and the local youth civil society, such that absurd situations of duplication and wasted resources are the result. An example can be helpful here. In a small town with a perfectly functioning and excellent quality youth club run by a local CSO that receives no support from governmental authorities, the Municipality plans to open its own youth club rather than joining forces to develop and consolidate what already exists because of political animosities between the powers that be in the city and the CSO concerned. Although this refers to a particular case, the evaluation encountered reports of many such situations, which in the end short-change young people.

**Local governance and transparency:** At least in civil society circles, there is a sense that political actors are trying to control the local public sphere. They complain about a **lack** of transparency and openness towards cooperation with the non-governmental sector, and about the fact that they self-censor in order to avoid exclusion for taking an independent line on specific issues. There are many complaints of corruption and abuse when it comes to the disbursement of funds for youth related projects. Some young people/youth associations have taken this situation into their own hands and are cooperating with coalitions for the exposure of corruption and for the disclosure of how public youth funds are being used. Correspondingly, some LSGUs and LYOs have experienced that local CSOs misuse local funds for youth projects for other or unknown purposes. So, mistrust exists on both sides.

**Relationship between the local and the national level:** The nature of the relationship between the LYAPs and the NYS can be seen as challenging. Often the LYAP simply repeats the objectives of the NYS, without necessary adaptation of priorities to the local context and needs of youth, such that the LYAP becomes the decentralized mechanism for the implementation of nationally identified objectives. This cannot exclusively be because the LYOs rely on the national level for funding. In the end that which they can access from the national level is limited. In the area of reporting, there is communication between many LYOs and the MoYS, and the introduction of the Regional Youth Coordinators (RYCs) was supposed to improve this further. In some cases, this has functioned as planned. However, it must be acknowledged that the RYCs suffer the same or even more constraints as the LYCs outlined above. The establishment of the National Association of LYOs has been supported as a means to improving coordination and communication further, but it has experienced

technical and legal difficulties to register and experiences sustainability issues as it has no access to institutional funding (as in the case of NAPOR and KOMS).

**Co-management (or lack thereof):** Co-management is a key principle of the international youth sector (as pioneered by the Council of Europe) and refers to getting different categories of people in positions of responsibility (in the governmental, non-governmental, research and other sectors) to work together on youth policy and issues. While the ideal it represents is constant, there are a very many ways in which co-management is put into practice around the world, and from the local through the international level. At the local level in Serbia the co-management principle has in theory been enshrined through the establishment of the Local Youth Committees. However, in practice it does not work. The general approach is that youth participation equals youth activism, volunteering and peer-to-peer activities, and that consultation of youth on the development of strategic documents is enough to ensure participation in decision-making. There is little acknowledgement that the Local Youth Committees require direct involvement of the representatives of young people

**Operational standards for LYOs and LSGUs:** While these have been established, widely publicized and LYOs have received training in how to work with them, LSGUs voluntarily commit to implementing them, with the result that many do not. Furthermore, many of those that have attempted to put them into practice, seem not to have been very successful. This continues to be obvious in tendencies among LYOs to prioritize quantity over quality (in terms of project and funding approach), to focus on the more legislative and administrative approach to working with youth (development of LYAPs and grant-making) in local municipalities rather than on the youth work (operational programs, youth clubs) and in the perception of the competence (or lack thereof) of the LYC in the wider youth community (non-youth specific staff doing LYC functions).

**Role and resources of Regional Coordinators:** In 2009, the MoYS created the role of regional coordinator, to coordinate and support the work of LYOs on a decentralized basis. In theory, this system makes a lot of sense, as it creates a role ensuring communication between the national and the local levels. In practice, however, this has not been the case, with the exception of the regional coordinator in responsible for the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Firstly, this is reported to be because of the nature of the appointment of the regional coordinators, which is evaluated as political and not always on the basis of competence for the role. Secondly, and objectively, this is because the regional coordinators have no resources at their disposal whatsoever to conduct coordination work (for site visits, meetings, communication costs), and in some cases they do not even benefit from a permanent workspace (office, desk in a LYO, etc.). Furthermore, their mandate is not recognized by all relevant stakeholders. Under these circumstances, it comes as no surprise when it is reported that some regional coordinators are not spending the majority of their time doing regional coordination.

All these have had a significant negative impact on the reach of what in theory could be an exemplary Serbia-wide infrastructure for youth in the localities. And while not all LYOs and LSGUs are dysfunctional some have consistently been and some well-functioning LYOs have become dysfunctional with changes of local self-government and of Local Youth Coordinators.

## **Regional / Provincial level NYS implementation**

Beyond the institution of the RYCs, the evaluation has not been able to identify specific regional level projects intended to implement the NYS. Nevertheless, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has a unique situation and position that should be considered.

Given its special status and political situation, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has an institutional youth infrastructure that more or less mirrors that of the national level, with a Provincial Youth Action Plan (PYAP), a Provincial Secretariat in charge of its implementation and a Youth Committee made up of representatives in the Provincial Assembly. In effect, the PYAP, with its 9 priority areas, covers the majority of the issues covered in the NYS, so even if formal implementation of the NYS has not taken place through this body, the implementation of the PYAP has de facto been a contribution to furthering those objectives.

By way of example of the scale and scope of the PYAP, and according to the [2013 progress report](#), the general grant-making stream under the PYAP in 2013 dispersed approx. 11.6 million RSD to selected projects (69 projects with approx. 800 direct participants). Most of the projects funded covered issues of environmental protection and sustainable development, and culture and leisure of young people. In addition, the PYAP includes a further grant-making stream specifically addressing prevention of violence and discrimination. This thematic open call dispersed an approx. total of 4.25 million RSD to 16 projects, reaching a total of 172,402 young people. Direct participation included 12,329 young people (5,955 girls and 6,374 boys), with a further 160,073 indirect participants. The average age of the young people carrying the projects (team) was under-21 years. Approx. 21% of the young people who participated directly or indirectly can be considered as disadvantaged or marginalized (young people with disabilities, young people from the Roma community, young people from families of refugees and displaced persons, etc.).

Reporting on the implementation of the Provincial Youth Action Plan (PYAP) in Vojvodina is available for 2012, 2013 and 2014, and makes a number of interesting remarks about its evolution. The implementation of the PYAP is mainly conducted through grant making to municipalities with youth specific programs, youth organizations or CSOs with a program of youth activities. If until 2012, the emphasis had been on the number of projects, 2013 saw a shift in approach, and a demand for more quality and sustainability. Hence, post-2012 reporting points to the fact that larger sums of money were disbursed to fewer projects, with fewer direct participants, with the aim of achieving stronger and longer lasting impact. Furthermore, new criteria for acceptance were introduced, such that projects had to have a regional dimension, in other words, cover a large territory across the Province, and had to involve a number of project partners with different profiles. Furthermore, quality, diversity and innovation of services provided were given more weight in the selection procedure. These new regulations were apparently introduced to address the limited response to calls for projects from the Eastern and South Eastern parts of Vojvodina and to develop cooperation between local governmental and non-governmental actors in the youth field.

In the estimation of the Provincial Secretariat, which prepares the progress reporting, this new approach to grant-making under the PYAP, has contributed to better quality of projects and better impact, although how quality is defined, how it is understood to have improved, and which impacts have been achieved are not elaborated upon.

## **The Fund for Young Talents**

The Fund for Young Talents was established to support extraordinary achievement of Serbian youth in academia, sport and cultural production. It aims on the one hand to develop the human capital represented by young people with special gifts and to give these young people a perspective that will allow them to stay in Serbia and contribute to the economic and social development on the other. In terms of financial investments, the Fund for Young Talents is one of the most important projects implemented under the NYS. Since 2008 14,200 students obtained scholarships and awards to the tune of 30 million euros. In addition, the Fund has established cooperation and signed agreements with companies and institutions in order to provide scholarship recipients with opportunities to further their education, employability and make the transition to working life in their chosen field. In 2014 alone stipends for 1680 students totally equaling 623.022.000 RSD and for 1123 school pupils equaling 42.330.000 RSD were dispersed to talented young people in Serbia.

An [evaluation of the action of the Fund for Young Talents](#) was conducted and published in 2013. It provides an extensive numerical overview of the investments made by the fund and information about how recipients of awards and scholarships have progressed into job placements, internships, employment or further studies, at home and abroad. It further outlines the many partnerships the fund has developed over its years of operation to ensure that young talents can stay in Serbia and still pursue their talents. By its own assessment, the Fund for Young Talents has made the first important step in institutionalizing its own functioning, that is, it has managed to build public awareness and visibility for the opportunity it represents for talented young individuals, and to continuously increase the number of applications received for each of the three annual competitions. There has also been a notable increase in the number of candidates for further studies abroad (in Member States of the

European Union, EFTA countries and some of the world's leading universities). Furthermore, through its various activities in the area of career development support and through its many agreements with companies and institutions, it has helped a not insignificant number of scholarship recipients to gain employment in their chosen field inside Serbia, thereby guaranteeing a certain return on Serbia's investments in them.

Yet, there remain several challenges. By its own assessment, the Fund for Young Talents does not yet have the necessary financial capacity to meet the demand there clearly exists for funding of talented young people. Furthermore, the opportunities for scholars returning to Serbia after periods of study or practice at centers of excellence in their chosen fields abroad are extremely limited, and it remains very difficult to offer them a clear and meaningful perspective when other options are available to them (abroad, for example). As much as respondents to the stakeholder survey conducted during this evaluation evaluated this program positively in the main, they also noted that it is still not visible enough Serbia-wide, that many young people concerned do not know how to use it, and that talents in fields other than sports and academic achievement (different kinds of cultural production) are not sufficiently supported. Finally, with its own objective and sub-objectives within the NYS, the Fund for Young Talents 'behaves' as something of a 'separate' program, not having extensive transversal links with other dimensions of the NYS (as is the case for other pillars of implementation). The program has something of a reputation as being an 'elite program'. Although in theory no-one is excluded, young people with significant social capital are more likely to use it, and this means a lot of talented young people who do not have significant support from their families and schools are not in a position to use it, even if they would be qualified. Furthermore, with its focus on scholarships and awards, the question of why it is not working in closer cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development needs to be asked.

## Grant-making

Grant making was an extremely important pillar of the NYS. Given the ambitious number of objectives and measures planned under the NYS, the limited resources (especially human) of the MoYS, it is not surprising that the decision was taken to 'outsource' a large part of the implementation of the NYS to service providers in the youth sector through a re-granting approach, and that technical support for the grant-making process has been entrusted to service providers.

***Mladi su Zakon*** is a multi-annual program of grant-making to both formally registered associations of young people and so-called 'non-formal' groups run through 25 Resource Centers around Serbia (organizations tasked with re-granting funds under the funding line)<sup>12</sup>, aiming to stimulate self-organization and initiative of youth, volunteering, activism, participation of young people in youth work and leisure time activities, and the development of youth-to-youth support initiatives. Established in 2010, it has conducted grant-making to the tune of approx. 1.75 million euros (approx. 211,169,943 RS) over its 5 years operation to and including 2014.<sup>13</sup> As such, it responds to a whole series of NYS objectives including, but not limited to, active youth participation, youth information, quality leisure, non-formal education, employability and employment opportunities, health lifestyles and non-violence, and has been used by youth groups to conduct projects on these issues all over the country. Unfortunately, extensive information is not available about the breakdown of themes of granted projects.

Both the [survey of beneficiaries and evaluation conducted in 2012](#) and survey of stakeholders conducted in this evaluation process reveal that *Mladi su Zakon* is considered one of the most important and effective programs undertaken under the NYS, especially at the local level and especially as regards what it takes to effectively support youth participation and activism through the NYS. Some [figures from the survey conducted in 2012](#) are illustrative. Asked about the impact of the program, the overwhelming majority of respondents stated they thought it

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<sup>12</sup> An open call is issued annually to recruit the Resource Centers. In 2014 these are: <http://www.mos.gov.rs/mladisuzakon/index.php/2013-07-15-16-02-23/mladi-su-zakon/resurs-centri>

<sup>13</sup> The total number of funded projects and the estimated reach of the program to young people over its years of operation has not been calculated and remains unknown currently.

- encouraged and promoted activism among young people (98%)
- fostered civil sector development (98%) and the formation of informal groups (91.5%)
- made a contribution to improving community development and promoting youth in local communities (94.9%)
- contributed to increasing the sensitivity of the community to specific topics, such as volunteering, charity work, etc. (93.2%)

Furthermore, it is generally felt that the program helped to foster better relations between the civic sector and governmental authorities, especially at the local level.

The evaluation holds that this positive assessment of *Mladi su Zakon* results from the fact that the program (concept and approach) acknowledges three important facts about fostering youth participation (in Serbia). The first is that young people are difficult to activate, and one of the most effective vehicles for this is peer activism. The second is that small-scale, creative and punctual initiatives of young people on all kinds of issues relevant to the implementation of the NYS often never get done because little or no funding is available to young people who are not organized in formally registered associations. And the third is that cooperative relations between the civic sector and governmental authorities are key to sustainable youth participation in the local context.

Nevertheless, there were challenges. Although no comprehensive monitoring or evaluation of the quantity and quality of *Mladi su Zakon* projects and their impact across NYS objectives has been conducted over the entire period of its implementation, the survey of beneficiaries conducted in 2012 points to key issues for understanding the program's potential impact, and specific barriers it may have encountered in its attempts to achieving that impact.

In the first place, there is the question of the sustainability of the youth activity *Mladi su Zakon* has succeeded in fostering. With its focus on informal groups, and funding for once off small-scale interventions, *Mladi su Zakon* may not sufficiently acknowledge the weakness and lack of community embedding of many associations in the localities of Serbia. Beneficiaries express particular concern about their financial sustainability, the lack of alternative sources of funding, and their difficulties to fundraise, even for projects. Secondly, and while the program is appreciated, beneficiaries feel it could be supporting their capacity development better, especially in fundraising, project development, implementation and evaluation, organizational development and for doing youth work. Thirdly, there is the question of how to foster mutual exchange and learning across the actors involved in the program. The position of local authorities in this relation seems most challenging. And finally while there is general satisfaction with the way the program works, there is nevertheless the sense that some of the budget, administration and reporting procedures are unnecessarily complicated and could be simplified considerably. The upshot of the above is corroborated by both the stakeholder survey conducted during this evaluation and by the discussions held during the field visits with beneficiaries, Local Youth Offices, implementers and other stakeholders.

A further and final challenge the evaluation highlights is that the question of the quality of the projects funded under *Mladi su Zakon* has never been systematically studied. By now, and even without year in-year out monitoring, quite a lot is known about the reach of the program, in terms of numbers, and that it is more attractive to young people than some other mechanisms of participation foreseen under the NYS. However, the real experience of the young people of the projects that are conducted is less well understood, potentially limiting the capacity of the program to adapt to the dynamic development of youth needs and youth cultures, even if the resource centers involved in disbursement of funds are closer to grassroots youth who applications they receive than the MoYS.

There have been two further categories of funding stream in operation during the period of NYS implementation, these being **general open calls providing funding to CSOs and other legal entities at any level for activities implementing NYS objectives**, sometimes thematically oriented, and **open calls for LSGUs and LYOs for funds to implement LYAPs**. According to information provided by the

MoYS, it financed 934 projects/programs of youth organizations to implement NYS objectives between 2007 and 2014, to the tune of more than 10 million EUR.<sup>14</sup>

While a larger investment than *Mladi su Zakon* in financial terms, the impact of these investments is not perceived as positively by stakeholders of the youth sector, especially by the civil society organizations. The evaluation holds that several problematic structural factors have caused this situation, including but not limited to the following most important ones:

- funding regulations that put national level platforms (which do not have access to specific institutional funding streams) into competition with their own members for project funding;<sup>15</sup>
- the lack of a programmatic approach to the disbursement of funding through such calls (once off projects are funded, and they have to be completed within the funding year);
- late and partial dissemination of the information about new calls (such that the call is disseminated just a week or two before the application deadline);
- an 'ad-hoc' approach to the choice of thematic focus for particular open calls (changes from call to call; lack of communication about why);
- huge competition for small amounts of money (the number of youth organizations registered as beneficiaries with the MoYS has skyrocketed in recent years and the MoYS has wittingly or unwittingly taken the approach of trying to fund as many projects as possible with the resources they have at their disposal);
- Typical negative effects of 'outsourcing' re-granting schemes that employ CSOs as implementers – partial or complete co-optation of organizations, concentration of resources in the hands of a few CSOs, poor transparency around selection procedures; acrimony over the selection procedures for organizations acting as re-granters.

In relation to funding for LSGUs to implement LYAPs, and since 2011, only 'Category 4' LSGUs<sup>16</sup> can benefit from funding directly from the state budget, under the rules of subsidiarity in place under the Law on Local Self-Government. Before 2011, all LSGUs could receive funding from the state budget, and today most do not qualify for such funding. As mentioned above 388 such projects were financed, to the tune of 1.3 million EUR. The evaluation encountered some consternation on the part of local actors regarding the regulations governing access to funds from the national level. Notably, the fact that CSOs and LSGUs/LYO are increasingly forced to cooperate with each other on project development and implementation to qualify for any funding from the national level at all was raised as a constraint, such that applications are not possible in some contexts. While this speaks to the extent that personal and political relationships in the local context can be an obstacle to the effective delivery of services to young people at the local level, it is also well known that the act of 'having to' work together can be 'game-changing' experience and can have a capacity building effect, in that it creates the first contact required to develop cross-sectoral cooperation, proven to be absolutely essential for ensuring delivery.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> All figures in RSD: 2007-149.979.594,06; 2008-233.861.957,35; 2009-152.917.918,54; 2010-118.852.783,44; 2011-122.689.426,62; 2012-112.259.557,22; 2013-156.075.406,69; 2014-133.681.274,22.

<sup>15</sup> The Law on Youth defines 'Krovni savez' (umbrella federation) as every federation consisting of at least 60 registered associations, having their head office on the territory of at least two-thirds of the counties of the Republic of Serbia and which have carried out youth activities in several local self-government units for at least two years, and which have at least 2,000 individual members, registered once, of whom at least two-thirds are young people. These (at least) 60 registered associations, apart from being registered with the Serbian Business Registers Agency, also have to be registered in the Integrated Record of the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Source: <http://www.mos.gov.rs/o-ministarstvu/sektor-za-omladinu/pravilnik-o-evidenciji-i-lista-evidentiranih-udruzenja/?lang=lat>

<sup>16</sup> Category 4 refers to the lowest level of social and economic development of a municipality, in other words to the highest level of social need or disadvantage. The specific measure of Category 4 can be found in the [Law on Regional Development](#) of 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Howard Williamson discusses this dynamic in some detail in 'Supporting Young People in Europe' vols. 1 & 2, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/IG\\_Coop/YP\\_Supporting\\_young\\_people\\_Vol\\_II\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/IG_Coop/YP_Supporting_young_people_Vol_II_en.pdf) and [http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/Supporting\\_young\\_people\\_en.pdf/27ad0c48-bb5c-4974-8a8b-24cfea06a592](http://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/Supporting_young_people_en.pdf/27ad0c48-bb5c-4974-8a8b-24cfea06a592).



In terms of the management of the grant-making portfolio, many stakeholders in the civic youth sector have criticized the decision to outsource, considering it problematic that such an important public function should be conducted by organizations outside the public sector. Furthermore, the practice of outsourcing has been criticized for not being transparent enough, for being prone to conflicts of interest, and for the resulting selection having chosen organizations which many feel are not experienced enough or the role. So while outsourcing has had efficiency advantages for the MoYS, it has also had important disadvantages for how the MoYS and specific of its CSO partners are perceived by the rest of the youth sector. Unfortunately, and as a result of this situation, there is a strong sense among some stakeholders that not everything in this area has been conducted completely 'above board'.<sup>18</sup>

## Youth information

With an objective of its own under the NYS, the area of youth information has been given considerable priority under the NYS, as it is rightly seen as a pre-requisite for effective NYS implementation. Priority has been given to decentralizing the points of access to information for youth to the local youth offices, modernizing the youth information system in line with international best practice (notably the standards proposed by the [European Youth Information and Counseling Agency - ERYICA](#)) and developing the digital literacy of young people, and conducting grant-making to make information campaigns and projects for and by young people on specific themes possible. Furthermore, the MoYS introduced a system of Info Days (about opportunities for youth in Serbia through the NYS and European programs, among other topics) and site visits to local youth offices in order to reach out directly to young people and relevant professionals in the localities.

Some work has been done with the support of the Ministry of Culture in the area of the development of 'youth media', although as a rule (inside and outside Serbia) youth media does not equate with youth information in concept and contents. Further, with the support of the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society and Republican Institute for Information Technology and the Internet, the MoYS launched the [Imagine Life Portal](#), but the domain name expired at the end of October 2014 and the portal appears to be inactive. 111 LYOs received training to open career information services. A panoply of smaller projects have been conducted in this sphere, funded both through open calls issued by the MoYS and implemented by local through national CSOs, many youth specific. The stakeholder survey and the field visit conducted under this evaluation both point to recognition in the youth sector that that progress has been made in improving and extending the youth information system over the period of NYS implementation. Finally, the European youth information system (made up of several organizations and providers) is present and active in Serbia in relation to the promotion of the European youth programs and opportunities for Serbian youth to participate.

Nevertheless, key challenges remain, and speak to the need for a more complex and integrated approach to youth information across all objectives of the NYS and from the national through the local levels. In the first place, and as will be evident from the kinds of measures which have been taken under this objective, youth information is more often than not put into relation with and prioritized in the area of employment and career guidance. While this is understandable in a context where the primary need of young people is considered to be access to sustainable livelihoods, it clearly underestimates the information needs of young people and the power of youth information and the potential role it could be playing across the objectives of the NYS. Secondly, the infrastructure for youth information, especially that encountered in the smaller and more isolated localities during the field visit, seems to be fairly outdated, involving info boards and info corners in the LYOs, although these localities would exactly need more developed youth information services, that allow for remote access and individual engagement, and even 'outreach' approaches. Thirdly, there is no 'one stop shop' youth information portal serving the entire territory of Serbia. While some exemplary initiatives do exist (NGO and municipal youth information offices / centers, youth clubs with a youth information function, etc.) and have their own web-resources, and many youth sector actors are

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/birn-summer-school/party-ties-help-ngos-win-key-serbian-ministerial-deals>



savvy at using social media and other open source vehicles for making youth information available, this does not constitute a strategically integrated system of youth information.

## International cooperation and partnerships

Since its very establishment, the MoYS had been extremely active in the area of international youth sector cooperation, recognizing the advantages of international exchange for its capacity to reach its own objectives under the NYS and for the youth sector in Serbia.

The political will this recognition translates into for international cooperation is demonstrated by the fact that Serbia has become something of a regional leader in European cooperation. This recognition and the political will it represents has made Serbia something leader in in South East Europe in this area. The MoYS estimates that over the period of implementation of the NYS, the series of projects conducted and ongoing in collaboration with international partners aimed at implementing National Youth Strategy has reached over 100,000 young people in Serbia. The total financial investment in youth in Serbia during the NYS implementation resulting from international cooperation is difficult to calculate accurately, but based on the information available to this evaluation (direct reporting from international partners and the MoYS; relevant evaluation material published by the international institutions) it can be stated with relative confidence that this exceeds 20 million EUR (and this does not include applications accepted by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and the European Commission's Youth Program (YiA).

Adequate evaluation of this area as an element of the NYS implementation requires a differentiation between **'external international cooperation'** and **'internal international partnerships'**.<sup>19</sup> We can include the best part of youth sector cooperation with the European Union and the Council of Europe under 'external international cooperation'. In this area, Serbia has been an example of good practice, taking many initiatives to engage in exchange, contribute financially, learn from others and make good use of resources available and profile its own experiences and achievements.<sup>20</sup>

In relation **EU cooperation** (especially to the use of EU funds for youth and engagement of Serbian young people in the EU youth programs, primarily Youth in Action and European Voluntary Service), not only has the number of projects and participants steadily increased (uptake is on the rise), the quality of projects is evaluated as having consistently improved over the years.<sup>21</sup> This speaks to the efforts of the MoYS and its key partners (the [Erasmus+ Contact Point](#)<sup>22</sup> and the [Tempus/Erasmus+ Office in Serbia](#)) to effectively promote the programs and the opportunities they offer and to inform young people around Serbia about them, and to the capacity of the MoYS to act effectively when there is political will for engagement. It also speaks to the quality of communication between the national and European level. Furthermore, a timetable for the establishment of the National Agency

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<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of the evaluation we will define **'external international cooperation'** as that through which Serbia contributes to international cooperation on the European or global level, makes financial contributions to international organizations, through which opportunities are extended to Serbian young people to participate in international exchange, mobility and training programs and through which international youth related initiatives can take place in Serbia with the participation of Serbian youth. We shall define **'internal international partnerships'** as that through which international donors and development organizations conduct their own programming with youth in Serbia or support joint programs with the MoYS and other partners with Serbian youth as beneficiaries and stakeholders.

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.hajdeda.org.rs/08\\_download/youth-in-action-in-serbia.pdf](http://www.hajdeda.org.rs/08_download/youth-in-action-in-serbia.pdf);  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/t5cevw2br1t0yaq/2014%20MOYS%20report%20COOPERATION%20WITH%20COUNCIL%20OF%20EUROPE.doc?dl=0>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.hajdeda.org.rs/08\\_download/youth-in-action-in-serbia.pdf](http://www.hajdeda.org.rs/08_download/youth-in-action-in-serbia.pdf), pp. 11-12

<sup>22</sup> As the countries with EU association agreements do not have their own national agencies for the implementation and promotion of the EU youth programs, locally embedded youth organizations have been selected by open competition to act as contact points. In Serbia there were 3 responsible for the promotion of Youth in Action and EVS during the period of the Lifelong Learning Program – 2007 and 2013 ([Hajde da, BalkanIdea](#) and [Edukacioni centar Kruševac](#)). The MoYS introduced a special budget line to provide resources to Contact Points in promoting the Program and conducting capacity building for its implementation. In addition, during the period 2008 – 2014, approx. 100,000 EUR were granted to Contact Points selected by the European Commission.

for Erasmus+ has been agreed. This will allow Serbia to participate fully in the youth programs of the EU. Nevertheless, the process will only be completed in 2018, a considerable delay on what was hoped for in some parts of the youth sector, in part due to the lengthy procedure for the establishment of national agencies required by the European Commission, in part due to the large financial cost the establishment and running of a national agency implies for the Government. Until then, participation of Serbian young people in Erasmus+ is only possible under the so-called Balkan Window, which will be available to organizations from Serbia from April 2015.

In relation to **Council of Europe co-operation**, the MoYS has also been very proactive, taking many initiatives to ensure that opportunities for mutual learning and benefit are used, through participation in all relevant political bodies of the Council of Europe co-management bodies, participation in partial agreements (for example, the [Partial Agreement on Youth Mobility with the European Youth Card](#))<sup>23</sup> and active engagement with flagship pan-European youth campaigns and initiatives, such as the [No Hate Speech Campaign](#) (its National Campaign Committee is the only one participating that has included Roma youth organizations in decision-making) and the [Youth Peace Ambassadors project](#).

Notable are the fact that Serbian youth associations and initiatives are among the most active in using European Youth Foundation funding<sup>24</sup> and that the development of its NYS has been considered a model of good practice, serving as one of the examples for the development of [a guide on how to develop a national youth policy](#). Furthermore, it is a leader in the adoption of quality standards elaborated by the Council of Europe's Youth Department for Youth Centers, with one residential youth center receiving the [Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centers](#) in 2015. Finally, 14 Memorandums of Understanding with relevance to youth have been signed with countries from the SEE region and Europe-wide. These represent the legal basis for the improvement of cooperation with individual countries in the fields of youth mobility, information and activism.

This **positive state of affairs in the area of European cooperation** speaks to the fact that the MoYS and successive Serbian governments have recognized the benefits of European youth sector co-operation and prioritized these. Participation in relevant programs of European cooperation, despite having a strong external dimension, are nevertheless seen as vehicles for the implementation of key objectives of the National Youth Strategy with European and national objectives matching quite extensively. [In the case of the NYS, this can certainly be said to be true of objectives in the areas of active participation, voluntarism, employability and inclusion of youth and the development of youth work.](#)

Cooperation with the agencies of the [UN](#), with the international assistance, aid, development and cultural promotion agencies of other countries (such as, [USAID](#), [GIZ](#) and the [British Council](#)) can be considered under 'internal international partnerships', as in general, these bodies conduct their own programming with youth in Serbia and support joint programs with the MoYS and other partners with Serbian youth as beneficiaries and stakeholders under the auspices of the NYS. There are strong overlaps between the agendas of some international partners and the objectives of the NYS in areas such as health, inclusion, migration, getting young people into employment, formal and non-formal education on specific issues (e.g. sexual and reproductive health and rights), human rights of young people coming from minority groups, children's rights, development of youth participation and volunteering. Again, the availability of funds for multi-annual projects inside Serbia dealing with many of these issues has made partnership with such organizations attractive for the MoYS, with its very ambitious strategy. For their part, the meeting with international partners during the field visit revealed that they evaluate cooperation with the MoYS very positively, citing the openness and constructive attitude of the MoYS to working with them and their more challenging experiences of

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<sup>23</sup> According to the MoYS, some 70,000 young people in Serbia use the European Youth Card. The MoYS has provided support for its promotion.

<sup>24</sup> According to [information provided by the MoYS](#), between 250-300,000 euros of European Youth Foundation funding has been disbursed to Serbian applicants annually for the last several years, representing approx. 10% of total EYF funding dispersed across Council of Europe member states.

attempted co-operation with other Ministries and government agencies in efforts to achieve their objectives in Serbia.

While overall, this area can be evaluated positively there have also been challenges. In the first place, some stakeholders in the evaluation have raised the issue of donor-driven priorities, in the sense that the existence of international partner budget lines for particular issues or problems of young people may encourage national authorities to prioritize those issues over ones which are more clearly acute as per current data. In the long run, all interventions conducted in partnership that bring resources into the youth sector are a positive contribution. Nevertheless, this begs the question of how the establishment of priorities is approached, and of the ways in which youth needs are identified, raising further questions of data-centric strategic planning and of how the principle of co-management is interpreted and translated into practices of participation of young people in decision-making (as well as practices of consultation of young people). Furthermore, the question of the accountability culture of the Serbian youth sector was raised during the field visit. There is a constituency of youth sector stakeholders that feels strongly that international donors and partners should be demanding more transparent reporting of the use of their funds and more rigorous monitoring of results from their grantees (governmental and non-governmental, with the aim of fostering more accountability in the sector. Finally, there is the fact that governments often use donor money to finance projects they cannot get through because of a lack of political priority or because of active resistance, avoiding the core issue of why the project was socially or politically 'unacceptable', and thereby, effectively exonerating government of responsibility for addressing it.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of Serbia, given the extent, scale and scope of its international partnerships, it is not unlikely that some youth issues are being addressed in this way, giving cause for concern about the sustainability and long-term impact of international donor / partner engagement for change in the national approach to certain issues. Changing this situation is certainly not fully within the control of the MoYS, however. Based on the experience of the evaluation with various governmental actors during the field visit, it is safe to say that the positive attitude of the MoYS towards international cooperation in the youth sector is not equally distributed across government. This, however, does raise the further question of the extent to which the MoYS is 'leading' on youth issues, something that will be taken up in a later section when evaluating according to performance criteria.

## ***Evaluation of performance criteria***

Several key performance criteria were identified as important to the evaluation by the commissioning partners (MoYS and UNFPA). These are **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, leadership, human rights approach and impact**. As the **human rights based approach** is one of the key elements of the international principles the evaluation will consider (in the next section of this chapter) and as **impact** is the subjective of the last section of this chapter, these will not be dealt with here as well. Each performance criteria shall be discussed in general, and then some more specific points about each in relation to the national, regional/provincial and local level of implementation and governance are made. The definition of each of these performance criteria is provided at the beginning of each section.

### **Relevance: The extent to which the Strategy and Action Plan considered and addressed real needs of young people in Serbia**

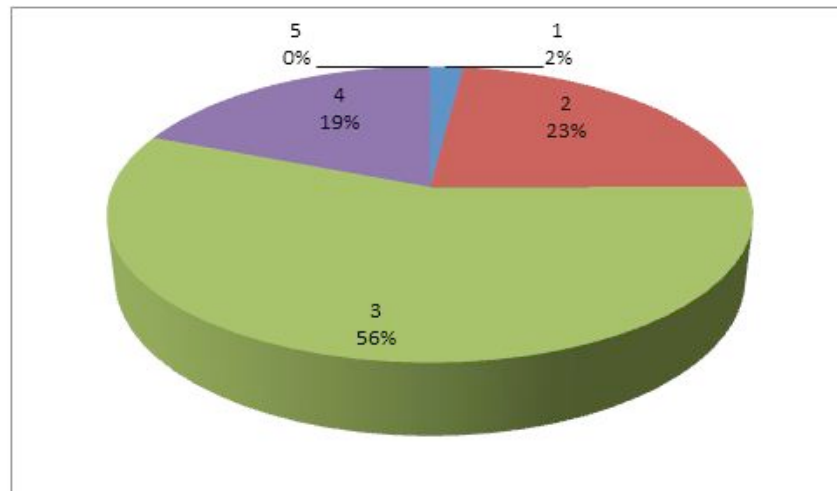
This evaluation finds that the NYS considered real needs of young people, and the activities that have been undertaken centrally and in a decentralized manner generally addressed such needed. On this

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<sup>25</sup> A good example of this is the approach to comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health/rights education through the formal education system. In most countries this is impossible and international agencies such as UNFPA are compensating for this by developing programs of out of school education, on the one hand doing what should be the work of public authorities, and on the other hand, not engaging with the core issue of the taboos surrounding this kind of education for society and education. This basically circumvents the authorities and does not sustainably alter the situation for the long haul, even if many young people receive non-formal education on SRHR.

performance criterion, respondents to the stakeholder survey scored the NYS with 3.03 out of 5 (see graph).

**Graph 1: % of responses on a scale from 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent) on the relevance of NYS Implementation**



In general, stakeholders participating in the evaluation find that the situation analysis presented was accurate, and that a large part of it remains valid today (without this being a negative judgment on the NYS). Nevertheless, it has not escaped their attention or that of the evaluation that there are many inconsistencies between the Strategy adopted and its Action Plan, and many differences between what the Action Plan outlines and what was actually done.

The situation analysis of the NYS is not a summary of a comprehensive ‘baseline’ study dedicated to the situation of young people, involving original research and surveying, and conducted with the aim of finding out what the data says about young people’s lives and what young people themselves say about their lives, in order to define which key themes are most important for the NYS to address. Rather, the situation analysis provides an overview picture of several key situations, that can indeed be justified as needs of young people, but which were pre-defined areas of strategic importance for the stakeholders involved in the process of developing the strategy. Comprehensive data about young people has not driven the choice of priorities, rather the priorities were identified and data has been provided to justify why they constitute needs of young people.

This fact does not make the situation any less valid, yet stakeholders participating in the evaluation rightly point out that for the NYS to be relevant, the needs, and the opinions, of young people need to be checked regularly and at shorter intervals than the period of implementation of this NYS. While to its credit, the MoYS does commission research on youth attitudes relatively regularly (annually since 2008), it is unclear how this is used in the day-to-day implementation of the Strategy and the evaluation has not been made aware of any ‘strategic revisions’ to the NYS having taken place.

Participating stakeholders also considered that the **economic and political instability** of the last years in Serbia, largely coinciding with the implementation of the NYS, have **made it more difficult for the NYS to address the needs outlined in the situation analysis**. This is certainly corroborated by the fact that the general macro-economic situation in Serbia has dis-improved since the publishing of the NYS. Back in 2007/8, it was certainly hoped that it would be possible to make more substantial progress on youth unemployment than has in fact been possible due to the worsened economic condition of the country. Furthermore, there have been three changes of government since the NYS was published. While it is not possible to say this with any certainty, it is not unlikely that these this has changed the way the NYS has approached some issues – either because of the worsening conditions and chances for real change or because of new political constraints or changed political priorities. Furthermore,

stakeholders from across the youth sector have reiterated again and again that the NYS was 'too ambitious' and had 'too many objectives', for the situation and for the timeframe of implementation. So, while relevant, it was not necessarily realistic.

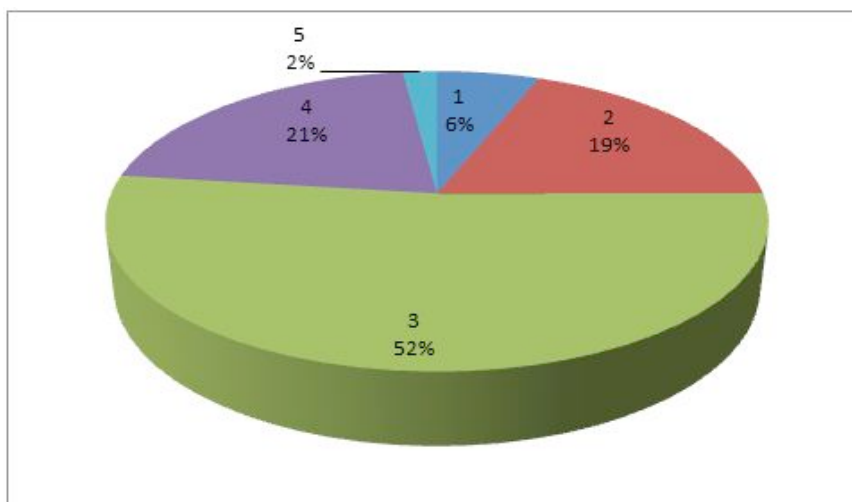
Another issue raised as concerns relevance relates to implementation. Many stakeholders question the level of priority received (in terms of investment and the number of dedicated actions) that some objectives received in comparison to others, stating that employment, education and housing have been such enormous problems for young people and so consistently over time that NYS implementation should have focused more on these and less on other issues. The figures tell an interesting story. For example, a total of 439.151.953,53 RSD was spent on Goal 1 (youth participation) from the state budget in the period 2009 - 2013, whereas during the same period Goal 8: Youth employment (identified as one of the most challenging and pressing problems of youth in Serbia) received 7 times less funding (with 59.240.543,95 RSD) and Goal 4: Equal chances, which includes support for young people with unresolved housing issues (another challenge cited as really important for young people) received only 25.713.378,18 RSD. These figures beg the question of how decisions on what got how much money was made, not because they were bad decisions, but because they certainly seem somewhat counter-intuitive. Furthermore, the role and responsibilities of other Ministries and other departments of government beyond the MoYS for NYS implementation have to be considered here. It was very challenging to access any information about the 'youth component' of the actions of government departments other than the MoYS, even when they were directly responsible for specific NYS objectives. This challenge clearly has to be addressed when considering cross-sectoral cooperation and monitoring and evaluation for the NYS, and is discussed further in the section on NYS performance in relation to international standards.

In terms of the different levels of implementation (national, provincial/regional and local), this evaluation concludes that the local level of governance does not necessarily have a 'better understanding' of the needs of young people just because they are geographically closer than the regional or national level. In the experience of this evaluation, the openness to and level of cooperation with civil society in a particular locality had a much more important impact on how the LSGUs / LYOs conceptualized youth needs (abstractly, based on some research or surveys vs. in human terms, based on examples of real situations or stories). The evaluation had the opportunity to meet many LYOs and LYCs during the fieldwork, and to hear about situations in many others. Those LYOs whose LYCs that consider themselves 'part of the youth community', tended to have better relations with the CSOs and youth initiatives they worked with than the LYOs whose LYCs considered themselves representatives of the LSGUs. At the regional level, the level of direct communication between Regional Coordinators and the LYCs they support is directly correlated to the perception LYCs have of the competence of the Regional Coordinators and their perception of the relevance of the support they receive, indicating the extent to which communication is key to understanding context, and by extension to having a grasp of the issues at stake for young people.

**Effectiveness: The extent to which the Strategy and Action Plan have been able to address their objectives and tasks in ways that have supported their achievement and have led to results**

The question of the effectiveness of the NYS reveals a relative polarization of perspectives across different kinds of stakeholder in different parts of Serbia, and at different levels of governance. From the perspective of this evaluation, all these opinions and ideas are valid and warrant attention. However, it is difficult to develop a coherent picture from them, as they tend to define effectiveness differently. On this performance criterion, respondents to the stakeholder survey scored the NYS with average grade of 2.92 out of 5.

**Graph 2: % of responses on a scale from 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent) on the effectiveness of NYS Implementation**



Some common criticisms in relation to effectiveness received from a variety of stakeholders, not just those involved in the survey, were that the NYS implementation has not been focused enough; that it lacked appropriate mechanisms for implementation; that sustainability was not achieved; that although it had good intentions, it had too few resources to be effective; that it did not involve young people enough; that the progress made was small; that the measures taken under some objectives were not appropriate to the task; that it lacked quality assurance mechanisms and that it was plagued by corruption, politicization and a lack of transparency. Other stakeholders felt it was difficult to judge on this point, because little or no evaluation to this effect had been done, the annual or semi-annual progress reports did not treat this issue, and that a lot more was done, than was documented.

In relation to the national level implementation of the strategy, and considering the above criticisms, the huge ambitions of the NYS in comparison to the resources at its disposal, especially its human resources, the evaluation finds that the MoYS has effectively managed the task for which it was responsible: to lead NYS implementation. As will be readily visible from the tables outlining the measures taken, there is almost no objective that has received no attention, and a very large number of specific activities have either been conducted centrally or have been delegated to service providers / implementers and young people's initiatives, on almost all issues raised by the situation analysis. In addition, many of the flagship projects conducted were of a pilot nature, and took a multi-stakeholder approach, leveraging additional funding and competence, indicating that the MoYS understands the need to use its limited resources to experiment with scalable models.

Furthermore, and this should not be underestimated, in a period of just 6 years, a more or less complete institutional framework and a good part of the infrastructure for the delivery of youth policy has been put in place, and that in conditions of economic crisis and of political change and instability. While it is true that some parts of this infrastructure are dysfunctional and the institutional framework for youth policy has some limitations, this an enormous achievement, and speaks to the extent to which perseverance on the part of key staff in the MoYS is instrumental for 'getting things done' in the Serbian governance context.

This said, there are some aspects of the way things work at the National level which objectively hinder effective policy implementation, and they can be put into two categories: technical challenges of doing policy in Serbia and political challenges of doing policy in Serbia. On the technical side, the moratorium on civil service hiring combined with stringent limits on the hiring of staff on service contracts; the absence of systematized ongoing monitoring and evaluation of NYS implementation; the lack of a clear and accepted mandate for the MoYS to 'lead' and 'coordinate' on all things youth inside the government of Serbia; the lack of a program budget (this was about to change at the time

of writing) and the apparent lack of obligation on any other Ministry to report to the MoYS, and on LSGUs to follow adopted guidelines and standards, has significantly impacted on effectiveness.

The political side of this equation is trickier, because it has to do with how vested interests and political priorities inevitably play out in the negotiations that are the day-to-day work of government. On the one hand, the MoYS has undoubtedly had to make compromises to get anything done, and nature of the compromises that had to be made have necessarily changed with each change of government. This is often perceived by civil society as 'selling out' to the political powers that be. In fact, it has been highly pragmatic – as it acknowledges that it is sometimes more effective to take what you have managed to secure and not ask for more, than to risk losing what you have secured by asking for too much. On the other, the politicization and the polarization of Serbia's public life along lines of loyalty and dissidence to current power holders is palpable in every aspect of governance. There was almost no single stakeholder that did not raise this as a significant issue for the effectiveness of NYS implementation efforts. This has created a certain sense of resignation and withdrawal among CSOs and youth activists that have taken a dissident stance, and the level of mistrust between youth civil society and government has grown (at least in the estimation of youth civil society representatives). The lack of credible co-management in decision making on youth policy, and ongoing debates around the status, funding and role of the National Youth Council KOMS, and other umbrella organizations representing youth and youth work interests, have contributed to the growing perception in the civil sector that this government's democratic credentials are questionable.

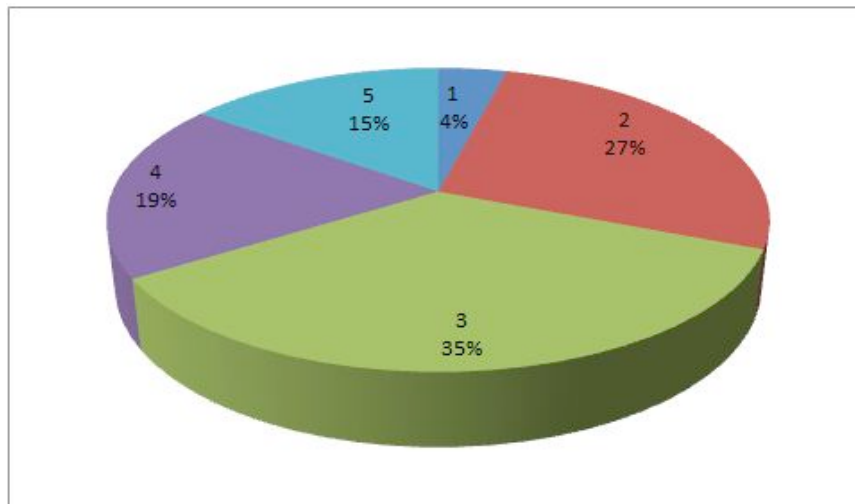
For their part, the provincial/regional level and the local level, experience similar technical and political barriers to effectiveness. In the case of the provincial/regional level, and based on the information this evaluation has been able to gather during its various activities, the system of regional coordination of LYOs is not working effectively, with the exception of one region, where there are nevertheless problems of communication and cooperation with the regional governmental authorities for youth (Provincial Secretariat for Youth Sport in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the only region to have this level of government). Furthermore, there seems to be no communication and cooperation between those regional governmental authorities and the MoYS, beyond what is formally required.

The many challenges facing local level youth policy delivery have been developed upon in detail in a previous section of this chapter. Suffice it to say here, the youth sectors of the localities met and observed by this evaluation are, with the exception of one or two exceptional cases, plagued by political infighting, creating animosities that have paralyzed implementation in some cases, short-changing the young people living in the localities concerned. In some, the politicization of the youth sector is so extreme, that it has led to really serious problems: duplication of action, concentration of financial resources in the hands of some youth organizations (without accountability for what they do) and the 'starvation' of others; accusations of corruption and abuse of funds; bodies with common goals working in isolation from each other with 'their' young people and poor transparency around funding decisions, to mention just a few.

**Efficiency: The extent to which the Strategy and Action Plan have used resources (financial, human, time, etc.) well and appropriately, and in ways which supported the implementation of their objectives**

Stakeholders that replied to the survey generally focused on the human and financial resource limitations and many were critical, with some blaming unsatisfactory outcomes of NYS implementation on inefficiency by the MoYS or other authorities charged with implementation. They rated the NYS implementation with average grade of 2.94 out of 5 for this performance criterion.

**Graph 3: % of responses on a scale from 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent) on the efficiency of NYS Implementation**



Efficiency is of course a matter of resources, but it would be simplifying the matter overly to see it exclusively in those terms. In the understanding of this evaluation, it is an assessment of the relationship between the resources that were available, what was feasible, how the resources were used and what was achieved that makes for an accurate picture of efficiency. Hence, the assessment presented by this evaluation will present two perspectives – a positive one and a not so positive one.

At the national level, and in relation the MoYS, the resource limitations experienced during the NYS implementation are quite obvious: not enough financial resources to do everything that was planned on the scale that was planned; limitations on the kinds of resources that were possible to mobilize; the period of implementation of the NYS was approx. 6 years, which is not little, but also not a lot, when one thinks in terms of the preparation and passing of legislation and human resource limitations (both in terms of numbers and competence). On the positive side, the MoYS has done a lot and achieved a lot in the time it had, and in a context of political instability; it has leveraged a lot of external funding from international partners and donors; it has developed some projects that can be considered scalable models; it decentralized its processes of grant-making and developmental activities to other actors of the youth sector closer to the grassroots and with more competence for the work in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity; and it has managed to implement legislation and create an institutional framework for the youth sector and to come quite far in consolidating it. On the not so positive side, the MoYS took on too much, maybe having, but certainly creating, unrealistic expectations; tried to spread resources as widely as possible to ensure wide coverage, but failed to pay enough attention to quality of outcomes; pursued many ‘once-off’ projects; did not manage to institutionalize co-operation with some other sectors and levels of government, leading to duplications and silos; and there is a perception that co-operation with the civic sector has dis-improved.

At the provincial/regional level, the Provincial Secretariat for Youth and Sports moved to a program approach, funding fewer projects with their limited budget, and applying stricter criteria for selection with the aim of improving the quality of projects. However, beyond its own progress reporting ([2013 progress report](#)), which states that this move has been positive for the quality of the projects funded, little is known about the impact of this efficiency measure.

At the local level, the picture is very mixed, as a result of the diversity of contexts, resource situations approaches, practices of the LSGUs, LYOs and LYCs and it would be unfair to make a sweeping generalization about their efficiency as they are so different. The resource limitations are very obvious, and there are a number key factors hindering the overall performance of that the LYO

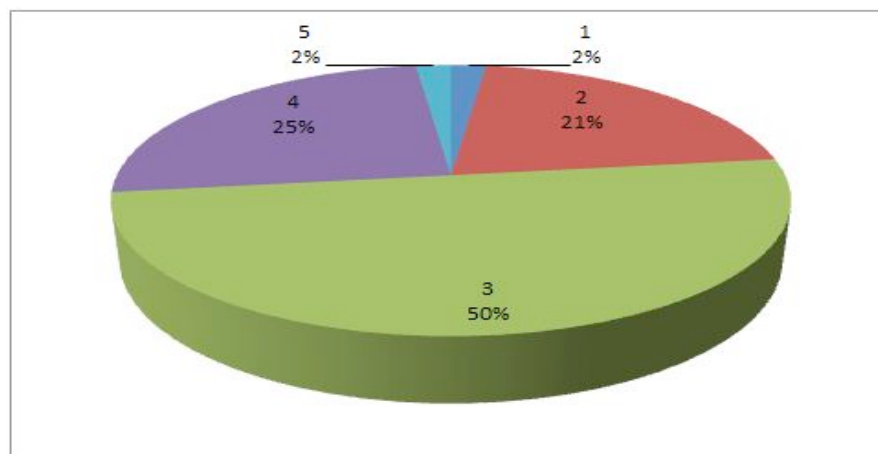


infrastructure, which have been dealt with in some detail in a previous section, and which do not require repetition here.

**Leadership: The extent to which those in charge of implementing the Strategy and Action Plan have demonstrated vision, remained true to mission, considered the needs of end-beneficiaries over other interests, taken initiatives, pushed implementation forward and generally acted as role models in the process**

On the leadership performance criterion, the stakeholders that took part in the survey rated this criterion of the implementation of the NYS with average grade of 3.32 out of 5.

**Graph 4: % of responses on a scale of 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent) on leadership of NYS implementation**



The fact that much depends on the personal commitment and dedication of key position holders has been acknowledged by those who answered the survey. In relation to the national level, some survey respondents referred to current and previous Ministers and State Secretaries as having visionary spirit. Others were critical, and questioned the competence of those implementing the NYS. In general, however, the staff of the MoYS was congratulated for their dedication and commitment, for taking on responsibility for the NYS and for making efforts to motivate other actors.

Nevertheless, and overall, youth policy was felt to be made up of 'too many words, and not enough deeds'. An interesting point was raised in the survey about a change in the nature of leadership in comparison to the beginning of the process of NYS implementation, that is that there was decisiveness back then, and it is no longer observed. Furthermore, the survey raises the question of the profile of the youth agenda within a Ministry that is seen to be far more focused on sport. Finally, some stakeholders raised their disappointment that the international partners present in the youth sector in Serbia are not 'leading by example' more. In other words, the question of why they do not demand better respect for basic standards of reporting, monitoring and evaluation, transparency, and quality control, from both their governmental partners and their non-governmental beneficiaries, especially when it comes to projects they finance, was raised several times.

This evaluation holds that, at the national level, the MoYS has demonstrated leadership, but has done so in different ways within government and towards the outside (in relations with youth civil society, or in its international partnerships, for example). Inside government, and although it chairs the working group on the implementation of the NYS, it has not managed to impose itself as the 'lead' on all things youth. Although it has been a consistent and often successful advocate for youth within government, its role in pushing for youth to be mainstreamed across sectors, and to lead on coordination across sectors, has not yet been solidified to the extent necessary for it to be possible to speak about 'integrated policy for youth'. This issue is taken up in more detail in the next section (evaluation according to international principles).

## ***Evaluation according to key international principles***

The [1st Global Forum on Youth Policies](#) took place in Baku Azerbaijan at the end of October 2014. Looking back at 20 years of youth policy development across the globe in different regions and countries, but also through the global multi-lateral and regional cooperation institutions, its deliberations reiterated several key principles that certain key principles for the basis of a global consensus on what youth policy should be about and how it should be done. The [Baku Commitment](#), a document prepared by the conveners of the Forum, restates these principles and commits action on the part of those partners to their promotion in the coming years.

These principles are a good benchmark for the evaluation of National Youth Policy, and the extent to which they have been considered and pursued in Serbia's NYS implementation shall be considered in this section.

### **A human rights based approach:**

*Designed and implemented within a human rights based framework, in line with the country's global and regional commitments.*

The NYS explicitly aspired to take a human rights based approach, and it is listed as one of the guiding principles and values of the youth sector in Serbia and of the NYS. Many of the objectives of the NYS demonstrate concern and sensitivity for the human rights dimension. In practice, many young people in Serbia are living experiences and conditions that violate the most basic of their human rights, but this is not necessarily because they are young. Being young only exacerbates their situation, as they are more vulnerable and have even less social and political capital than their elders in similar situations. The NYS has tried to be sensitive to such situations by its attempts to be inclusive of such young people or by organizing specific activities on and around human rights issues and for specific target groups who experience a violation of their rights. Furthermore, a lot of youth activism and peer-to-peer work / projects funded through the NYS has tried to promote tolerance, intercultural dialogue, Roma integration, inclusion and integration of vulnerable youth into the labor market or education (according to the information at the disposal of the evaluation, the amount of grant-making on these topics has exceeded 20 million RSD in the period of NYS implementation). Yet, as is often the case, outcomes do not always match good intentions. This is unavoidably an area where more, and better, will have to be done more consistently, more persistently and with more sustainability, across all sectors of government, if the situation of such young people is to be effectively redressed.

### **Inclusivity:**

*Ensuring equal opportunities for every young person to achieve their full potential in life, including the elimination of barriers of inclusion, especially of vulnerable groups and enabling civic participation of all young people.*

Similarly to the human rights based approach, the inclusion of vulnerable, marginalized, excluded and special needs young people is mentioned explicitly in the NYS and many measures and activities have been undertaken to promote inclusion, from a variety of perspectives (economic, social, cultural, community, school, NFE, decision-making, etc.). Yet, this evaluation observes a common misunderstanding about what inclusion means in practice. In the estimation of this evaluation, the question of inclusion has more often than not been considered from the perspective of the desired outcome: 'getting marginalized young people into jobs'; 'developing their competence'; 'providing them with health information'; 'making them participate'. Yet, effective and sustainable inclusion has a lot to do with the process through which the inclusion outcome is reached, and especially to do with the agency the ones to be 'included' have for determining the nature of the inclusion. This evaluation finds that the measures taken for inclusion under the NYS have not always been sensitive to this problem and this is visible in the lack of participation of young people from marginalized groups of

youth in decision-making on inclusion measures that will affect them. Furthermore, and as noted by international partners, there has been some resistance in government circles to the idea that ‘some youth are more vulnerable than others’, with the idea that ‘all young people are vulnerable’ dominating the approach to implementation. This is clearly a political issue.

### **A participatory approach:**

*Designed, developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with the meaningful participation of young people, and with the involvement of all concerned stakeholders, from the local to the national level, in both rural and urban settings, and in all development contexts, including post-conflict and transition situations.*

The NYS was developed through what has been hailed as a model process, an example of good practice from point of view of the participatory approach, involving all stakeholders, putting youth organizations and young people in the driving seat. Yet, the implementation of the NYS has been less participatory, with young people and their organizations generally being conceptualized as beneficiaries or service providers, with the exception of one specific program intended to promote youth activism in which young people’s own interests and ideas have driven the nature of priorities for funding (*Mladi su Zakon*). Furthermore, little monitoring and evaluation of this strategy has been conducted, and that which has been conducted has not included a broad base of young people. Beneficiary organization reporting has been the most important basis for the development of the limited progress reporting conducted during implementation. Furthermore, the NYS aspired to the promotion of youth participation, and youth participation in decision-making. Yet, and in the same vein as what has been said about inclusion above, there is a big difference between participation and the participatory approach to participation. Real participation in decision-making, that avoids tokenism, involves the sharing of power and the direct engagement of representatives of young people, youth organizations and particular youth interest groups in policy-making, and this reaches further than consultation, something that the MoYS and its local partners have done on a more or less regular basis, even if only in the form of surveying attitudes.

### **Gender-responsiveness:**

*Enabling specific actions to promote gender equality, ensure young women are equal partners to young men, and to address gender-based disparities in all settings, from political to socio-economic and cultural.*

In its situation analysis, The NYS identifies the increased vulnerability of young women to specific risks and the question of young women’s participation as issues of concern. Yet, there is relatively little discussion and acknowledgement of the Serbia’s challenging ‘gender culture’ in other aspects of the situation analysis. One [comprehensive study of the gender-responsiveness of the Strategy carried out by a Serbian CSO in 2014](#), reports that in general the Strategy (both in terms of its formulation and in terms of its implementation) fails to effectively mainstream a gender perspective. It makes this judgment based on specific evidence, such as that implementation and reporting have not ensured an adequate disaggregation of participation by Gender, so it is impossible to estimate the real numbers of girls and young women being reached by the Strategy, especially for vulnerable groups; that Gender differences have not been analyzed sufficiently in the establishment of the priorities of the strategy; how they have been impacted upon by the action of the NYS is has not been adequately studied and that the question of Gender-based violence (including the role of young men in combatting it) has not been sufficiently prioritized. As it stands, and to the best of the ability to judge of this evaluation, relatively few specific activities were carried out on this complex of themes and social challenge.

*Comprehensiveness: Adopting a holistic approach to youth development, through increased collaboration across policy sectors, ministries and other relevant entities as well as by providing an integrated strategic framework that guides legislation and measures affecting youth.*

On the one hand, and with its many and diverse objectives, the NYS has certainly attempted to be comprehensive in its coverage of youth issues. Efforts have been made at both the national and local levels to develop a more integrated approach between youth specific policy objectives and implementation measures and other key sectors of relevance to their implementation (health, social welfare, employment, education, justice, etc.). These have met, however, with mixed response, which is a one likely reason for the fact that in its application, however, this evaluation holds that some issues and some young people have received more attention than others. Furthermore, the reasons for what and who got priority and why in a given phase of implementation were not always very clearly communicated to the youth sector at large.

So, while making brave attempts to institutionalize practices of cross-sectoral cooperation, and while itself being very open to partnership with other sectors of government but also partners outside government, the MoYS has not managed to profile itself as a coordinating body ensuring the comprehensiveness and integration of policy measures for young people. Certainly inter-sectoral cooperation on youth is today understood as necessary and mechanisms have been created to foster it and the national level, but they require the cooperation of other bodies as much as the leadership of the MoYS, and this cooperation appears not to be very forthcoming in the case of some other sectors of government and at the local level. This is visible in the fact that certain key sectors, some directly involved in NYS implementation, are not working with youth as a specific category (c.f. health, social protection) and that local level youth policy delivery is basically seen as the exclusive responsibility of the LYO rather than as a joint responsibility of a network of authorities dealing with youth related issues.

### **A knowledge- and evidence-base:**

*Developed and regularly updated, based on the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative information on the situation, needs, challenges and opportunities of young women and men in a given context.*

The NYS is based on a situation analysis that has been established on the basis of research evidence about the needs of young people (in general. As mentioned above, the dimension of gender differences in youth situations was rather neglected). Yet, in the estimation of this evaluation, the choice of priorities was not sufficiently led by the data. Certain priorities were formulated as strategically important government by government (for example, the Fund for Young Talents) without such being a pressing need of young people as demonstrated by comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, the evidence base for the NYS is not established systematically and in a manner comparable over time (many studies of youth and youth policy are being produced but without coordination and without widespread dissemination, if the desk review during this evaluation is anything to go by), making it difficult to update and further develop the situation analysis underlying the Strategy, to steer implementation in a direction of more effective intervention and to evaluate impact.

### **Fully resourced:**

*Have adequate, transparent and dedicated resources for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and maximizing available resources through coordination and by enabling multi-stakeholder partnerships and shared ownership.*

While the financial resources available the NYS were by no means negligible, those resources were negligible when considering the scale of some of the issues the NYS sought to tackle (the best example has to be youth unemployment which in 2013 was 40,4% for the age bracket 15 – 30 in Serbia and for the age bracket 15 – 24 is 49,7% ([Labor Force Survey 2013](#)), almost double the 2012 EU average of 23% ([EU Youth Report](#))). Furthermore the number of staff working at the MoYS to implement, oversee and monitor the NYS was negligible in comparison to the task at hand, even taking full account of the externally contracted support teamers (7 full time civil servants and 18 contracted support staff).

If we look to the local level we see that the situation was even more critical, especially in those LYOs that were unable to receive any direct funding from the MoYS to implement their LYAPs because the level of development of their locality made them ineligible (c.f. category 4 funding), or in those localities where the LSGU has given little or no priority to the LYO, and work with youth across sectors of local government. Many LYOs are operating on the basis of the voluntary commitment of the Local Youth Coordinator. This is certainly one of the factors influencing the effectiveness of NYS actions, and for which many excellent models of good practice developed and experimented with during the NYS implementation have not been brought to scale.

Finally, it must be pointed out the resources available to the NYS have never been comprehensively calculated and are not publicly available. It will not escape readers' attention that many of the figures included in this evaluation cannot be considered more than 'guesstimates', cobbled together from various sources of information. At the local level there are serious issues of transparency around the financial resources available for young people. There are concerns in the civic youth sector about the withholding and even abuse of funds allocated to youth for other purposes in some localities. Correspondingly, there are also concerns among LSGUs about cases of abuse of funds by CSOs.

Nevertheless considering the above, and at least at the national level, this evaluation finds that the MoYS has made sterling efforts to make the most of the resources at its disposal and to leverage others through international and other partnerships. So while this evaluation must find that the resources at the disposal of the NYS were not adequate, it finds that those have been maximized to optimum effect.

### **Accountable:**

*Nationally and locally owned and led, and regularly monitored and evaluated, against specific youth development targets and indicators, with the active participation of youth.*

While the NYS certainly aspired to be accountable (as clearly demonstrated by the process of its development and many of the formulations it includes) and its implementation has created some mechanisms for accountability, this evaluation finds that the implementation process itself has not been accountable enough to the civic youth sector and to young people and their representatives for several reasons including the lack of co-management of the NYS; the lack of meaningful participation of young people in NYS decision-making during the implementation period; the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the NYS implementation using youth specific indicators while it was ongoing; the ongoing status and consolidation problems of the National Youth Council (KOMs) and the fact that the 'Youth Committee' began its work only towards the very end of the NYS, among others. Furthermore, there is the matter of transparency and good governance, as a dimension of accountability, which this evaluation finds problematic, especially at the local level. The question of the financial rectitude of some LSGUs in their dealings with youth is an important challenge for the governance culture in Serbia. Some civic actors are putting this on the agenda through 'publish what you pay' style campaigns to ensure that local public spending on youth, which is de facto public information, is published and available to the public. This issue is dealt with in more detail in the conclusions chapter.

## ***Impact of the NYS on its main fields of its action***

### **Introduction**

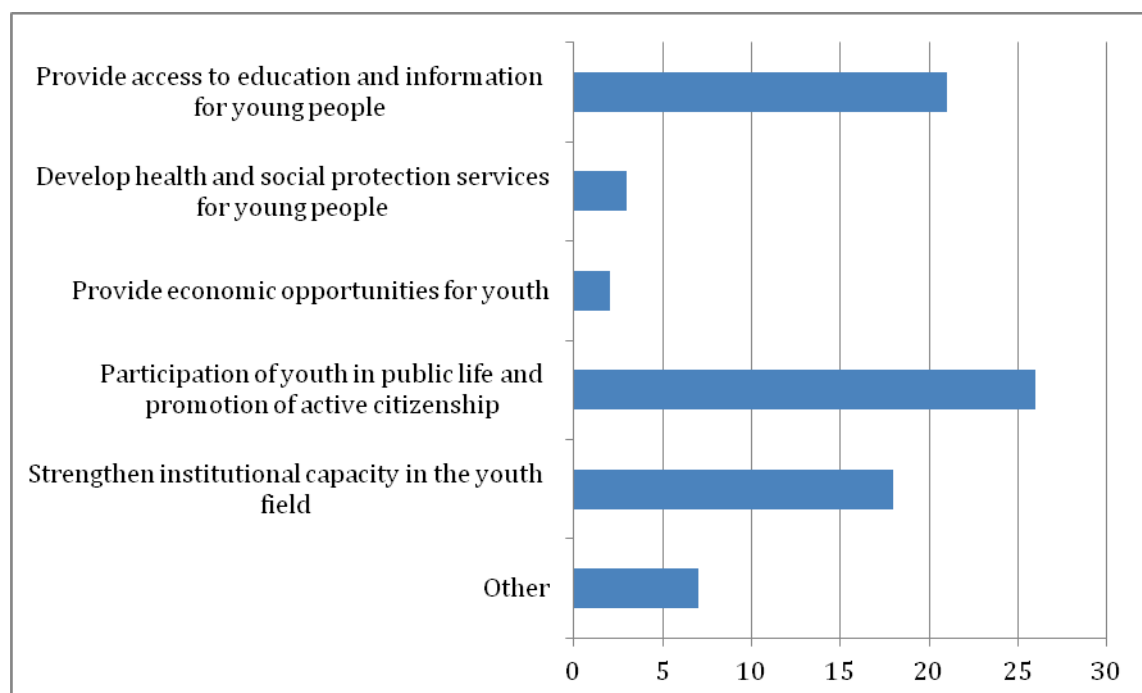
This section attempts to evaluate the impact of the NYS on five key fields of action, those being education and information, health and social protection services, economic opportunities, participation in public life and active citizenship and institutional capacity in the youth field. It acts as something of a summary of all other sections of this chapter, and prepares the ground for conclusions to be drawn.

It is important to reiterate that this chapter is not an in-depth evaluation of the impact of the NYS on the situation of youth in each of these areas. Without data collected over time about the changes in the life situations of youth and without attendant qualitative research into how young people are living, including subjective measures about how they feel about their lives, it is impossible to make solid evaluations of impact, because there is no baseline to compare to, and because progress on key indicators over time have not been tracked (although routinely collected statistics for some aspects are available). Further, it would be spurious to claim that strong causal relationships can be established between the action of the NYS and the overall situation in any of these fields, given the fact that young people become 'adults' with time, and the youth of 2007/8, are not necessarily the youth of 2014. Rather, with the right kind of ongoing research, involving monitoring across the NYS but also across all sectors of policy action, it is possible to evaluate what might have changed for young people who have participated in or been reached by the actions of the NYS. The issue of research, monitoring and evaluation will be taken up again in the conclusions section. Suffice it to say here that the 'assessment of impact' presented in this section cannot be anything but partial, despite having been enriched with a variety of perspectives beyond those of the evaluation team.

## In general

The stakeholder survey considered the question of how successful the NYS had been in addressing the five key areas of action, with a strong polarization of responses in favor of education and information, active participation and citizenship and institutional capacity. As can be clearly seen from the graph, economic opportunities and health and social protection are considered not to have been addressed successfully.

Graph 5: Number of responses out of total responses (52) by thematic area in answer to the multiple-choice question: 'In your opinion, which of the following have the Strategy and Action plan been successful in addressing?'



The results of the other activities to evaluate the NYS corroborate this overview, and point to some key challenges. These are dealt with field by field.

## Education and information

Three objectives of the NYS can be said to directly address the challenge access to education and information of young people (3. Information of youth; 5. Encouraging talents; 7. Developing formal and non-formal education), with specific measures to reform, improve, institutionalize systems of education (formal and non-formal); to extend participation in educational activities, and to actually disseminate information to young people. Furthermore, and as can be seen from the presentation of measures taken by objective and sub-objective, the implementation of almost all other objectives has included explicitly 'educational' or 'informational' approaches to varying degrees. This fact is important, because it demonstrates the extent and scale of investment in education and information through the NYS and the extent and scale of expectation that is placed on education and information for improving the general quality of life of young people. Taken together, these are not insignificant and run into the hundreds of millions of dinars over the period 2008 – 2014. And not without good reason. Ongoing investments in the improvement of the reach and quality of education and information of young people can have long term impacts for the overall social, cultural, political and economic development of a country. So much for the validity of the rationale of the NYS.

In terms of what has been achieved, including from the subjective perspective of stakeholders in the sector, this evaluation finds that important progress has been made in several respects:

- the **quantity of non-formal education, youth information and formal education** available has without a doubt been increased through the NYS. This is especially visible when we look to the local level. Before the NYS and the establishment of the Local Youth Office system, there were many localities in Serbia where young people had no access at all to either non-formal education opportunities or youth information services. From 'nothing' to 'something' can be said to be an improvement. This can also be said in relation to formal education. The Fund for Young Talents has certainly enabled access to education for a large number of gifted young people, through its scholarship program;
- the **quality of non-formal education and youth information** can also said to have been enriched by the many investments in the development of standards, quality development programs, training of educators and youth information workers in NFE and youth work, and in career guidance and counseling using NFE approaches;
- the **political and social recognition for the potential of non-formal education and youth information have been enhanced** through the many programs bringing different kinds of professional concerned with youth issues (inside and outside the youth sector) into contact with concepts, approaches and methodologies with which they were not familiar before;
- furthermore, there now exists a level of **acknowledgement that quality assurance and development are necessary** to deliver results through non-formal education and youth information, especially among professionals of NFE and youth information, but in also in other sectors;
- the **competence of the sector to conduct both non-formal education and youth information** have certainly been enhanced during the NYS implementation period.

This evaluation holds that the above achievements have created conditions conducive to improving the availability, access, reach and quality of education and information. These measures have undoubtedly contributed the creation of a more 'enabling environment' for young people to pursue their education, career plans and choice of lifestyle. However, the existence of an enabling environment, like the existence of opportunity, does not equate with access or improved outcomes. So, while 'a good start' has certainly been made, especially in the areas of non-formal education and youth information, the NYS has not achieved the extent and level of progress it set out to in several key respects:

### Access

- from an **inclusion point of view, there is still a long way to go** to ensure that the access of all young people to formal education commensurate with their potential. This remains particularly true for at least two categories considered vulnerable under the NYS – **Roma young people and**

**young people disabilities (physical and / or mental).** Even if many excellent activities have been carried out, the structural and social barriers to 'inclusive education' are enormous, and will require not only reforms to education, but attitudinal change in the wider society to be realized sustainably;

- furthermore, and although more attention has come to be given to the **prevention of school drop-out and to second chance education** in the last years, through pilots and discussions of what local youth sectors can do to influence the challenges related to these themes, a more systematic approach would be necessary;
- a similar **inclusion challenge is faced in the area of non-formal education**. Even if its methods and approaches favor inclusion, and even if its promoters and deliverers have put some emphasis on this theme, and some organizations of marginalized youth have benefited from support from the NYS grant-making available (for example, 17 Roma associations have received grants from the NYS), the impact on the overall problem of inclusion seems to be relatively limited. Discussions with relevant government agencies and representative bodies of Roma valued the NYS for the opportunities it offers but corroborated the above conclusion;
- the **Young Talents Fund**, wittingly or unwittingly, **favors young people with high levels of social capital** by virtue of its focus on academic achievement, necessarily limiting access. Secondly, **access to the Fund remains much too dependent gatekeepers** (school directors, individual professors and families of gifted young people). Finally, there is a witting or unwitting **favoring gifted young people in 'economically relevant fields' (e.g. science, technology, etc.) and in sports**, to the detriment of cultural and artistic production.

## Quality

- the NYS has sought to improve access to quality education. **The challenge of the quality and relevance of formal education remains thorny and pressing in the eyes of most stakeholders of the youth sector.** Many measures to compensate for the deficiencies of what is considered to be a broken system have been put in place through the NYS. However, **little appears to have been done to change the crux of the problem – the approach to teaching, the content of the curriculum and the level of participation of students in reform and management of the education they receive;**
- furthermore, while some improvements have been made as concerns the appropriateness of the approach to youth information, **it is not yet possible to evaluate the quality of current service as 'modern', i.e. corresponding to internationally recognized standards.** This undermines the good results in increasing the amount of youth information and the number of physical youth information access points.

## Reach

- an objective was to improve access of young people in **isolated regions, small rural localities and de-populated areas**, and these continue to **be under-served by youth information and by non-formal education**. Even if there are indigenous examples of good practice, the NYS has not achieved to scale them up;
- furthermore, some stakeholders consider that media coverage of the NYS and the opportunities it has on offer has been poor, and **little information on programs for young people is available via television, which is [still an extremely important source of media for young people](#)** (with social media, like Facebook, being the other most important source).

## Health and social protection

The NYS has two explicit objectives pertaining to the health and social protection, and one on safety of young people (objectives 10, 4, 9 respectively), which the evaluation team considers relevant here. As in the case of education and information, a national youth strategy cannot be expected to fix dysfunctional health and social protection systems. This evaluation holds that the measures undertaken under the NYS demonstrate acknowledgement of this fact, and the MoYS has, wittingly or



unwittingly, taken the **pragmatic decision to focus on filling gaps and improve existing provision by making the case for the development of 'new' youth specific health and social services and safety measures**, having the ability as it does to mobilize partners and leverage their competence in specific areas such as adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health, among others. Taking this approach is the 'long road to walk', as it involves helping professionals of long standing to 'unlearn' a good part of the canon of what they have been taught their whole professional lives. This was ambitious and brave, but equally it was a risky gambit. The evaluation can identify several important achievements, but also several 'building sites' which are likely to remain 'active' for some years to come.

In terms of achievements, the whole area of **legislation** is crucial to these youth challenges and issues, especially in areas such as juvenile justice, regulation of social services, protection of children / youth in the care of the state. Many of the measures carried out under the NYS in relation especially to social protection have targeted the improvement, modernization and harmonization of legislation in line with international standards of good practice. This acknowledges the fact that even in a country in transition, whose process of judicial reform has not been completed and continues to be problematic, changes in legislation and especially in the enforcement of legislation, have important trickle down effects for the development of public culture. Considering that the young people concerned by these essential services are often among the most marginalized and discriminated, being victims not only of violence, crime, trafficking, abuse and deprivation, but also of irrational prejudice, efforts in the improvement of legislation can be expected to yield benefits for the young people most concerned in the long term, both in terms of how they are seen by society and in terms of how they are treated under the law.

At the same time, and this speaks to the risks involved, **it is unclear whether the measures foreseen and implemented in the area of social protection have actually improved the workings of legislation** for the young people concerned. This warrants an example. In 2009, under the provisions of NYS objective 4, draft minimum standards for the institutional accommodation of children and young people were drawn up and piloted, with plans to introduce them to all institutions for the residential accommodation of young people. This is one of several measures taken in 2009 to address the following sub-objective: To reduce the number of young people in residential accommodation and to improve the offer and quality of services to those young people that stay in the institutions. Yet, no information is available as to whether anything has been done to implement these minimum standards in subsequent years, and no information is available on how this might have improved the living conditions of the young people in such institutions. This does not have to mean that nothing was done, and there has been no effect, even if it would appear to be the case from the dearth of information available. Another example from the health area is pertinent. In 2009/2010, the Ministry of Health adopted the [National Program for the Health Care of Women, Children and Youth](#). While its implementation to date remains questionable, the very existence of the program is an opportunity.

The second main area of achievement can be observed in the **creation of infrastructure**. This is particularly visible in the area of health, particularly sexual and reproductive health of young people. A relatively small number of projects have been conducted under the NYS in this relation, with mixed results in terms of reach and impact on youth health. Yet, these leave behind potentially lasting structures and processes, that if further supported could have positive results for youth health, even if currently are not fully functional. A good example in this relation is the work of the [Global Fund in Serbia](#), for which young people are among the most important beneficiaries.

Another example is warranted, demonstrating both the achievement and risk. Within the NYS, efforts have been made to open 'youth friendly health services' (in the form of drop in clinics) within the local public health clinics, and many local health clinics have such units. Guidelines and standards have been elaborated on what these services are supposed to do and how they are supposed to serve young patients. Quite a lot of medical staff in polyclinics has received specialized training for staffing these youth friendly services. According to the Ministry of Health, Department for Public Health (which is partner of the MoYS on youth health projects) the medical professional culture in Serbia is changing, with more and more medical staff being aware of the specificities and sensitivities of working with young patients. In theory, a multi-disciplinary team including psychologists and

counselors with specialized knowledge and practice for conducting youth health staffs these youth friendly health services. Yet, most polyclinics do not have the resources to effectively keep these youth friendly services open, few are staffed by such multi-disciplinary teams and even fewer are in a position to offer young people what they really need – comprehensive sexuality and sexual and reproductive health counseling, free contraceptives, mental health services and substance use counseling. So, **the infrastructure is in place, but it does not really work (yet)**. And, the external (international) funding may only be for a pilot period of three years, after which it is **unclear whether the Ministry of Health, the MoYS or any other body will be able to provide further funding for carrying the infrastructure through to sustainability and autonomous functioning**.

In the same vein, **outreach from within the community has been a key approach promoting youth health**, possibly with even more lasting results than the creation of infrastructure. It is interesting to note here that ‘community’ can refer to any grouping, from like minded active young people who are committed to promoting healthy lifestyles among their peers to young Roma women who want to improve their own sexual and reproductive health and that of their mothers, sisters and cousins. Yet, such projects require time and long term investments in the training new generations of community members to continue doing outreach, and to be brought to scale. It has to be acknowledged that there is simply no guarantee of that kind of investment in the conditions of resource penury facing the Serbian authorities, youth or otherwise, even when there is political will.

Thirdly, **awareness raising and campaigning** have been important pillars of action, especially in relation to health and safety, and the Serbian youth sector (governmental and non-governmental) has developed its competence for this kind of outreach to young people through the many initiatives undertaken in the area of health and safety promotion, prevention of violence and prejudice, prevention of substance abuse, peer to peer awareness raising on sexual and reproductive health risks. This kind of work has been conducted by the MoYS and its partners centrally, or through project funding to initiative groups and CSOs. However, even if the saying ‘repetition is the mother of knowledge’ holds true, it is notoriously difficult to assess the impact of awareness raising initiatives, especially when it comes to objectives of behavioral change (e.g. in relation to smoking, driving under the influence, engaging in unsafe sex, substance abuse, etc.). **Many thousands of young people have certainly been reached with messages about healthier lifestyles and tolerance through the activities conducted under the NYS, and a large proportion of these young people will act as multipliers of those messages, but little or nothing can be said with certainty about what these messages have changed in their attitudes and behavior (at least in the absence of specific and targeted evaluation)** or on any knock on effects for the state and prospects for youth health over time.

Finally, **international partnerships** have proven absolutely crucial in developing the scope and reach of the NYS especially on health related objectives, and this for three reasons. First, certain international organizations have health related objectives which overlap considerably with the NYS objectives in this field. Second, they have money for things that the MoYS cannot afford to do itself. And third, the Ministry of Health, which has primary responsibility for this field, still does not recognize youth as a special demographic and, therefore, has difficulty in engaging with NYS objectives. This speaks to broader challenges of inter-sectoral cooperation, resource penury and donor priorities that are evaluated in other sections of this report. Suffice it to say here that in this particular case the involvement of international partners has **made it possible to implement effective pilot models of youth health promotion that can, in the future, be replicated in a decentralized way and scaled up over time**. This kind of approach will have an impact on youth health outcomes.

## **Economic opportunities**

This theme straddles several objectives of the NYS, and so received quite a lot of attention in its implementation, the development of economic opportunity for young people being seen as an underlying pre-requisite for ensuring many other dimensions of well being on the part of the individual and society as a whole.

Undoubtedly, the efforts of the NYS under objective 8: Stimulation of employment, employability and entrepreneurship, etc., have impacted on the economic opportunities of young people in Serbia. The same can be said of all the measures taken under the NYS to develop the supply of well-trained, well-educated and basically experienced young people to the labor market. In general, the evaluation finds that these have been of relatively good quality, judging by the several evaluations of discrete projects conducted with the support of NYS funding or on an operational basis by the MoYS and its partners in the areas of career guidance, development of work experience, job placement, development of skills for employment, etc., that have been conducted. These point to the fact that 'modern' and international approaches have been used in the development and implementation of these projects. They have also had relatively wide reach, considering the resources at their disposal. **The many young people who have been involved in these initiatives have certainly gained in employability.**

This said, the open question and conundrum in relation to the extent to which the NYS has addressed the challenge of economic opportunity for young people has consistently been and remains one of the **lack of sustainable livelihoods for young people leaving education** (whatever their level of educational attainment), and the situation in this relation has not become better over the period of NYS implementation. On the contrary, it has become worse, as a result of the world economic crisis, which has worsened the overall macro-economic situation of Serbia, obliterating what had been a promising level of growth around the time the NYS was published in 2008. This has caused general standards of living to fall. So, while the pragmatic approach of helping those with qualifications, but needing support to find a job, get into work, has worked well where there are jobs available, the NYS has not been able to significantly impact on the fact that there are simply not enough jobs to go around, even for those with high academic qualifications. To make matters worse, getting a job is by no means a guarantee of a sustainable livelihood.

Serbia is by no means alone in finding this challenging. Most countries in the EU and around the world grapple with this problem. A common approach has been to try to systematically assess future needs of the labor market, and use that information to institute reforms in education and training. This has proven complex, politically sensitive, time-consuming and expensive, and more often than not, has not delivered the hoped for results in terms of sustainable livelihoods, because education and training systems cannot react fast enough for the dynamic nature of the global economy. This approach has underpinned many of the NYS interventions and pilots intended to impact on the economic opportunity of young people.

Sterling efforts to promote entrepreneurship have been made, but have (so this evaluation finds) generally not focused enough on empowering young entrepreneurs to set up and run businesses, even if many of the projects have done an excellent job around skills training for entrepreneurship. This evaluation finds that **fewer initiatives have been taken to create the 'enabling environment' required for youth entrepreneurship to flourish** (agreements with banks and credit institutions to provide seed funding with preferential rates of interest, special legal and tax provisions that motivate young people to take the necessary 'risk' of self-employment and setting up their own business, strong educational measures embedded in the school curriculum to create the critical mass of understanding and interest among youth for entrepreneurship, lobbying and advocacy in the business community to support young entrepreneurs, to name just a few) than to promote entrepreneurship as a value and as a credible approach to attaining a sustainable livelihood.

There is also a socio-political attitudes dimension to the question of economic opportunity. In a country in transition, such that Serbia is, there are **some traditional cultural barriers to how economic opportunity gets distributed**. This evaluation has been told again and again by youth sector stakeholders of all kinds that young people in Serbia today believe that being a member of the political party in power will get you a job, especially in public service, which continues to be single largest guarantee of a sustainable livelihood. For as long as this is the case, or perceived to be, sustainable livelihood development will be undermined, because the 'quick-fix' will always win. There seems to be little recognition of this situation, and the pragmatism of young people in its face, in the approach taken by the NYS to this issue.

Finally, there is the **vexing question of inclusion**. Economic opportunities and outcomes are a cornerstone of successful inclusion, and while it is understandable that the NYS in a context such as Serbia puts maximum emphasis on the economic opportunity of all young people, there are **specific groups of young people whose experience of discrimination and segregation in education and over-representation among the unemployed and those working in the informal labor market ensure that they are consistently marginalized from economic opportunity**, and to an alarming degree. This is certainly still the case for Roma, for young people with disabilities and for young women trapped in poverty. There is truth in the saying that 'a rising tide takes all boats with it', and this seems to be the assumption underlying most of the work done in the area of economic opportunity under the NYS. Yet, some young people and some communities simply need more help. And **the number and scope of measures taken to improve the economic opportunity of such young people has simply not been important enough to ensure lasting effect**, even if some excellent models that could be scaled up have been piloted.

## Participation in public life and active citizenship

Youth participation and their active citizenship are explicitly covered by four objectives under the NYS, covering active participation in society, participation in decision-making, quality of leisure time and promoting the goals of environmental protection and sustainable development, respectively (objectives 1, 2, 6, 11). Of these, Objective 1: To encourage young people to participate actively in society, received the highest financial investment out of all 11 objectives (439.151.953,53 RSD in the period from 2009 to 2013 inclusive). However, several other objectives, not least those pertaining to the promotion of equal chances (objective 4), the development of non-formal education (objective 7), the safety of young people (objective 9) and health promotion (objective 10) have relied heavily on the vehicles of youth participation and active citizenship for achieving their goals.

As will be evident from the presentation of the measures undertaken under the NYS, a very large part of the strategy has explicitly or implicitly promoted these two core values of the youth sector. Stakeholders involved in the evaluation point to many achievements including greater acknowledgement for the need to involve young people in decision making processes; support for youth activism has grown (in terms of resources); the development of local youth action plans has given young people on the local level the opportunity to express their needs and have them considered in policy; youth organizations in some towns have been empowered and can play a more active role in the public life of the locality; young people in some localities demonstrate more interest and willingness to volunteer; the 'position' of youth in the local context has been improved and young people have more opportunities to access space for using their leisure time constructively and in a socially responsible manner.

It is extremely difficult to assess the extent to which the NYS investments made have improved the participation culture or sense of active citizenship of young people in Serbia, a factor that in the 2007/8 situation analysis was given quite some importance as a barrier to youth participation. [Latest available research on attitudes of young people to volunteering shows that when asked, they are interested in the idea of volunteering, yet about 70% of those surveyed never have.](#) These results are widely corroborated by the upshot of discussions held during the field visit conducted during this evaluation with a variety of stakeholders actively involved in delivering opportunities for participation to young people around the country, including through volunteering. The assessment of stakeholders closest to the local contexts where young people live was consistently that young people are passive, inactive and hard to motivate and involve in any form of activity, unless it is associated with some form of material or social gain (i.e. getting a job, being paid, etc.). Yet, what can be seen from the implementation of the NYS, especially under objectives 1 and 6, is that there is no shortage of demand from young people and their initiative groups for opportunities to participate, get involved in activities and spend one's time constructively. The floods of 2014 also demonstrated once more that mobilization of young people for specific causes is possible. These somewhat contradictory results beg the questions of how young people are participating, and what is hindering them, if they are not?

Based on everything the evaluation team has been able to observe, it would appear four very separate situations of youth participation are interacting with the NYS.

In the first place, with the growth in opportunities for 'free participation' according to interest and personal motivation of the young people concerned through important, and in this context, well-resourced national NYS programs such as *Mladi su Zakon*, there has been a consolidation of the participation culture among 'active young people'. The minority of young people, they benefit from a higher level of social capital than their peers who do not participate – [research corroborates that the few young people who have volunteered tend to be better educated and enjoy the support of their families](#). The approach of devolved grant-making through contact points and resource centers to informal groups means young people with 'ideas' and a 'sense of initiative' can take matters into their own hands and 'do something' they are excited about and motivated to do. In this way general participation is uncoupled from membership of a youth organization, or any other membership, and becomes a fluid and temporary form of engagement. Engagement with public life takes place through the project, which may or may not seek to change something in society. The young people **see themselves as leaders, but do not see themselves leading in public life. That is the work of politicians and young people do not want to be like them.**

Secondly, one can observe other 'active young people', similarly endowed with social capital, who seek and find opportunities for participation through the activities of Local Youth Offices and through Municipal funds for promoting the constructive use of leisure time and youth self-organizing, most often referred to as activism. While such opportunities have been put in place in theory for all young people, **access to such often comes at the price of collaboration with the powers that be controlling the LSGU in which the LYO is located, which can be hostile to civil society groups seeking to maintain autonomy and independence.** This dynamic limits the scope and space of participation to that which is essentially acceptable to those with political power, unless alternative sources of funding can be found. So, public life is remade in the image of those with political power, and young people and youth groups who want to 'make a difference' often have to choose between the means to do so, and 'splendid isolation'.

Thirdly, **those who are disadvantaged** in some way are conceptualized as 'beneficiaries' of measures to improve their participation – this approach can be seen quite clearly in many of the projects and programs conducted under the NYS with international partners 'for' vulnerable young people. In general, these young people **are not decision makers in their own participation opportunities, but rather consumers, not having the social capital to demand self-determination.** The location of such participation is rarely the public sphere and even if such young people may gain some competence for active citizenship from their involvement, it is quite unlikely they will be able to put them into practice effectively, given everyday exclusion and discrimination. Hence, **they participate, without necessarily improving their position in public life.**

And finally, there are **the silent and unrecognizable majority of young people** who never participate at all, either because they have no idea there is anything to participate in, or they are too busy with the demands of their lives, or they are simply not interested. These young people have been extremely **hard to reach and engage through the NYS** because, at least in this first period of implementation, **the approach of the MoYS has been to decentralize, coordinate and facilitate, rather than reach out, inform, include and engage.** Peer approaches to participation are rightly assumed to be effective, but they cannot replace youth services that seek young people out, actively support them to make the best of the opportunities that are available to them, engage with them to find out what they need and want, and involve them in decision making. In theory, this should be the role of the Local Youth Offices, but until now, only a few have been able to profile themselves in this way.

In this relation, the question of **youth participation in decision-making** is important. Formally, key principles of the youth sector such as participatory policy making and co-management of youth policy ([underscored by the growing global consensus around what youth policy should do and how youth policy should be done](#)) have been enshrined in the NYS, and their echoes can be heard in many of the echoes of their rhetoric can be heard in many of the measures undertaken under the NYS. Yet,

effective participation of young people in decision-making has not been significantly fostered, because that would require far reaching reform of national through local level governance in several sectors from youth through education through justice through policing and the list could go on. This is not to say that young people are excluded or that the MoYS has not been sincere in its implementation of the NYS in relation to participation. **Youth organizations are now regularly consulted on youth policy making in Serbia. This is most definitely an improvement** on the time before the NYS. However, it does speak to a **conceptual misunderstanding. Consultation is not the same as having a share in decision-making – that requires having a say over budgets, over policy implementation, over the direction taken by leadership – the spirit of co-management, rather than an exclusively structural incarnation. And the questions of who gets consulted and how consultation is structured are just as important for the ‘participatory’ quality of decision-making, as whether consultation takes places.** The changes required to ensure real, and not tokenistic, participation of youth in decision-making in Serbia are yet to be made.

## **Institutional capacity**

One specific objective of the NYS addressed the creation and development of the institutional framework of the youth sector in Serbia and the development of its institutional capacity (Objective 2). This is one of the best-endowed objectives in terms of financing, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest financial investment and number of projects from among all the goals of the NYS (112 projects and 152.185.323,94 RSD of investment from 2009 – 2013 by the MoYS alone). In addition, other objectives foresee the improvement or creation specific legislation to cater for young people in other sectors (juvenile justice, social housing, protection of minors, cultural policy, etc.). It would appear that the MoYS has expended a lot of energy and workforce on this work, as the process of making legislation and strategy in Serbia is necessarily among the most fraught with politics, and therefore, consuming. And this it is certainly **one of the areas in which significant progress has been made.** Stakeholders involved in the evaluation unanimously point the creation of the legislative and institutional framework for youth policy in Serbia (including the adoption of the youth law, the creation of the LYO infrastructure, the establishment and adoption of a variety of youth specific strategies in addition to the NYS, such as that on career guidance and counseling, youth employment and youth health and development) as a key achievement of the NYS and of the MoYS.

Yet, many aspects targeted under this objective have not been addressed in as much detail as was originally foreseen. The evaluation finds that many stakeholders surveyed in the evaluation would subscribe to the saying that *‘one of the greatest delusions in this world is the hope that all its evils can be solved by legislation’*, and criticize the MoYS for putting too much emphasis on the formal work on developing or changing legislation and creating strategies, and not enough emphasis on the quality of the processes they are supposed to foster.

For example, and particularly important for the youth sector, it cannot be denied that a lot has been done in the area of **co-management**. A definition of youth organizations has been developed and enshrined in the Youth Law of 2011 (articles 13 & 14), regulations as concerns the operation of youth organizations have been established as part of the process of the adoption the law, the MoYS provided funding and support for the establishment of a National Youth Council, and guidelines for co-management and functioning of LYOs were established for the local level. Nevertheless, the co-management principle is weakly implemented on both the national level and the local level, due to many factors including problems of institutionalization of the NYC and other key representational platforms, practices of decision and policy making that exclude civic actors, the late establishment of the national level ‘Youth Committee’ (at the time of writing had only just begun its work), the poor functioning of the local level Youth Committees (few include youth representation). Hence, in terms of youth participation in decision-making, inter-sectoral cooperation and the integration of youth policy provision, **national structures have been put in place, but they are yet to embody the values and principles under which they were established (i.e. youth participation in decision-making and co-management of youth policy) and to serve as examples of how this should be done at other levels of governance (especially, the local level).**

There also **remain important gaps in and overlaps (even contradictions) among pieces of legislation** when it comes to youth. Even the age definition of youth enshrined in the Youth Law of 2011 (15 to 30 years) has not yet been mainstreamed through all legislation, such that it creates difficulties in monitoring and evaluation.<sup>26</sup> The Law on Local Self-Government, with its current contents, is not conducive to the institutionalization of the LYO infrastructure. The same might be said of certain provisions in the Law on Associations, which does not provide adequately for the institutionalization of the function of umbrella organizations and representative platforms, such as KOMS (the National Youth Council) and NAPOR (the National Association for Youth Work Development). These difficulties of a 'technical' nature are having a **strong impact on the capacity of youth civil society to live up to its end of the bargain of implementing the NYS**, and require urgent resolution. Closely related is the question of other youth relevant legislation and strategy being developed by government, and their relationship with the NYS. This evaluation is aware of at least two further strategies that directly concern young people (youth employment and youth health and development), which are not under the direct responsibility of the MoYS and about whose implementation this evaluation has been able to find out little, but which common sense tells us should be better connected to the NYS. **While the MoYS has been able to establish formal cooperation with other Ministries regarding NYS implementation, through its working group for that purpose, it seems that its involvement in the youth targeted work of other Ministries is less developed.** The question of the mandate to lead and coordinate on youth across government has been raised in previous considerations and will be taken up again in both the section of this chapter on evaluation according to international principles and in the chapter on conclusions.

Furthermore, this evaluation observes that **the institutionalization of grant making as a key approach to supporting civil society within NYS implementation has had some unforeseen and likely unintended negative effects on the development of the civil society the NYS seeks to support.** Stakeholders involved in the evaluation, especially those involved in civil society, have unanimously raised the challenge of competition and poor cooperation among youth CSOs over the last several years of NYS implementation. An internalization of the value of cooperation and unity in common goals may be part of a natural maturation process of civil society, one which Serbian youth sector CSOs are yet to complete, but in the current Serbian context, the fact that youth representation platforms have to compete with their own members for project funding from the MoYS to survive, is creating dependency and undermining solidarity.

Finally, a lot of **excellent quality work has been done in the area of youth work development** and significantly, this has been done through the **elaboration of standards for youth work in Serbia.** These standards are specifically relevant for the LYO infrastructure and the work they do with youth, yet the MoYS readily acknowledges that the **guidelines are often not adhered to because the LSGUs are not obliged to apply them, monitor how they are being applied and report on progress.** In terms of the institutionalization of the youth sector and the delivery of services to young people, both of which the development of the institutional framework is supposed to underpin, quality assurance and development are essential, and although frameworks for such have been piloted, they have not been systematized or brought to scale, even within the operational activities of the MoYS itself. It is unlikely that such will ever happen through the local infrastructure if it remains a wholly voluntary undertaking, and if the example is not shown by the MoYS in the first place.

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<sup>26</sup> Tanja Azanjac, Donatella Bradic, Djordje Krivokapić, Marlene Spoerri, Tatjana Stojic, [Youth and Public Policy in Serbia](#), Youth Policy Press, 2nd edition 2014.



## Conclusions

This chapter attempts to interpret the issues, challenges, situations and information that has been collated and explored in all previous sections of the evaluation in a way that is conclusive and can inform future action. The many achievements and shortcomings of NYS implementation have been highlighted in the presentation of the NYS as implemented and the remainder of the chapter on evaluation findings, and these do not need to be repeated. Hence, this chapter will take a synthetic approach. It will look at several 'challenge areas', in the sense of particularly problematic issues or factors that have especially hindered implementation, as found by this evaluation, and try to understand their implications for the youth sector and future NYS development and implementation.

Those 'challenge areas' that seemed most striking to the evaluation team and on which broad consensus could be found through the evaluation activities and findings are discussed in more depth below. The following chapter, entitled recommendations, considers these conclusions in relation to what might be done to address these challenge areas through and during the implementation of the new NYS.

## *Sustainability*

The question of the sustainability of the action of the NYS was discussed at length during the evaluation. Sustainability can be understood as the **capacity for a given action to continue through time with lasting effect, and has structural, financial, social and political dimensions.**

A number of factors, many of which have been discussed at length in the findings, have hindered the sustainability of the action of this NYS, including too little investment for problems too large, single activities conducted for a particular objective, donor driven financial investments (the priority of the donor gets large financial investments, other priorities have to make do with less resources), absence of monitoring and evaluation, a 'once-off' project approach (including pilot activities that never get past the pilot stage and including project funding regulations that do not allow for continuation or follow-up projects), insufficient staff resources to work with results of any evaluation and monitoring done, problems of communication and cooperation up and down and across levels and sectors of government (national to local; inter-sectorial).

At the same time, the NYS has achieved some important progress and markers of sustainability, including the decentralization of grant-making to a level closer to the grass-roots, creation of resource centers that have the potential to become 'mentoring hubs' for youth project initiatives; pilot models of intervention (especially in the broad area of the transition of youth from education to the labor market and local youth work delivery) that can be scaled up; creation of an institutional framework for the delivery of youth policy and youth work at the local level, that while not perfect, can be improved and capitalized upon, the main pillars of an institutional framework at the national level, which can be further developed.

Open questions around the issue of sustainability that will have to be tackled in years to come are that of donor exit, the mandate of the MoYS to lead and coordinate on youth issues and quality of action. In relation to donor exit, it is clear that a very large chunk of the resources mobilized by the MoYS for the implementation of the NYS has been provided through partnership with international and other external donors. It is to the credit of the MoYS that it has been able to leverage this kind of cooperation. Yet, the donors are starting to leave, or to wind down certain kinds of programming, and in several respects, it is unclear what will come after them.<sup>27</sup> In terms of sustainability, it is unlikely

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<sup>27</sup> For example, [the Open Society Foundation in Serbia](#) financed youth projects to the tune of approx. 650,000 USD between 2009 and 2013, before OSF in New York closed its centralized Youth Initiative and decentralized the decision to focus on youth to the local foundations, such that it is unclear whether a youth specific funding program will continue to be available in Serbia and other countries.



that government resources will be able to fill the gap that will be left. Hence, some advance planning is necessary.

In relation to the mandate of the MoYS to lead and coordinate on youth issues across government, more will be said under the section on integration of youth policy below. Suffice it to say here that sustainability of youth policy action in Serbia requires leaders and champions to push it forward, both inside government and in the civic sector. And these leaders and champions need to be recognized and have mandates to be able to do so.

Finally, in relation to the quality of action, this evaluation underscores what has already been acknowledged by the MoYS and key actors of the civic youth sector – if the last years have been about putting structures in place, the coming years have to be about filling those structures with meaningful opportunities and support that speak to young people and motivate them to engage, and to ensuring the quality, sustainability and accountability of that programming. Sterling efforts have been made to develop guidelines and competence frameworks for the delivery of quality experiences to young people through the infrastructure in place (governmental and non-governmental). These remain to be mainstreamed and to become owned, and a further job of work will be required to ensure that structures for quality assurance are implemented.

## ***Decision-making***

The development of the National Youth Strategy 2008 in Serbia is hailed internationally and nationally as a ‘model process’, because it came about at the initiative of the civic youth sector and because it involved the broadest spectrum of stakeholders and a large number of young people as well. Furthermore, the NYS is clearly grounded in the values and principles of youth participation and co-management. And several important measures have been taken to put in place structures and frameworks that make youth participation in decision-making possible.

Yet, while intentions are exemplary, the results on this front are not wholly satisfactory (this evaluation finds). Yes, young people have many more opportunities to participate, be active, enjoy more opportunities for constructive leisure time, self-organize. And on important issues, such as the priorities for a local youth action plan or the new National Strategy, surveying and consultation processes of broader constituencies of young people do now take place regularly. However, and as discussed in depth in relation to the international principles, participation in activities and consultation does not equate with participation in decision-making, which remains weak.

There are some structural barriers hindering access to and participation of young people in decision-making, including the fact that:

- existing structures of youth policy and decision-making do not involve co-management (i.e. the sharing of power between governmental and non-governmental actors on decision making regarding youth related policy making), even if the co-management principle is acknowledged and consultation of young people and their representatives takes place periodically in key policy development processes.<sup>28</sup> For this to be the case, some representative bodies of young people would have to be involved in the day-to-day implementation and steering of the NYS and about how NYS money gets spent;
- the mandate of the National Youth Council (KOMS), while acknowledged de jure formally, is undermined de facto because it has to survive on project funding. So, although support from the MoYS for KOMS is forthcoming (it does receive financial support), this is not institutional support and does not foster consolidation as a national body representing the interests of young people in the policy making process. The same can be said for other umbrella organizations with advocacy objectives and functions;

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<sup>28</sup> Here we are specifically referring to the composition and mandates of the Youth Committee at national level (as yet to begin working in earnest) and of the Youth Committees at local level (few if any of which include representatives of young people). Furthermore, both of these bodies have an exclusively advisory mandate.

- there are few, if any formal, mechanisms for youth involvement in decision-making at the local level few representative bodies that could act as a partner in local policy making processes (i.e. platforms of youth organizations, broad based youth parliaments) both as regard youth issues, specifically, and as regards general issues of local policy making;
- Even where pupils' and students' parliaments exist, their mandate to act as partners in decision-making are not sufficiently recognized at the level of individual schools and all the way up the policy-making ladder. It is unclear such bodies are involved in education policy-making, for example, beyond the fact that there is a national organization of school students and that it is a member of the European umbrella (OBESSU);
- finally, the civic youth sector, which once led the politics of contestation in Serbia, and had a strong advocacy profile, has transitioned to a service provision role. This is in part the result of the structure of NYS implementation, which has decentralized specific tasks for coordination, promotion, grant making and evaluation to CSOs with strong links to the grass roots. Many of these were at one time advocacy organizations. However, their current position as implementers, with few other opportunities for sustainable funding, has changed their position, profile and legitimacy to conduct advocacy. It is also in part just part and parcel of the natural maturation process of a civil society in consolidation.<sup>29</sup> This point will be discussed in more detail under the challenge of CSO autonomy and dependence.

Finally, and to add nuance to much of what has been outlined above, it must be acknowledged that a lot of investment has gone into the training and capacity development of CSOs over the years of NYS implementation, including in the relation to participation in decision-making. It is, therefore, somewhat counter-intuitive that the civic youth sector behaves passively when it disagrees with what it sees happening in its own sector. When asked why the civic youth sector is not more 'demanding' of a 'seat at the table', stakeholders raised a lot of different possible reasons including questions / challenges, however more often than not their responses boiled down to two main factors: dependence on the resources available for projects from the MoYS and 'self-censorship' as a means of survival in a politically hostile environment.

## ***Integrated youth policy***

The MoYS has early on understood that to get anything of the NYS implemented, it would have to marshal the political will and resources of the 'big hitters' in government – other Ministries with key sectoral dossiers of relevance to youth and to its objectives – education, employment, health, justice, interior to name just a few. To this end, it has established the Working Group on the Implementation of the NYS. Discussions with the MoYS and some other Ministries point to the fact that there have been real benefits of putting this mechanism in place, and the MoYS' openness for inter-sectoral cooperation is to be applauded. However, as the MoYS readily acknowledges, there is not always adequate recognition across government of the need to mainstream a youth perspective through youth relevant policy domains outside the responsibility of the MoYS. To date, the MoYS has not managed to establish the working group as a coordination mechanism for integrated youth policy, by which the MoYS can lead cross-sectoral action on youth specific policy implementation in other sectors.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Joerg Forbrig, *The Nexus Between Civil Society And Democracy: Suggesting a Critical Approach*, in published in: Reichel, Walter (Ed.): *Political Priorities between East and West. Europe's rediscovered wealth – What the accession-candidates in Eastern and Central Europe have to offer.* (No. 2. May 2002), pp. 79-103. Available online at: <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/jforbrig1.pdf> and *Civil Society: Theory and Practice in East-Central Europe*, PhD thesis, Florence, European University Institute, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> By way of example, young people as a specific category and target group are often invisible in the action of other sectoral Ministries. For example, in the Ministry of Health data is not disaggregated by age to the extent that the specific health situations and needs of younger adolescents, adolescents, youth and adults can be differentiated, with policy being developed accordingly. This is also the case in some other government agencies and Ministries, including the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, which until recently did not work with categories such as NEETs (youth not in education, employment or training), that have proven extremely useful in adjusting active labor market interventions to get young people into employment in other countries.

Furthermore, the integration of interventions for young people across objectives within the NYS has been a challenge, with certain objectives basically being implemented as 'standalone projects' (c.f. the Fund for Young Talents). A common misunderstanding is that integrated policy is about putting resources together, and leveraging capacities within different sectors. This is certainly true, but it is also about developing projects and approaches together. Of course, the capacity, agency and political will of other policy actors is also key to the achievement of integration and it has not escaped the attention of this evaluation that the fact that different political parties are in charge of different Ministries has hindered co-operation. The demands of sustainability require deeper integration of policy measures is achieved, externally towards the action of other sectors and internally within the NYS. There is no recipe for making this work. However, ongoing monitoring and evaluation and enhanced active face-to-face communication between departments and responsible persons can facilitate it. In other words, integrated youth policy is supported a communicative 'culture' of policy-making and implementation.

### ***Capacity of the MoYS and other NYS implementing bodies***

There are four key dimensions to the question of capacity – human resources, financial resources, time, and competence. Of course, when thinking about this question the first body that springs to mind is the MoYS, but it is not alone in responsibility for implementing the NYS. In fact, it shares responsibility quite widely and has decentralized a lot of functions for which it recognizes that others have more capacity or more competence – which is in and of itself an indicator of competence. Other important actors in the implementation of the NYS whose capacity needs to be considered are: all actors of the Local Youth Office Infrastructure, CSOs acting as resource centers and contact points, umbrella organizations at national level (KOMs, NAPOR, National Association of Youth Offices, etc.), other Ministries, international partners, etc. The capacity of other actors (other Ministries, LYOs and CSOs) is dealt with in different ways under other parts of this section, including under integrated youth policy, LYO infrastructure, autonomy and dependence of CSOs, so in this section the focus is on the MoYS.

In general, the evaluation observes a lot of competence for leveraging capacity, especially on the part of the MoYS, and a lot of constraints that have hindered more effective implementation. Yet, none of these are such that they cannot be addressed with targeted remedies. The two exceptions are the fact that the MoYS is chronically under-staffed (with 9 civil service position filled out of the 12 foreseen and 14 support staff on service contracts) and in some respects, has a very limited mandate. Aspects of 'poor performance' on the part of the MoYS, such as late issuing of calls for applications with short deadlines, or the lack of ongoing monitoring, boil down to the fact that there are not enough bodies and brains to do all the work the implementation of such a huge complex of objectives and activities as represented by the NYS involves. Furthermore, and as outlined above in the section on integrated youth policy, the mandate of the NYS as a coordinator or lead on youth has not yet been established, and this further constrains its capacity to act autonomously and decisively. In relation to money and time, it should be reiterated that the financial resources and the time at the disposal of the NYS were not commensurate with its ambitions, but they were not negligible by any stretch of the imagination, so the capacity imperative for the future will necessarily be to be more realistic. This is also a quality imperative, and relates in part to competence. The MoYS will have to develop its competence for making tougher decisions on what can be realistically achieved to an acceptable level of quality in the time and with the resources available in the coming NYS from 2015. That competence involves part convincing arguments, part building coalitions and part standing up for the decisions taken.

### ***Local youth policy infrastructure and implementation***

A lot has been written in this evaluation about the serious problems of implementation of the NYS at the local level and about the capacity and constraints of the LYO infrastructure to deliver quality experiences and services to young people in the localities where they live. It is not necessary to

repeat all of that. Yet, this is a key challenge for the sustainability and effectiveness of youth policy in Serbia going forward, and efforts will have to be made to develop what is currently a system not operating optimally into something better.

The conundrum of achieving this lies in the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of power at the local level, with the LYO infrastructure often falling between the cracks in that relationship. LYOs are responsible for the delivery of local youth policy and youth work in line with national objectives and guidelines on standards, yet local politics determines their mandate, their conditions of work, and the resources they have at their disposal, as well as their room for maneuver. Where there is alignment between the different interests at play, the infrastructure seems to work well enough. Where there are conflicts between what the LYOs do / want to do and what local politics thinks they should, the system fails to deliver to young people.

Again, there is no recipe for how to deal with this, but it stands to reason that a better separation of the political decision-making from the delivery of policy and services, implying a clearer mandate of LYOs for delivery of both the LYAP and the NYP (towards the LSGUs), stronger regulation and some obligation on LSGUs to enforce national standards at the local level and the implementation of quality assurance obligations from local to national level would help remedy the current impasse that is being experienced by very many of the LYOs. Nevertheless, the evaluation recognizes that for as long as LSGUs have absolute autonomy in how they wish to operate an LYO, this will remain extremely challenging.

## ***Governance, the role of politics and transparency***

Closely related to the challenge of empowering the LYO infrastructure to deliver better outcomes to young people, is the thorny and, frankly, controversial question of governance, politics and transparency. In many respects, the political culture and the culture of governance that can be observed in Serbia are undermining the good intentions behind the enormous effort put into the NYS by the many stakeholders who are committed to young people. Unfortunately, the question of how governance takes place depends much more on politics than it does on the putting in place of procedures, regulations and standards. And even more than some abstract idea about the relation between politics and governance, the governance culture depends on how the people doing it use the regulations, procedures and standards in place and for which purposes. If this evaluation speaks frankly about this theme, it is because without efforts to develop a culture of governance in the youth sector (at all levels) that is more transparent, inclusive, democratic and which embodies the values the youth sector seeks to promote through the NYS, much of the effort to implement NYS objectives will be undermined.

Again, it is easy to write about this in an evaluation, and very difficult to do something about it through the day-to-day practice of policy-making and implementation.<sup>31</sup> Yet, there are concrete measures that can be taken explicitly within a national youth strategy to promote transparency and good governance and to practice policy in accordance with the values preached in the key framework documents regulating a youth sector. In the first place, acknowledging this is an issue and discussing it openly during relevant policy making deliberations would be an important start. A next step might be the development of an objective under the NYS to promote the culture of good governance in the sector, with specific funded activities to support that (training for civil servants and CSOs in (local) youth policy cooperation along with models that have proven useful in other similar contexts; a more open approach to information about NYS implementation, including 'publishing what you pay'; development of co-management mechanisms; monitoring and evaluation; the institution of some

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<sup>31</sup> In 1990, in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent revolutions that took place around East-Central Europe, Ralf Dahrendorf rightly pointed out that change in political culture takes time: *"... the formal process of constitutional reform takes at least six months; a general sense that things are moving up as a result of economic reform is unlikely to spread before six years have passed; the third condition of the road to freedom is to provide the social foundations which transform the constitution and the economy from fair-weather into all-weather institutions (...), and sixty years are barely enough to lay these foundations"*. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolutions in Europe*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1990, p. 92f.

checks and balances within the system for financial and other forms of rectitude; and the development of watchdog mechanisms, among others). It will of course take time, but a start has to be made somewhere for change to be possible, and there are examples of good practice that might be learned from.

### ***Autonomy and dependence of youth civil society***

Again, closely related to previous considerations is the question of the autonomy and dependence of youth civil society, and its capacity and agency to, at one at the same time, act as an advocate on behalf of youth and as a deliverer/implementer of youth policy. This question has come up again and again in the course of the evaluation, and it is quite a sensitive issue, because discussions of this can easily degenerate into conspiracy theories about the invisible hand of state control. Getting embroiled in that kind of speculation is something the evaluation has sought to avoid. Nevertheless, it has to acknowledge that the effect (whether witting or unwitting) of the institutionalization of project funding through grant-making competitions, in the context of the absence of other funding schemes for CSOs which are, in the end, also a source of employment for a not insignificant number of young people, has had the effect of 'co-opting' certain CSOs. Furthermore, it has to acknowledge the fact that what once were key youth advocacy CSOs now act as 'implementers' and 'service providers' in the decentralization of the NYS implementation, and they do so for the reason that they are among those organizations most competent and best positioned to do this.

This does not mean that these CSOs have lost their independence and now 'do the bidding of the government'. What it does mean is that it is very much more difficult for them to do advocacy, as they are fearful of being seen to 'bite the hand that feeds them' and they are less trusted by the constituencies on behalf of which they advocated in the past, to do so in good faith now and in the future. As mentioned previously, it is likely that this is just one phase in the natural maturation of any civil society. Yet in the current Serbian youth policy context it has led to a kind of paralysis that cannot only be seen as the result of the typical problems of collective action. A national level example seems useful, even if the phenomenon of co-optation is even more pronounced at the local level. Youth civil society agrees (in the majority) that the new NYS should not have been adopted before thorough evaluation, yet it did not manage to advocate with a unified voice for the postponement of the process (whatever the result of that advocacy would have been), and it is surprised at itself, because its own self-image is contradicted by what it sees.

As in the case of governance issues, there is significant mileage in this question of autonomy and dependence being openly discussed, whether in the context of meetings of KOMS and other umbrella organizations, or more generally inside youth CSOs. There seems to be no shortage of activities during which such could be done. Yet, it is not happening (at least so it seems to this evaluation). Explicit activities on this issue and how to address it through measures of the NYS should be discussed in the context of the development of the new NYS and the elaboration of its action plan. At the same time, a more open attitude on the part of the MoYS and local authorities to the 'advocacy role' of youth civil society would go a long way to supporting it through this phase of 'cognitive dissonance' about its role. Youth civil society hardly seeks revolution – in fact, it is for the most part it seems most concerned with getting on with the work for and with young people. The question of institutional funding for CSOs, especially the umbrella organizations, is really essential to this. Whether at the local or the national level, the possibility for CSOs to get space, without having to pay rent, use funds for ensuring basic secretariat and accounting functions, and cover the costs of volunteers involved in organizational development activities (not just specific service delivery projects) would take the pressure off considerably.

Finally, and coming back to question of political and governance culture, the evaluation has been told again and again that young people see being a member of a political party as the ticket to getting a job and accessing a sustainable livelihood (usually because it is seen as providing access to civil service jobs). The evaluation has also been told again and again that politics and especially people involved in political parties are corrupt and only in it for personal gain. While in some respects these perceptions contradict each other, they are taken as 'fact', and demonstrate the extent to which the nature of the

political culture influences how civil society interacts with the state. This is wreaking havoc in the youth field. On the one side, there is mistrust and skepticism, and on the other there is a sense of being the victim of unfair judgments and scandal mongering. The most basic forms of co-operation around the common objectives represented by the NYS are hindered by this state of affairs. While changing the political culture in Serbia is not the job of the NYS, the youth sector would be well served by acknowledging its urgent need for confidence building measures, something that could be easily built into the NYS.

## **Reach**

It is difficult to make conclusive judgments on the reach of this NYS because there are no reliable figures emanating from specific studies of that. Yet, the figures we have for direct and indirect participation in activities and projects of the NYS show that in general there, and on the national level, there is a multiplier effect. Multiplication also seems to be a basic approach that all projects adhere to in some way (local through international) and there is awareness for the need to extend the reach of the NYS to as many young people as possible.

And, yet there are some groups who seem to be consistently less likely to be involved in NYS activities, and who are less likely to be reached by NYS action. These are the usual suspects: Roma young people, young people from other minority groups, LGBTQI youth, young people with physical disabilities, youth with mental health issues, young people in isolated rural localities (mostly school-going youth), young people in the care of the state, and young people living in poverty. Taking stock of this fact does not take away in any sense from the many excellent initiatives that have been undertaken to reach and include marginalized young people and the large majority of young people not touched in any way by the NYS. Nor does it underestimate the complexities of inclusion in a multi-cultural society such as Serbia, its history of national minorities and inter-ethnic peace and conflict. Simplistic as it may sound, however, more needs to be done, more systematically, with a more proactive and inclusive approach on an ongoing basis over time and across all objectives of the NYS.

As has been discussed on many occasions in this evaluation report, providing opportunity is important, but more often than not the difference between opportunities being used and not being used, is the support available to young people to make the most of them. This fundamental fact has been acknowledged in the area of career guidance and in relation to the transition from education to the labor market of young people (with or without qualifications). It now needs to be acknowledged in relation youth participation, volunteering, activism, healthy lifestyles, participation, exclusion, and many more specific areas of NYS action.

Youth information is a key instrument and vehicle for outreach, and a good start has been made in developing the availability of youth information. Yet, a youth information infrastructure that reaches out to young people rather than waiting for young people to come to it is not yet in place. In the end, the young people who are well enough informed to show up to a LYO or youth information center and ask for information are the ones who already have the most social capital. All the other young people need to be reached out to in more active and proactive ways, and in the meantime there are excellent examples of how this can be done that can be learned from.

Another fundamental fact is that young people cannot stand being preached to, and NYS outreach efforts have to take this into account. The approach of financing non-formal groups through the Mladi su Zakon program goes quite far in taking this into account, as does some of the work supported by international partners in youth health promotion and prevention through peer education. This approach needs to be mainstreamed, and the temptation to use the NYS and its instruments of outreach to tell young people what think and what to do, needs to be tempered. It is one thing to support the value development and citizenship orientation of young people, it is quite another to tell them which values they should have.

## ***Monitoring, evaluation and research***

The absence of systematic monitoring, evaluation and an integrated system of youth research in Serbia have significantly weakened NYS implementation. All stakeholders, including the MoYS, whose role it is to conduct, compile and interpret such, agree that this is a problem that has to be addressed. There are a number of issues in this relation, most prominently capacity and competence. Objectively, the MoYS has neither the time nor the people with the advanced competence to conduct the level of monitoring, evaluation and youth research that is required to adequately maintain an overview of what is happening, how it is happening, to which effect and with which implications for the NYS in real time (i.e. using it for formative purposes).

There are two common approaches for dealing with this – a dedicated unit for evaluation and monitoring, and for the development (usually through commissioning) is established within the MoYS to work on this on an ongoing basis or an independent body funded by government is established outside the MoYS to fulfill this role.

More complex than which technical approach one takes to the question of monitoring is the way in which the indicators for monitoring are established and what they should be. For the monitoring system to really work it needs to be owned, and that means all NYS stakeholders have to be involved in developing it. Furthermore, actors at other levels and in other sectors are also involved in NYS implementation and without their cooperation, whichever option is chosen, the pitfalls experienced by this NYS in the area of monitoring and evaluation especially will not be overcome. So, there will likely have to be some ‘awareness raising’ and capacity development across sectors and from national to local level to support the implementation of a comprehensive NYS monitoring and evaluation system.

Clearly resources are necessary for this, and good quality monitoring and evaluation costs money, because they require fieldwork and meetings and consultations and face-to-face work, and the collection of qualitative data, and monitoring on subjective measures, not only number crunching (although that is also important). Making this work is often a matter of making the decision to make it work. The dedication of resources and staff time to these kinds of self-reflection exercises is often questioned when it is a toss up between monitoring and funding activities. However, it will always be a toss up between these two. You either do it or you do not.

In relation to youth research, this evaluation has revealed that there is absolutely no shortage of research being done on youth and youth policy in Serbia. It is just being done by all kinds of actors who are not communicating with each other about it. And a lot of it seems not to be published in a timely manner and made public to the sector (for whatever reasons, sinister or not). There is mileage in making youth research and its institutionalization an objective of the NYS. An important start in this area would be to conduct a mapping of existing research efforts and initiatives that are ongoing or longitudinal (not so much what research has been done and published), and to make an analysis of which items of research are conducted in a comparable manner and which not. Furthermore, the preparation of a baseline study would be an important step forward, something along the lines of the European Youth Report, but for Serbia, a resource that can be updated with new research on a regular basis, maybe in synchronization with the timetable for the preparation new strategy documents and action plans. Again, this requires resources, but regular, comparable and timely youth research is an absolute pre-requisite for effective youth policy-making and implementation and without it chances of achieving objectives are significantly more limited.

## Recommendations

Considering the conclusions drawn in relation to the several 'challenge areas' addressed above and the content of the new NYS, the evaluation team recommends the following courses of action and possible activities or measures that might be appropriate for addressing them (presented by category, but in no particular order of importance). It should be noted that several of these courses of action overlap or inter-depend. As the mandated lead agency for the implementation of the NYS, the MoYS is likely the most appropriate body to take the initiative for the implementation of these recommendations. However, this does not exonerate other governmental and non-governmental actors of the youth sector of responsibility for their implementation. In fact, it is the conviction of this evaluation team that without partnership and cooperation with other stakeholders of the youth sector and their political will, it will be impossible to implement many of these recommendations.

### ***Sustainability***

1/ Use external funding and partnerships to underpin the sustainability of strategic interventions under the NYS, starting with relevant piloting and ending with scaling-up success models. This requires

- the development of priority programs in cooperation with key external partners with resources for specific priorities relevant to new NYS (taking into account grass roots needs);
- action and funding streams covering longer time frames;
- large-scale funding;
- the maintenance of operational responsibility for programs, especially monitoring and evaluation;
- the involvement of CSO partners and other government departments in design, evaluation and monitoring.

2/ Review, evaluate and change the approach to grant-making in favor of long-term, intersectoral, multi-year and multi-stakeholder interventions that leverage the funds available for strategic objectives. This requires

- the development of funding programs with a conceptual and strategic basis in the new NYS;
- a move away from once-off small scale project financing for CSOs, potentially funding fewer grantees;
- more stringent quality criteria for projects and more stringent quality controls on grantees;
- more transparency around the selection procedures and decision-making for newly developed funding programs;
- more timely and more attractive communication to the youth sector about open calls and funding programs (including but not limited to the organization of regular information days; training for new applicants; advice and 'counseling' to new applicants, etc.);
- the creation of administrative grant opportunities for larger CSOs with representative and umbrella functions.

3/ Enhance, further develop and scale up the *Mladi su Zakon* program and its further development. This can be achieved by

- a nation wide campaign to reach out to young people about *Mladi su Zakon* and the opportunities it offers;
- a larger financial investment in the program to increase the number of initiatives funded;
- setting aside funding to offer *Mladi su Zakon* grantees perspectives for follow-up funding to continue projects with clear potential for contributing to the participation and active citizenship of young people.



4/ Further develop the infrastructure that underpins sustainability, i.e. for inter-sectoral cooperation, participatory decision-making (co-management), quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation and research. See recommendations on each of these items below.

5/ Establish the role of the MoYS as leader and coordinator on youth issues inside government. This can be achieved by

- building the capacity of partners in other government departments for 'mainstreaming youth';
- institutionalize participatory decision making (co-management);
- act as an example for other government departments;
- develop new approaches to communication with all stakeholders inside and outside government;
- further develop existing and initiate new mechanisms for inter-sectoral cooperation.

6/ Prioritize quality of action over quantity of investments and projects. This might involve the

- development of a quality assurance framework that can be mainstreamed through the work of the MoYS, the LYOs, linked to a systematic monitoring and evaluation framework and that can be applied to NYS implementation in other sectors;
- development of standardized youth services delivery models for implementation by LYOs
- accreditation and certification of qualification and training formats for youth sector professionals (including but not limited to youth workers).

## ***Decision-making***

1/ Analyze structural barriers to participatory decision-making (co-management). This should include

- consideration of which structural barriers to participatory decision-making can be addressed by specific measures under existing objectives within the new NYS.

2/ Study good practices of participatory decision-making (co-management) in the youth field locally and in other countries. This can be achieved by

- conducting a dedicated study;
- conducting study visits around Serbia and to other countries;
- the development of scenarios for participatory decision-making (co-management) adapted to the Serbian context.

3/ Develop a new 'concept' for participatory decision-making (co-management) in the youth sector under the auspices of the new NYS integrating existing good practice (models of co-management) from inside and outside the country including all relevant stakeholders.

4/ Develop a work plan around the institutionalization of participatory decision-making (co-management) as a practice within the implementation of the NYS. This should include

- the organization of capacity building for youth sector stakeholders (policy, youth work, research and politics) on the meaning and practice of co-management (in general and in Serbia).

5/ Reform and improve structures of participatory decision-making in line with the new concept of co-management, including

### **The Youth Committee**

- Enhance the mandate of this body to go beyond 'take it or leave it' advice, giving it a key role in the new co-management concept
- Ensure the broader representation of young people's organizations and other stakeholders with relevant expertise (for example, research, youth work practice, etc.)
- Hold more regular meetings (at least three times per year)
- Create strong links between the working group on the governmental working group on the implementation of the NYS
- Ensure the workings of the Youth Committee are transparent and its proceedings public information

#### The National Youth Council

- Foster the consolidation of the role and functioning of the NYC as a representative platform for youth organizations
- Provide institutional and administrative funding for the NYC
- Guarantee the autonomy, independence, recognition and status of the NYC through with adaptations to relevant legislation
- Include representation of the NYC in all relevant decision-making bodies with at least consultative status where full decision-making power is not possible

6/ Strengthen the evidence on the basis of which decision-making around implementation and strategic (re-)direction of the NYS is conducted. This should include the

- regular publication of a national youth report (on the model of the European youth report and/or the national youth reports published by other countries, possibly every 2 – 3 years);
- the organization of a regular national youth conference (possibly to coincide with the publication of the national youth report);
- regular organization of a national youth needs / concerns survey (possibly to feed into the drafting of the national youth report);
- mainstreaming of these key resources and sources of evidence through formative evaluation and strategy (re-)development efforts;
- avoiding that such initiatives are taken exclusively as a means to inform the development of a new Strategy at the end of the current strategy period.

### ***Integrated youth policy***

1/ Analyze the legal documents and provisions requiring harmonization to ensure sustainable and integrated implementation of the new NYS (from local through national level). Focus on necessary revisions to those documents and provisions that

- do not 'recognize' youth as a specific category requiring policy and programming attention;
- do not provide specific protections to young people over 18 and under 30 (as per the definition of youth in the youth law);
- hinder the implementation of quality standards for youth related programming (for example, Law of Local Self-Government);
- are essential for creating the 'enabling environment' for civil society development and have a direct impact on the status and functioning of youth organizations from local through national level;
- contradict each other in regard of the rights and responsibilities accorded to young people in Serbia;
- would in any way act as barriers to the implementation of the new NYS.

2/ Conduct a participatory analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of inter-sectoral cooperation with other sectoral Ministries important for the implementation of youth policy in Serbia, involving relevant sectors throughout the process, with the aim of

- mapping the extent and quality of existing practices inter-sectoral cooperation across the fields of implementation where it is necessary;
- understanding the reasons why inter-sectoral cooperation works well in some cases and does not work well enough in some other cases;
- developing bilateral and multilateral agreements with other sectors about the practice of inter-sectoral cooperation regarding NYS implementation;
- using the analysis to improve the modus operandi of inter-sectoral cooperation on youth.

2/ Campaign for mainstreaming of youth through other sectors of government. This requires

- Better visibility for youth within government, in particular in relation to its 'big brother' within the MoYS. i.e. Sport;
- Advocacy for the active involvement of other sectors in the implementation and evaluation of the NYS;

- Facilitation and motivation of the active involvement of other sectors in NYS implementation (on the basis of the evidence collected during relevant analyses of what works / does not work in inter-sectoral cooperation) including the provision of
  - o easy to use communication and reporting mechanisms;
  - o expertise, advice and technical support for other sectors to mainstream youth;
  - o incentives for active engagement in favor of implementation of the NYS;

3/ Further develop and enhance the role and functioning of the 'Working Group on the Implementation of the NYS. This will require

- Development of the mandate and task description of the working group to go beyond the mere exchange of information with the aim of using it as a
  - o platform for the planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of intersectoral projects;
  - o clearing house for best practices of other sectors in relation to youth objectives;
  - o means for leveraging expertise and know-how of other sectors in relation to youth;
  - o mechanism for mainstreaming youth through other sectors;
  - o platform for understanding which other sectors of government require support to achieve effective NYS implementation and to deliver effectively to young people;
  - o mechanism to sensitize other governmental sectors for the need for participatory decision-making (co-management) around NYS implementation and relevant practices they could adopt;
- Inclusion of a wider cross-section of stakeholders from across relevant government departments
- Advocating for the meetings of the working group to be mandatory;
- Motivating participation by demonstrating the benefits of active participation for other sectors.

4/ Initiate joint project development, implementation and evaluation of large-scale projects with other sectors of government around NYS and other sectors' common youth objectives. This will require the use of common quality assurance and reporting mechanisms. International partners could act as facilitators of such processes if necessary.

5/ Improve communication and knowledge management on youth across government. This should include the

- establishment and institutionalization of mechanisms for regular information exchange, reporting, evaluation, and quality assurance that are harmonized between different government sectors;
- development and institutionalization of a knowledge management system (online) that can be used by any government official reporting on NYS implementation or needing support on youth issues.

6/ Engage in pilot actions to foster the local level integration of youth policy development and implementation with LSGUs individually and multi-laterally, bringing practices evaluated as successful to scale over the period of implementation of the NYS.

7/ Develop a simple but comprehensive quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation framework for the NYS that can be applied across the objectives and over action plan periods for the whole duration of the NYS. This requires the inclusion of

- all relevant stakeholders (other sectors having responsibility for key objectives, the national statistical service, governmental agencies with responsibility for key cross-cutting themes, relevant independent agencies, universities and researchers) in the process of development;
- a training component to ensure all stakeholders that are expected to be able to work effectively with the monitoring and evaluation framework.

## ***Capacity of the MoYS and other NYS implementing bodies***

1/ Improve the human resource situation of the MoYS. This requires

- the regularization of the contractual situation of support staff working for the MoYS, the Regional Youth Coordinators and the Local Youth Coordinators;
- re-consideration of functions that should/should not be outsourced (e.g. grant-management) given the perception of a lack of transparency / conflict of interest;
- increasing the head count at MoYS to an adequate number for the projected workload implied by the implementation of the new NYS and the recommendations emanating from this evaluation;
- form practice teams around key NYS objectives, themes and / or implementation instruments
  - o to ensure comprehensive coverage and relevant reporting within the newly established evaluation and monitoring framework;
  - o to ensure symbiosis between instruments such as grant-making and the implementation of key objectives and sub-objectives within the NYS;
  - o to ensure regular and face-to-face communication with key sectoral ministries and external partners involved in implementation of NYS objectives;

2/ Create a unit responsible for supporting the implementation and further development of the new strategy. This unit could be responsible for

- quality assurance;
- evaluation and monitoring of progress on new NYS objectives;
- formative development of the new Strategy through regular consultations and evaluations with youth CS and other partners;
- mobilizing new inter-sectoral and external partnerships and resources;
- developing a strategic approach to the sustainability of financial resources for the implementation of the NYS over time.

3/ Develop a strategic approach to the sustainability of financial resources for the implementation of new NYS over time. This should include

- developing a work plan around the mobilization and optimization of financial resources for the implementation of the NYS considering all possible sectoral and external contributions (see recommendation to create a strategy unit);
- developing scenarios for mitigating the negative effects of prospective donor exit;
- mainstreaming a clear and adapted-to-purpose financial reporting system, that is conceptually and technically harmonized with the monitoring and evaluation framework adopted
  - o ensuring it can be used year in year out for the sake of comparability over time;
  - o including reporting from all recipients and all providers of funding for implementation of activities to fulfill objectives of the NYS;
  - o considering online solutions to maximize efficiency (c.f. examples of good practice in other countries, ministries and organizations (for example, European Youth Foundation; Open Society Foundations));
  - o piloting at the national level;
  - o adapting to and mainstreaming through local youth offices once tried and tested;
  - o developing and providing training to all current and prospective grantees once the system has been tested.

4/ Make a feasibility study of what of the objectives and sub-objectives within the NYS can reasonably be addressed within a 3-year action plan period, on whose basis relevant and realistic action planning can be conducted, ensuring that sub-objectives are prioritized accordingly.

5/ Improve the competence of the MoYS and other implementers of the NYS for their tasks. This should include

- the provision of opportunities for professional training for staff working in the MoYS, in the LYOs and other key (non-governmental) implementers to improve their competence for their domains of work

- this could be effectively supported by making better use of (subsidized and no-cost) provisions made available by the European institutions through professional exchange and in-residence training schemes (opportunities under relevant chapters of Erasmus+; programs of the European Youth Centers Strasbourg and Budapest);
- development of a tailored training schemes or adaptation of existing training models on inter-sectoral cooperation for 'youth professionals' of all categories (civil servants, researchers, youth activists / advocates and representatives of political organizations / parties, youth workers);
- studying which existing instruments of the NYS can be used to foster the competence of the sector through specific action-planning (for example, the Young Talents Fund to foster youth research, etc.);
- making efforts to ensure the retention of 'youth sector professionals' trained at the expense of the LYOs, MoYS and partners, thereby capitalizing on capacity building investments, by
  - developing a youth sector professional internship program;
  - developing a young professionals program (fast track training for employment in a given sector) for prospective youth sector professionals;
  - developing an academic / professional higher educational qualification for youth workers, capitalizing on the work already done in the area of youth work qualification by NAPOR.

## **Local youth policy infrastructure and implementation**

1/ Facilitate and support efforts to redress the technical, administrative and budgetary challenges faced by specific LYOs, including mediation with responsible LSGUs. This could be achieved by

- creating and maintaining a database of key data about LYO functioning and local youth policy;
- organizing an annual conference of LYOs / LYCs and LSGUs, in cooperation with the National Association of Local Youth Offices, to evaluate cooperation and exchange best practices for addressing common and specific challenges;
- developing specific funding streams and training schemes to address the main problems identified;
- providing technical assistance to LSGUs facing challenges to implement the quality standards for LYOs and LYCs;
- supporting LSGUs in the development of plans to improve their resource base for local youth policy implementation, including consideration of how to best exploit currently unused 'youth property' and other infrastructure requiring investment to optimize their usefulness.

2/ Enhance the status, mandate, profile and resources of Local Youth Coordinators. This should include

- improving the transparency of recruitment procedures for the position of Local Youth Coordinators by developing a clear job description, attendant competence profile, and impartial recruitment practices;
- sensitizing LSGUs / LYOs to the mandate, profile and job description of the Local Youth Coordinators with an explicit demand that the quality standards be respected;
- ensuring adequate working conditions for Local Youth Coordinators by promoting the regularization of contractual arrangements and the provision of adequate resources to ensure they can fulfill their job description;
- training Local Youth Coordinators in the use of all newly established evaluation, monitoring, quality assurance, reporting, knowledge management and communication frameworks and tools so that they are competent enough to multiply such training with youth initiatives and grantees actively engaged with the NYS / LYAP in their locality.

3/ Enhance the role, resources and legitimacy of the Regional Coordinators. This should include

- improving the transparency of recruitment procedures for the position of Regional Coordinators by developing a clear job description, attendant competence profile, and impartial recruitment practices;
- communicating the mandate of the Regional Coordinators to all LSGUs and regional authorities with youth related programming under the NYS with an explicit demand for active cooperation;

- ensuring adequate working conditions by regularizing contractual arrangements, resources for working space, communication, site visits to LYOs, the organization of meetings, etc., adequate to their job description;
- training regional coordinators in the use of all newly established evaluation, monitoring, quality assurance, reporting, knowledge management and communication frameworks and tools so that they are competent enough to multiply such training with LYOs in their region.

4/ Develop the capacity of LYOs and local youth civil society actors for cooperation, partnership and the development and implementation of integrated youth policy through the NYS and LYAPs. This can be achieved by

- conducting training for individual categories of actors and for groups of actors together to enhance cooperation;
- studying and adopting existing models of cooperation and training for cooperation;
- developing joint projects;
- working with other sectoral services.

5/ Clarify the relationship and division of responsibilities for NYS implementation between the local and the national levels

- institutionalize clear lines of decision-making and reporting and clear divisions of responsibilities between LYOs, LYCs, LSGUs and the MoYS;
- change relevant provisions so as to oblige LSGUs to enforce national standards and guidelines for LYOs;
- change relevant provisions so as to oblige LYOs to implement the monitoring and evaluation framework and the related quality assurance mechanisms established for the new NYS;
- train LYOs in the use of all newly established evaluation, monitoring, quality assurance, reporting, knowledge management and communication frameworks and tools so that they are competent enough to multiply such training with LSGUs in their region.

6/ Sensitize LSGUs to the necessity of institutionalizing participatory decision-making (co-management) for youth policy and programming at the local level through specific capacity building and awareness raising activities. See the recommendations made in this relation under the section on 'decision-making' above.

7/ Require better separation of powers between political decision-making on local youth policy and the delivery of policy and services by LYOs. This could be achieved by

- initiating relevant changes to the Law on Local Self- Government;
- initiating relevant changes to the Law on Youth;
- communicating standards and guidelines on separation of powers to LSGUs;
- engaging in dialogue with LYOs on their concerns and challenges in working with the LSGU to implement local youth policy;
- providing advice and technical support to LYOs experiencing challenges in this relation;
- intervening with LSGUs in cases where this can be of assistance.

## ***Governance, the role of politics and transparency***

1/ Institute measures to promote trust building and ongoing dialogue between different constituencies of the youth sector (governmental – non-governmental – academic – practice) on all issues of importance to the implementation and further development of the new NYS, and especially issues that are perceived as controversial or subject to conflict of interest. Some measures relevant to this point have been outlined under the sections on decision-making and integrated youth policy. Further measures revolve around developing mutual trust and confidence among youth sector stakeholders, maintaining a constant flow of information and the development of a more communicative culture in the youth sector, including

- studying models of good practice from other countries and international institutions on;
- the institution of regular briefings / newsletter on recent developments in the implementation from the MoYS to other partners in the youth sector;

- the establishment of an open service oriented NYS 'help desk', a one stop shop go to address for anyone with questions about the NYS. This can have both physical and virtual (online) manifestations;
- the organization of regular roundtable discussions with a variety of partners to discuss 'controversial issues';
- capacity building for youth sector professionals active in the implementation of the NYS on communication and cooperation approaches;
- facilitated confidence building activities for professionals working in the MoYS, other government departments and CSO leaders working together on NYS implementation.

2/ Institute a new approach to information sharing, transparency and governance in the youth sector by adopting a 'publish everything as public information' model regarding youth and the NYS, using relevant provisions on good governance, public information and e-government in place or currently under development in Serbia, and linking to the newly developed monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance frameworks. Relevant actions include

- revamping the website of the MoYS to ensure better accessibility, intuitive navigation and interactivity / responsiveness and the availability financial accounts (for example);
- 'publish what you get and publish what you pay';
- ensure the workings and results of the participatory decision-making (co-management) system are published and accessible;
- acting as a 'role model' in this field to encourage other constituencies (local through international) involved in the NYS to take the same approach and open themselves up to scrutiny;
- initiating a pilot project with the cooperation of relevant other sectors of government to experiment with approaches to good governance that can in the long run be mainstreamed across government.

3/ Put more emphasis on participatory decision-making (co-management), evaluation and monitoring of the NYS to ensure better checks and balances within the system for financial and to demonstrate financial rectitude.

4/ Consider the development of a 'watchdog mechanism' – something like an NYS / Youth Ombudsperson – to which constituencies concerned about transparency, governance, the role and influence of politics, conflicts of interest and even corruption can address themselves and seek redress. The development project should include all stakeholders of the youth sector.

5/ Engage in more active external communication to young people and the general public about the development of the youth sector, the work of NYS implementation through a modernized and systematically integrated youth information system.

### ***Autonomy and dependence of youth civil society***

1/ Re-examine and explore, in cooperation with home-grown CSOs, the contours and factors determining autonomy and/or dependence of youth civil society and consider together mechanisms for addressing these that can be accommodated under the objectives of the new NYS

2/ Within efforts to harmonize legislation pertaining to youth and the youth sector, conduct a comprehensive review of legislative and policy provisions that have an impact on the functioning of youth civil society in Serbia

- change rules regarding access to funding on the part of CSOs to ensure that new CSOs are not created exclusively to benefit from funding streams that come on line (i.e. revise eligibility criteria) on the basis of open dialogue with youth CSOs and relevant experts on civil society development.

3/ Make a clear and strict separation between project funding streams for the implementation of the objectives of the NYS and funding streams dedicated to the 'managerial' implementation of the NYS through outsourcing, for which CSOs may also apply. This could involve

- studying the project and administrative grant-making approaches of other countries' ministries of youth and sports with a similar level of reliance on grant-making and outsourcing;
- applying a project funding moratorium on CSOs to whom managerial functions have been outsourced, implying an adequate level of funding for administrative functioning of the organization over the entire period of the outsourced contract, such that project funding is not necessary for the organizations in question to survive;
- creating profiles of service providers vs. project grantees, including specific criteria for how organizations can be one or the other or change role in different action plan periods;
- integrate such approaches and criteria into monitoring and evaluation frameworks and revise relevant by-laws;
- familiarize members of selection committees (for tenders and open calls for projects) with the new approach and ensure compliance in selection procedures;
- develop a more transparent procedures for both project grant-making and outsourcing / tendering, following good practice established in other countries and by communicating procedures, criteria and the way in which selection committees are established to the youth sector.

4/ Take an 'assertive' rather than 'defensive' approach to non-governmental advocacy and civil society critique of the MoYS and the NYS, by developing mechanisms to channel these constructively, by engaging with it on an ongoing basis and by using the opportunity it provides for communication, dialogue and engagement.

5/ Diversify the funding schemes available to CSOs to provide access to the basic minimum of institutional or administrative funding needed to run an organization

- consideration of how to make better use of public property for ensuring CSOs have access to office and activity spaces;
- support in the form of resources other than cash grants.

6/ Provide institutional support for larger, national CSOs, especially the umbrella organizations key to the functioning of the participatory decision-making system (co-management), such that they can afford to pay basic operational costs (at least in part), hire a minimum of staff and conduct basic organizational development tasks.

7/ Develop some specific mechanisms for trust building among CSOs and governmental authorities, especially at the local level. See the recommendations made in this regard under the section on governance, the role of politics and transparency.

## **Reach**

1/ Develop mechanisms for studying and measuring the reach of the new NYS to its target groups in general and more specific target groups that have been under-served by the previous NYS, considering factors that hinder and promote successful outreach with the instruments and activities of the NYS.

2/ Adapt measures that are intended to increase / improve the reach of the NYS to the realities and situations highlighted by new evidence of what influences reach positively.

3/ Include reach to so-far under-served populations or groups of young people as a specific criterion for project grants.

4/ Mainstream a more 'outreach' oriented approach across the work of the MoYS, its partners, and the NYS implementation, in general.



5/ Review the tools for outreach currently at the disposal of the MoYS, study which are most effective and adapt communication and outreach practices, taking into account expert advice where necessary (e.g. youth information, digital communication).

6/ Place more emphasis on the principle of ‘multiplication’ through the work of the implementation NYS, in cooperation with other government sectors, external partners, the local level, grantees and organizations engaged in managerial activities. This requires

- the development of a coherent and consensually understood concept of multiplication;
- and its mainstreaming through NYS action.

7/ Increase resources for outreach activities

8/ Integrate outreach into the job description of the LYCs, LYOs and regional coordinators. This implies

- the creation and provision of training for local youth policy actors and implementers in youth outreach work.

9/ Modernize, systematize and better resource youth information. This requires

- becoming familiar with and adapting the principles and practices of modern youth information according to recognized European and global standards;
- providing infrastructure for youth information and outreach (virtual, for example, ‘one stop shop’ youth information portal and physical, for example, Mobile youth centers, mobile information points, etc.);
- doing ‘market research’ style study on communicating with young people to avoid ineffective messaging and preaching.

10/ Make better use of the newly modernized and systematized youth information system for NYS outreach.

11/ Conduct a national campaign about opportunities for youth available through the NYS using social media and national TV.

12/ Create support mechanisms for excluded youth to make use of the opportunities available under the NYS.

## ***Monitoring and evaluation***

1/ Mainstream one centralized and unified monitoring and evaluation framework and system for youth related work, advocating for it in the MoYS and across government, dedicating financial and human resources to its development and implementation, piloting, communication to government and the rest of the youth sector and training for its use. This should involve the

- development of a project for the participatory establishment of indicators for M&E taking into account international best practice (involving all stakeholders that will work with the new framework in its development, focusing on qualitative and quantitative parameters, assessing quality of results and impact, not only quantity thereof, including subjective youth measures, focusing on fewer indicators, focusing on administrative and thematic dimensions);
- dedication of time and human resources in the MoYS workflow and organizational chart for monitoring and evaluation (making M&E an integral part of staff job descriptions);
- dedicating resources to improve capacity and competence for M&E among all NYS implementers from local to international level and across government, civil society and the research communities.
- development of new and easy to use (online) tools for financial reporting and oversight
- linking of the new M&E system to relevant sources of information and statistics that already exist and could be exploited better (national statistical office, census, ‘new’ register of citizens, international databases, etc.)

2/ Put emphasis on the structural independence and impartiality of the monitoring and evaluation framework, system, activities and people involved by establishing specific mechanisms for ensuring such.

3/ Develop a quality assurance framework for the work of the MoYS and the implementation of the NYS and tie it into the M&E framework. This can be achieved by

- studying the existing models of quality assurance available for work of this nature in practice in other countries and developed as international standards (c.f. ISO standards);
- mainstreaming the quality assurance criteria through efforts to streamline M&E and through grant-making and outsourcing procedures.

## ***Youth Research***

1/ Give priority to the development of a recognizable youth research community and infrastructure. This could be achieved by

- mapping of research being conducted on an ongoing basis (for example, longitudinal studies, relevant statistics being routinely collected, relevant qualitative research on Serbian youth being produced inside and outside the country, research commissioned by international organizations);
- providing researchers who identify as youth researchers a platform for communication, exchange, mutual learning, and approximating best practice from abroad (yearly meeting, virtual community development tools, grants for common research projects, etc.);
- using relevant NYS objectives to support youth research and the emergence of an identifiable youth research community;
- creating a one stop 'clearing house' where youth research can be stored and access (through which anyone interested in youth research can gain access to existing material and researchers can gain visibility for their work);
- fostering conditions for the better coordination and collation of and information exchange around punctual youth research conducted on Serbia youth;
- making better use of research products with a youth dimension in the work of the MoYS and implementation of the NYS;
- linking these efforts to the work of the new 'strategy unit' within the MoYS.

2/ Institutionalize the preparation of a periodic national youth report (along the lines of the European Youth Report) which can inform the development of the national youth strategy and its action planning and to which the evaluation and monitoring of the NYS can contribute.

3/ Encourage relevant researchers / faculties to engage with youth themes.

## Links to additional information about the evaluation

- [Results of the Stakeholder Survey \(narrative\)](#)
- [Results of the Stakeholder Survey \(graphs\)](#)
- [List of stakeholders that participated in the evaluation](#)
- [Program of field visit as run](#)
- [Blank stakeholder survey \(SRB\)](#); [Blank stakeholder survey \(EN\)](#)
- [Stakeholder Mapping](#)
- [Evaluation project description](#)

## Bibliography

The complete archive of materials that have been consulted in the development of this report, with the exception of the interview / meeting / focus group notes and recordings (which are subject to data protection regulations and must be kept confidential) can be accessed through the following URL: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/peoper2slmp3aek/AACvhDY04lt4UnoznYaZxM0Ya?dl=0>