



How to get successful

Youth policy at the local level?

Manual for Local Youth Action Plan (LYAP) Development

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**Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia
And
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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	7
2.1. NATIONAL LEVEL	7
2.2. LOCAL LEVEL	8
3. LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IDENTIFICATION	13
3.1 HOW TO FORM A SUCCESSFUL TEAM FOR LOCAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT	14
3.2 ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH INTO LYAP DEVELOPMENT PROCES	15
3.3 SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS	17
3.4 SUCCESSFUL MEETING ORGANIZATION	18
4. STEPS IN LYAP'S IMPLEMENTATION	21
4.1 TIMELINE FOR LYAP DEVELOPMENT	21
4.2 STRUCTURE (CONTENTS) OF THE LYAP DOCUMENT	22
4.3 DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY STATUS	25
4.4 PRIORITY SETTING	29
4.5 OBJECTIVES DEFINITION	29
5. PUBLIC DISCUSSION	31
6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION	33
7. LOCAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	37
8. CONCLUSION	39

INTRODUCTION

GTZ - German Organization for Technical Cooperation in collaboration with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) implements the project "Conflict Transformation and Youth Empowerment" (CTYE) in Serbia.

The project provides support to the Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sports, primarily in promotion of non-violent forms of behavior and conflict prevention, organization of youth and their empowerment in applying their initiatives.

The Manual for local youth action plan development has been created as a result of collaboration between Serbian Ministry of Youth and Sports and German Organization for Technical Cooperation - GTZ on this project and conveys experiences gained in work with pilot municipalities on youth policy issues.

Considering and recognizing the importance of implementation of National youth strategy at the local level, GTZ CTYE provides support with this Manual to the Ministry of Youth and Sports in their work with the local governments recognizing youth and youth policy as its long-term strategic goal.

Ministry of Youth and Sports' vision is a modern, European Serbia headed by creative, hardworking and courageous people, Serbia that provides good life for its youth in every local community.

We wish Serbia to become a country with youth participating in all areas of social life. It implies an active role of youth in education, employment, health care and cultural life to empower them to create themselves conditions for good life, traveling, studying, work and development.

That is Serbia that youth won't flee from: not because they don't have a choice, but because they don't want to. The young should travel to acquire new knowledge and experience, to socialize with their peers worldwide, but also to return to their country and apply what they have learnt.

The purpose of the Manual for local youth action plan development is to present main steps in the process of local youth action plan development, to explain the importance of the steps, how to make them and what should be avoided in the process of LYAP development. Presented steps and recommendations are based on invaluable experiences of the GTZ's project "Conflict Transformation and Youth Empowerment" in direct work with local governments.

The Manual is intended for local government representatives and relevant institutions for youth care at the local level, i.e. those who will take the most active role in the development process and later in the implementation process of the **local youth action plan**.

INSTITUTIONAL

2 FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The serious intention of a country to make real reforms may be noticed in its relation to one of most vulnerable social groups - youth. Strategy of every country is to enable its youth to fulfill life plans and to help them to find their place in a society.

Obligation of the Republic of Serbia with regard to the youth as a specific social group comes from the obligation that Serbia has assumed to international organizations. It primarily refers to already initiated process of EU stabilization and accession as well as obligations that come from the Council of Europe membership.

It should be particularly emphasized that in 2003 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life whose aim is to enable the young to actively participate in all segments of the social life in the regional and local community.

In that sense, a youth issue is not an issue that may or should be treated only at the level of the Republic of Serbia, but at the local government level (municipality, town, city of Belgrade) given that the national policy and strategy, action plan and programs, youth care in general, may be successfully implemented and achieved only if local government participate actively in these processes.

2 1 NATIONAL LEVEL

The Ministry of Youth and Sports was founded in May 2007 as a strategic priority of the Serbian government to deal with the youth issues, i.e. youth life quality improvement in a systematic and planned way. By establishing the Ministry two parallel processes have been initiated - the National youth strategy development (with the Action plan) and the establishment of local youth offices, as an instrument for strategy implementation at the local level.

The national youth strategy

Through a wide consultative and high participatory process and participation of all interested parties a National youth strategy have been developed. The government adopted the National youth strategy on May 9, 2008 as the first step to youth status improvement. Starting from the Strategy main task to provide opportunity for development of systemic, institutional and development solutions for youth support in various areas of social life, strategic directions and goals have been defined to include specific areas concerning youth life, that Serbian government want to pay special attention to.

Who are the young in the Republic of Serbia?

According to the National Strategy, the young are persons who are 15 - 30 years old. In the Republic of Serbia there are approximately a million and a half young people, which makes 20 per cent of the total population.¹

¹ The National Youth Strategy, Census for the year 2002, the Republic Statistics Office.

Action plan for the National youth strategy implementation

Action plan adoption is one of important steps to fulfillment of a vision given in the National youth strategy: "Youth living in the 20th century Serbia are active and equal participants in all areas of social life with equal rights and possibilities to develop their potential in full. It requires their active role in a family life, education, employment, health and overall social life."

On January 22, 2009 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Action plan for the National youth strategy implementation for the period of 2009-2014, thus showing its commitment to create systemic conditions for better youth life in the Republic of Serbia.

The Action plan may help everyone: government bodies, organizations, institutions, individuals and all other interested parties to implement Strategic goals. In line with this the Action plan defines precisely roles, responsibilities of the implementing parties as well as the institutional mechanisms to enable achievement of desired results and fulfillment of strategic goals.

The Action plan determines activities to be implemented in the period of 2009-2014. Detailed plan of funding the activities has been produced for 2009, while the cost projection has been made for the period of 2010-2014. Activities, expected outcomes of proposed activities and indicators (quantitative and qualitative) to monitor Strategy implementation and measure achieved results, have been determined for every objective.

2 2 LOCAL LEVEL

Within the National youth strategy a decentralization principle was presented as a model to enable achievement of national goals, but in line with specific needs of youth in every local community.

In order to implement National youth strategy goals successfully at the local level, it is necessary to create certain preconditions, i.e. instruments to enable the National youth strategy implementation: establish the youth offices at the local level (and appoint local coordinators) and form a Youth Council.

In the past two years, a planned youth issue resolution process started at the local level in over 90 municipalities across Serbia, including the process of opening youth offices and youth councils.

Why would local governments be interested in Local youth action plan (LYAP) development?

Local governments through the LYAP development ensure:

- Planned and long-term resolution of youth issues, with creation of measures and services adapted to the real youth need in a specific local community.
- More economic use of existing resources (material, technical, institutional and human) through networking of local institutions and organizations.
- Cost effective and targeted spending of municipal budget

An option to use alternative funding resources (resources are available only with the valid plan municipal documents)

THE YOUTH OFFICE is the integral part of the local government and makes a bridge both among the stakeholders (municipality, local institutions and organizations and youth) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Youth office provides institutional framework for the youth through which they can influence decisions that directly affect them. Youth office also makes possible for all youth local institutions and organizations to get networked and to improve the youth services quality through the maximum use of the available resources.

Main goal of opening the local youth offices is to create conditions for the better youth life quality in the local community - Serbian municipalities and towns - and youth active participation in modern trends of society development.

Local Youth Offices objectives are:

- Youth promotion and recognition and their active involvement in the society;
- Provision of support to youth initiatives and projects;
- Promotion of healthy life styles;
- Incentives for economic youth empowerment;
- Informal youth education;
- Youth information;
- Making possible quality leisure time;
- Promotion of values of tolerance, recognition of human rights and equality;
- Prevention of risky youth behavior;
- Promotion and recognition of volunteering work;
- Youth mobility;
- Promotion of life chances for all youth groups, particularly sensitive groups;²
- Encouragement, development, recognition and rewarding of the excellent youth achievements.

THE YOUTH COUNCIL consists of the representatives of all local institutions and organizations who work with the youth, as well as the youth representatives: high school student parliaments, student organizations, youth informal groups, etc.

At the request of the local government, the local institutions and organizations appoint their representatives. To appoint a representative to the Youth council, municipality has first to set the selection criteria and to ensure that the majority of youth is informed about the way the Youth Council is managed.

² National youth strategy. The Strategy defines the term of youth sensitive group as a group including all categories of youth impaired or disabled to exercise their rights (eg. Disabled youth, young Roma, poor youth).

By analyzing the activities of similar municipal structures in the region and in EU, the Ministry of Youth and Sports gave the following recommendations on activities that youth councils may implement:

- To initiate and participate in local youth policy development in the field of: education, sport, leisure time use, employment increase, information, active youth participation, provision of equal rights, health care, culture, gender equality, violence and crime prevention, rights exercise, sustainable development, environment protection and other;
- To participate in development of special local action plans, programs and policies in line with the National youth strategy and monitor their implementation;
- To provide opinion on youth issues and inform responsible municipal/town bodies about them;
- To provide opinion on draft regulations and decisions to be passed by municipal assembly in the youth-related areas;
- To adopt annual and periodical reports on implementation of local youth policy and local youth action plans and youth programs and submit them to the local government management/town/city management and assembly;
- To initiate project preparation or local government/town/city participation in youth programs and projects to improve youth status and enable youth rights fulfillment under the jurisdiction of the local government units;
- To encourage collaboration between local institutions and youth organizations and associations and provide support for implementation of their activities;
- To encourage inter-municipal collaboration regarding youth and inform local government on it;
- To give opinion on project proposals important for the youth that are partially or fully funded from the local government/town budget.

IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THE YOUTH POLICY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL SUCCESSFULLY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEED TO SET AN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK (YOUTH OFFICE AND YOUTH COUNCIL) TO ENSURE CONTINUOUS AND SYSTEMIC IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASURES PLANNED ACCORDING TO REAL YOUTH NEEDS IN A SPECIFIC COMMUNITY AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

**SUSTAINABLE
MODEL
OF YOUTH
POLICY**



1

Establishment of Youth Office
and appointment of local
coordinator

**SYSTEMATIC
INVOLVEMENT
OF YOUNG PEOPLE**



2

Establishment of
Youth Council

**CREATION OF
MEASURES
ACCORDING TO
AVAILABLE
RESOURCES**



3

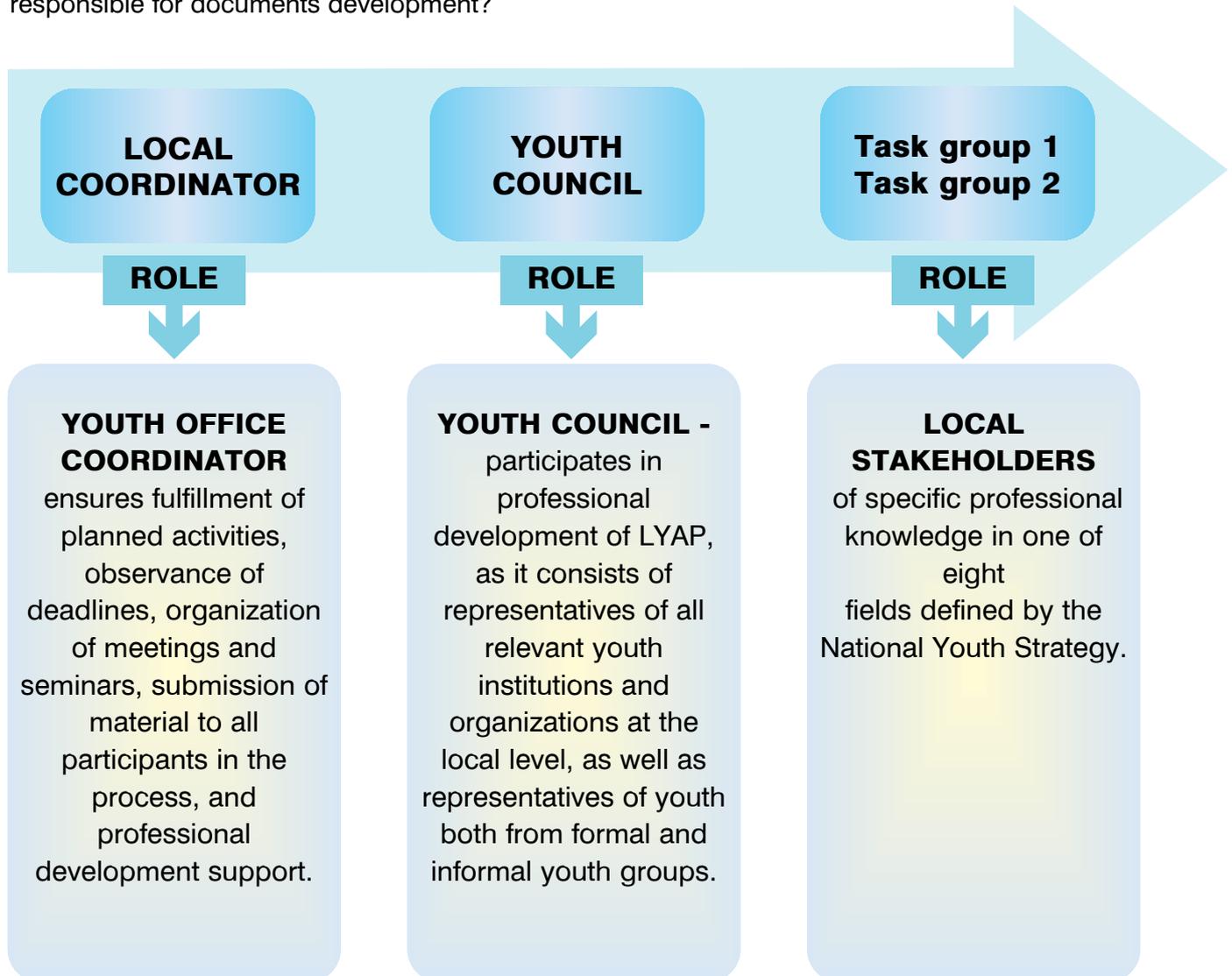
Local Youth Action Plan
(LYAP)
Development

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

3

IDENTIFICATION

Main question that is posed regarding the first stage of LYAP development is the following: Who is responsible for documents development?



The practice showed that only multidisciplinary teams composed of all interested local stakeholders, with wide participation of youth, may produce good plan documents. Such teams produce LYAPs to be afterward implemented. **The above mentioned multidisciplinary structure fully suits the structure of YOUTH COUNCIL.**

Multidisciplinary and participatory approach enables easier and more objective consideration of problem complexity, i.e. more comprehensive approach. It is particularly important that they look at the problems and potential solutions from different aspects and have better developed control systems. Such a model of work makes possible creation of optimum measures for resolving specific youth issues.

The first step in local stakeholders identification is to make a list of all persons and organizations that may be both positively or negatively affected by the goal achievement. When making this list the answers should be given to the following questions:

- Who will get the most if the goal is achieved?
- Who will lose the most if the goal is achieved and why?
- Who possesses the formal power in goal achievement?
- Who possesses the informal power in goal achievement?



Key partners in the process of creating LYAP are primarily young people, then local government, education, health care and social welfare institutions, police, judiciary, cultural institutions, media, NGOs, churches, private sector, renowned members of the society (artists, sportsmen, academicians, etc.) and others.

Partner selection criteria for LYAP creation should be clearly and transparently defined, understandable to all participants in the process and properly presented.

Criteria which should not be used in the selection are:

- **unverified information on local stakeholder competence;**
- **personal connection as the only parameter;**
- **ultimate proposals of some stakeholders (political groups, donors, etc.).**

3 | 1 HOW TO GET A SUCCESSFUL TEAM FOR LYAP DEVELOPMENT

To build a good team and do an efficient team work, besides contacting and communicating with various potential partners (including ones you have not collaborated with so far), as various organizations may have various ideas, solutions and abilities,

**BEAR IN MIND that -
FORMING A TEAM DOES NOT MEAN HAVING A SUCCESSFUL TEAM.**

Features of a successful team are the following:

- **wide participation - team includes a number of people (experts and youth);**
- **a wide range of a target group - youth of different age, social status, nationality, etc;**
- **work transparency- sharing of knowledge, ideas and abilities;**
- **structured obligations and tasks - there is a clear division of roles and rules of work;**
- **consensus decision making - decisions are made in consultation with all partners.**

Successful team work is ensured by respecting autonomy and independence of partners, by distribution of relevant information to all partners and by open and clear partnerships (there are no so called "Partnerships within the partnerships").

Team work can be difficult when there is not enough time to include all who are interested in the work and when the local partners for some reason do not share common interests, i.e. different problems are their priorities.

Main starting point in all activities is the right of every young person to be involved in all activities regarding youth and community they live in. The youth know best what their problems are, their needs, their priorities but also limitations. The youth want from adults support, both to their opinions and to implementation of their ideas.

3 2 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN THE LOCAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Several steps have to be taken for an active involvement of youth in the LYAP development process:

STEP 1 - organize informative and educational youth meetings/public discussions

At the very start of LYAP development process, organize informative-educational meetings/public discussions at schools, clubs, student organizations, volunteer clubs, local NGOs, depending on local capacities, to explain, with simplicity and in more details:

- what the process of LYAP development is;
- what the goal of LYAP development process is;
- what the stages of LYAP development process are;
- what the envisaged activities are;
- who the participants in the LYAP development process are;
- how long the LYAP development process takes;
- in what way the youth may participate in the LYAP development process.

The goal of these informative and educational meetings is to inform as many interested groups as possible about their possibilities to participate in LYAP development.

Youth offices should be the drivers and organizers of above mentioned activities while activities should be implemented in partnership with local government and local institutions and organizations.

STEP 2 - focus group organization

Youth offices should be the drivers and organizers of above mentioned activities while activities should be implemented in partnership with local government and local institutions and organizations.

The focus group goal is to have youth define their needs, problems, challenges they are facing and possible solutions to guideline their work in the LYAP development process

After a set of informative and educational meetings a set of focus group meetings should be organized with young people actively participating in them. Focus groups may be organized not only with young people, i.e. youth representatives, but also with representatives of relevant institutions, municipalities, etc.

In order to have youth actively participate in the focus group work the best thing is to organize them at schools, faculties, dormitories, etc. This creates space for involvement of all interested, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable youth.

The focus group work should be focused on:

- youth needs identification;
- identification of problems youth are facing;
- methods of resolving problems that youth are facing;
- discussions on various sector issues youth are interested in;
- proposals and suggestions of youth related to the LYAP development process.

Information on youth needs, their problems, as well as the solution proposals, can be collected in addition to focus groups, by anonymous surveys, creative workshops, short researches, etc.

Local coordinators and youth office associates should actively participate at meetings and focus groups, to encourage youth work and provide information on LYAP development process to all interested youth. Youth should be given opportunity to actively participate in all activities within the LYAP development process in:

- task group forming;
- data collection and analysis;
- priority definition, LYAP development;
- consultations, etc.

Things to **avoid** in work with youth:

- **don't be aggressive;**
- **don't impose your opinions and solutions to them;**
- **don't promise unrealistic i.e. unrealizable things;**
- **don't manipulate children and youth, as once lost trust is difficult to regain.**

3 3 SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS (communication skills)

It is essential to learn how to communicate clearly and efficiently when working either by yourself or as a member of a team. We communicate with others to express our thoughts, to hear other opinions, to get necessary information, to share experiences, etc.

For the team work the following communication principles are essential:

- **active listening and posing clear questions;**
- **discussion, not a presentation of your ideas and attitudes;**
- **openness for collaboration.**

Some suggestions for efficient communication are:

- listen to others carefully and they will often tell you, if they have time, all you need to know;
- let other person always speak more;
- accept the rule of 70% listening and 30% speaking.

Main rules of successful communication are:

- ask for additional explanations if necessary. Not only that you'll get needed information but show your partner that you're an attentive listener;
- ask "open" questions that require answers more extensive than the simple yes or no. Your goal is to get more information from your interlocutor;
- ask your interlocutor what he/she thinks or feels about an issue or ask his/her advice;
- at the end of the conversation don't forget to repeat what you've talked about, e.g. "Just to check if I understood you correctly: You said that..." This technique will prevent potential misunderstandings.

The most frequent communication channels at work are:

- direct/oral communication,
- formal, written communication and
- e-mail communication.

Each of the channels has its advantages and disadvantages, but the recommended communication in business is written communication. By confirming certain conclusions, obligations, recommendations or opinions in writing, we do not leave space for misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

If you want to communicate well with others, you have to ask questions that bring your interlocutor in a defending position. A question "Why?" is too direct and can be upsetting. A phrase like this: "How do you mean?" or "If you could explain to me..." are more suitable; don't interrupt your interlocutors. Remember what you wanted to add or ask and say that after your interlocutor ends his/her speech. This is one of the rules of business etiquette.

3 4 SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATION OF MEETINGS (facilitation skills)

Efficient meetings, whether inside your team or with the external partners, are very important for good implementation of activities. In order to run a meeting well, the following preparations have to be made:

- define a meeting goal, i.e. what we expect from the meeting;
- identify meeting participants (with regard to the goal and results), who will run the meeting and who will take the notes;
- develop agenda;
- send agenda to the participants at least 3-4 days before the meeting;
- a day before the meeting check if all invitees will come to the meeting.

It is useful to set "the meeting rules" at the start of the meeting. The rules serve to prevent some occurrences that would affect the efficiency of the meeting. Some of the rules are:

- turn off the mobile phone;
- no interrupting/heckling of other participants in the meeting;
- no leaving the room while the meeting is running;
- no smoking; etc.
- one person can speak at a time.

A person that runs the meeting should react and remind the present ones of the agreed rules every time when some of jointly established rules are violated. At the very beginning of the meeting, the one who runs the meeting should also inform the others about the results achieved since the last meeting. In this manner a responsibility system is established among the team members.

In order to maintain the attendees' concentration, it is necessary to:

- select a good meeting manager to get others focused on the topic;
- hold brief meetings;
- if the meeting lasts longer, make breaks;
- involve all participants (don't allow some participants to be just formally present).

After the meeting, all participants should be sent meeting minutes with clearly noted agreed actions, as well as activities to be conducted by the participants in the future. Meetings should be organized regularly, but not too often, as people over time get bored sitting at meetings.

For activity monitoring (successes and problems) between two meetings, regular informal communication is recommended.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- holding a meeting without clear reason;
- giving opportunity to participants to "go off the subject" in their discussions, talks and to fail focusing on the agenda topics;
- holding a meeting for more than 45 minutes;
- scheduling a meeting immediately after the lunch;
- closing the meeting with no clear conclusions and activity plan for further steps.

ORGANIZING A MEETING WITH OFFICIALS - In the process of LYAP development one of the necessary steps would certainly be involvement of some officials who should contribute in some way to your goal achievement. The officials are: mayor, representatives of a line ministry, representatives of interested donors, etc.

To achieve a higher goal, it is the best to maintain a good and professional relationship with the officials you meet. Therefore you should use every meeting or opportunity to meet them so that you could:

- build a relationship
- collect information
- provide information
- lobby to achieve your goal.

The following part deals with the things you should do as soon as possible, before, during or after the meeting with the selected officials.

BEFORE THE MEETING

Before discussion starts, agree within your team on key issues you'll present to the officials:

- define what specifically you want to achieve with the meeting with officials; (e.g. Inform them about your activities, seek for support, ask for the funds, etc.)
- try to find out what the general attitude/opinion of the officials is about the youth and if they have done something on this so far;
- prepare your presentation;
- arrive in time for the meeting.

DURING THE MEETING

- be polite and respect the attendance of officials (the least you can do is to thank them for their time);
- be concise and to the point in your speech (officials often do not have much time available);
- listen attentively and identify the areas of common interest (whether they specifically relate to your project or not);
- take notes (whenever possible);
- explain things you disagree with and kindly ask for the comment;
- at the end of the meeting leave your contact details.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Inform your team members about the results of the meeting;
- Send additional information to the official (if necessary);
- Maintain contacts with the official and develop your relationship.

NOT RECOMMENDABLE

- **don't** give arbitrary and unchecked answers (if you don't know the right ones);
- **don't** discuss many issues at once, i.e. be focused;
- **don't** give too much information and leave insufficient time to the official to answer some of the questions

STEPS

4 IN LOCAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

4 1 TIMELINE FOR THE LYAP DEVELOPMENT

Time planning is extremely important both for planning the activities you may implement in a certain period of time, and for monitoring the non-/achieved results.

Whether it is a short-term or long-term planning of time or activity, it is recommended to plan a 6 months period for the very LYAP development.

When planning the timeline for certain activities, all team members who are responsible for specific activities, need to take part in it. Plan should be realistic, achievable and acceptable to all those who participated in its development.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	TIMELINE
Data collection	1.5 months
Analysis of the existing resources Analysis of the existing services Analysis of the existing problems	1.5 months
Defining priority Defining activities for resolving priority problems	1-2 months
Communication strategy Monitoring Evaluation	1-2 months
Budgeting	1 month
Public discussion	1 month

When planning the following should be taken into consideration:

- annual leaves, i.e. vacations, both of team members and those we have to work with on implementation of certain activities (remember that July, August and January are almost "non-working days");
- planned or already confirmed local or national elections (this period is good for establishing contacts and sharing information about your work, but often not for implementation of specific activities);
- real necessary time and some additional risk (potential delay) for some activities.

Optimum time for a LYAP development process is 8 to 10 months. It is proved in practice that if the process lasts shorter, there is a risk of poor implementation of some activities. In case the process lasts longer, there is a risk for the process to get off the subject and to lose attention and motivation of participants in the LYAP development process.

When planning time, LYAP teams recommend to pay special attention to municipal budget adoption date. Namely, if you want to have some LYAP activities supported by the municipal budget, it is important to align your activities with the time necessary for your funding request to get into budget preparation, i.e. to be on the agenda intended for budget adoption. If your activities are not adapted duly to these frameworks, there is a risk that the proposed LYAP activities get adopted, that is, funded in the next budget year.

4 **2** **DOCUMENT STRUCTURE (CONTENTS)** **LOCAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN (LYAP)**

LYAP structure, regardless of work methodology and tools used, always consists of the following elements:

INTRODUCTION - outlining:

- ✓ why the development of LYAP started,
- ✓ who took part in the LYAP development process and
- ✓ in what period of time;

DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY STATUS - is made according to:

- ✓ analysis of the youth-related data,
- ✓ analysis of existing resources and
- ✓ analysis of existing youth services;

LOCAL COMMUNITY PRIORITIES - that result from the consultations with the relevant participants in the LYAP development process. The following issues are addressed within every priority:

- ✓ goal;
- ✓ objectives;
- ✓ activities and activity holders;
- ✓ fund resources;
- ✓ indicators.

ACTION PLAN TABLE - that contains the concisely stated:

- ✓ goal,
- ✓ planned activity,
- ✓ responsible person for its implementation, and
- ✓ timeline.

BUDGET - that contains the amount of funds for the planned period necessary for the activity implementation;

Upon defining LYAP content, members of the Youth Council define together the areas/topics they can deal with themselves according to the data collected and experience gained, and the areas they would need help for, from the external experts.

Forming of task groups, as already mentioned, is a proven mechanism in practice that enabled wide participation of interested local stakeholders and provided high level of expertise in specific areas (e.g. social issues, health care issues, safety, etc.), as only high expertise of the participants in the LYAP development may ensure creation of optimum solutions for youth.

Reminder: Main framework in LYAP development at the municipal level is a National youth strategy that defines goals (and general areas) and is recommended to be a framework for task group formation, certainly, depending on the specific local community needs.

NATIONAL YOUTH STRATEGY AREAS AND GOALS

Youth activism - Encourage youth to take active part in the society

Institutional framework - Develop youth collaboration and ensure decision-making participation through sustainable institutional framework according to youth needs and youth partnerships;

Youth information - Develop youth information system at all levels and in all areas;

Equal opportunities and chances - Ensure the right of all the young people in the society, particularly the young people who live under difficult conditions.

Support of successful (talented) youth - Encourage and respect exceptional talents and achievements of youth in various fields.

Youth leisure time - Improve the opportunities for better use of youth leisure time;

Youth education - Develop open, effective and just system of formal and informal education that is available to all youth and in line with global trends in education and educational context in the Republic of Serbia;

Youth employment - motivate and encourage all forms of employment, self-employment and youth entrepreneurship;

Youth safety - Improve the youth safety;

Youth health - Take care about and improve youth health, decrease risks and key health issues and develop health care adapted to the youth;

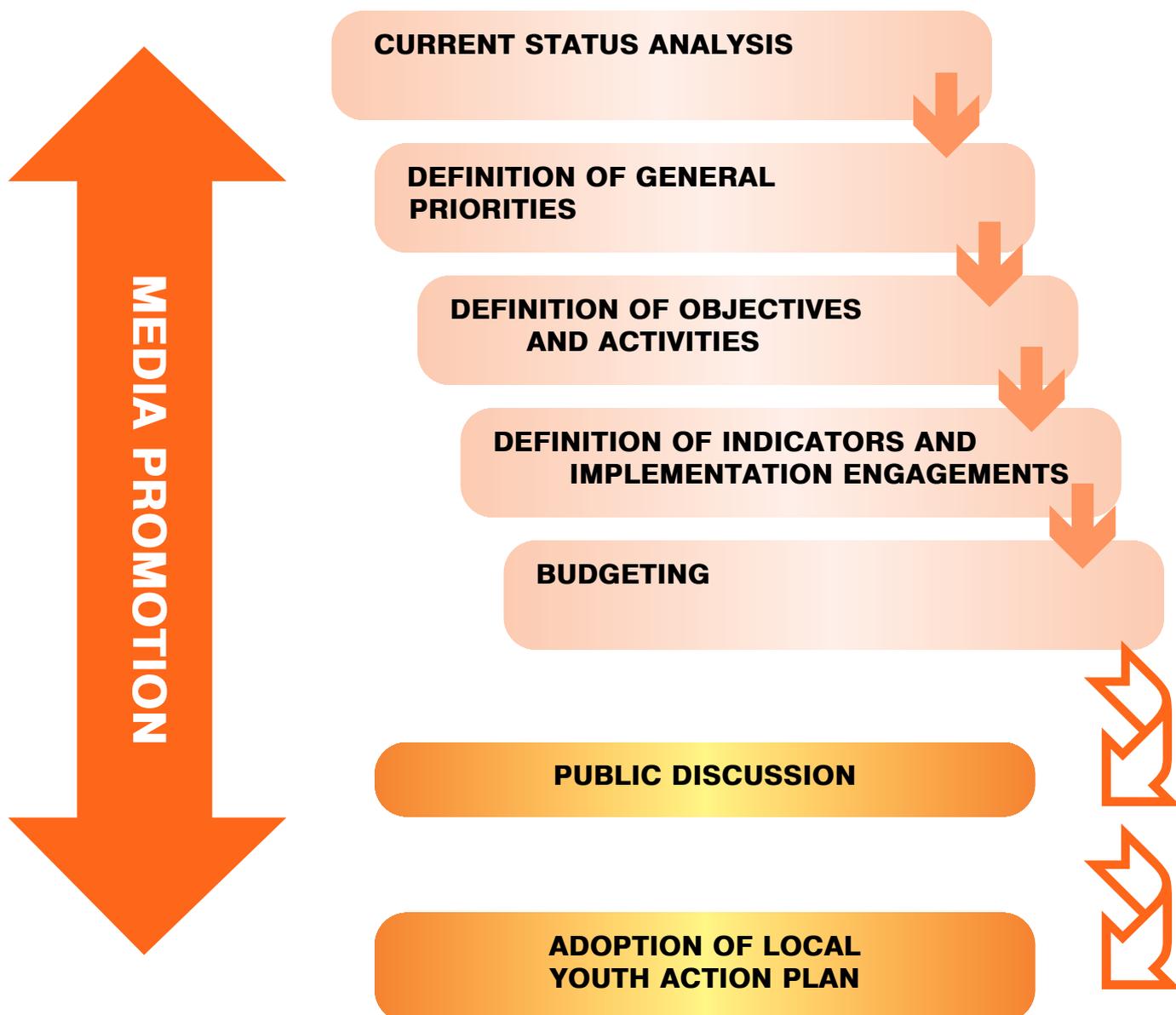
Environment protection - Empower youth to take initiative and actions that are in line with main goals of sustainable development and healthy environment.

***In the course of LYAP development process a good distribution of work is necessary among the participants in the plan writing process. It is important to engage in some chapters writing people with relevant competence in that field.**

If all relevant data have been collected and if the content of LYAP is clearly defined, the process of LYAP development will usually last for about two months.

After being written, the draft document is sent out to all relevant partners for comments. Experience shows that consultations on draft LYAP usually last 30-45 days, but it can be longer depending on the number of topics covered in the LYAP, number of consultations/meetings held, number of participants attending the consultations, etc. After consultations and collected comments, suggestions and recommendations, they start to develop a final version of LYAP.

The process of LYAP writing (draft writing, consultations and final version writing) takes, most frequently, about six months. LYAP usually covers the period of five years. The assessment of outcomes is conducted afterwards. Then according to the achieved results, but also to collected data on changes that occurred in the local community in the previous period, development of a new LYAP starts.



What **should not** be done when developing draft LYAP:

- **do not** speed up the process of writing and public discussion as you affect the quality of LYAP in this manner;
- **do not** suit the activities stated in the LYAP to the interests of e.g. local government or donors, as this is not the way to resolve real problems of your local community, but to fulfill wishes of the potential investors for a short time.

4 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY STATUS

Every local community is specific for its geographic, demographic, social, economic and other characteristics. Stated characteristics are the base for available resources of a local community, i.e. the starting point in resolving youth issues.

The practice showed that youth from various communities, however, have similar problems, i.e. similar wishes about their future life - social security, possibility to get educated, get employed, have a quality leisure time, etc.

LYAPs from various local communities differ in the initial conditions for resolving stated problems, i.e. local community's capacity and resources. Therefore, the precise analysis of the current status is crucial for setting realistic goals, i.e. successful planning.

As mentioned, there is no successful planning without examining internal and external environment, local institutions, i.e. local community circumstances.

SWOT analysis is a good way to do that. SWOT³ is an abbreviation for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, while opportunities and threats describe external environment. SWOT analysis is performed most frequently in a team in the form of a table, as shown below.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

For adequate definition of current status, it is necessary to conduct the following activities:

- DATA COLLECTION and
- RESOURCE ANALYSIS (CAPACITY ASSESSMENT)
- ANALYSIS OF EXISTING SERVICES (YOUTH ACTIVITIES)

DATA COLLECTION

After setting your goal, defining the roles within the team and starting to build necessary capacities and plan the time necessary for implementing all stages within the LYAP development process, you need to collect necessary data so that you can have a realistic view on the status of youth in the local community. Collected data are also necessary to plan activities within every stated stage.

³ SWOT: **S**trengths, **w**eaknesses, **o**pportunities, **t**hreats.

During the data collection stage one should know that there are different types of data:

- existing statistical data;
- data in the records of some institutions (annual reports, etc.);
- data that do not exist in the databases, but are important for monitoring and evaluation of the youth activity at the local level (parents' attitudes, extracurricular activities, etc.);
- data that are not recorded, but are very important for monitoring local community situation (e.g. data on socially vulnerable youth that are not recorded, but are very important due to the fact that some funds are allocated for that particular youth group).

SOURCES OF AVAILABLE DATA

Necessary data may be obtained from:

- ✓ the National Statistics Office and authorized institution for data collection - the Law on statistical research defines the level at which Republic collects the data, who gives the data, who the data refer to, what characteristics are collected, at what level and how often;
- ✓ competent local institutions, such as: schools, health care centers, social welfare centers, financial and communal departments within the Municipal Assembly;
- ✓ provincial institutions.

METHODS OF COLLECTING UNAVAILABLE DATA are:

- inventory;
- survey;
- recording, i.e. collecting new data.

There are several methods of data collecting by survey. They are:

- face to face;
- telephone survey;
- mail survey method;
- Internet survey.

If there are few respondents at the local community, i.e. few institutions that may give us necessary data, then the data are collected from all respondents. If there are many respondents at the local community, we use the SAMPLE. Representative sample is based on already known likelihood of choice of every unit in the sample, so the conclusion may refer to the entire population. It is important to choose sufficient number of units in the sample to have a reliable conclusion based on sample.

An expert in a specific field should work on sample definition and its range. In order to conduct the survey and collect all necessary data, it is necessary to walk through all survey stages:

- goal definition - why data are collected;
- methodology definition - selection of data collection method, sample choice;
- provision of financial means to conduct the survey;
- survey instrument definition - defining a basic group (where the sample is selected), putting together a questionnaire, developing interviewer's work instruction, etc.);
- sample selection, i.e. development;
- interviewers' training;
- field work (interviewing/poll-taking);
- interviewer work control - control is made by the supervisors i.e. survey organizers; encoding questionnaire;
- data entry.

To collect relevant data, it is necessary to:

- avoid working with undefined main groups;
- have a good sample to draw a reliable conclusion from;
- precisely define questions in the questionnaire to get precise and clear answers;
- involve professional and trained people.

There are no currently standardized procedures for data collecting at the municipal level. Data collection procedures are clearly defined for the Republic level by the Republic bodies. Those data are available with the republic bodies and can be obtained only at the special request.

RESOURCES ANALYSIS (CAPACITY ASSESSMENT)

Next step in defining current situation of the local community is identification of existing capacities (resources) and the missing ones necessary for achieving the set goals. Resources may be divided into three main groups:

- MATERIAL RESOURCES** - technical equipment
- HUMAN RESOURCES** - adequate expertise/profile and experience;
- FINANCIAL RESOURCES** - necessary financial means.

In order to clearly determine our own weaknesses, i.e. available or missing resources, the easiest way is to use the table. When filling out Table 1, i.e. when defining current and needed capacity, you should be as detailed as possible and state even the things that at first seem understood (e.g. state all professional profiles that should deal with the youth issues, etc.).

Table 1: RESOURCE ANALYSIS

TYPE OF A RESOURCE	EXISTING RESOURCE	MISSING RESOURCE	PROVIDER OF A POTENTIAL RESOURCES
MATERIAL RESOURCES			
HUMAN RESOURCES			
FINANCIAL RESOURCES			

EXISTING YOUTH SERVICES ANALYSIS

Filling out of the Table 2 provides an analysis of existing youth services (activities) in the local community. The practice shows that many institutions have various youth-related activities, but due to the poor media promotion, youth is not informed about such activities. As a consequence of a poor youth and wide public awareness of the existing services, there is very often a duplication of youth-related services at the local level. It is particularly seen with the services whose providers may be institutions or civil sector representatives (Youth counseling, organizing various educations, etc.), who are not informed about the interlinked activities due to the lack of systemic collaboration model.

Table 2: ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING YOUTH-RELATED SERVICES

EXISTING YOUTH - RELATED SERVICES	WHO PROVIDES THEM	WHO FINANCES THEM	MISSING YOUTH RELATED SERVICES
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

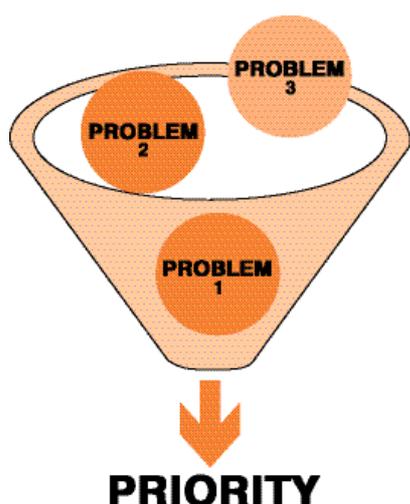
4 4 PRIORITY DEFINITION

Well defined priority should be:

- realistic, i.e. attainable;
- in line with the real capacities;
- based on real needs of a specific target group or community in general;

Priorities are agreed and aligned by all (or majority) who are affected by resolution of such priorities. It is very important to have in mind when setting priorities that budgetary limitations may affect their achievement. But, bear in mind that budget means should not be your main limitation factor. Budget means are only one source of funds for achieving your priority.

In collaboration with your partners you may make a list of potential donors and design a plan to present them your activities and plans and how to ask for their support.



Remember, money is not always the only problem. Often, lack of motivation, initiative, collaboration, competitiveness, distrust among some partners/participants in the process and lack of readiness for the action may be bigger obstacles in work than the lack of funds.

Priorities should be set according to the relevant data from the database, from various surveys, focus groups and meetings; meetings with youth and institutions that take care about the youth; discussions with local government representatives (responsible for children and funds).

IT IS NOT RECOMMENDABLE FOR THE PRIORITY TO BE:

”Political”, i.e. priority imposed by some political parties, and most frequently in the service of collecting points in the pre-election campaign. Reflection of personal ambitions of those in power to make decisions or reflection of prevalence of one profession (interest area) over others.

4 5 GOAL DEFINITION

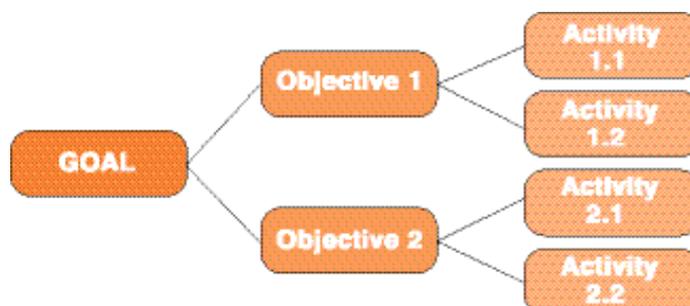
According to the real situation and youth need in local community, the local action plan should define short-term, mid-term and long-term goals to improve the quality of youth life.

As mentioned at the beginning, LYAP is not a goal in itself, but an instrument for youth life quality improvement in the local communities. Indeed, this is why both youth/ the ones to be affected by the decisions most / and the relevant institutions who work with youth at the local level should be involved in LYAP goal definition.

Goals - According to vision and mission set by the local partners and outcomes of the current situation analysis, goals are defined. There is no correct or wrong goal. Thing that suits one local community, does not have to suit the other, even if they have the same mission. Goals are based on internal and external assessment (SWOT analysis), so they would differ for every local community.

In the ideal case, goals:

- ✓ show the clear direction
- ✓ are realistic
- ✓ are focused on the outcomes



Objectives - After setting the goals, generally it is easy to define the objectives. Objectives must relate to your goals, as your goals must relate to your mission.

Objectives are detailed and timely defined action plans for every specific goal. They are usually well elaborated in the annual plan and often one goal is accompanied by several objectives.

Objectives must be SMART⁴:

- ✓ specific
- ✓ measurable
- ✓ attainable
- ✓ realistic and relevant
- ✓ timed

Be ready to face negative reactions of some partners to clear, measurable tasks. Reasons them being reserved may be fear from:

- sustainability;
- change;
- learning that some activities might not suit real needs, but remain in the LYAP due to the respect for the person who conducts them;
- clearly defined responsibility (isn't it easier to say that we are all responsible?);
- nonobservance of deadlines;
- losing the old days feeling for the sake of better management.

All of us should consider the fears and find new ways for more tolerant relationship within our team. The major advantage of setting the objectives is to have every local partner focused, aware of what is expected from him, and what is his contribution to the overall picture.

When you have well defined and measurable objectives, it is necessary to define specific responsibilities for their achievement and consider in advance how to measure the performance.

⁴ SMART: **S**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**ealistic and relevant, **t**imed.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Once written the draft LYAP should be sent for public discussion before final adoption. Even though representatives of relevant youth-related institutions have been involved in the LYAP development, Youth council obligation is to present proposed activities to all interested parties in the local community thus enabling them to give comments and proposals to those who have not participated directly in the LYAP development. Consultations are a kind of external evaluation of your previous work and they can help you notice omissions, work through some segments thus improving the LYAP quality.

Draft LYAP should be considered and discussed by:

- youth, i.e. those who are mostly affected by the proposed activities;
- professionals;
- representatives of local government (responsible for budgets);
- NGO representatives, i.e. those experienced in the same or similar activities;
- potential donors (those who support similar activities or those who plan to do that in the future);
- media representatives.

Pre-requisites for successful public discussion are:

- sufficient time for preparing and holding the public discussion;
- timely public information about the start of public discussion;
- publishing of draft LYAP (by media, putting the draft document on the internet, printing some copies of LYAP available to the public and often placed with the competent municipal department, sending the draft LYAP to all relevant institutions, etc.).

In addition to the proposed activities, draft LYAP should contain information about those who participated in its development, in what period of time, based on what data some activities have been proposed, who they consulted, who the partners were, etc. By presenting such information we will remove potential dilemmas, provide explanation for some proposed activities, thus creating more space for comments on some essential issues in the LYAP

Practice showed that in the course of public discussion, mechanisms should be clearly defined for the proposals and amendments to come from the local government, i.e. youth council. It is recommended to set a time and form for submission of written proposals and amendments to the local government (Youth office).

In the next step, Youth council does the analysis of received proposals, and professional selection of those which can be adopted, and provides explanation for non-adopting the discarded ones.

Next step is informing the wider public about the adopted comments, and explaining why some comments are excluded in final version. Models of communication used are: media, written submittals to relevant institutions, information board notification in the municipality, etc.

Thereby, not only that you extend gratitude for the provided comments, but at the same time you establish better communication and trust among interested partners in the local community and increase number of potential partners to implement LYAP.

Consultations can be made by:

- public discussions, round tables, meetings;
- polls conducted at schools and among citizens;
- surveys of relevant institutions;
- focus groups;
- online/internet surveys.

The real time necessary to prepare and do the consultations is one to two months,

Things to avoid in the public discussion:

- discussion for form's sake, i.e. the ones organized without real wish/need to discuss comments and suggestions that might be adopted;
- debates only among the like-minded;
- discussions without real youth participation.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6

What is monitoring?

Monitoring or supervising - is a continuous overseeing of results and progress in implementing the planned activities conducted according to the prior defined indicators. Monitoring involves comparison of information collected during implementation with already defined indicators. The aim of monitoring is:

- **specific use of invested human and material resources** for implementation of planned activities;
- to ensure **activities are implemented in a manner that guarantees attainment of the goals** we planned and to measure to what extent the goal is attained;
- **to modify activities**, material resources or staff in due time;
- **to improve quality of services and activities and include outcomes** in plan review;
- to **recognize professional capacity of associates.**

Five basic questions in monitoring

When planning monitoring and evaluation, bear in mind, that they have to answer the following basic questions:

What do we monitor and evaluate?

Who does monitoring and evaluation?

When are we going to monitor and evaluate?

Why do we want to monitor and evaluate attainments?

How (by which methods or instruments) are we going to monitor and evaluate?

The purpose of monitoring is collection of information about the activity and identification of various problems at the earliest stage (that teams are facing) and collection and consideration of proposed or applied solutions. This enables proactive reaction to problems in order to prevent them or efficiently resolve them, and provides invaluable experience for future projects, too.

When we speak about the monitoring process as a part of LYAP development process, we have to make distinction between two kinds of monitoring:

LYAP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS MONITORING - monitoring the implementation of the activity in the period of 6 to 10 months, the length of LYAP development process, enables finding timely solutions for the problems that may occur during the LYAP development. This type of monitoring is done by the participants in LYAP development process, and the Youth office is also recommended to do the same.

MONITORING OF THE LYAP IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS - monitoring of the LYAP activity implementation. This type of monitoring is done by monitoring teams composed of the representatives of various institutions and organizations at the local level, while the LYAP should have clearly defined monitoring mechanism and monitoring team structure.

What is evaluation?

Evaluation (attainment assessment) is a process that, in a systematic and objective way, tries to determine relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of implemented activities within the set goals (project goals, strategy goals, action plan goals). Evaluation relies on monitoring results, as well as on its own specific methods and tools. It deals with analysis and assessment of collected data to assess how successful the project is. It should assess in a systematic and objective way progressing towards the **outcome achievement**.

Who can perform evaluation?

The task of assessing the level of success of the implemented activities may be given to people inside or outside the team involved in the development process.

Evaluation may be:

- **Internal** - Internal evaluation is performed by the participants in the planning process, who have better insight into the real situation, clear picture of what is the most relevant for assessment, what sources of information are the most objective. On the other hand, there is a danger of the biased assessment which can result in over self-criticism, exaggeration, exacerbation factor or supporting factor and potentially being less critical to the partners in the process.
- **External** - External evaluation is performed by the external, "neutral" experts, thus decreasing the danger of personal protections, making the processing and interpretation of received data more objective and internal and external advantages and weaknesses more realistic. On the other hand, there is a risk of failing to involve into the evaluation some important factors that may impact the implementation of planned activities, either by oversight or omission of important information.

Evaluation measures:

- **Fulfillment of the outcomes outlined in LYAP:** identification of project results and the level of their achievement;
- **Impact** of implemented activities or services on the users, i.e. target group (youth);
- **Change** in the target group, i.e. what qualitative change occurred in the target group (youth).

In addition to that, evaluation serves also to:

- **improve monitoring methods;**
- recognize easier internal and external **strengths and weaknesses;**
- integrate new insights into the LYAP revision;
- collect new information necessary for the more **efficient** future LYAP planning (**revision**).

The same as with monitoring process, a distinction should be made with the evaluation process between EVALUATION OF THE LYAP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (assessment of how effective implemented activities were within the LYAP development) and EVALUATION OF LYAP IMPLEMENTATION (assessment of the fulfillment of planned activities within the LYAP regarding the target group - youth).

LOCAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN

7

IMPLEMENTATION

After completion of the LYAP and its adoption by the municipal government followed by provision of some funds for the proposed activities, a real work starts for the local community.

A number of strategies, action plans, proposals, recommendations have been written in Serbia so far. A certain number of people have been involved in their development, some local initiatives have been started, consultations held with various social partners, some funds allocated. Unfortunately, experience showed that majority of work was done only after completion of such documents.

Due to the lack of clear vision of where we want to go, lack of motivation to proceed in a defined direction, without provision of funds, with frequent changes of government, laws and provisions, etc, there was rare or no implementation of the activities planned by the documents, in the sense that they could cause a change in a society.

Therefore, in the entire course of LYAP development you should bear in mind that the most important stage after LYAP being developed is achievement of the set goals. The most important is implementation of planned activities, and making them concrete. In order to achieve that, you have to work on lobbying and promotion of LYAP envisaged activities. On the other hand, that would influence those who develop other action plans and strategies at the national or local levels to set as one of their goals/priorities, fulfillment of youth needs and quality improvement of youth life.

CONCLUSION

The manual provides recommendations for the local youth action plan (LYAP) development through partnership of local partners, observance of national guidelines and high level of youth participation.

However, success of the overall process, particularly LYAP implementation, depends, primarily, on local community - local government, local institutions and organizations, as well as on wider local public that have to look for their long-term strategic solutions in the youth.

Planned and systemic dealing with the youth policy, particularly under restrictive municipal and institutional budgets, is a great challenge for every local community, but still the success of the overall process will primarily depend on personal and social motivation of all local partners.

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