

# COMPENDIUM OF POLICY BRIEFS



**SUPPORT TO  
ELECTORAL REFORMS**

ПОДРШКА НА ИЗБОРНИ РЕФОРМИ  
МБËSHËTETJE E REFORMAVE ZGJEDHORE



This publication is made in the frames of the Support to Electoral Reforms project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM). The views, opinions and content expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the donor, the project or the implementers.

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# INTRODUCTION

This Compendium of policy briefs developed by participants in the Academy for Public Policy is an integral part of the Project Support to Electoral Reforms in North Macedonia. The Project's principal aim is to promote democratic and credible election processes that facilitate political participation and social integration by enabling voters to select their representatives and hold them accountable. The Project activities are channeled to support the overall objective through the achievement of three outcomes:

**Outcome 1:** Strengthened institutions conduct fair and efficient election processes.

**Outcome 2:** Internally democratized political parties present citizen-oriented policies and election programs.

**Outcome 3:** Empowered citizens hold political parties and elected officials accountable.

As part of the second outcome, the Project supports political parties in developing resources and capacities for adopting evidence-based programs and for engaging with local communities, including women, youth and other vulnerable groups.

The Evidence-Based Policymaking approach to planning seeks to ameliorate the mismatch between policymakers' perceptions of citizens' needs and existing on-the-ground realities and demands by informing the planning process with high-quality analysis and relevant evidence. In the political arena, evidence-driven policy formulation works to improve the quality and efficiency of proposed policies and programs, strengthen political parties' responsiveness, and help them become more citizen-oriented and more accountable to their constituencies.

Taking into consideration the above and recognizing that the effective participation of youth in political and public life is critical to democratic development, the Project organized the Academy for Public Policy dedicated to representatives of political parties' youth wings. The Academy was envisaged as a "learning by doing" opportunity that aimed to enhance the competences of young leaders in creating and influencing public policies. It did so by combining theoretical sessions on topics related to policymaking with the practical experience of engaging with the local community to develop policy responses to citizens' needs.

The following policy briefs represent the crowning achievement of youth political party wings' efforts to design evidence- and values-based policy responses to community problems. They were developed with the primary objective of proposing relevant citizen-oriented solutions envisaged to be incorporated in political parties' election programs. In the initial stages of preparation, the political party youth organized extensive interactions with local communities and vulnerable groups, which helped them identify citizens' most pressing needs and demands.

The knowledge acquired from these interactions served as the basis for drawing up policy documents which were shared with party leadership to feed into further development of policy ideas and be embedded in their platforms in the run-up to the Local Elections of 2021.

The results were more than inspiring: of the 22 policy solutions proposed by aspiring young leaders from 6 political parties, almost all were reflected in their parties' election programs. These outcomes are a promising testimony that political parties are recognizing the benefit of prioritizing their constituents' compelling needs, are grounding proposed programs in evidence, and are prepared to shift to a more citizen-centered and programmatic approach to policy development, thus making election processes more representative and inclusive.

# TETOVO STREET DOG COALITION

Providing care for stray dogs in  
municipality of Tetovo

*- Abdulla Osmani*



## SUMMARY

Even though Tetovo is one of the biggest cities in North Macedonia, there is no coherent system for care for street dogs and this poses a serious problem for citizens' health and wellbeing.

Tetovo Street Dog Coalition is a non-formal initiative of young people from Tetovo from 2021. They embrace the common goal to advocate for improved institutional addressing of the problem with street dogs. The idea for this project is aimed at improving the conditions for care and nurturing of street dogs on the territory of the municipality of Tetovo.

The objective of this project idea is to offer an alternative model that would ensure full sustainability of a shelter for care for street dogs.

This shelter, among others, will carry out three main activities:

- First, detection, rescuing and care for street dogs on the territory of municipality of Tetovo;
- Second, treatment and rehabilitation of street dogs that were already rescued and placed in the shelter;
- Third, informative-educational and communication activities to contribute to raise public awareness for increased care for animals, as well as for possibilities to adopt and support dogs which are placed in this shelter. The shelter is to be established as a special entity by the municipality of Tetovo.

Given the above, this specific idea is further elaborated below from the aspect of the current situation, the legal framework as well as some comparative examples. Finally, concluding observations are presented also from the aspect of concrete realization of this initiative.

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

There is no need for special methodological elaboration, research and analysis for the undutiful fact that Tetovo is faced with the problem of street dogs. However, what matters is to determine the extent of the problem for the citizens of the city located under Shar mountain.

Based on the results from the conducted public poll from the beginning to the middle of July 2021 with representative sample of 540 respondents aged 18 - 30 and 31 - 55, citizens of Tetovo are obviously disappointed because neither the local or the central government show any interest to tackle this burning issue for years.

This is further supported by the following five answers to the questions:

**First, as many as 78%** of the respondents stated that Tetovo is faced with a major problem with stray animals;

**Second**, based on the answers to the first question, **almost 50.9%** of the respondents stated that stray animals are dangerous for them;

**Third, 60%** of the respondents stated that they know a person from their town who either had a problem or accident with stray dog or other stray animal;

**Fourth, 48.8%** of the respondents stated that there have been no concrete initiatives so far in Tetovo to tackle this burning problem;

**Fifth, 70.5%** of the respondents stated that they are willing to volunteer if some appropriate initiative is established and implemented for treatment and care of stray dogs, compliant with the practices from member-states of the European Union.

Given the above, it is obvious that citizens of Tetovo express the need for establishment of shelter for treatment and care for stray animals in compliance with the highest international standards.

Having in mind the previously stated, the document further analyses the legal framework in respect of treatment and care for stray animals.

### Legal framework

At institutional level, rights of animals are specified in the “Law on Protection and Well-being of Animals”<sup>1</sup>.

The Law stipulates the minimum requirements for protection and wellbeing of animals, that is, their breeding, protection, care and placement, protection of animals kept in farms, protection and wellbeing of animals during transportation (...), protection and wellbeing of domestic and stray animals, animals in zoos and animals used for experiments and educational purposes.

According to the provisions of the Law, the Food and Veterinary Agency is in charge of implementing the law<sup>2</sup>.

From the aspect of the topic of this paper, there is a special sector within this governmental institution that deals with the care and wellbeing for animals<sup>3</sup>. This sector, among others, performs six important tasks:

- First, monitors the situation with regard to animal diseases in Republic of North Macedonia;
- Second, drafts programs for control/eradication of animal diseases
- Third, drafts reports on the health status of animals;
- Fourth, drafts laws and by-laws related to health care for animals;
- Fifth, keeps record and register of veterinary entities;
- Sixth, communicates with relevant international organizations.

### Current situation with stray dogs in Tetovo

There is an immediate need to establish a Centre for treatment of stray dogs in Tetovo because they pose a danger for the life and health of citizens<sup>4</sup>.

This problem is present for many years. It is a biggest concern for children and parents. That is, parents feel very uncertain about the safety of their children who need to travel to school, when they walk on the streets and play in the school yards which are the main places where stray dogs gather<sup>5</sup>.

1 Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia“ No. 113/07 and 136/11.

2 See [fva.gov.mk](http://fva.gov.mk).

3 See the official website of the Food and veterinary agency: [fva.gov.mk/mk/zdravstvena-zasita-bлагоо-тојба-зivotni](http://fva.gov.mk/mk/zdravstvena-zasita-bлагоо-тојба-зivotni)

4 See [lider.com.mk/zivot/nema-reshenie-za-kuchinjata-skitnici-vo-tetovo-tetovchani-preplasheni/](http://lider.com.mk/zivot/nema-reshenie-za-kuchinjata-skitnici-vo-tetovo-tetovchani-preplasheni/)

5 See Aline Gil Alves Guilloux et.al, Stray dogs in urban fragments: Relation between population's perception of their presence and socio-demographic factors, Pesquisa Veterinária Brasileira, januari 2018.

Specifically, in February 2021, more than 12 citizens of the city under Shar mountain were bitten by street dogs. According to the estimates from May 2021, there were more than 400 stray dogs on the streets of Tetovo.

The situation is worsened during winter time when dogs become more aggressive because of frozen surfaces and lack of food. At the same time, the number of street dogs on the city streets increases due to lack of care by the population from rural municipalities about this problem. Abandoned dogs from the surrounding settlements come to Tetovo searching for food in the garbage containers which additionally aggravates the problem.

Given the above, in 2021, Tetovo local self-government stipulated budget allocations of over 3 million denars to tackle this burning problem compared to the allocation of 1 million denars in 2020.

The care and treatment for stray dogs in Tetovo is entrusted to the veterinary clinic which can only minimally mitigate the problem with the limited funding allocated by the municipality because this economic operator estimates the cost for rescuing and treatment of a dog at the amount of 9.000 denars. This problem can be solved sooner either by providing twice bigger allocation from the municipal budget for the veterinary facility that took the obligation to tackle this problem in Tetovo or if the municipality establishes a special enterprise with bigger capacity for rescuing and treatment of stray dogs on the territory of the municipality.

Taking into account the above said regarding the situation in the municipality of Tetovo, one can draw the following four most important conclusions:

- **First**, Tetovo is one of the least organized cities, meaning a risky environment from the aspect of dangers from stray dogs for the citizens;
- **Second**, currently, the municipal authorities in Tetovo are not appropriately organized and focused on resolving this problem;
- **Third**, reported cases by citizens who were attacked or bitten by stray dogs are constantly increasing, leading to the conclusion that there is lack of specific initiatives to tackle this situation;
- **Fourth**, in 2021, the local self-government in Tetovo announced that it will allocate 3 million denars to be invested in centers for treatment and care for stray dogs, however, this was not implemented in practice.

Given the above stated, the document further provides an overview of two comparative examples which can serve as good foundation to tackle the problem of stray dogs in Tetovo.

## ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Having in mind the current situation and the particularities of the current municipal leadership, there are numerous comparative and beneficial experiences for tackling the problem with stray dogs in Tetovo. Also, if one acknowledges the thesis that Tetovo is one of the cities with worst treatment of this problem, two other examples are further presented below: the first one refers to the municipality of Gostivar, being a municipality that made certain progress with this regard, and the second example refers to Skopje, a local self-government unit with biggest achieved progress.

## Municipality of Gostivar and the problem of stray dogs

Citizens of Gostivar, just like the citizens of Tetovo, were faced with the problem with stray dogs in the past, even to a bigger extent. However, that was the situation until 2018/2019 when the local self-government took specific steps to mitigate and tackle this burning problem.

Specifically, the problem with stray dogs in Gostivar was tackled in two phases:

- **First**, preparatory phase;
- **Second**, operational phase.

In the first phase, the municipal administration in the course of 2017/2018, in cooperation with partner organizations, drafted a feasibility study to determine the extent of the problem, that is, the approximate number of stray dogs. According to that document, there were between 600 and 700 stray dogs in Gostivar.

Once the scope of the challenge was identified, municipality of Gostivar initiated the second phase with concrete realization. During 2018 and 2019, two shelters for stray dogs were constructed on the space of the former military barracks, in compliance with appropriate international and domestic standards in this area. The total capacity of the two shelters is 200 dogs. During 2020/2021, the municipality of Gostivar informed about the start of the construction of a third shelter, meaning that this city at the west of the country will for certain be the first city to completely tackle this serious challenge.

## The City of Skopje and the problem of stray dogs

The existence of a shelter for treatment and care of stray animals, with conditions that meet the needs for treatment and care for stray dogs, has been subject of discussion in the capital of the country for many years.

Using other European centers as example, in the course of 2000, the City of Skopje opened a shelter for treatment of stray animals "Lajka". The aim of this establishment is to put things in order after so many years on the territory of the capital city.

The shelter is operated according to the highest standards in this area. Namely, „Lajka“ is more than shelter, that is, this institution, according to knowledgeable people in the area, is real home for all stray dogs.

The capacity of the building is for around 100 dogs. This center applies humane methods for capturing the dogs by individuals who possess appropriate certificates that are issued by the Centre for animals' wellbeing at the Faculty for veterinary medicine. At the same time, the boxes where the dogs are placed, are equipped with floor heating.

When the animal is caught and brought to the center, it spends several days in a quarantine in order to complete all health and other examinations. A dog which is found to be healthy is then subject of human treatment, that is, sterilization or castration. After the intervention, the animals are placed in another unit, and once they recover they are transferred to the shelter along with other dogs.

This is where they receive training (to eat at certain time, to walk at certain time, etc.) in order to be prepared for their new home. Once this period is over, photos are made of the dogs, all their characteristics are registered in a file and then returned to the place from where they were initially taken, if in the meantime they were not provided another home.

Once this period is over, photos are made of the dogs, all their characteristics are registered in a file and then returned to the place from where they were initially taken, if in the meantime they were not provided another home.

Irrespective of the perceived weaknesses in the treatment and care for stray dogs, it is a fact that the City of Skopje, compared to other cities in the country, has established a most comprehensive system. This sphere definitely needs to be further developed so that the citizens of the capital of the country no longer have problems with stray dogs. Given its objective, the document further elaborates the possible ways how to tackle this problem in the City of Tetovo.

In view of the previously stated sections, one can perceive a difference in the approach of the municipal authorities in Tetovo with the other cities in the country when it comes to treatment and care for stray dogs.

In any case, like for many other matters in life, the longest path in respect of this issue starts with the first step. Therefore, this initiative aims to pave the way for all further steps until final resolution of this problem on the territory of the city under Shar mountain. Specifically, the following activities will be taken, among others:

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- 1 First, Tetovo should initially prepare a feasibility study to detect the cause of the problem and approximately to estimate the exact number of stray dogs that exist in the city. According to the data collected from the public debate, it was striking fact that 60.000 stray dogs might be born from one pair of dogs in a period of six to seven years, if their uncontrolled procreation is not regulated on time;
- 2 Second, municipality of Tetovo must change its attitude to this problem by increasing the budget allocations for treatment of stray dogs, at least three times, or from current 3 million denars to at least 9 million denars. The finding will be used immediately to tackle the challenges in the period until a systemic solution is put in place;
- 3 Third, regardless of the limited budget resources, the municipality of Tetovo must develop a s Fourth, given the great number of half-empty and abandoned state buildings, there is no special problem in Tetovo in terms of finding appropriate space for construction of such shelter;
- 4 Fourth, given the great number of half-empty and abandoned state buildings, there is no special problem in Tetovo in terms of finding appropriate space for construction of such shelter;
- 5 Fifth, if problems arise, the municipality should undertake appropriate changes in the detailed urban plan in order to foresee the construction of such shelter;
- 6 Sixth, the examples from Gostivar and Skopje can be good inspiration to operationalize this project idea;
- 7 Seventh, in cooperation with local civic initiatives, municipality of Tetovo should undertake appropriate informative-educational and communication activities that will contribute to further awareness raising in citizens for more care for animals, as well about possibilities for adopting and supporting a dog that will be placed in the future center. The center/shelter will be a separate entity, established by the municipality of Tetovo.

## USED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Law on animal's wellbeing, Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia "No. 113/07 and 136/11;
- Official website of the Food and Veterinary Agency, [fva.org.mk](http://fva.org.mk);
- Official website of the municipality of Tetovo, [tetova.gov.mk](http://tetova.gov.mk);
- Official website of the municipality of Gostivar, [gostivari.gov.mk](http://gostivari.gov.mk);
- Official website of the City of Skopje, [skopje.gov.mk](http://skopje.gov.mk);
- Aline Gil Alves Guilloux et.all, Stray dogs in urban fragments: Relation between population's perception of their presence and socio-demographic factors, Pesquisa Veterinária Brasileira, January 2018.

# BITOLA SMART APP CITY

Proposed measures and policies

*- Andrej Gulabovski*



## SUMMARY

The initiative “Bitola SmartAPPcity” is created based on the needs of the citizens of the municipality of Bitola, and it refers to the municipal budget, transparency and digitalization of public services. This document covers many proposed reforms that aim to increase the trust of citizens in the municipality by: increasing citizens’ awareness about the budget; increasing the participation of citizens in the budget planning processes; improving the municipal transparency via the introduction of digital call sharing tools, strategic documents, detailed urban plans, statistical data, as well as through the digitalization of public services.

## METODOLOGY

For the needs of this policy brief we have performed a research among the residents in the municipality of Bitola, interviews with employees in the municipal administration, two focus groups with citizens where we collected relevant data through which we prepared conclusions.

The survey questionnaire that we conducted within this research aimed to research the views of the residents of the municipality of Bitola on issues related to transparency of budget planning in the municipality and digitalization of public services. 173 respondents participated in the survey.

We organized two focus groups with citizens where we tried to find out if the citizens feel the need to introduce such reforms as well as the feasibility to implement them by the municipal administration.

Ultimately, in order to understand the perspective of the municipal administration, we conducted a series of interviews with heads of departments or their employees: department of legal and normative activities; department of budget coordination and budget control; department of urban planning and environmental protection; IT department in the Municipality of Bitola.

## DEFINITION, CONTEXT, AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ISSUE

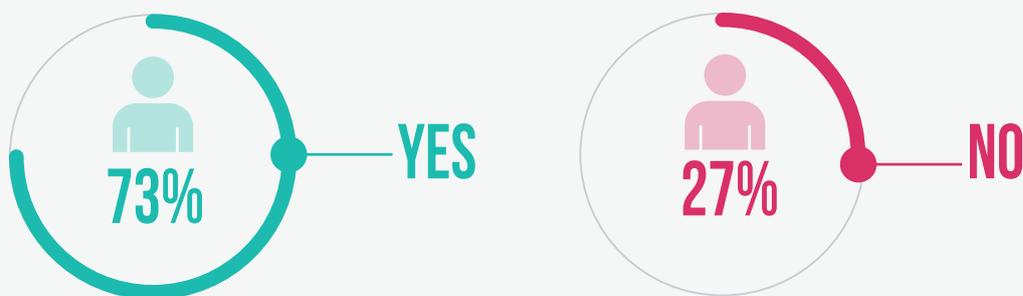
### BUDGET

The budget of the Municipality of Bitola is available (published) publicly on the website and in the Official Gazette, but the complex overview is an obstacle for the ordinary citizen to understand its essence in targeted planning and spending of funds. This was concluded by our research.

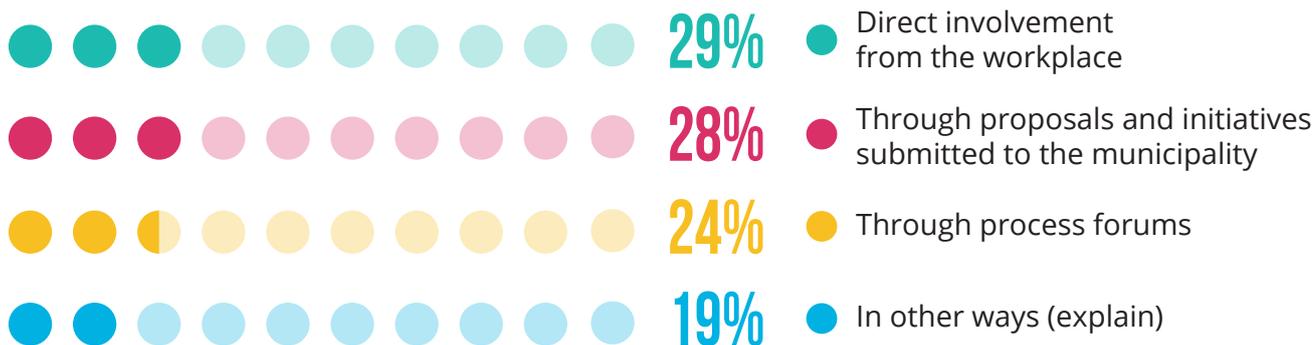
As a start, most of the citizens in the Municipality of Bitola are not familiar with the municipal budget (56%). 45% of the citizens understand the budget as it is presented currently, 30% do not understand it, 25% have not seen the budget.

Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents stated that they were not involved in budget preparation and/or distribution of funds planning. As respondents stated, it was mostly through submitting proposals and initiatives to the Municipality, direct involvement from the workplace, forum processes.

Were you in any way involved in preparing the municipal budget and/or distribution of funds planning?



If the answer to the previous question is yes, it was through:



The Municipality of Bitola is also aware of this issue. A representative of the Department of budget coordination and budget control stated: *"...Regarding the participation of citizens in the budget preparation process, we comply with the legal provisions that impose an obligation on municipalities to provide citizens the right to participate. However, such involvement is at a very low level, which implies that we should find ways to encourage citizens to participate directly in budget preparation"*

## TRANSPARENCY

The Municipality of Bitola in 2021, on the transparency index of the Center for Civil Communications is on the 11th place in a competition of 97 institutions at local and central level. According to the authors:

**“Bitola lost its long-standing leadership position [among the municipalities], despite the improvement of its active transparency from last year 88 % to 91 %<sup>5</sup>.”**

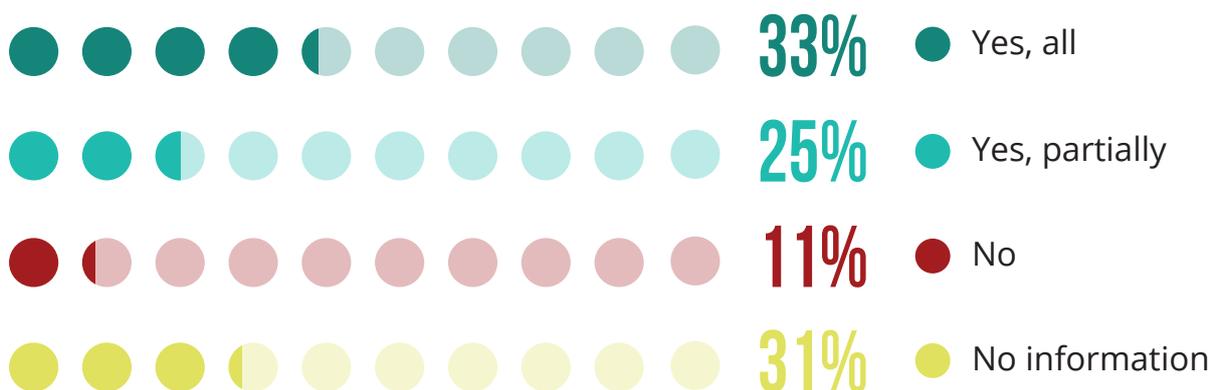
<sup>5</sup> Qendra për Komunikime Civile, Indeksi i Transparencës Aktive (2021). Në dispozicion në: <https://www.ccc.org.mk/images/stories/akt21.pdf>. [Qasur më 19.8.2021]

The citizens of the Municipality of Bitola also agree that the municipality is generally transparent (high 73%). Regarding the public, transparent and timely publication of public calls, strategic plans, documents and programs, detailed urban plans (DUP), citizens have different views.

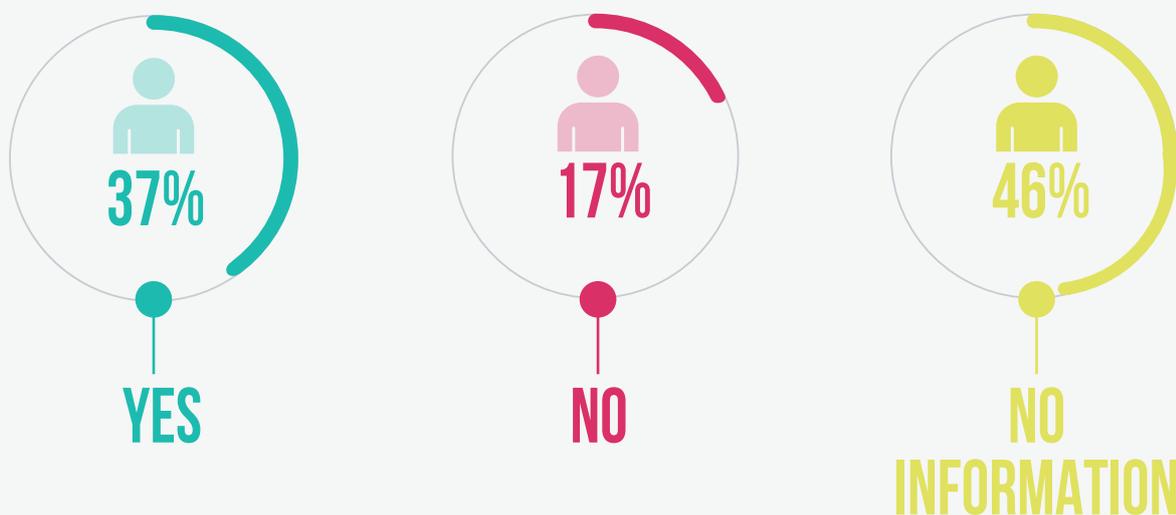
Do you think that the municipality is sufficiently transparent?



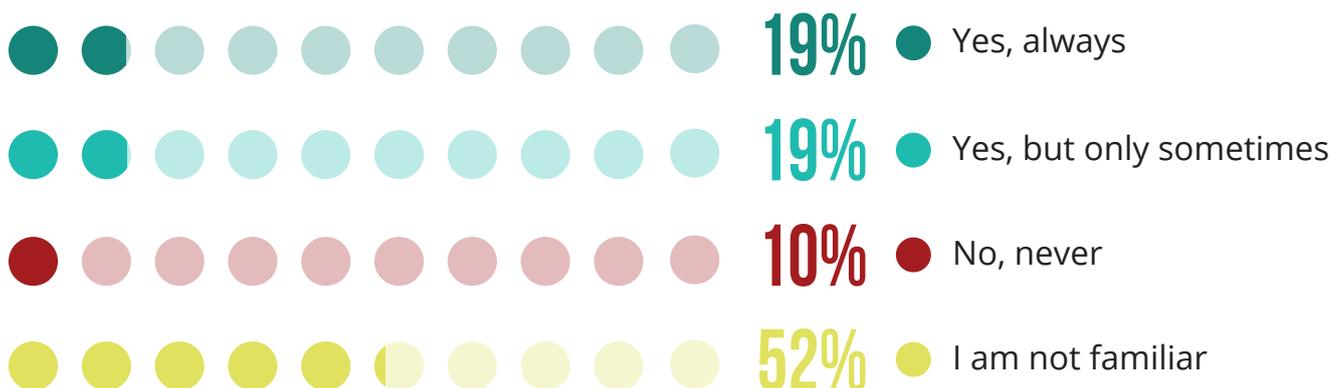
Does the Municipality publicly, transparently and timely publish public calls?



Does the Municipality publicly publish all strategic plans, documents, and programs?

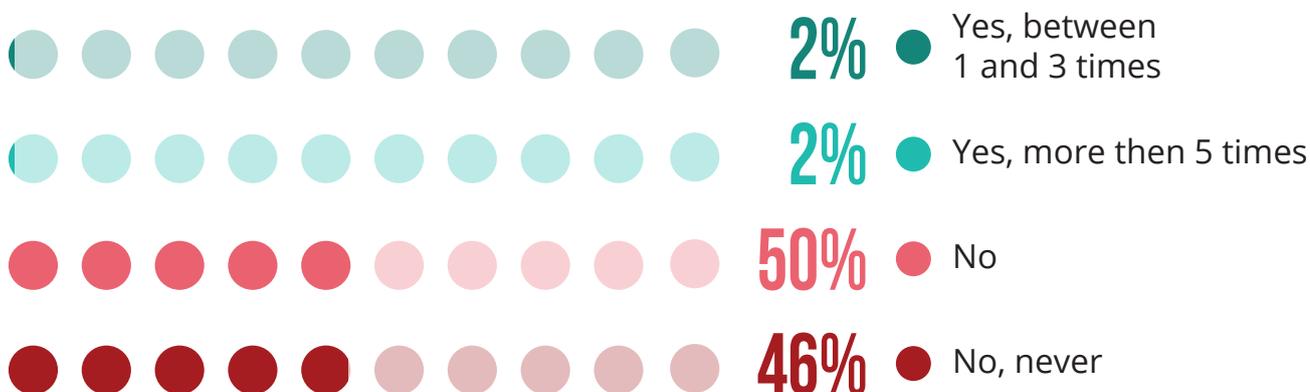


Are the amendments to the detailed urban plans (DUP) publicly available before their adoption?



Regarding the participation of citizens in the public hearing to amend the DUP, more than 96% stated that they never participated.

Have you ever participated in a public hearing to amend the detailed urban plan (DUP)?



This issue is recognized by the Department of urban planning and environmental protection in the Municipality of Bitola, and their representative stated:

*Considering that the amendments to the General Urban Plan (GUP) and the adoption of a new GUP or the amendments to the DUP are not so frequent, and certainly remain very unclear to the citizens that are not familiar with them, I would say that it takes efforts to facilitate the process in order to have a simplified overview for the citizens. Although the Law on Urban Planning required public presentation and publication in public locations, we believe that it is not sufficient*

## DIGITALIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services are the basis of a fair society, because in this way citizens have access to opportunities to improve their quality of life, but also to protect the most vulnerable members of the community. Therefore, the country provides access to health, education, social services, but also provides obligations for citizens, in order to protect the public interest. Therefore it is crucial for the country to have: citizen oriented delivery of services, fair and efficient administrative procedures, mechanisms to ensure the quality of public services and availability of public services<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Center for Change Management, How to get better public services for citizens (2019). Available at: <https://cup.org.mk/publication/publikacija%20mk.pdf>. [Accessed on 19.8.2021]

The Municipality of Bitola has published on its website a list of forty services it offers to its citizens<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, the Municipality of Bitola in cooperation with the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, and within the Strategy for Public Administration Reform 2018-2022 (item 4.2.5)<sup>9</sup>, launched “Single point for services” through which 64 services will be available to the citizens of the Municipality of Bitola<sup>10</sup>.

In the survey that was conducted for the needs of this research, 92% of our respondents from the Municipality of Bitola believe that digitalization of services is something that is required. Asked whether the Municipality of Bitola has introduced sufficient e-services, the highest percentage of citizens, i.e. 48% believe there are but not sufficient e-services; 21% believe there are no e-services; 16% believe there are sufficient e-services; 15% have no information.

Most of the citizens believe that the introduction of e-services will reduce the costs of citizens, the time required to access the service and the corruption risk.

Key reasons that currently prevent citizens from using online services include the lack of information about them (52%) and lack of Internet access (30%).

Most of the citizens would like to be able to submit digital questions to the mayor (35%), and to be able to monitor digitally their case (24%).

We can conclude that a key issue for the Municipality of Bitola remains the need to introduce digitalized tools in providing access to public services as well as increasing the transparency and participation of citizens in preparing the budget and track the spending of public funds.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

„Bitola SmartAPPcity” includes a series of changes that directly contribute to improve the situation in the area of digital services and transparency with the ultimate goal to increase the fight against corruption, as follows:

### **Regarding the budget:**

Introducing a citizen budget and digitalized access for direct participation of the citizens in the preparation of the budget;

### **Regarding transparency:**

Public overview of all transactions of the municipality by target, date of receipt or payment and value;

Public overview of all debtors on the basis of property tax;

### **Regarding the digitalization of public services:**

Creating a case monitoring system, where citizens will have the opportunity to check to what extent their case is resolved regardless of their location;

Creating an application to increase the relationship and trust between the mayor and citizens

<sup>8</sup> The Municipality of Bitola, List of services. Available at: <https://bit.ly/37JuY90>. [Assessed on 19.8.2021]

<sup>9</sup> Government, Strategy for Public Administration Reform 2018-2022 and Action Plan. Available at: <https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/1587>. [Assessed on 19.8.2021]

<sup>10</sup> Municipality of Bitola, Single point for services. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3CLUV69>. [Assessed on 19.8.2021]

## BUDGET

### Introducing the citizen budget tool

One of the ways to overcome the issue of understanding the budget is the introduction of a simplified form of the municipal budget and a simple presentation of the target, amount and plans of the annual budget, or so-called "citizen budget". The biggest commitment is the disclosure of all hidden expenses under the encrypted budget items.

Therefore, the respondents in the research believe that a simplified form of the budget and a simplified overview of the targets will contribute to a greater trust towards the municipality, i.e. whether a simplified version in which all revenues and expenditures are clearly emphasized would encourage them to inspect the municipal budget annually before its adoption, rebalance and annual balance sheet.

#### ПОСЕБЕН ДЕЛ

		948.424.000	396.047.000	66.172.000	474.422.000	23.974.000	0	968.616.000
Програма Подпрограма Категорија Ставка	О П И С	Предходен Буџет	Б У Џ Е Т					ВКУПНИ Расходи
			Буџет	Расходи од самофин. активности	Расходи од дотации	Расходи од донации	Расходи од кредити	
W0	ПРОТИВПОЖАРНА ЗАШТИТА	11.767.000	3.403.000	0	8.437.000	0	0	11.840.000
	<b>ПРИХОДИ:</b>							
W00	ПРОТИВПОЖАРНА ЗАШТИТА	11.767.000	3.403.000	0	8.437.000	0	0	11.840.000
	<b>РАСХОДИ:</b>							
40	ПЛАТИ И НАДОМЕСТОЦИ	8.437.000	0	0	8.437.000	0	0	8.437.000
401	Основни плати	5.812.000	0	0	5.812.000	0	0	5.812.000
402	Придонеси за социјално осигурување	2.625.000	0	0	2.625.000	0	0	2.625.000
42	СТОКИ И УСЛУГИ	3.330.000	3.403.000	0	0	0	0	3.403.000
421	Комунални услуги, греење, комуникација и транспорт	1.010.000	1.010.000	0	0	0	0	1.010.000
423	Материјали и ситен инвентар	1.760.000	1.760.000	0	0	0	0	1.760.000
424	Поправки и тековно одржување	560.000	633.000	0	0	0	0	633.000

Standard budget overview<sup>11</sup>

## EDUCATION



Example of a citizen budget<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Општина Штип, Буџет за 2021 година. Достапен на: <http://www.stip.gov.mk/index.php/mk/budjet/4197-budjet-za-2021>. [Пристапено на 19.8.2021]

<sup>12</sup> Општина Центар, Граѓански буџет на општина Центар за 2017 година. Достапен на: <https://www.fosm.mk/CMS/Files/Documents/Gragjanski-budjet-na-opshtina-centar-za.pdf>. [Пристапено на

The Municipality of Bitola is open regarding this proposal. A representative of the department of budget coordination and budget control stated:

**“Regarding the simplified overview i.e. the “citizen budget”, we absolutely agree with the need to prepare a budget overview and we are witnessing its importance for us as municipal administration and municipal council, but mostly the citizens, because the current overview of the budget is complicated and vague...”**

## Participation in budget preparation

Inclusion in the budget preparation process usually means the involvement of political actors and civil society organizations, and very rarely citizens are invited or asked about the needs they have in their residence.

Therefore, we propose to create an application that will allow the citizens of the Municipality of Bitola to express their opinion on a particular project, to be able to submit draft ideas or otherwise contribute in budget preparation. The municipality is interested in a two-way communication, because in this way it receives “first hand” information about the needs and desires of citizens in a certain area of the municipality, which may be used in policy making.

Several municipalities<sup>13</sup> in RNM have introduced digital means of direct involvement of citizens in budget preparation. For example via „Google – surveys”<sup>14</sup>, citizens are provided with the opportunity of a quick digital participation and submission of ideas before the budget preparation process in a simplified way.

As we mentioned in the first part, generally the citizens participate in a very low percentage in budget preparation. However, it is good that 75% of the citizens would like to participate in budget preparation, and the highest percentage is via the digital application of proposals and ideas (37%), through direct meetings with municipal and council representatives (25%) and process forums (20%). 74% of the respondents believe that with greater participation in the budget process, their trust in the municipality will increase.

## TRANSPARANCY

### *Fiscal transparency*

We would have significant improvement of transparency if the Municipality of Bitola decides to provide a public overview of all its transactions and the transactions of the institutions and enterprises within the Municipality, based on their target. This practice has already been introduced nationally, with the introduction of the Open Finance Portal<sup>15</sup>. In fact, according to our respondents, public monitoring of municipal transactions will increase trust in the municipality, will reduce corruption risk, and will increase the transparency and accountability of the municipality.

13 Municipality of Bogdanci, Questionnaire for collecting budget proposals for ULSG Bogdanci for 2021 – participate, plan, propose. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2W2nUSK>. [Accessed on 19.8.2021]

14 Municipality of Dojran, Participate in preparing the budget of the Municipality of Dojran for 2021. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3Dakdv1>. [Accessed on 19.8.2021]

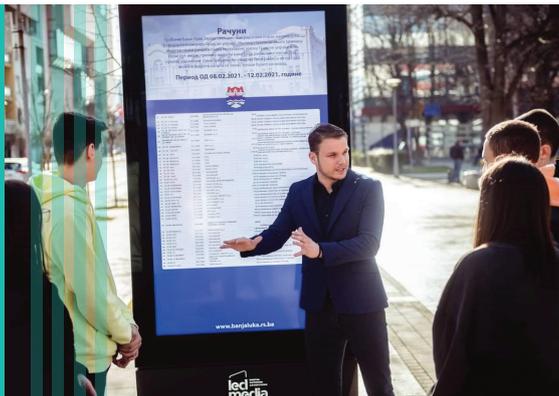
15 Ministry of Finance, Open Finance. Available at: <https://open.finance.gov.mk/mk/home>. [Accessed on 19.8.2021]

The Municipality of Bitola is aware that such measures may enhance the trust towards the municipality. According to the representative of the Department of budget coordination and budget control:

**“Undoubtedly, the simplified overview of the budget in terms of the process of its preparation, budget items, and overview of the specific purposes (targets) of the funds planned in the budget, contributes to active participation of citizens in the entire budget process which proportionally restores trust in institutions.”**

The IT department also expressed willingness, if the legal dilemmas are resolved in advance. Most of the citizens of the Municipality of Bitola would be able to monitor municipal transactions by placing a billboard in the downtown area (36%), social networks (24%), and website (17%).

As an illustration, in the Municipality of Banja Luka, BiH, a system of online monitoring of transactions performed by the municipality has been introduced through a public billboard placed on the most crowded streets throughout the city. Therefore, citizens can inspect and check at any time all the payments and disbursements from the municipal treasury.



*Public billboard with an overview of online transactions and other useful information of the Municipality of Banja Luka, BiH*

Particularly important information for the citizens include public calls and announcements published by the municipality, from which depends the access to certain services or timely information to provide obligations for the citizens. However, we should be aware that not all citizens have equal skills, and not everyone knows how to manage electronic devices in order to be regularly and timely informed through the website of the municipality, official gazette or social networks. Through digital tools, citizens will have the opportunity to be informed about all public calls published by the municipality.

### **Transparency in publishing strategic documents**

Although the Municipality of Bitola has generally high index of transparency, which among other things includes the publication of key documents, the public announcement of programs, plans, strategies and other bylaws adopted by the Municipal Council should proceed. The recommendation is to complement the media through which they are shared, i.e. to follow the example of the Municipality of Banja Luka, BiH and to place an electronic billboard or electronic information board, at a crowded and accessible location

## Transparency in publishing statistical data

The citizens assess according to their personal conviction, and often build their position based on the available information related with the issue, including available statistics related with the operation of the municipality in the past years or according to parameters they consider important and relevant in the election of their representatives. Therefore, it is very important to insist on sharing the statistical data regarding the operation of the Municipality with all citizens.

## Public overview of all debtors on the basis of property tax

Following the example of the Municipality of Kavadarci, and in order to promote transparency and fiscal discipline, we propose public announcement (publication) of all individuals and legal entities with residence / headquarters in the municipality in which they are debtors on the basis of property tax, utilities and other payments. A large percentage of respondents agree with this proposal.

## DIGITALIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

### Case monitoring system

Jointly with the reforms in the public administration at the national level, the municipalities should also introduce digital solutions that will enable to track the administrative procedure of a submitted request / case, and the responsible official at a certain moment. Through pre-coded digital tools, the citizens will have the opportunity to inspect the administrative procedure related with the resolution of their case i.e. the submitted request. We have already shared the information that 24 % of the citizens want to be able to monitor their case digitally.

Regarding the feasibility for the Municipality of Bitola to provide digital tracking overview of the case during the administrative procedure, a representative of the department of legal and normative activity, stated:

*We have a digital internal program which allows checking the current official in charge of the case and the next steps, which documents have been submitted, and which documents are missing etc. I think it is necessary to provide a secure overview of the flow of documents first, in order to enable an overview only to the submitter of the request / case. However, I don't know if that is feasible by the IT department*

The representative of the IT department said:

*Certainly, it can, but in my opinion it is necessary to establish a new system that will respond to changing needs. Certainly, it is a serious step that requires maximum protection of personal data in accordance with the Law on Personal Data Protection and the establishment of a simple system so that citizens do not have a problem using it*

### **Web application, “My mayor”**

We believe that all citizen questions deserve a quick answer in order to increase citizen satisfaction related with the services that the municipality is obliged to provide. Therefore, digitalization offers quick access on information, but also tools to quickly share the information to the other side. Therefore, we propose to create an application which will enable citizens to submit questions of their/public interest to the public relations officers. More than half of our respondents said they would use this application.

Asked for an opinion regarding the idea of “My Mayor”, the representative of the IT department in the Municipality of Bitola, said:

*I often think about this idea and about the desired response. According to the applicable law, state institutions, including local self-government units are obliged to respond to any request about public information within the deadline prescribed by law. But, if the municipality offers an alternative and quick access to such information, it is certainly beneficial for both parties. But it is very important to consider the fact that it is very difficult to respond quickly to citizens on one hand, because they can ask different questions which can't be answered immediately, and on the other hand there is a need to hire officials who will be exclusively responsible for this task*

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

According to the data collected from the research, interview with municipal administration employees and opinions and views of participants in both focus groups, and based on previous research in the area of transparency and corruption by several nongovernmental organizations, we provide the following recommendations to the Municipality of Bitola:

- 1 Introduction of a simplified overview of budget planned funds, the so-called citizen's budget;
- 2 Introduction of a case management system, which will enable quick digital inspection in the administrative procedures i.e. submitted requests or initiated cases;
- 3 Providing an overview of all transactions performed by the municipality, by placing a digital billboard in the downtown area;
- 4 Introduction of digital tools to involve citizens in different processes, such as setting budget priorities or adopting detailed urban plans;
- 5 Enabling a quick and simplified communication between citizens and municipal bodies, such as by introducing the application "My Mayor".

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# OHRID YOUTH HUB

About the needs to establish a  
Youth hub in Ohrid

- *Angela Miteska*



## SUMMARY

Ohrid, as one of the biggest cities in the country, does not have developed infrastructure that would meet the needs of young people who live or study in the city.

Currently, in this context there is a national institution- library “Gligor Prlicev” Ohrid that deals with library activities and no other activities that would anticipate the needs of the young population.

Given the perceived weaknesses, this project is aimed at establishment of the Ohrid youth hub, that will provide activities related to the needs of young people aged 15 to 29.

## CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Youth policy is a phenomenon of the modern society. All developed countries strive towards promotion of youth policies, and more importantly, this is also understood by developing countries. One can say that North Macedonia is somewhere half way in this effort because Macedonian politicians are cognizant about this need and its importance, however, fail to be sufficiently alert and undertake specific projects that rely on youth policies.

North Macedonia allocates only 0.3% of the total budget for education. It is worth noting that one shortcoming is the lack of diligence of the local authorities. That is, each municipality should have designed its youth strategy, which is the case with many municipalities. However, the municipality of Ohrid is unfortunately not part of that list of municipalities. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the municipality neither transparently spends the money on youth policy or shows any interest to improve and promote this segment. Apart from the youth council, the Municipality of Ohrid has not shown interest to improve the youth standard on its territory.

Starting point for this innovative initiative are young people themselves and their future. Therefore, the basis to initiate a new chapter was to conduct a survey with young people so that we can all jointly create a hub that will respond to the needs of various categories of young people from Ohrid, as well as young people who temporarily stay in the city for their studies and education.

According to the conducted public poll in the course of June, out of 150 young people aged 18-29 who live on the territory of the municipality of Ohrid, 100% of them stated the need for establishment of “Ohrid youth hub” that would integrate the above-mentioned functions. Also, according to the focus group discussions held on the 27 June 2021, on the question how can young people in Ohrid be attracted to become active participants in the activities of the Youth cultural center, respondents answered that this goal can be achieved by organizing attractive activities that respond to the life habits, desires, preferences, psychographic and demographic characteristics of young people in order to meet their cultural and social needs. According to the focus groups, the advantages from the establishment of such cultural center include contacting the real world, decline of juvenile delinquency as well as appropriate channelizing of the energy of these members of our society. Finally, according to biggest number of the focus group respondents, the potential location for establishment of such center in Ohrid should be the space of the former military barracks in the city.

## Comparative analysis

The European Union (EU) and candidate states for membership continuously implement the so-called “structural dialogue with youth “. This dialogue has the form of permanent consultations where youth are given the opportunity to share their opinions and proposals and make impact on the European policy for matters that affect them. Based on this established process, the European Commission is obligated to conduct a continuous dialogue with the youth.

With the project „Ready for life, ready for society“<sup>16</sup>, young people and the European Commission identify ways how to primarily improve the youth standard.

This strategic document identifies eight areas that require taking initiatives, inclusive of the initiatives which are subject of this research, that is:

- **First**, education and training;
- **Second**, employment and entrepreneurship;
- **Third**, health and wellbeing.

Apart from the previous example, the example from Spain gives valuable insights in this area<sup>17</sup>. That is, the pillar of youth association in Spain are the so-called “youth info centers “that, among others, provide information to young people for voluntary work opportunities.

Denmark, similar to Spain, has established several youth centers also for students up to age of 18, which have the function of recreation and animation centers<sup>18</sup>.

Another EU member, Croatia, has established numerous youth centers on its territory that also perform the function of so-called “incubator “for promotion and realization of ideas aimed at improving the status of this population<sup>19</sup>.

Given the above examples, one can conclude that youth policies are central point of development in a country due to the fact that investing in the young people today provides guarantee for secure future. Therefore, the European Union is working on a range of laws, programs and strategies aimed for the European youth.

Those solutions should give the basis for development of youth policy in Republic of North Macedonia (hereinafter: N. Macedonia), in somewhat restructured fashion in order to respond to the Macedonian mentality, education and life style.

Having “first hand “knowledge about the functioning of the youth centers, libraries and university communities, one can conclude that young people in N. Macedonia prefer to study in reading halls. However, it seems that there is lack of content in the existing reading halls and libraries where the focus is mainly on education, and therefore they have been constructed to ensure peaceful and quiet atmosphere with minimal interior elements, limited to basic learning equipment (desk/table, chair, shelves).

Having in mind the European practices, it is clear that for a student to give his intellectual maximum, he/she must be provided with contents that also distract the attentions, such as for fun and rest.

16 ShikoEU Youth Conference ‘Ready for life, ready for society’, Amsterdam, <https://www.europa-nu.nl>.

17 Shiko <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/>.

18 Shiko <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en>.

19 Shiko <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en>.

## Desk research about youth policies in North Macedonia

Policies in North Macedonia are usually created based on the needs and requirements of the voters, however, young people are often politically marginalized, and there are limited number of policies targeting the young people.

The term “youth “refers to young people aged 15 to 29.

Brief analysis of more important documents targeting young people is given below.

### *National youth strategy (2005-2015)*

The National youth strategy was designed for the period from 2005-2015. According to the Strategy, the Agency for youth and sport is the leading institution that implements the objectives.

Given that the then National youth strategy was poorly implemented and the foreseen practices were obsolete, in 2016, the AYS drafted and proposed the National youth strategy for 2016-2025.

Main strategic priorities of the Strategy are:

- **First**, enabling better standard of living and equal opportunities for quality life.
- **Second**, creation of conditions for respecting and protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms, and systemic integration and interaction of various categories of young people.
- **Third**, creating opportunities for inclusion of young people in the monitoring and implementation of policies and decisions that affect them.
- **Fourth**, equal access to quality education and
- **Fifth**, other forms of personal and professional development.

### *Rulebook on quality standards for youth hubs*

The Agency for youth and sport drafted the Rulebook on quality standards for youth hubs that derive from the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies. This document defines the youth hubs and the notions used in this context, such as youth workers, youth work, etc.

Objectives of the Rulebook:

- **First**, systemic support for the personal development of young people and their active involvement in the community life
- **Second**, informal education, training and coaching for young people;
- **Third**, information sharing, mentorship, advising and counseling;
- **Fourth**, informal experiential learning in their free time during entertaining and volunteering activities organized by and for young people.

### *Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies*

The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies is aimed at ensuring creation and implementation of youth policies at all levels, through multi-sectoral approach. The Law aims to enhance youth participation in policy creation processes, encourage volunteer work, youth activism and youth work as well as personal, professional and social development in young people.

In addition to stipulating youth organizations and organizations for young people, the Law also stipulates the establishment of a National youth assembly, National advisory body for youth policies and Register of various youth organizations.

This Law obligates the Government and the municipalities to adopt youth strategies with special action plans. Municipalities are obligated to establish youth offices and youth hubs and to appoint a youth officer, as special services aimed for the young people according to the law. Each municipality, in a period of five years, must ensure the functioning of at least one youth hub on its territory, and within one year from entry into force of this law to establish a research center on various topics related to young people within the Agency for youth and sport.

Apart from the Law on Youth, young people are also addressed in other laws, such as laws under the competence of the MoES, that is, the Law on Secondary Education, Law on High Education, Law on Student standard, voluntary work, etc. Also, there are many strategies that target the young people as a group. These are mainly strategies for education, as well as strategies to reduce the youth unemployment. The aforementioned referred to plans and strategies at national level, however, each municipality at regional level bears the obligation from the state and the citizens to create youth strategies for improving their standard of living.

## ALTERNATIVES

Given the survey results, comparative experiences and the national legislation, „Ohrid youth hub “would integrate the following functions:

- 1 **Një bibliotekë që do të ketë literaturë nga autorë të huaj dhe vendas.** Në këtë kuptim, duke qenë se Ohri, ndër të tjera, është qytet universitar, një çështje e përfitimit civilizues për studentët është ekzistenca e kushteve të përshtatshme për studimin e tyre.
- 2 **Sallë leximi që do t'u shërbejë studentëve.** Në këtë pjesë, si dhe në lidhje me pikën numër 1, statusi i “qytetit universitar” për Ohrin, tregon ekzistimin e infrastrukturës adekuate që do t'i japë kuptim një kualifikimi të tillë.
- 3 **Dhoma e konferencave.** Ky segment ndër të tjera ka një efekt mjaft të rëndësishëm në zhvillimin e mëtejshëm të ofertës turistike të këtij qyteti. Gjegjesisht, siç e dimë mirë, turizmi kongresist është një segment i rëndësishëm në kuadër të turizmit në përgjithësi, dhe Ohri me vite të tëra përpiqet fuqishëm të tërheqë një numër më të madh të vizitorëve.
- 4 **Hapësira për klubin e debatit.** Ky segment, si dhe pika 1 dhe pika 3 janë në funksion të modernizimit të mëtejshëm të kushteve të studimit në Ohër.
- 5 **Qendra e Karrierës.** Ky segment i qendrës rinore do të ndikojë në drejtim të përmirësimit të mëtutjeshëm të kushteve të përgjithshme të jetesës dhe punës së të rinjve, të cilët sipas të gjitha hulumtimeve kanë nevojën më të madhe për mbështetje për të arritur qëllimet dhe angazhimet e tyre profesionale.
- 6 **Lokale të tjera pune, pjesë rekreative;**

The realization of this objective will definitely require the local policy creators to express their will. Even though the required funding for this purpose is not insignificant, and, given the needs in a city like Ohrid, I think that young people who are the driving force in the society, deserve to have their needs addressed.

## USED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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# STRUGA CARES

Proposed measures and policies

- Besjan Pollozhani



## SUMMARY

Treatment of stray animals and other related aspects is a topical issue, both regionally and globally, and requires special attention. The problem with stray animals and the related statistics is a complex matter, coupled with lack of contemporary long-term policies to tackle the problem.

There is no official data about the number of stray animals in North Macedonia. According to data published by non-governmental organizations dealing with care for animals, there are almost hundred thousand stray animals in the country, exposed to diseases, abuse and various weather conditions.

The City of Struga has been struggling with the problem of stray dogs for years. They wander around the city which poses a threat for citizens' life and safety, especially for young children who cannot be protected from possible attacks. Also, there is a risk of spreading various diseases in people. In addition to spreading diseases, stray dogs also cause other problems for citizens. This will be further elaborated in the framework of this initiative which is undertaken in consultations with veterinarian providing treatment for dogs.

This document analyses the problem of stray dogs by presenting data collected from meetings with citizens. Citizens were given information about the idea to tackle the problem and their views and proposals will be further analyzed and compared against current public policies in this area. Also, the survey and the elaborated answers of respondents will help to develop more clear understanding about the needs to tackle this problem in the municipality of Struga.

First, stray dogs from Struga and the surrounding places will be sent to a special facility for dogs. The facility will provide staff in various areas dealing with treatment, food, bathing and other activities that will be regulated in details once the project is completed. Dogs will not be permanently placed in the facility. After several years, once the doctor determines that conditions are met, dogs will be taken out of the facility and offered to citizens who are interested in taking care of dogs in their home. Citizens will be able to get a dog for a favorable price. The idea is to contribute to making Struga a safer place for all citizens in the municipality.

Once the problem is tackled, it will bring direct benefits to citizens of all categories in the municipality of Struga, especially children and retired people as most vulnerable groups. It will be also beneficial for the local community, local self-government and institutions because the solution will rely on citizens' ideas and opinions and good practices from other countries. In addition, this project will ensure safer and healthier life for stray dogs. To sum up, the implementation of this project will be beneficial for all citizens in the municipality of Struga.

This policy brief is relevant because it provides immediate solution to an alarming problem. Therefore, the initiative itself is unique as it tackles a very topical issue that rests on solutions sought by the citizens themselves. To date, there has been no similar project addressing this problem. Furthermore, support provided by the municipality of Struga is another major success that contributes to the realization of the project.

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Having felt, heard and witnessed the danger from stray dogs, as citizen of the municipality, just like other citizens and children in many cases, I took the initiative to propose solution to a problem that endangers the life and safety of citizens of Struga. This way I can contribute to the solution and leave my own trace. This project will be also proposed to a political party and to the municipal authorities for the forthcoming elections. Existence of stray dogs in public areas on the territory of a local self-government unit is phenomenon that affects the citizens who live and gravitate there. According to the estimates of the World Health Organization (WHO), there are over 200 million stray dogs globally. Given the lack of official statistics about stray dogs in Republic of North Macedonia, citizens are concerned mainly about the ability to move freely and safely around public areas and to protect their health from possible stray dog attacks as this can cause physical, health and mental consequences.

Lack of an organized system at local level for capture, registration, fragmentation, sterilization, castration, that is medical and humane treatment of stray dogs, not only has negative impact on the municipality's image, but also denies any efforts for affirmation of the city as the best touristic, cultural place, both nationally and internationally. In this context, in addition to the role of citizens and CSOs dealing with protection and wellbeing of animals to warn about the situation, response is also required from the local authorities to take appropriate measures and activities for reducing and controlling the stray dog population, which is based on the need to reduce health and safety risks, such as: disease transmission; abuse, intimidation and harmful effects on citizens from aggressive behavior of dogs; traffic accidents and environmental pollution. Local authorities bear the responsibility for controlling the stray dog population and they need to develop mechanisms and implement adequate programs in order to enforce laws related to stray dogs.

Animal protection and wellbeing is regulated in the Law on Animal Protection and Wellbeing. ("Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia" No. 149/14, 149/15 and 53/16) and Regulations on capture, interventions and treatment of stray dogs, methods of performing the socialization test, method and content of data for keeping records and the method of surveillance, requirements for approval of shelters, form and content of the approval application, as well as format and content of keeping the Register of approved shelters („Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia" No. 44/21). The Law on Animal Protection and Wellbeing stipulates the minimal requirements for protection and wellbeing of certain types of animals in terms of procreation, care and placement, including the stray dogs. EU legislation on animals' wellbeing undergoes changes based on current circumstances, scientific progress and results of new research and studies. Given the situation with stray dogs in Republic of North Macedonia, owners need to take more personal responsibility for their pets in order to reduce the number of stray dogs.

According to Article 28 of the Law on Animal Protection and Wellbeing (Official Gazette of RM, No. 149/14, 149/15 and 53/16), the municipality, that is, the City of Skopje are responsible for collecting stray dogs, that is, both registered and unregistered dogs found at public places without their owners and to temporarily place them in adequate shelters. Shelters need to provide basic animal protection from unfavorable weather conditions and effective closure. Qualified individuals deal with capturing of stray dogs without causing unnecessary pay or suffering.

Public pressure about the urgent need for measures to tackle the problem can be a catalyst that drives local policies and activities about the problem of stray dogs. Partnerships between the local authorities and CSOs and NGOs, and with other institutions dealing with or creating policies on animal protection and wellbeing, is definitely a positive step forward to ensure an overarching support in the process of finding optimal solutions and exchange of best practices to tackle the problem. Finally, it should result in a range of activities conducive to humane treatment and somewhat reduced number of stray dogs in public areas.

## **ALTERNATIVES- SOLUTIONS**

According to the analysis of the survey conducted with citizens from the region of municipality of Struga and students of the secondary school Niko Nestor Struga, one can draw a conclusion that the problem of stray dogs in Struga requires urgent solutions as it endangers the life, health and safety of citizens.

Survey results show that citizens have distrust in competent authorities as no measures have been taken to prevent the existence of stray dogs. Citizens identify the municipality of Struga as the main reason for the existence of this problem as the municipality bears the responsibility to take action and solve the problem.

According to citizens, construction of a shelter is the right option to find solution to the problem which must end because of risks to citizens' health and safety and the negative image about the aesthetics of the city of Struga as touristic place that attracts citizens from other municipalities and foreign tourists. For this reason, the municipality and the central government need to show commitment and provide funding for implementing a project that tackles issues about stray dogs, while citizens' life and safety will be guaranteed to a higher level.

According to the valid law, procedures on capture, interventions and treatment of stray dogs, methods of performing the socialization test, method and content of data for keeping records and the method of surveillance, requirements for approval of shelters, form and content of the approval application, as well as format and content of keeping the Register of approved shelters are specified in a Rulebook (Rulebook on the procedures on capture, interventions and treatment of stray dogs, methods of performing the socialization test, method and content of data for keeping records and the method of surveillance, requirements for approval of shelters, form and content of the approval application, as well as format and content of keeping the Register of approved shelters are all specified in a Rulebook („Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia“ No. 44/21). Shelters must be provided with appropriate measures and staff to ensure effective protection, feeding and treatment of animals, if necessary. To control the number of stray dogs, the municipality must temporarily place the stray dogs in the shelter in order to undertake castration, treatment and preventive health care and socialization test, in compliance with the veterinary health regulations, and then to return the dogs at the place of catchment.

Stray dogs must be labelled with a microchip and returned to the place where they were found in order to avoid unnecessary pain or suffering. In exceptional cases, municipalities can apply other prescribed methods to control the number of stray dogs. The municipality should design and approve multi-year plan and program for conducting controls over the population of stray dogs and submit them to the Food and Veterinary Agency for approval.

Costs for capture and treatment of stray dogs are covered by the municipality. The entity in charge of the shelter must keep records about admitted animals, to be available for inspection on request of the Food and Veterinary Agency as it issues approvals for sheltering based on filed requests.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Systematic and organized approach by the municipality of Struga with a wide range of activities to capture and treat stray dogs is more than indispensable in order to attain the objectives for protection of public interest, health and safety of citizens.

Organization of extensive campaigns to raise citizen awareness about the law on animal protection. Active participation of all organizations must be ensured – governmental bodies, NGOs, media and civic society. In addition, public discussions and debates need to be organized to discuss the solution to the problem.

Construction of special shelter for dogs outside the city and other related organizational activities (selection of location, creation of appropriate conditions for placement of animals, training for the staff, etc.) are very important. To that end, the municipality of Struga needs to provide its funding or request donations from governmental and non-governmental institutions in the country.

Shelters should be constructed at places that do not interfere with the operations of other facilities and do not pollute the environment, provided with strong fence that visually separates the shelter from the environment. The fence around the shelters should be constructed to prevent entry and exit of animals, there should be enough space to ensure functional links among other facilities, and maintain green areas at all unpaved surfaces.

Shelters should be provided with drinking water from a public supply network or own sources. Water from own sources must be controlled according to regulations on health safety of drinking water, at least twice a year or more often, if necessary.

Facilities in the shelter should be equipped with system for wastewater, so that atmospheric water can be drained in the sewerage or natural recipient without treatment. Shelters should be also connected to the sewerage network, and wastewater and faeces to be drained in the public sewerage or septic tank. Floors, walls and roof of the premises, where animals are kept, must be constructed with leak-proof material that is easily cleaned and sanitized, and also damp and erosion proof. These materials should also prevent any mechanical damages and should be maintained to ensure protection from unfavorable weather conditions.

There should be enough day light in the premises where animals are kept. At the entrance of the shelter, there should be a sign indicating the name of the shelter, the address, telephone numbers, e-mail and working hours, as well as the telephone number of a person on duty.

Based on all analyzed practices in the country and abroad, the animal shelter should be equipped with premises for:

- 1 Admission of animals,
- 2 Medical treatment of animals,
- 3 Placement and care for animals,
- 4 Isolation (quarantine) of animals,
- 5 Post operational care for animals,
- 6 Conducting a socialization test for a dog,
- 7 Storage of cleaning detergents and sanitizers,
- 8 Storage of animal food,
- 9 Staff,
- 10 Admission of clients and
- 11 Sanitary facility.

Shelters with such conditions have managed to tackle the problem of stray dogs in many places, and therefore the construction of shelter should be a top priority for the Municipality of Struga.

## RESOURCES

- Citizen survey
- Data from an analysis conducted by recruited expert for the project
- Law on Animal Protection in Republic of North Macedonia Ligji për mbrojtjen e kafshëve të Republikës së Maqedonisë së Veriut



**KICEVO  
GREEN  
CITY**

Proposed measures and policies

*- Davor Mihajloski*

# КИЧЕВО

## ЗЕЛЕН ГРАД



## SUMMARY

Local governments have a key role in dealing with climate change and conserving the environment. Many environmental laws impose duties on the municipalities and state authorities, including the Municipality of Kicevo. According to research conducted in support of this document, key issues in the environmental domain in the municipality of Kicevo are: lack of parks and greenery, unsuitable waste management, low air quality, absence of prerequisite conditions for alternative transport, illegal and excessive logging. General recommendations for the municipality of Kicevo are that it should: enact the statutorily mandated strategic documents in the domain of environmental protection; expand annual funding for environmental projects; improve the administrative capacities of the environment department and inspection service. This document also offers particular recommendations for overcoming the mapped problems.

*Municipality of Kicevo*<sup>20</sup>



## IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its 6th assessment in August 2021, whereby scientists alert that we are seeing accelerated, intensified and widespread climate change caused solely by human activity, with climate extremes such as heat waves, droughts, and tropical cyclones which are becoming more frequent and stronger. Although this situation calls for a global response, it is up to individual countries to undertake a series of measures for mitigating the impact of climate change on their respective territories, as well as slow the deterioration on the global level. Local governments are the first line of resistance to global climate change and conservation of the environment.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

In view of the importance of environmental protection, it is not surprising that a number of state institutions, agencies, and bodies shared jurisdiction in policymaking and supervision over the implementation of legislation in this domain. An overview of several laws and strategies in the environmental domain that impose duties on municipalities is appended (that list is not exhaustive).

<sup>20</sup> Municipality of Kicevo. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ki%C7evo#/media/File:Komuna-e-ker-coves.png>. [Accessed 11.8.2021]

<sup>21</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 'Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis' (2021). Available at: [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGI\\_SPM.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf) [Accessed 11.8.2021]

The legal authority of local governments to act on matters of environmental protection may be found in Article 22 (1) off the Law on Local Self-government, which stipulates that The domain of authority of municipalities includes protection of the environment and nature, i.e. measures for protection and prevention of water/air/soil pollution, nature conservation, protection against noise and non-ionizing radiation<sup>22</sup>. The powers and duties of local government units are further regulated by sectoral legislation. The Law on Environmental Protection includes Article 1 (1) where municipalities are indicated as institutions that have powers and duties in maintaining prerequisite conditions for protection and improvement of the environment, Article 3 (3) which requires municipalities to provide funding for protection and improvement of the environment, as well as Article 60 which stipulates that the Municipal Councils should enact Local Environmental Action Plans covering 6-year intervals<sup>23</sup>.

Article 26 of the Law on Ambient Air Quality stipulates that the municipality should develop an air quality plan for particular zones and agglomerations where levels of polluting substances in ambient air are higher than the borderline or target values<sup>24</sup>.

According to Article 18 of the Law on Waste Management<sup>25</sup>, municipalities should enact a municipal waste management plan. In addition, Article 19 states that municipalities should also enact waste management program, as well as instruments for implementing the waste management programs.

According to Article 5 of the Law on Urban Greenery, municipalities are required to create a Green Registry; create a Strategy for Development of Greenery; connect basic plan for planning, designing, planting, maintaining, protection and reconstruction of greenery, as well as enact an annual operating program for planting and maintaining greenery<sup>26</sup>.

The National Strategy for Nature Protection also envisages participation of municipalities in its implementation<sup>27</sup>.

## METHODOLOGY

Several data collection methods were used for purposes of this policy brief, namely:

- **4 interviews** by electronic means with representatives of the municipality of Kicevo from the departments of environment and local economic development, a member of the Council of the Municipality of Kicevo and a representative of civic organization;
- **2 focus groups** with 16 participants, one focus group with members of political party youth organizations, and the other group with students and other young people;
- **A questionnaire** with a sample of 75 respondents published on social media in the period 23-25 June 2021;
- **Public consultation** with stakeholders, 20 attended by participants.

22 Law on Local Self-Government, „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ no. 5/2002.

23 Law on Environmental Protection, „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ no. 53/2005; 81/2005; 79/2006; 101/2006; 109/2006; 24/2007; 159/2008; 83/2009; 161/2009; 1/2010; 48/2010; 124/2010; 51/2011; 123/2012; 93/2013; 187/2013; 42/2014; 44/2015; 129/2015; 192/2015; 39/2016; 28/2018; 65/2018; 99/2018.

24 Law on Ambient Air Quality „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ no. 67/2004; 92/2007; 35/2010; 47/2011; 59/2012; 163/2013; 10/2015; 146/2015; 151/2021.

25 Law on Waste Management „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ no. 68/2004; 71/2004; 107/2007; 102/2008; 143/2008; 82/2009; 124/2010; 140/2010; 51/2011; 6/2012; 123/2012; 147/2013; 163/2013; 27/2014; 51/2015; 146/2015; 156/2015; 192/2015; 39/2016; 63/2016; 31/2020.

26 Law on Urban Greenery „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ no. 11/2018, 42/2020

27 Government Cabinet, National Strategy for Nature Protection „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ no. 50/2018

The analysis and recommendations offered at the end of this document were developed from the experience, attitudes and perceptions shared by the residents (especially the young) from the Municipality of Kicevo.

## INSTITUTIONAL, STRATEGIC AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

As a town, Kicevo had developed through these injuries from a small trading settlement into an urban center. Residents from all ethnic groups present on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia live in the municipality of Kicevo. The total population is 30138, according to the 2002 Census.

In terms of institutional capacities for creating and implementing environmental policies, only four out of 186 employees in the municipality of Kicevo are working in the environment department, according to a municipal employee. The municipality has one authorized inspector in charge of inspection supervision in the domain of environment protection. The municipality is in charge of issuing B-type environmental permits and approvals of environmental assessments. The municipality develops environmental plans by creating individual programs (such as a program for air, disinfection, insect control, rat control, animal control and treatment of street dogs etc).

According to a member of the Council, the municipality allocates the following amount of funding every year:

***The municipality allocates 500,000 denars per year for projects that contribute to energy conservation, utilization of renewable energy sources and environmental protection. The funding framework for carrying out the program of activities in the domain of environmental management for 2021 is 37,360,000 denars (the largest portion of this amount, 30 million denars, is apportioned for inverter AC units), while in the past few years the amount allocated was around 9 million denars, on average.***

According to publicly available data, the 2021 Budget of the municipality of Kicevo includes two-line items pertaining to environmental sustainability. One is a 2,000,000 denar project for improvement of river beds that provides for removal of solid waste in rural and urban areas, and a project for expanding water capacities and utilization of natural sources to increase water quantities, especially in rural areas, with a value of 13,000,000 denars<sup>28</sup>.

*Kitino Kale*<sup>29</sup>



<sup>28</sup> Council of the Municipality of Kicevo, Budget. Available at: <https://kicevo.gov.mk/mk/buxheti-i-komunes-se-kercoves/> [Accessed 11.8.2021]

<sup>29</sup> Kitino Kale, Kicevo. Available at: <https://mojportal.mk/kitino-kale-kicevo.> [Accessed 11.8.2021]

## KEY CHALLENGES IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

It seems that the environmental protection situation in the Municipality of Kicevo has been gradually getting out of control over the past few decades. A brief description of the problems identified by respondents during the research is given below.

### LACK OF PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

The first significant problem is the lack of parks and green spaces that residents, including youth, might use for sports or leisure. As many as 79% of respondents believe that there are not enough greenspaces in Kicevo, and 29% think that the provision of more green spaces should be a priority (which was the second most selected response, after investments). However, the reason does not seem to be a lack of suitable sites; it's the opposite – the city of Kicevo has an abundance of potential parks. The problem is the poorly planned urbanization and frequent deviations from the urban plan. Just for illustration purposes, in the period from 2005 to 2020 there have been 1893 newly built apartments in the municipality, i.e. in 2010 there was new construction of housing units with aggregate total usable area of 9318m<sup>2</sup>, and by 2020 this was increased by 100% to 18096 m<sup>2</sup><sup>30</sup>.

Thus, almost all green spaces throughout the city have gone into private ownership, without any plan for their renovation, or they have become illegal dump sites, including the well-known picnic localities along the Treska river.

The civic organization representative explained that the municipality is facing uncontrolled urbanization, pointing out that “construction permits are being issued for buildings without ensuring provision of parking space for the residents, there is no regard for that minimum space that should be left empty between adjacent buildings, and thus green spaces get eliminated.”

Asked to comment on the balance between urban development and the creation and maintenance of public green spaces, the member of the Council stated:

**“It is clear that the balance between urban development and creating and maintaining public green spaces should be improved. It is also a fact that here in Kicevo we need more green spaces and neighborhood parks with urban equipment for the local residents' leisure and recreation.”**

### INAPPROPRIATE WASTE MANAGEMENT

The next identified problem are the illegal dumpsites/landfills that crop up every day even in the more urbanized parts of the city. Overfilled containers, waste and garbage strewn about can be seen on the city streets every day. The member of the municipal Council identify the problem with waste disposal and management, i.e. lack of solution for a city landfill, ask the most burning issue that results in the creation of mini-landfills

30 State Statistics Office, MakStat database: Construction; Data on completed apartments, average prices, unfinished and demolished units; Completed apartments by number of rooms, by municipality, by year. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3xANnz7>. [Accessed 11.8.2021]

that contaminate their surroundings, waste burning and maximum utilization of the capacities of the public utility company Komunalec for collection of all waste, but also for everyday transport of such waste in other distant municipalities that have landfills, which imposes additional financial costs.

The respondents placed the responsibility for the problem with inappropriate waste treatment on different entities.

According to the Council member, this is a complex problem that does not have a single cause. According to the representative of the civic organization, the public utility company "Komunalec" is the culprit that contaminates the environment by depositing waste at unsuitable locations.

It seems that the local government does not yet have a long-term strategy for addressing the problem, including the matter of introducing a recycling system. The public utility companies are now forced to accumulate waste at dumpsites and burn it, which is itself a cause of several other problems (such as air pollution) which will be discussed below.

## LOW AIR QUALITY

All of this leads us to the third problem, which is the degraded quality of the air. In the last few years the city of Kicevo climbed to a high ranking on the list of cities with the most polluted air, not only in the country but at the global level.

Although the geographic location and elevation of the city are conducive to good air quality, the situation depicted below shows the opposite.

PM10 / $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	Kicevo
24h limit value for protection of human health	50
Number of days in the current month with exceeded 24h limit value	28
Number of days in 2020 with exceeded 24h limit value	28

January 2020<sup>31</sup>

PM10 / $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	Kicevo
24h limit value for protection of human health	50
Number of days in the current month with exceeded 24h limit value	21
Number of days in 2020 with exceeded 24h limit value	21

January 2021<sup>32</sup>

31 Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, State System for Automated Monitoring of Ambient Air Quality: monthly report January 2021, p.89. Available at: [https://air.moepp.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/0204\\_202001VkupenIzvestaj.pdf](https://air.moepp.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/0204_202001VkupenIzvestaj.pdf). [Accessed 11.8.2021]

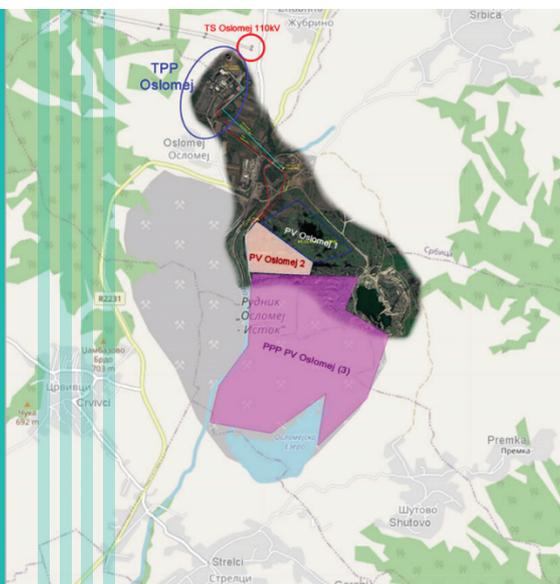
32 Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, State System for Automated Monitoring of Ambient Air Quality: monthly report January 2020, p.87. Available at: [https://air.moepp.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/0204\\_202101VkupenIzvestaj.pdf](https://air.moepp.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/0204_202101VkupenIzvestaj.pdf). [Accessed 11.8.2021]

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Просек
Јан	142.2	214.3	116.5	115.0	73.5	132.3
Фев	107.6	125.6	68.5	87.2	57.0	89.2
Мар	76.0	87.3	53.4	48.7	43.3	61.7
Апр	56.5	59.3	40.7	36.1	29.9	44.5
Мај	35.7	42.8	28.4	22.6	23.0	30.5
Јун	41.6	30.4	29.9	24.2	17.5	28.7
Јул	40.1	38.0	36.0	27.1	20.0	32.2
Авг	45.6	36.1	35.8	31.2	26.0	34.9
Сеп	40.2	33.9	40.9	20.4	22.7	31.6
Окт	65.3	49.0	51.6	34.7	38.4	47.8
Ное	127.9	83.2	90.3	63.7	65.5	86.1
Дек	136.5	152.3	137.1	61.8	90.5	115.6
Просек	76.3	79.3	60.8	47.7	42.3	

*Monthly overview of PM10 concentrations, multi-year comparison<sup>33</sup>*

There are several causes of air pollution in the Municipality of Kicevo.

In 2020 the regular supervision by the State Environmental Inspectorate has identified a number of deficiencies in the operation of the MEC Oslomej Powerplant which is situated near the town of Kicevo. Dust emission limits were exceeded, even though dust removal is carried out by electrostatic filtering. This thermal power plant is using the residual quantities of local lignite from Oslomej mine as fuel at this time.



*Map of populated localities that define the project zone<sup>34</sup>*

<sup>33</sup> Public Utility Company for State Roads, Air Dispersion Model for the A2 Motorway Gostivar Kicevo, section Bukojcani- Kicevo, p.8. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3IRfNTs>. [Accessed 11.8.2021]

<sup>34</sup> Општина Кичево, План за вклучување на засегнатите страни ФЕ Ослмеј 2. Достапно на: <https://kicevo.gov.mk/mk/plani-i-angazhimit-te-paleve-te-interesuara-cf-oslomej-2/> [Пристапено на 11.8.2021]

With regard to the cited remarks from the State Environmental Inspectorate, MEC Oslomej will be instructed to bring dust emissions within the range of limit values.

A feasibility study for modernization of the power plant was prepared in 2015. Environmental Protection standards that would be applied through this project are the current values from European regulations, i.e. standards for emissions of harmful gases defined in European Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions should be applicable to the modernization of Oslomej TPP, which means that SO<sub>2</sub> emissions concentration should not exceed 200 mg/Nm<sup>3</sup>, NO<sub>x</sub> emissions concentration should not exceed 150 mg/Nm<sup>3</sup> and particulate emissions are limited to 10 mg/Nm<sup>3</sup><sup>35</sup>.

The 2018 plan for air quality in the municipality of Kicevo recognizes landfills as a key polluter:

***The principal polluter in the municipality was (and still is) the city landfill. For which the Municipality of Kicevo found a temporary solution elaborated in a plan for temporary deposition of waste in the MEC Oslomej mining pit. The public utility company JP Komunalac Kicevo is in charge of disposal of municipal waste using machinery. JP Komunalac Kicevo is taking the collected waste to the mining pit, which is designated for solid municipal waste, located 15km from Kicevo. The municipality is regularly carrying out campaigns for cleanups of illegal dump sites. This solution will remain until implementation of the project for integrated and sustainable waste management system in the Pelagonija, Southwest, Vardar and Skopje regions, where the Municipality of Kicevo is an active participant, and construction preparations are currently underway for setting up a transloading station in the Municipality of Kicevo***<sup>36</sup>

”

According to the poll respondents, another key polluter is household heating, especially the use of firewood. A comparative analysis of total costs of heating a 60 m<sup>2</sup> housing unit showed that heating with inverter AC units would cost a household 58% more, with pellets 122% more, with heating oil 267% more, and with panel heaters 205% more than inverter AC units.

Another source of pollution that was mentioned is traffic. In 2020, there were 11810 vehicles registered in the Municipality of Kicevo<sup>37</sup>. One in three residents of the Municipality of Kicevo has a registered vehicle, in contrast to the national average where one in four residents has a registered vehicle<sup>38</sup>.

35 Powerplants of North Macedonia, Modernization of Oslomej TPP (2019). Available at: [https://www.esm.com.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Modernizacija-na-OSLOMEJ\\_2019.pdf](https://www.esm.com.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Modernizacija-na-OSLOMEJ_2019.pdf). [Accessed 11.8.2021]

36 Municipality of Kicevo, Plan for air quality for 2018. Available at: <http://sovet1.kicevo.gov.mk/3/11/Plan%20za%20kvaliteten%20vozduh.pdf>. [Accessed 11.8.2021]

37 State Statistics Office, MakStat database: Transportation; Registered vehicles; Registered on-road motor vehicles and towed vehicles, by municipality, by year, number. Available at: <https://bit.ly/37CBJta>. [Accessed 11.8.2021]

38 State Statistics Office, MakStat database: Censuses; Population Census 2002 by municipality; Total population, households, and housing units in the Republic of Macedonia. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3iELDk6>. [Accessed 11.8.2021]

As part of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment that the Public Company for State Roads prepared for purposes of construction of the A2 Motorway Gostivar-Kicevo, which includes the Bukojcani-Kicevo section, there is an analysis of an air dispersion model to assess the impact of air pollution from the construction works and from future motorway traffic on the ambient air quality. The analysis concludes that results from the PM10 air emissions dispersion modeling show that dust in the air resulting from construction activities could contribute to violating environmental quality standards<sup>39</sup>.

With regard to the problem of air pollution, the local authorities have already undertaken measures that we will discuss later, but nonetheless there is room for additional activities and measures that would accelerate the resolution of the problem.



MEC Oslomej<sup>40</sup>

## LACK OF PREREQUISITE CONDITIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

In the previous paragraph we noted that traffic has a negative impact on air quality, and yet there is no alternative public transport in Kicevo. In fact, there isn't a single bicycle path in Kicevo. According to the member of the Council of the Municipality of Kicevo:

**“There have been attempts to introduce public transport, such as a bus line connecting the villages with the city, but the level of interest was low and those attempts would fizzle relatively quickly. As for bicycle paths in Kicevo, unfortunately we will have to wait for better times when there might be better vision for the positive effects of biking.”**

This is mostly due to the poorly planned transport and traffic network, which subconsciously deters people from using environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as using bicycles, electric scooters and the like.

## ILLEGAL AND EXCESSIVE LOGGING

Finally, we would also point to illegal and excessive logging in the woodlands around the city as an important problem in the domain of environmental protection. A study conducted by the civic organization Eurothink on the topic of “”, the Kicevo region is identified as one of eight hotspots for this type of crime.

<sup>39</sup> Public Utility Company for State Roads, Air Dispersion Model for the A2 Motorway Gostivar-Kicevo, section Bukojcani- Kicevo, p.8. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3lRfNTs>. [Accessed 11.8.2021]

<sup>40</sup> РЕК Осломеј. Достапно на: <https://kicevo.mk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/rek-oslomej.jpg>. [Пристапено на 11.8.2021]



*Kicevo as one of the hotspots for this type of crime*<sup>41</sup>

According to the analysis:

*The forest assets are managed by the PENF through its subsidiary Lopushnik-Kicevo, a forested area of 55340,88 ha. In the period from 2010 to 2019, the subsidiary Lopushnik-Kicevo has filed a total of 223 criminal complaints and 635 misdemeanor complaints for illegal logging. A total of 72591 cases of illegal logging by unknown perpetrators were identified.*

However, there are suspicions of corruption and enabling of illegal logging by employees in these entities:

*In July of 2018 the police in Kicevo filed charges against an employee 4 alleged abuse of official position that caused approximately 4000 EUR worth of damage. In February 2021, the MOI filed criminal charges against the General Director of the PENF, the head of the Lopushnik subsidiary in Kicevo, and three other employees in the subsidiary, alleging abuse of official position. They were accused of enabling illegal logging in the Kicevo region, causing financial losses in the amount of approximately 300,000 EUR to the public utility company*<sup>42</sup>.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE AFOREMENTIONED PROBLEMS

We can conclude from the opinion poll that most of the respondents are dissatisfied with the present situation in Kicevo. That is why we used the various instruments to ask respondents about possible solutions to the problems that the city is facing. What follows is an overview of some solutions that would at least mitigate, if not completely resolve the problems.

<sup>41</sup> Eurothink, Destroying Our Future: Forms and Models of Organized Crime in Illegal Logging in the Republic of Northern Macedonia (2021). Available at: <http://eurothink.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CIP-FINAL-Izvestaj-Drvokradci-%D0%9C%D0%9A.pdf>. [Accessed on 11.8.2021]

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 18-22.

- 1 The problem with lack of green spaces is a decades-long problem in Kicevo, so it's no wonder that poll showed that the citizens think it deserves the most attention. Namely, the city has numerous sites with the potential to become mini-parks, but those sites are usually converted into illegal dump sites, full of garbage and debris. The city should increase the ratio of green spaces available to the residents by 100% and improve the extent, quality, and diversity of green spaces and other green infrastructure. After improving several sites, it is important that the city continues to allocate financial and human resources for maintaining those sites. Of course, future urban planning and construction should take into account the residents' needs when it comes to public green spaces.

The most recent activity by the local government to renovate "Kitino Kale" is a good example. Even though the project deserves full praise for reflecting the Municipality's awareness of the need to maintain public green spaces, it nevertheless must be noted that simply renovating one park is not enough - it should be continuously maintained.

- 2 In general, illegal dump sites may be addressed in the short term by their relocation. However, investing in a waste recycling plant would resolve the problem in the long term. In addition, the Municipality should develop a recycling system and consider rewards/incentives for residents who sort their waste.
- 3 We already mentioned that in the past few years Kicevo climbed quite high on the list of cities with the most polluted air globally. It has to be noted that the Municipality already offered subsidies for installation of AC units in households in order to reduce the number of residents who use firewood for heating. There were also subsidies for pallet-fueled furnaces, but the problem nonetheless continued to be alarming.

We believe that the subsidies for AC units should continue as a solution to this problem, and as many households as possible should shift to heating with electricity. There should also be more supervision over the operations of the MEC Oslomej coal mine and investment in more efficient filters that would reduce the pollution.

- 4 Another problem that we pointed out is the lack of infrastructure that would enable alternative transport. In order to address this problem, we believe that construction should begin on several bicycle paths, as well as subsidies for purchasing bicycles. Public campaigns should also be conducted to raise awareness among the citizens about environment-friendly modes of transport and would encourage them to choose bicycles instead of their motor vehicles.
- 5 Dhe problemi i fundit që u përmend ishte prerja ilegale e pyjeve. Një zgjidhje është sigurisht rritja e efikasitetit të ndjekjes penale për dyshimet për kryerjen e veprave penale, si dhe rritja e dënimeve për veprat e kryera penale kundër mjedisit. Megjithatë, vetëm këto masa nuk mjaftojnë për ta zgjidhur plotësisht problemin. Disa nga pjesëmarrësit në fokus grupe sugjerojnë që qytetarët, përmes aksioneve të organizuara nga autoritetet vendore, të përfshihen drejtpërdrejt në procesin e pyllëzimit të zonave të zhveshura, gjë që do të përshpejtonte rigjallërimin e natyrës dhe ekosistemeve të rrezikuara.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion to the above, we must note that local authorities are already undertaking measures to address some of the issues. The purpose of this document is to provide additional encouragement to the citizens and local authorities to continue the projects that are for everyone's benefit, and point to the culprits that generate dissatisfaction among the residents. The idea was also to propose possible solutions to problems that the citizens think are the most alarming.

Specific recommendations to the local authorities:

- Develop and adopt strategic documents that will establish priorities and activities for protection of the environment in the short, medium, and long term. Thus the Municipality of Kicevo should promptly enact a Local Environmental Action Plan, a waste management plan and program, a new air quality plan, green cadaster, strategy, program, and plan for greenery etc.;
- Strengthen the involvement of citizens and civic organizations in the creation of strategic priority and performance evaluation;
- Increase the number of staff in the Department of Environmental Protection and the inspection services;
- Increase annual funding allocated for environmental protection programs and activities;
- Support activities aimed at improving public environmental awareness.

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# YOUNG PEOPLE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER

Policies to improve the  
youth situation in Stip

- *Dejan Dimitriev*



## SUMMARY

Many theoreticians understand the society as a pact among our predecessors, our contemporary fellow citizens and the ones who are still not born.

Each societal process with no doubt passes through several generations, whereby a key segment in this unwritten contract are the young people.

Young people are the avant-garde of each societal change and their courage and initiatives determine the societal progress.

At the time of writing this text, in 2021, Republic of North Macedonia will celebrate the 30th anniversary of its independence. Problems and challenges faced left a mark also on the contemporary generations of young people. Turbulent decades of the period of gaining independence contributed to the so-called early maturation of many young people, mostly due to the unfavorable societal climate.

The City of Stip and its citizens share this „destiny “and local policy creators and decision-makers have been so far unsuccessful in the creation and implementation of a comprehensive program offer to improve the overall wellbeing of the young people in the city.

Having in mind that the Republic and the City can no longer afford the „luxury “to neglect the human capital of young people, we have decided to draft the first comprehensive youth program for the City of Stip that will be offered to the political entities that will participate in the forthcoming local elections.

Project intervention: „Young people are stronger together “aims to give a voice to the young people, especially for matters that affect them and about their needs and rights.

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

### Institutional structure

The Agency for youth and sport bears the institutional responsibility for youth matters. As part of its competencies, the Agency is in charge of drafting an action plan that will be the base for its work and is compliant with the commitments of the central government in this regard. Apart from this institution, in the legal system of the country there is also a position for a Youth and youth policy advisor in the Office of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia.

At the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia there is an informal parliamentary group, the so-called parliamentary club for youth matters and policies composed of MPs from various political parties. In 2018, this parliamentary group initiated and implemented the processes for adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies that was acknowledged by all political parties represented in the legislature.

At local level, youth matters and youth needs are institutionalized through the establishment of the so-called youth councils or councils of young people that function within the local self-government and are specified in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies and Law on Local Self-Government. Local youth councils are one form of youth organization that make efforts for enhanced youth participation in decision-making processes at local level.

## Normative infrastructure

The normative infrastructure entails all formal legal documents adopted by the institutions of the state. Existing norms include the following documents:

- **First**, Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies;
- **Second**, 2016 – 2025 National Youth Strategy;
- **Third**, 2019 – 2021 Strategic plan of the Agency for youth and sport, and
- **Fourth**, Local youth strategy of the municipality of Stip as document of the local self-government.

## Legal framework pertaining to the local self-government competencies for youth policies

In compliance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, there is a one-level local self-government in the country. The constitutional setup of the local self-government is further elaborated in the Law on Local Self-Government (LLSG).

According to Article 22 paragraph 1 of the LLSG, municipalities have competencies to cooperate in groups for: organization of public services, urban and rural planning, environmental protection, local economic development, communal affairs, culture, sport and recreation, social protection, education and child protection. This is not an exhaustive list and there is a possibility to expand the list with other competencies specified in the law, such as the delegated competence. Based on the competencies for education, municipalities are responsible for the work of primary and secondary schools.

In the city of Stip there are 5 primary, 7 secondary schools and 1 university. The fact that Stip is a university city provides an excellent opportunity for cooperation in the field of local youth policies. In this regard, especially important are the student assemblies that are established according to the Law on High Education since 2018 – individual student assemblies at the faculties and University student assembly at the University „Goce Delcev “- Stip.

Competencies in the field of culture include activities for institutional and financial support for cultural institutions and projects; nourishing the folklore, customs, crafts and other cultural values; organization of cultural events; stimulation for various specific forms of creations, etc. Culture is especially important for building the community, and young people are important factor for development of local culture.

In the municipality of Stip, there are several such institutions. Those are: National institution: „University library Goce Delcev “; Youth home; Art gallery „Bezisten “; Multimedia center „Kiro Gligorov “; National theatre, and National institution: „Cultural center Aco Sopov“. Competencies related to sport and recreation entail activities for development of sport and recreational activities; organization of sporting events and competitions; maintenance and construction of sporting facilities; support for sporting associations, etc. Funds allocated in the municipal budget are of major importance for the realization of the municipal competencies. The section below shows the financial support from the municipality for realization of competencies which are relevant for the young people, such as education, culture, sport and recreation.

## Competencies of the municipality according to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies

Apart from the Law on Local Self-Government, analysis will be required for other laws that stipulate provisions about activities to be taken by the municipalities about youth policies. In this context, the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies is relevant. That is, chapter 5 of the Law stipulates youth participation at local level through establishment of local youth councils that have „advisory and advocacy role in the municipalities, municipalities of the City of Skopje and the City of Skopje with regard to youth matters and policies “. These youth councils are directly linked with the municipal councils where they have the right to participate in the work of the council about youth related matters. The local youth council is established by the local youth assembly composed of representatives of youth organizations, organizations for young people, youth political party branches, student organizations and other forms of youth organizations. With regard to youth services, the law stipulates the establishment of:

- **First**, youth office;
- **Second**, youth hub;
- **Third**, youth officer.

In terms of the implementation of this Law in the municipality of Stip, one can note that the municipality has appointed a person who performs the function of youth officer. With regard to the establishment of local youth assembly, local youth council and youth hub, based on the publicly available information, the municipality of Stip is still in the process of establishing these structures.

One can also note that the local youth strategy of the municipality of Stip is not publicly available. That is, the last publicly available local youth strategy refers to the period from 2011 to 2015 that preceded the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

## Financing and support for the local civic sector

Apart from institutional support, municipalities are entitled to financially support the local civic sector, that is organizations that implement projects of relevance for the municipality.

Item 463 refers to the transfers made to non-governmental organizations. This budget item enables the municipalities to provide direct financial support to CSOs for local initiatives. Yet, the realization of these funds has proven to be difficult for some municipalities especially concerning the mechanism for applications and allocation of funds, as well as the transparency of the municipality when allocating funds. According to the analysis of the Centre for civic communication for 2016, the planned funds from this budget item 463 were utilized up to 80%, that is, Stip has share of 12.611.000 mkd.

Closer analysis of the spending from the budget item 463 is shown in the policy brief of the Foundation for development of local communities.

The planning and realization of the funds stipulated under this budget item in the municipality of Stip are shown below.

**- BUDGET ITEM 463**

YEAR	BUDGET	ANNUAL ACCOUNT
<b>2018</b>	16.300.000 mkd	14.936.905 mkd
<b>2019</b>	16.880.000 mkd	14.144.869 mkd
<b>2020</b>	400,000 mkd	42,222 mkd

The analysis of the special part of the annual account of the municipality shows that out of all allocated funds from the budget item 463, the biggest is the share for sport. In 2018, total of 12.922.370 mkd were allocated for sport, and 110,000 mkd for culture. In 2019, 25,000 mkd for culture, and 13.912.650 mkd for sport. In 2020, despite the outbreak of the pandemics, 7.003.320 mkd were allocated for sport and only 30,000 mkd for culture.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### *Financial and career perspectives in Stip*

- 1 Mapping individual sectors of special interest for local economy development according to the strategic priorities of the municipality;
  - Department for local economic development will be tasked with design of appropriate study to support the economic activities of strategic importance for the municipality;
  - Department for local economic development will be tasked with monitoring of the opening and development of new business initiatives in these economic areas;
- 2 Providing support for innovative business ideas of young people in Stip, through establishment of business incubator;
  - Establishment of multisectoral platform, among the local self-government, academic community and business sector, to serve as a base for the business incubator;
  - Given the limited municipal resources, as part of this initiative, the municipality will focus on providing working space for free as well as partnerships with experts from the business community.
- 3 Building trust through establishment of an independent monitoring system for the municipal support for creation of business initiatives, implemented by the Local youth council in Stip, in cooperation with the youth civic organizations that work of the territory of the city
  - Young people do not have trust in the capacities of the municipal institutions or in their transparency. To overcome the obvious feeling of alienation from the local institutions, municipal authorities need to be open for monitoring by youth organizations in order to tackle the gap of distrust.

- 4 Increasing the youth employment opportunities through cooperation with competent institutions and local initiatives.
  - Establishment of register of young job seekers who deal with various crafts;
  - Organization of Annual employment and internship fair in cooperation with the university and municipal secondary schools;
  - Support for local initiatives of the civic sector aimed at building capacities and skills which can increase the future professional interest of young people in areas of strategic importance.
- 5 Creation of an internet platform for interaction of the young people with the local self-government.
  - This online space will provide a forum for sharing information of importance for young people.

*Improving the conditions in the secondary schools in the city of Stip*

- 6 Proactive coordination of the local self-government with the Ministry of education and science for creation of new classes at the secondary schools for occupations which are deficient on the labor market.
  - There is an obvious need for staff with professional craft qualifications in the city. To address this need, the local self-government needs to initiate a proactive coordination with the MoES to tackle this problem in a timely manner;
  - Campaign for promoting the advantages of secondary vocational education.
- 7 Increased support for informal student activities, for expanding the knowledge and improving the skills.
  - The municipality of Stip, through the Youth council and other appropriate bodies needs to make efforts for increased youth participation (secondary school students, in this case) in informal educational activities. Through youth participation in such activities, young people can significantly develop their capacities. That is, young people acquire the so-called soft skills, which unfortunately are not being offered by the formal educational system.
- 8 Monitoring of the work of the secondary school career centres.
  - Exceptionally important is the need to ensure continuous work of the secondary school career centres so that students can be provided with quality counseling;
  - As part of the efforts to improve the overall work of the career centres, the local self-government will organize a series of trainings in cooperation with the civic sector to build capacities in this area;
- 9 Assessment of the infrastructural capacities of the school buildings and coordination with the central government for further improvements.
  - The need for infrastructural improvement of the overall situation in the municipal secondary schools was stated by all citizens who participated in the process of conducting the survey;
  - Improved infrastructure of secondary schools will improve the overall capacities of the educational institutions and their educational activities, as well as the overall wellbeing of the students.

- 10** Programs for improved skills of the teaching staff at the kindergartens, primary and secondary schools.
- Improve the quality of teaching and education through design and implementation of programs for capacity building of teachers and professors in the educational and upbringing process;
  - Programs for improvement of technical and methodological skills of the teaching staff will be implemented in coordination with MoES and relevant CSOs and the Local youth council.

### *Studying in Stip or further from home – how to keep young people in Stip*

- 11** Design of a study for assessment of infrastructural capacities of the university „Goce Delcev“;
- 12** Lobbying to the central government for realization of the study findings;
- 13** Renovation of the reading hall at the library „Goce Delcev“ Stip and extending the working hours to 24 hours throughout the whole week;
- 14** Increased support and promotion of the work done by students at the artistic faculties of the university „Goce Delcev“ in Stip;
- 15** Media campaign for promotion of Stip as small but attractive university city, by using experiences from other cities with similar position.

### *Cultural and entertainment life in Stip*

- 16** Opening of a cinema;
- 17** Opening of a city swimming pool;
- 18** Increased support for organization of music summer festivals and events.
- Organization of two new music summer festivals. One would be festival of popular music and the other event would bring together alternative and less renowned musicians.
- 19** Structural reorganization of the institution „Youth home“, into youth cultural centre;
- Organization of two new music summer festivals. One would be festival of popular music and the other event would bring together alternative and less renowned musicians.
- 20** Development of the park “Suitlak” in public space and additional adaptation of the space for cultural-entertaining events;
- Organization of two new music summer festivals. One would be festival of popular music and the other event would bring together alternative and less renowned musicians.

### *Cultural and entertainment life in Stip*

- 21** Construction of sport and recreation center;
- 22** Putting into operation the city swimming pool;

- 23 Increased support for all sporting clubs and local teams;
  - Diversification of the funds for sports that were not previously supported by the municipality.
- 24 Infrastructural improvement of the walking path along the river Bregalnica;
- 25 Design of a study for planning the construction of additional infrastructure to improve the conditions for outdoor sport and recreation;
- 26 Increasing the traffic culture level to ensure equal treatment of cyclists as traffic participants and raising the public awareness about the benefits from daily cycling;
- 27 Renovation of the City stadium.

## USED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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# TETOVO KALE (BALTEPE) - THE HEART OF TETOVO

Restoration and affirmation of one  
of the biggest archeological sites

- *Dino Bllazheski*



## SUMMARY

Being one of the five largest towns in North Macedonia, Tetovo has a serious tourist and cultural potential which is unfortunately underutilized and insufficiently protected by the central and local government institutions. At the same time, as is the case with the whole country, continuous efforts are needed for this town to improve its reputation in the domestic and international public.

In this sense, the purpose of this document is to offer possible alternative solutions in order to finally commence the processes of conservation, rehabilitation and affirmation of the Tetovo Baltepe (Kale) Fortress, which is one of the largest cultural and historical sights of the town on the foot of the Shar Mountain.

To achieve that goal, a review of the history, features and current state of the Kale, the legal framework, budget allocations and relevant comparative experiences are provided hereinafter. At the very end, based on the review, final observations are presented, which represent a specific contribution to reinstate the Kale Fortress as the heart of the town in all its splendor, in order to improve the overall living conditions in Tetovo, but also in the whole country.

## PROBLEM - BACKGROUND AND RELEVANCE

At the top of Tetovo, like a crown above the city, proudly stands the “Tetovo Kale/Baltepe” fortress. However, this landmark is slowly but surely sinking into oblivion of the people, the time and the competent institutions. The walls that testify to the centuries-old history of this landmark and that still conceal the sighs of their creators are but silent witnesses of countless memories, and the love secrets of those who created their life stories right there, now, in the 21st century, bulge like a ruin that chases you away.

*The current condition of the Tetovo fortress.*



### *A brief historical overview*

The Tetovo Kale is located on the top of Baltepe, at an altitude of 803 meters, with an area of 108,000 m<sup>2</sup>. This landmark is located only two kilometers away from the center of Tetovo. The content of this landmark is very complex. Namely, the inner part has five palaces, large kitchens, baths, one well in the middle and three exit tunnels. The site itself has the character of a fortified urban settlement from the late antique period and the Middle Ages.

The Tetovo Kale together with the “Colorful Mosque” and the “Arabati Baba Tekke” are probably the three most important historical sights in the city under the Shar Mountain.

The creator of these historical pearls is Recep-Pasha, who ruled in these areas at the end of the XVIII and the beginning of the XIX century. During that period, this ruler extended his pashalak to Kosovo to the north, to Stip to the east, and all the way to Ohrid to the south, and he used the wealth he acquired to build the most beautiful buildings of that time in Tetovo, among other things.

Wanting to further strengthen his power, but also to defend himself from the enemies, Recep Pasha began to build the Tetovo Kale, also called "Bal Tepe", which translated from Turkish means "honey peak". Its dominant and strategic position was ideal for such a large fortress.

Although Recep Pasha ruled for 50 years, he still failed to see the fortress fully built, which is why this work was completed by his son Abdurrahman Pasha.

As for the history of this landmark, the oldest remains of the walls of the fortress are the large blocks dating from IV-III century BCE. Indeed, it is assumed that on the foundations of these walls, new walls were later firmly erected, in late antiquity, built of crushed stone and mortar. At the southern end of the site, on the other hand, numerous fragments have been discovered from the Hellenistic period and Late Antiquity.

### ***Current situation***

Cultural heritage is an expression of lifestyle developed by a community and passed down from generation to generation, including the customs, values, places, objects and artistic expressions. Preserving our cultural heritage is important because it preserves our integrity as a people. Cultural heritage is the heritage of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society inherited from past generations.

The deliberate act of preserving the cultural heritage, and the heritage of the present in the future is known as conservation, which is promoted by the ethnic museums - museums of cultural history and the cultural centers, although these terms may have a more specific or technical meaning in the same contexts of other dialect.

The archaeological site Kale has had the status of a cultural monument since 1953. Today, this building is under the jurisdiction of the National Institution "Museum of the Tetovo Region"<sup>43</sup>.

The condition of this landmark testifies to the extremely low interest of the competent authorities for renovation and restoration of this building and for its transformation into an attractive tourist destination. For many years, the residents of Tetovo, who find refuge from the city chaos and polluted air at the top of the Baltepe, have actively been advocating for its restoration. However, in order to get there, they must walk down a road which is more than thirty years old and which has unfortunately not been renovated yet.



*Shtigjet e hyrjes në Kala  
janë në gjendje të keqe*

As for the landmark itself, on June 5, 2012, the wall at the entrance of the Tetovo Kale collapsed. The protective wall that is more than 200 years old seems to have succumbed to the negligence. Today, these ruins speak about the negligence of the institutions.

The responsibility for the maintenance of the Tetovo Fortress is constantly transferred by the competent institutions. Thus, according to the municipality of Tetovo, the Kale fortress is fully under the competences of the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments. For this reason, in 2014, the National Conservation Center prepared a project for conservation of the outer wall of the Kale and the Ministry of Culture approved the appropriate funds. However, these conservation efforts continue to this day. Namely, in 2019 the Conservation Center received MKD 1,050,000 denars that were used for conservation of the Kale; in 2020 - 363,947 denars were allocated, while in 2020 the city museum in Tetovo promised that, after so many years, the complete site will be lit up and a security service will be hired.

To date, none of these promises have been fulfilled.

### ***Legal status***

Article 56 of the Constitution of the Republic stipulates that all the natural resources of the Republic of Macedonia, the flora and fauna, amenities in common use, as well as the objects and buildings of particular cultural and historical value determined by law, are amenities of common interest for the Republic and enjoy particular protection. In this sense, based on the constitutional provisions, the Law on Protection of Cultural Heritage determines cultural heritage as material and immaterial goods that (...) are under a legal regime in accordance with this and other law. According to this law, the cultural heritage is a fundamental value of the state, protected in all circumstances, and the protection of the cultural heritage is of public interest and mandatory on the entire territory of North Macedonia. The Law on Protection of Cultural Heritage prohibits damage, destruction, appropriation, concealment, evasion and usurpation of cultural heritage, selling of state cultural heritage of special importance, export of cultural heritage of special importance and requisition, repression, attack and use of cultural heritage for military purposes.

Having in mind the aforementioned, the twenty-fourth chapter of the Criminal Code refers to the following crimes against the cultural heritage and natural rarities - "damage or destruction of goods under temporary protection or cultural heritage or natural rarities", "taking goods under temporary protection or cultural heritage or natural rarities abroad", "alienation of cultural heritage of special importance in state ownership", "bringing unlawfully acquired goods under temporary protection, cultural heritage and natural rarities" and "unauthorized trade in goods under temporary protection, cultural heritage and natural rarity" - as part of the crimes against cultural heritage provided for in the Criminal Code.

However, despite of the constitutional and legal provisions, the Tetovo Kale is unfortunately a silent witness to the negligence of the institutions and the non-application of the law in this sphere.

### ***Budget support***

In the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture for 2019 - 2021, the Tetovo Kale is not included as a strategic priority of the state. In the state budget for 2020, on the other hand, a modest amount of 2,500,000 denars is provided for several archeological sites, including the Tetovo Kale. The situation was similar in the previous year - 2019, when only 3,000,000 denars were allocated from the State Budget.

Based on the aforementioned, the conclusion is that the state has allocated certain funds for the Tetovo Kale which are quite scarce and which do not make it possible for this facility to be rehabilitated and included in the tourist offer of the city and the country.

On the website of the Office for Protection of Cultural Heritage it is stated that the institution is also working on projects for the restoration of Macedonian kale fortresses, but the Tetovo Kale cannot be found among the projects.

In the 2019 and 2020 Budgets of the Municipality of Tetovo, no items can be found that refer to the Tetovo Kale. From all of the aforementioned in relation to the financial support, we can conclude that despite of its poor condition, the Tetovo Kale is still neither a priority of the Government and its institutions, nor of the local government in Tetovo.

## **COMPARATIVE PRACTICE**

Unlike the Tetovo Kale which is an example of negligence, comparative experiences speak for the opposite. In this sense, we will mention the "Tsarevets Fortress" as an example, located in the town of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria.

The restoration of this cultural landmark began way back in 1930 and lasted for 51 years. Thus, nowadays, the road leading to the Fortress, the main entrance to the Fortress, the main tower, the side walls, the remaining towers, as well as the church with the impressive icon paintings depicting the birth and end of the second Bulgarian Empire have been completely reconstructed and renovated. In this sense, just below the church, the imperial palace can be found, and the archeological excavations show that in the past it had 470 residential houses, houses for the aristocracy, a room for receiving visitors, 23 harems and 4 town monasteries. Unique pieces of clothing woven in gold, and gold ornaments from the period of the second Bulgarian Empire were also discovered. Furthermore, for the purposes of tourism, signposts and boards have been put up, which clearly indicate the location where the fortress is located. To magnify its beauty and to turn it into an even bigger tourist attraction, the project "Sound and Light" was realized, which tells the history of this Fortress in a unique and magic way.

Considering this experience, the difference in the engagement of the competent authorities for restoration and maintenance of a historical, cultural building in both countries is clearly evident. On the one side, we have the Tetovo Kale which stands abandoned, neglected and ruined, while on the other hand there is the Tsarevec Fortress which is neatly arranged, reconstructed and constantly renewed, transforming itself into an attractive tourist attraction.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The Tetovo Kale is a protected cultural object, but unfortunately, only on paper. However, its strategic position, as well as its accessibility can turn this location into one of the biggest tourist attractions in the country. Also, the geographical location and its proximity to the Prizren Fortress make it possible to implement joint activities or to engage in an exchange of tourist activities, organizing mountaineering activities and hiking, horse riding and other activities that would further promote mountain tourism with the Kale as a starting point. Until then, however, the following procedures require urgent action:

- 1 First, the road leading to the Tetovo Kale needs to be reconstructed;
- 2 Second, signposts in Macedonian, Albanian and English need to be set up to help domestic and foreign tourists reach the Tetovo Kale easier and faster;
- 3 Third, boards with the history of the Tetovo Kale need to be placed;
- 4 Fourth, significant funds need to be allocated from the state budget and from the budget of the municipality of Tetovo, not symbolic ones, for the entire site to be restored;
- 5 Fifth, use of foreign funds should be considered, especially “RCC - Tourism Development and Promotion Project/ EU funded project”; the “the European Green Agenda for the Western Balkans”; UNESCO - World Heritage Fund; “Stiftung SST, Schweizerische Stiftung für Solidarität im Tourismus” from the Swiss Confederation; the Regional Cooperation Council; IPA regional development programs in the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as the Europe for Citizens Program;
- 6 Sixth, a pictorial representation of what the present Tetovo Kale looked like in the past needs to be made;
- 7 Seventh, an opportunity should be provided for organizing events, such as: concerts at the Tetovo Kale; outdoor theatrical performances; open-air cinema screenings; festivals; open-air exhibitions; events organized by the youth of Tetovo, etc.

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# TOWARDS AN URBAN, YOUTHFUL CHAIR

Skate park as a solution for the underdeveloped urban youth culture in the Municipality of Cair

*- Egzon Guri*



## SUMMARY

At this year's Tokyo Olympics, 13-year-old Momiji Nishiya from Japan won the Olympic gold in the women's street skateboarding competition<sup>44</sup>. This became possible as from 2020 skateboarding, along with three other sports, have become Olympic sports for the first time<sup>45</sup>.

It is estimated that there are over 85 million skaters globally, the majority of whom are under 18 years old<sup>46</sup> with the use of over 5,000 skate parks<sup>47</sup>. The skateboard industry is one of the fastest growing sports industries and by 2025 it is expected to reach a value of \$ 2.4 billion<sup>48</sup>.

Skateboarding differs from traditional sports in that there are no formal rules to follow or a standardized location where it takes place. You can skate from any sidewalk to a specially designed skate park. Skateboarding is generally an individual sport that requires creativity, innovation and skill. More recently, skateboarding has taken on an organized form, through competitions such as the X Games, Dew Tour or Street League Skateboarding (SLS) World Tour<sup>49</sup>, and recently it has become part of the Summer Olympics.

Skateboarding dates back to the 1950s in Southern California, and mass production and sale of skateboards began as early as the 1960s. Over the next decade, skateboarding grew in popularity, innovation and diversification of technique and style, from slalom and freestyle to a more vertical and aggressive riding style practiced on ramps, rafters and in pools. In the 1980s, the style, culture and scope of the sport changed again. Skateboarding returns to the city streets, and the style of riding evolves from "free" to "street style". Already in the 1990s, the skateboarding market grew significantly, and in the 2000s one of the key trends was its institutionalization<sup>50</sup>. In the past, skateboarding was considered an alternative sport, with a significant subculture based on rebellion, risk-taking, anti-authoritarianism<sup>51</sup>.

According to Beal & Beal (2013), "the dynamic relationship between the skateboarding industry, the youth market, general economic conditions and mainstream media coverage is the reason for the general acceptance of skateboarding and skaters"<sup>52</sup>.

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## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SKATEBOARDING AND THE CITY

There is probably no other sport more defined by the city, urban infrastructure, architecture and design, than skateboarding. Skaters use public spaces, streets, squares, stairs, ramps, fences, to perform various tricks. Public and urban space is their natural habitat and playground. However, there is a trend in the world to create skate parks, as a more organized form, in contrast to street skating



*Skater on the quay in Skopje*



*Skater on a sidewalk in Skopje*

## SKATEBOARDING IN NORTH MACEDONIA

The skating community in North Macedonia has existed since the 1980s<sup>53</sup>, and the sport gained significant popularity during the 2000s. There are currently two skate parks in Skopje<sup>54</sup> and two pump tracks<sup>55</sup>, and locations that are often visited by skaters are the quay under the Stone Bridge, Post Office, Goce Delchev monument, the square in front of MNT, GTC, the area under the Railway. There is still no specialized place for indoor skateboarding in our city.



*Skate park in the Municipality of Karpos*



*Skate park on the quay*

53 Radio MOF (2017) [Gallery] Skaters before the Government in the 1980s and 1990s. [online] Available at: <https://www.radiomof.mk/galerija-skejterite-pred-vlada-vo-80-tite-i-90-tite-godini/> [Accessed on 9 August 2021].

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## **PROBLEM AND IMPORTANCE: ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CAIR MUNICIPALITY ABOUT THE URBAN CULTURE**

The key problem we look at in this policy paper is the underdeveloped urban youth culture in the Municipality of Cair and how building a skateboard infrastructure can help overcome this problem.

According to the 2002 census, the total population in the Municipality of Cair is 64,773 inhabitants, living on a territory of 3.52 km<sup>2</sup>, which makes it the most densely populated municipality in Europe. The Municipality of Cair has a high birth rate and natural increase. With regard to the age structure of the population, young people aged 15 to 29 count for 15,624 or 24% of the total population in the municipality.

In view of this, we prepared a questionnaire for young people from the municipality, with the use of a relevant and voluntary method to mobilize respondents. The questionnaire was available through the social networks in the period from 18.06.2021 to 23.06.2021.

Sixty-five (65) respondents took part, of which 70% male and 27% female, 80% aged 15 to 25 years, and 60% with higher education. Seventy-five (75%) of the respondents live in the Municipality of Cair. The results show that young people from Cair spend their free time in different ways. Although there is a lack of places for entertainment and culture, young people still spend most of their time with friends (60%), sports (46%), listening to music (35%) and socializing with family (32%). Most of the local youth are also fans of different sports and spend their time sporting. The most popular are the traditional sports such as football, basketball, volleyball, etc.

The answer of the respondents to the question whether there is enough public space for practicing sports and urban culture in the Municipality of Cair, was expectedly negative. A significant proportion of the respondents, or some 74%, answered that there is no public space for practicing urban sports and cultures. Remarkably, 75% of young people answered that the lack of cultural and entertainment spaces is a serious problem in our society.

## **SKATE PARK AS A SOLUTION FOR THE UNDERDEVELOPED URBAN YOUTH CULTURE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CAIR**

According to the respondents, the lack of space for sports and urban culture is a serious problem, which has been highlighted by the young people from the country as a serious cause for dissatisfaction. The demands of young men and women from Cair are numerous, however, overall, they are interested in building skate parks (60%), organizing urban sport competitions such as cycling, skateboarding, rollerblading (48%), building playgrounds for children's entertainment (34%), as well as events and competitions for traditional sports and music events (29% each).

To the question if the construction of a skate park in the Municipality of Cair would be beneficial for the youth in Cair, about 64% of the respondents answered that the skate park would be of great benefit. Youth in Cair are also interested in urban culture, urban sports and skate park. To the question what they would like the municipality to do to enrich the cultural and entertainment content for young people, 58% of the respondents answered "to build a skate park".

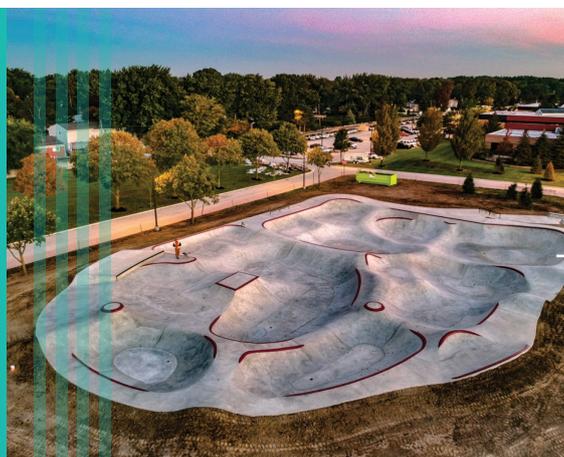
## REQUIRED RESOURCES FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A SKATE PARK IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CAIR AND TECHNICAL CONDITIONS

According to the estimates of the International Association of Skateboard Companies, Skaters for Public Skateparks and the Tony Hawk Foundation, the cost of building a skate park in the United States is approximately \$ 45 per 1 ft<sup>2</sup> (or 0.09 m<sup>2</sup>). This means, that for a 3,000 ft<sup>2</sup> skate park, the cost would be \$ 135,000, for 8,000 ft<sup>2</sup> - \$ 360,000 (for a 25,000-person neighborhood) and for 16,000 ft<sup>2</sup>, - \$ 720.00 (for the municipality at large)<sup>56</sup>.

For the construction of a skate park on the quay, sized 15 by 50 meters (or 8073 ft<sup>2</sup>)<sup>57</sup>, in 2014 the City of Skopje spent 4,998,480 denars<sup>58</sup>. We can conclude that about 619 denars were spent for 1ft<sup>2</sup>, i.e. about 12 dollars, which is significantly lower than the estimate in the United States. The municipality of Karpos in 2006 estimated that a similar amount would be required for the construction of a skate park in the municipality, i.e. about 4 million denars<sup>59</sup>.

The standard costs for building a skate park include purchasing private land or use of public space, building a road, fence, benches, lighting, drainage<sup>60</sup> and design and construction of structures and elements for skating such as: banks, quarters, funboxes, Grindboxes, Rails, Miniramps, etc<sup>61</sup>. An additional cost to consider is the cost of maintenance of the space once built.

Finally, the question to be considered is whether there is a possibility of building an indoor skate park, which can be visited throughout the year, and not just when the weather permits. This decision would significantly affect the final price.



*Example of a skate park*

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## NEED OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

When deciding on the space on which the skate park will be built, as well as the technical solution, it is necessary for the professional team to understand the sport, but also to timely consult the skate community in the process. In 2014, during the construction of the skate park by the City of Skopje, this principle of inclusiveness was not respected, and the skate community reacted:

**“***[The Skateboard Association of Macedonia] explains that a skate park must be built by a company that meets all European safety standards and has a license to legally build skate parks supported by world skating organizations. They expressed concerns that the money will be spent on a non-functional skate park, which, as they say, will be unusable like the park in Karpos built a few years ago*<sup>62</sup>**”**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The government and local authorities, in this case the Municipality of Cair, should:

- 1** Listen carefully to the voice of the young people who are clearly in need for more cultural and recreational space;
- 2** Be aware that the needs of young people are changing, and in addition to traditional sports, there is a need for support and development of alternative sports that are becoming increasingly popular with this target group;
- 3** Invest in a modern skate park on the territory of the municipality of Cair, designed in consultation with the skate community, and provide funds for its construction and maintenance;
- 4** Refrain from stigmatizing or condemning street skating, which is complementary to skating in the skate park.

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# LGBT + INCLUSIVE CITY OF SKOPJE

Proposed measures and policies

- *Evgenija Janakieska*



## SUMMARY

Discrimination is a phenomenon that occurs in each local community, on different grounds, through different forms and in areas that are the responsibility of both the central and the local governments. Thus, LGBT + people are much more likely to be exposed to various forms of hate-motivated violence and generally live surrounded by hatred, discrimination and hate violence. The term LGBT + itself is an abbreviation for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people, while the special sign "+" is a suffix for all those sexual and gender identities that deviate from the heteronormativity and are not covered by the four terms.

Young LGBT + people are the target of bullying, even physical violence from their peers, and when "getting out of the closet" (declaring that they are for example, gay, lesbian or trans to their family and environment), they are often victims of family violence. For Macedonian citizens, homosexuals are one of the least acceptable groups of fellow citizens (31.7%) . 36.8% of LGBT + people were discriminated against in the workplace, 39% were discriminated against in the exercise of social protection rights, and 30.77% were discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity when reporting cases to a police station<sup>67</sup>. The data say that 96.6% LGBT + people faced some form of discrimination, and 76.6% of them were discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.

Such data contribute to LGBT + people being more exposed and at risk of being fired, denied housing or public services by institutions, or being kicked out of a restaurant or office just because of their choice. In this regard, in our country there are policies to prevent discrimination at the central level, but at the local level there are no structural documents or mechanisms to improve the position of the LGBT + population.

The municipality, as a community at the local level where young people live and move on a daily basis, should offer support and counseling systems for LGBT + people, assistance to parents of young people who are LGBT + and programs through which they will be strengthened and helped to live independently. The local community should offer a safe environment that promotes non-discrimination.

So, the main solution that this document proposes following the example of European LGBT + friendly cities are the introduction of a local plan to improve the living conditions of the LGBT + population.

Currently, no local plan directly addresses the LGBT + population, which further strengthens the need for it. This plan should include a series of activities intended for services, support for the LGBT + population but also increased education of the population to accept them.

63 The political Culture, Identities and Civil Society, FOSM, 2017 (in manuscript)

64 Analysis of the problems and needs of LGBTI people in the Republic of Macedonia in the field of social protection, legal services and police action. Helsinki Committee for Human of the Republic of Macedonia - LGBTI Support Center,

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## PROBLEM - CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

### WHAT IS LGBT +?

The acronym LGBT covers a wide range of groups: lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people<sup>66</sup>. and as such has been used since the early 1990s as a comprehensive term for sexual and gender identity.

Over the years, the abbreviation has changed and later other identities have been added to this abbreviation: LGBT-TIKA (T - transgender, T - transsexual, I - intersex, K - queer, A - asexual persons). However, due to the considerations of exclusion and the addition of new identities, today the abbreviation LGBT + is used, with the idea that it includes all those sexual and gender identities that deviate from the heteronormativity. The abbreviation (LGBT +) basically includes two concepts: sexual orientation, which is characterized by emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to people of a certain gender.

Gender identity (the way we experience ourselves) is often equated with gender<sup>67</sup>. Transgenderism is a somewhat more complex term, because it does not refer to sexual attraction, but to gender identity.

LGBT + people are a marginalized group, which is discriminated against by society (institutions, fellow citizens ...) and faces the risk of poverty, inaccessibility to basic public services such as health care, police protection, equal treatment and recognition of identity. The data say that 96.6%<sup>68</sup> LGBT + people faced some form of discrimination, and 76.6% of them were discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation. More specifically, LGBT + people most often experience discrimination in the workplace, i.e., 66.6% were discriminated in the workplace, 40% were discriminated in the judiciary and administrative bodies and in access to goods and services. A significant 43.3% were discriminated against in education, science and sports<sup>69</sup>. Although the legal framework under the Law on Prevention of Discrimination is comprehensive and clear, many of these problems faced by the LGBT + community are due to the lack of appropriate mechanisms at the local level through which they will be able to exercise their rights.

### PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE LGBTI UNION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

In the last few years, significant steps have been made in the Republic of Northern Macedonia on this topic:

- National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2016-2020 - The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which advocates for the promotion of protection against discrimination against LGBTI people, which created the conditions for the adoption of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination.
- Establishment of an Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for LGBT +

66 A complete glossary of the term is available at the following link <http://lgbti.mk/%D0%B-F%D0%BE%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA/>

67 Handbook for youth workers "Capacity building for working with LGBT youth", Subversive Front, 2017, p. 21

68 Research on the experiences and knowledge for prevention and protection against discrimination of vulnerable groups of citizens, Institute for Human Rights, 2019, p. 64

69 Ibid, p.65

- The adoption of the Law on Protection and Prevention of Discrimination, which introduces sexual orientation and gender identity as a basis for providing protection against discrimination and defines intersectional discrimination.
- Establishment of the Commission for Protection and Prevention of Discrimination, which is an independent and autonomous body, with status of a legal entity. It consists of seven members who are elected and dismissed by the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia. The Commission undertakes activities for the promotion, protection and prevention of equality, human rights and non-discrimination, gives opinions and recommendations, promotes the principles of equality, the right to non-discrimination and tackling all forms of discrimination by raising public awareness, information and education<sup>71</sup>.
- Conducting anti-discrimination and hate speech trainings for the employees of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) and other state bodies.
- Holding the first Pride Parade in 2019, the second (which due to the Covid-19 pandemic was held online) and holding the third Pride Parade in June 2021.
- The adoption of the new Law on Primary Education which includes sexual orientation and gender identity (SORI) and eliminates discrimination regarding SORI<sup>72</sup>.

Preparation of a draft law on textbooks and other teaching and didactic materials in primary and secondary education<sup>73</sup>. Adoption of such regulation would contribute to reduced prejudices and stereotypes in textbooks, which is one of the requirements of the law and is noted in the Report on the impact assessment of the regulation.

## CITY OF SKOPJE AND LGBTI +

Although most of the competencies to protect the rights of the LGBT + community are in the central government, local self-government still plays an important role. Without the active participation of municipalities and Councils in order to adopt measures and policies at the local level, and cooperation with institutions at the central level one cannot expect a real step forward in building sustainable solutions. Namely, the local self-government through cooperation with the local police stations, the schools under the jurisdiction of the municipalities, the implementation of measures and policies that are in their competence are key to creating a safe environment for LGBT + people.

Local governments can and should adopt a Local Strategy for the Protection of Marginalized Groups in the Local Community (including LGBT +), to allocate funds to support and promote cultural and artistic queer events, to allocate funds for the establishment of safe houses and centers for assistance and support to victims of LGBT + violence, as well as capacity building of civil servants employed in municipalities for ethical treatment

71 Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination, Official gazette of RNM, No. 101 from 22.5.2019, available at -27.5-Law on Protection from Discrimination.pdf (mtsp.gov.mk)

72 Carovska: Through a combined model of textbooks, to phased digitization and modernization of education | Government of the Republic of Northern Macedonia, available at - <https://vlada.mk/node/24945>

73 The draft law is still in the process of adoption. It is available at the following link - [https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub\\_regulation&subitem=view\\_reg\\_detail&itemid=64178](https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=64178)

and non-discrimination in working with LGBT + persons. In this context, for the needs of this document, focus groups were realized with representatives of the LGBT + population on the territory of the city of Skopje. The biggest challenges for protection against discrimination at the local level are the following:

- The levels of knowledge and skills for dealing with discrimination and hate speech among employees of local self-government units are quite low.
- Bullying in the secondary and primary schools on the territory of the City of Skopje, of which the secondary schools are under the direct jurisdiction of the City, while the primary schools are under the jurisdiction of the municipalities on the territory of the City of Skopje.
- Lack of a local strategy or program that will help reduce the stigma on this group of people and promote support, tolerance and acceptance by the community
- Ineffective and inefficient protection of LGBT + victims of violence

On the other hand, the city of Skopje has taken a series of initiatives aimed at improving the situation of the LGBT + population. The City of Skopje in 2019 has given up one of its business premises for the use of the "Committee" - a project of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (HCHR) to support LGBT + people in Skopje. Through a memorandum of cooperation between MKC and HCHR, the space in the multi-storey garage Beko is a place for meetings, trainings, but also a cultural program intended for these people. The city has signed a memorandum with the civic organization "Together Stronger" in 2019 to implement the Paris Declaration to end the HIV epidemic, thus undertaking international obligations to work on issues that most affect the health aspects of these communities. And lastly, the City of Skopje helps with finances and other resources of various initiatives that work in support of LGBTI people in Skopje, such as the sexual and reproductive health projects implemented through HERA, as well as a series of projects and cultural events funded through the cultural competition announced every year by the city<sup>74</sup>.

## ALTERNATIVES, SOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS

Based on the already mentioned challenges and findings about the situation of the LGBT + population, the support of LGBT + people should move in the direction of ensuring greater security in public spaces, support of the already established mechanisms by the organizations for protection of LGBT + victims of violence, as well as cooperation with police stations on the territory of the local self-government. ethical treatment of victims, avoidance of double victimization and effective and efficient protection against violence and prevention.

Above all, a systematic approach to this issue is needed, which in the long run will improve the situation of the LGBT + population at the local level. Thus, the most adequate solution following the example of European LGBT + friendly cities is the introduction of a local plan to improve the living conditions of the LGBT + population.

<sup>74</sup> The data were obtained through an in-depth interview with a representative of the City of Skopje done electronically in July 2021

The first part of the plan should include the sensitizing of employees to issues related to queer people and accepting the needs of the LGBTI community as relevant. Employees in the various sectors of local self-government in the City of Skopje and in the Skopje municipalities must participate in trainings for dealing with discrimination and hate speech, as well as strengthen the communication with the services of the City of Skopje (and the other municipalities on the territory of the Republic of Northern Macedonia).

Further, increased financial support is needed for services for victims of SORI-based violence. Such support would include financing the existing infrastructure of shelters and counselling premises of organizations working with marginalized groups. In this way, organizations will not spend energy on seeking funds for sustainability, but will focus on offering support to users of their services, while providing a permanent solution to the operation of shelter centers.

Also, it is important to promote equality, non-discrimination and acceptance of queer people at the local level and this can be done by conducting campaigns that promote equality and values that are inclusive of all groups, and provide greater support for queer cultural and artistic events (especially financial).

In terms of education, it is important that there are programs that talk about the existence of diversity and campaigns in schools that promote non-discrimination and non-violent behavior. For a concrete result in the schools, in addition to the programs, it is necessary to strengthen the cooperation with the professional services from the schools and the centers for social work that have the key role in noticing the violence and reacting to it. The quick reaction of the employees in the schools and the centers for social work will not allow the violence to continue, or to hide it from the parents who may be ashamed of their child's difference, or in cases when the child is a victim of domestic violence due to a presumed different sexual orientation or gender identity by the parents. It is important to note that only high schools on the territory of the City of Skopje are under its jurisdiction.

Additionally, the city of Skopje as the capital should be the agent of the changes in improving the position of the LGBT + population, whereby it can become a member of the network of rainbow cities (Rainbow City Network)<sup>75</sup> which is a network of over 30 cities that have encouraged and exchanged experiences of social inclusion.

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75 Më shumë informacion mund të gjeni në linkun e mëposhtëm- <https://www.rainbowcities.com/about-us/>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The realization of the above-mentioned alternative primarily requires political will and courage of decision makers at the local level. The conservative environment and the attitudes of the citizens towards the LGBT + population should also be taken into account. However, in order to introduce concrete policies and measures at the local level, it is necessary to make a broad consultation process with civil society organizations and organizations including LGBT +. After the consultative process, initiated by the Mayor of the City of Skopje, an action plan should be prepared with defined future steps towards the realization of alternative solutions at the local level as permanent mechanisms that will offer support, effective and efficient protection, spaces for development of queer culture at the local level, safe zones and finding an optimal model for the continuous and sustainable functioning of such local mechanisms, which will build a safe environment for LGBT + people in their local community.

## USED LITERATURE

### Laws

- Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, no. 258 of 30.10.2020)

### Publications and research

- Research on the experiences and knowledge for prevention and protection against discrimination of vulnerable groups of citizens, Tatiana Temelkoska Natasha Boskova, Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women, 2019
- Handbook for youth workers "Capacity building for working with LGBT youth", Subversive Front, 2017
- Political Culture, Identities and Civil Society, FOSM, 2017 (in manuscript)
- Analysis of the problems and needs of LGBTI people in the Republic of Macedonia in the field of social protection, legal services and police action. Helsinki Committee for
- Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia - LGBTI Support Center  
In-depth interview conducted with a representative of the City of Skopje electronically
- In-depth interview conducted with LGBT + person conducted electronically
- Two focus groups with LGBT + individuals and representatives of civil society organizations and associations.

### Websites and links

- <https://www.rainbowcities.com/about-us/>
- Carovska: Through a combined model of textbooks, to phased digitization and modernization of education | Government of the Republic of Northern Macedonia (vlada.mk)
- 27.5-Law on Protection from Discrimination.pdf (mtsp.gov.mk)
- LGBT\_broshura\_web.pdf (hera.org.mk)
- <http://lgbti.mk>

# STRAY DOGS

Progressing from superficial to  
sustainable solutions in the  
municipality of Prilep

*- Evgenija Markoska*



## SUMMARY

Stray dogs represent an increasing problem in urban communities and cities. The Municipality of Prilep, one of the larger cities in our country, is no exception. The municipality does not have data about the number of stray dogs at this time, and there is no structural solution for this problem. Polling conducted for purposes of this document shows that 92% of residence believe that the municipality of Prilep is facing an increasing number of stray animals, that number growing daily. Furthermore, 2/3 of the respondents were not aware of measures or activities undertaken by the municipal government. To address this problem in a durable way, the Municipality of Prilep should change its present approach because it proved unsuitable and insufficient. The present approach taken by the Municipality of Prilep is to shift the responsibility of dealing with stray dogs to the public utility company Komunalec, which I believe is unsuitable because this is not the primary activity of PUC Komunalec and thus it cannot invest its full capacities into addressing the problem.

This problem generates a series of consequences that are directly felt by the citizens and the local community overall. Foremost among these is the insecurity and fear of dog bite incidents and the possibility of disease transmission; uncontrolled breeding of such dogs; effects on the environment and public hygiene are also significant, as dogs can carry and deposit waste/garbage on the streets; last but not least, the lack of possibilities for humane treatment and increasingly frequent euthanizing of stray dogs in the absence of a structured approach.

In terms of possible solutions and alternatives, the most suitable structural approach to addressing this problem would be to create standalone service, i.e. a public utility company whose primary activity would be to care for animals, following the template of PUC Lajka from Skopje, for example. The benefits of introducing this type of public utility company are enormous: it would make it possible to regularly monitor the status and number of stray dogs on the local level through a unified public database of domestic pets; it could offer the possibility of requiring identification and registration of animals by their owners; more opportunities for treatment, sterilization, and castration of stray dogs; more opportunities for adopting dogs placed under care of the public utility company; offering veterinary services to dog owners. In addition, establishment of this type of center would also allow focus on educating the citizens, which is one of the key challenges and fundamental to solving this problem.

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE

Protecting and caring for animals is an issue that has been consistently present in our society, but has been growing in relevance over the past 10 years. Thus, animal rights are part of the democratic palette of rights, where a society must demonstrate its progress through its treatment of animals and their right to life, in accordance with the nature of various species. Stray dogs are a particular problem in this regard, i.e. dogs without owners roaming the city streets.

The issue of stray animals and availability of accurate statistical data about them is very complex ; there are no long-term modern policies addressing the issue of stray animals. In the absence of official data , 92% of citizens responding to the poll conducted for purposes of this document believe that the Municipality of Prilep is facing an increasing number of stray animals, and that the number is growing daily. On the other hand, there is no suitable dedicated service/authority on the territory of the municipality that could deal with this issue; of course, when we refer to a service or an authority, we mean an institution that would offer humane treatment to animals. The current approach taken by the Municipality of Prilep is to shift the responsibility of dealing with stray dogs to the public utility company Komunalec, whose primary domain of activity is not stray dogs. Also, despite efforts to the contrary, unsuitable facilities designated for these purposes also play a major role. This problem is an additional threat to the safety of citizens, they are affected by the disease transmission risk, aggressive behavior from animals, and significant environmental contamination, especially around waste bins/dumpsters.

Stray dogs have negative impacts the city environment and human health. They cause pollution and endanger safety. On top of that, stray dogs are becoming an increasing threat to human health; they can transmit and spread rabies, which is a lethal disease. Attempts at population control often endanger animal welfare through the tendency towards mass killing or use of inhumane methods of killing (poisoning, shooting, strangling etc.), cruel methods of catching and unsuitable facilities for accommodation and management, which is contrary to the Law on Protection and Welfare of animals .

At the European level, with the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, in particular Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the legal status of animals is regulated so that they are not seen as objects or mere living creatures – they are considered to be sentient beings. In this regard, the first important step in the European progress on animal rights is the European Convention for Protection of Pet Animals in 1987. The preamble contains several points identifying the need (or requirement, to be more accurate) to stipulate certain duties of humans towards animals: “Recognising that man has a moral obligation to respect all living creatures and bearing in mind that pet animals have a special relationship with man; Considering the importance of pet animals in contributing to the quality of life and their consequent value to society; Considering the difficulties arising from the enormous variety of animals which are kept by man; Considering the risks which are inherent in pet animal overpopulation for hygiene, health and safety of man and of other animals”. Later, a Declaration on the Protection of Animals was prepared along with the Maastricht Treaty, recognizing them as sentient beings.

Addressing the issue of stray animals requires a multi-sector approach and cooperation among institutions of the system, nongovernmental organizations, and local governments; it requires undertaking measures defined in the laws and conducting activities that will finally impose order and solve this decades-long problem. To address this problem in a durable way, the Municipality of Prilep should change its present approach because it proved unsuitable and insufficient.

## What is the local approach taken by the municipal authorities?

Article 25 paragraph (1) of the Law on Protection and Welfare of Animals, referring to unregistered dogs reads: „Municipalities, municipal authorities within the City of Skopje, and the City of Skopje shall have the authority to gather stray dogs and unregistered dogs, and temporarily accommodate them in suitable facilities - shelters. These facilities should provide basic protection to the animals against the elements and keep them in an enclosed space”. This is further expanded in paragraph (3), which reads: „The shelters shall ensure implementation of suitable measures and staff to provide efficient protection of the animals, regular feeding and watering, as well as medical treatment for the animals, if needed.”

The problem around this law appears in paragraph (5) which explains animal population control, where our law allows for euthanasia of animals. The euthanasia approach is a challenge in itself because euthanasia as a mechanism for dealing with the stray animal population has been applied for decades and failed to produce results. Non-governmental associations for protection of animals demand amendments to the Law on Protection and Welfare of Animals with explicit prohibition of animal euthanasia. Namely, the Law in its current form is self-contradictory, because if earlier paragraphs stipulate suitable facilities for provision of humane treatment, then how could euthanasia mentioned in paragraph (5) be an example of humane treatment? This dilemma and challenge is something that the national legislation should harmonize, so that local governments can follow and comply with it later.

On the other hand, aside from the authority to deal with stray dogs assigned to PUC Komunalec, the Municipality of Prilep has undertaken a number of other steps. By decision of the Council of the Municipality of Prilep, a Program for Addressing the Issue of Owner-associated and Stray Dogs on the Territory of the Municipality of Prilep 2019-2021 was adopted, based on a proposal from the Mayor of the Municipality of Prilep. This plan is not publicly available. The Municipality of Prilep has also adopted a project for improvement of municipal operations – grant for the Centers for development of planning regions (Pelagonija planning region) which envisages systematic solutions for the issue of stray dogs in the Pelagonija region, establishment of humane approaches to the welfare of stray dogs and promotion of cleaner and safer environment in the urban and rural areas of Pelagonija. The project entails development of a study at the Pelagonija region level, as well as creation of technical documentation for construction of a regional Center for stray dogs.

Nevertheless, polling shows that 2/3 of the residents of Prilep are not aware that the municipal authorities have undertaken any kind of measures for alleviating the problem. It was notable that this issue also attracted the interest of the relatively younger residents of the municipality; up to 70% of the poll respondents we're young people in the 19-29 age range, which indicates that the younger population wanted to see their municipality organized in a European and modern way. Another conclusion from the online poll was that these phenomena endanger the safety of citizens, as more than half of the respondents stated that they had been in a situation where they had been attacked by a stray animal, and that this situation also plays a role in polluting the environment.

The residents of Prilep also defined the causes of this problem. It was pointed out that the causes of the issue of street animals may be classified in several groups:

- Irresponsible ownership- This is primarily related to excessive uncontrolled breeding of pets, as well as abandonment of pets
- Lack of education about animal rights;
- Improper management of (public/private) shelters  
This mainly refers to insufficient staffing, or staff that do not pay sufficient attention to the animals or don't see them as living creatures, which has been a problem in the municipality for years.
- Lack of appropriate legal framework that would address and encompass all of them causes listed above

One positive example of a country that is good at dealing with this is Croatia, which, aside from having detailed legislation, is also excellent in dealing with the issue in practice. There are 41 stray animal shelters in the country that manage the problem. The law itself stipulates construction of shelters in all municipalities (at least one shelter, depending on the size of the municipality), where each shelter would accommodate at least 50 animals.

Operation of the shelters is funded by municipal budgets. Each shelter must provide appropriate veterinary care for the animals, tagging/"microchipping", provision of permanent sterilization. Also, unlike our law, the Croatian law also stipulates sterilization and tagging/"microchipping" of cats, not just dogs - which is one more difference between where we are and where Croatia is on this issue. On the other hand, aside from the Law on Animal Protection which stipulates "No-kill" shelters, there are other programs addressing this issue, such as: Program for Stray Dog Population Control in the Republic of Croatia; Rulebook on Requirements that must be met by animal shelters;

## ALTERNATIVES – SOLUTIONS

The local government and its readiness and political will to address the problem have a key role in addressing the issues listed above. As we saw in the text, there are a number of challenges in dealing with this problem: there is no accurate collection of records of stray dogs, the residents are not sufficiently informed about the work of the local government, there is no suitable institution to deal with stray dogs, and there are irresponsible owners who are also part of the problem.

The most appropriate solution for this problem would be to establish a separate municipal utility company dedicated to dealing with stray dogs. This solution is realistically feasible and there are no legal obstacles to its implementation. Such solutions are part of public policies in developed cities, they are sustainable, and contribute to more humane treatment of animals - stray dogs, in this case. Furthermore, establishing this type of entity would focus the city's approach on a structural solution to the problem, instead of the current approach through different public utility company.

The benefits of introducing this kind of company are enormous:

- Enabling regular monitoring of the status and number of stray dogs on the local level through a unified public database of domestic pets
- Possibility of requiring identification and registration of animals by their owners
- More opportunities for treatment, sterilization, and castration of stray dogs;
- More opportunities for adopting dogs placed in care of the public utility company
- Offering veterinary services to dog owners

In the absence of a legislative framework, the municipality should keep in mind several aspects when establishing this type of public utility company. Foremost among these are suitable premises with electric power supply and drinking water. The shelters must also have capacities for cleaning and appropriate disinfection of the equipment and room surfaces. In addition, the public utility company itself should introduce a No-Kill policy, following the example of developed European countries.

Aside from the above, introducing this type of center will make it possible to focus more on educating the citizens, which is one of the key challenges. Education is one of the long-term positive solutions for stray animal control, thus promoting educational campaigns aimed at promoting unhindered and constructive coexistence between humans and animals is of fundamental importance. To achieve these results, it will be necessary to include all citizens (children, young and older citizens) in addition to animal owners, with involvement of all relevant stakeholders (e.g. schools and media), as well as people who work with animals.

An addition to the proposed solution is deepening cooperation with citizens and local civic organizations. Thus, civic organizations may contribute on programs for reducing the numbers of stray animals by working together with associations, veterinary stations, citizens (e.g. voucher-based system, or mobile clinics that would serve multiple communities/localities etc). The associations should be legitimate recognized intermediaries in the process and promotion of accommodation of the animals. The associations should receive authorization to act in the capacity of community wardens and be granted such authority for a small amount of compensation that would be paid into the associations' accounts. (not a full-time engagement, but having the mandate and authority to report and respond to irregularities, and impose sanctions).

There is an interesting approach with involving citizens as "stray animal guardians". This approach was introduced in Belgrade, in our neighboring country of Serbia, where there already are such stray animal guardians<sup>76</sup>. Those people have been enrolled in a registry with their personal data, and they take responsibility for stray dogs that they have decided to care for. The guardians say that they are volunteers in a way, and that their engagement would help the city in treating this animal population. This practice is being carry out by the Public Utility Company Veterina – Belgrade.

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76 More information on the following link - <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/3219286/gradski-psi--lualice-kojih-niko-ne-treba-da-se-plasi.html>

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Establishment of a public utility company to deal with straight dogs is a realistically achievable short-term and relatively inexpensive solution. The first step that should be taken is to conduct an assessment and research the number of dogs in the city owned as pets, but also the number of stray dogs. This information will be required in order to plan the size of facilities needed to accommodate the stray dogs. The standard for this type of facilities requires 10m<sup>2</sup> per dog.

Next, a work program, systematization of staff positions and financial framework should be created for the public utility company to start operations. If we take the example with PUC Lajka from Skopje, we can see that establishing a company would require around 80000 EUR<sup>77</sup>, mostly donations from other public utility companies; eight people would be employed. If we take that into account, we might conclude that expenses for establishing a public utility company in Prilep would be lower, in view of the number of dogs and the territory on which this public utility company would operate. This plan should also contain clear performance indicators for the company.

The next step would be developing standard operating procedures. These procedures are the foundation for the company's activities and operations, and will enable professionalism in its approach. Related to the procedures is suitable training on working with animals for the staff, as well as procedural rules. This is a key aspect in the work of this type of company.

The listed recommendations for activities make up the basis for a long-term solution of the problem with stray dogs in the municipality of Prilep. Of course, the establishment of this type of entity should not rely only on the activities listed above. One thing that was mentioned is being of key importance is that this company should be visible and reach out to the citizens with information about its work. The company should also implement annual education campaigns and activities for raising the awareness among the population. Thirdly, cooperation with civic organizations and informal groups at the local levels is of key importance, as these groups possess information and experience in dealing with the problem and know how to contribute.

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77 Information from the web site of PUC Lajka - <https://lajka.com.mk/>

## LITERATURE

### LAWS

- Law on Protection and Welfare of Animals, (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, no. 149 dated 13.10.2014)
- Law on Animal Protection of the Republic of Croatia

### Analyses and publications

- Discussions conducted with two different focus groups with different age segments, participants up to 29 years age, and a focus group of older citizens
- Desk review of current legislative solutions of the Republic of North Macedonia
- Comparative analysis, Croatia as a positive example
- Online questionnaire with 60 respondents included
- Interview with a representative of the Municipality of Prilep

### Web pages

- Web page of PUC Lajka - <https://lajka.com.mk/>
- Web page of Radio Television Serbia - <https://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/125/drustvo/3219286/gradski-psi--lualice-kojih-niko-ne-treba-da-se-plasi.html>



# FUNCTIONAL LOCAL YOUTH COUNCIL IN GOSTIVAR

Proposed measures and policies

- *Fjolla Jakupi*



## SUMMARY

Politics has prominent place in society nowadays, while young people are societal drivers. Therefore, young people cannot refrain from political involvement.

This initiative rests on the objective to identify youth needs, requests and expectations from politics, and in particular from their municipality. Also, this initiative is aimed at reactivating the youth council in the municipality of Gostivar as it has been inactive for the past several years. The inactive youth council in the municipality of Gostivar is both topical and alarming problem for many years, that is, since 2016 when the current mayor won the local mayoral elections. After the local elections, the youth council has remained in the shadow, while young people are deprived of appropriate place where they can articulate their needs and make progress at the start of their career. This serious and prominent societal problem has become topic of discussion as young people are hopeful and willing to be heard and that steps will be taken to improve the situation and finally settle the problem by reactivating the youth council.

The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy provides opportunities for young people. It also stipulates the municipal obligations for improved youth participation by means of specific local measures and mechanisms that ensure youth representation and participation in the local policy creation and decision-making processes in the interest of young people. The local youth council will provide for sharing of responsibilities between the municipality and youth activists and established partnership aimed at improving the living conditions of young people on the territory of the municipality of Gostivar. In this context, representatives of the local youth councils are entitled to:

- Propose items on the agenda of the municipal council regarding matters that affect the young people;
- Initiate youth-related activities within the remit of the municipality;
- Initiate, partake and provide feedback for the local youth strategy process and other policies;
- Submit questions to the municipality of Gostivar about matters affecting the young people; and
- Perform other advisory and advocacy activities in compliance with the Law on Youth participation and Youth Policy;

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Gostivar is located in the western part of North Macedonia and stretches over the southern part of the Polog valley. The city of Gostivar is the center of the Gostivar municipality and covers an area of around 650 km<sup>2</sup>. The city is the administrative, political, business and cultural center for around eight thousand citizens, while almost 36.000 citizens live in the city<sup>78</sup>. Gostivar is a typical multicultural city, where citizens of all nationalities in North Macedonia live (Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma etc.). The municipality of Gostivar has taken several activities to support the young people in the past several years.

78 <https://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%93%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%80>

**In 2018, Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the organization Democracy Lab with the purpose of opening a Youth Centre in Gostivar**<sup>79</sup>. The project was implemented by Democracy Lab and it was financed by municipality of Gostivar and the American Embassy in Skopje. The Centre aims to extend the cooperation and trust among various communities from Gostivar, tackle prejudices and promote multi-ethnicity. The Centre will provide programs, training and courses to develop a new generation of active citizens who acknowledge their civic rights and obligations.

**At the start of 2020, municipality of Gostivar awarded ten scholarships for 10 young people talented in sports.** The municipal support was commended by parents and young sportsmen from Gostivar. It is the first time that young talented sportsmen were financially supported by the municipality of Gostivar.

**The implementation of the project CoWork**, financially supported by municipality of Gostivar, World Chikago from USA and the local company Lucky Media started in August 2020. CoWork – Gostivar/Youth Empowerment Platform is a coworking space created specially to support young entrepreneurs, as well as those working remotely for different companies. CoWork is a modern and innovative space that motivates young entrepreneurs to make a step forward in their professional career. This space can be used by individuals of various professions, such as lawyers, accountants, marketing managers, architects, photographers, video-editors, consultants as well as other professions dealing with digital trends.

Municipality of Gostivar support projects that improve the status of young people and prevent immigration. The procedure for opening a Youth resource center started in 2019. The Mayor of Gostivar and UNDP resident representative signed a Memorandum of cooperation for opening of a Youth resource center in Gostivar that provides services for the Polog region. The initiative is part of the project „Creating work opportunities for all“, implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of labor and social policy and the Employment Agency, supported by the Swiss Agency for cooperation and development (SDC).

To support increased youth representation in decision-making processes, municipality of Gostivar established a local youth council. However, until the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation, the council was not put in operation and did not give the expected results.

The implementation of the Law on Youth participation and Youth Policy opens new possibilities for young people<sup>80</sup>. The law stipulates several measures to improve youth participation with mechanisms at local level that ensure youth representation and participation in local public policy and decision-making processes. That is, according to the law, local youth councils, youth officer and youth center should be put in place at local level. This policy brief takes account of the findings deriving from young people's views on the local youth council. It also provides proposals and solutions for establishing and putting in operation the local youth council in Gostivar, as well as recommendations to implement other legal provisions of the Law on Youth participation and Youth Policy at local level.

79 <http://gostivari.gov.mk/mk/category/%d0%b2%d0%b5%d1%81%d1%82%d0%b8/>

80 Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy 2020, <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>

To that end, young people from Gostivar were interviewed and were video recorded (with their consent). The interviewer asked which are the drawbacks in the city and what is their opinion about the functioning of the youth council. Furthermore, during a 3-day seminar in the city, 21 young people from various age groups and ethnicities had the opportunity to be informed and educated by relevant trainers how to make progress in political life, what should a politician look like and what is leadership. They shared their observations and suggestions to develop a concrete proposal about restoring the functioning of the youth council.

On the question what they think about the situation of young people in Gostivar, as many as 80% of young people stated that young people are not supported in realization of their ideas. (Graph no. 1)



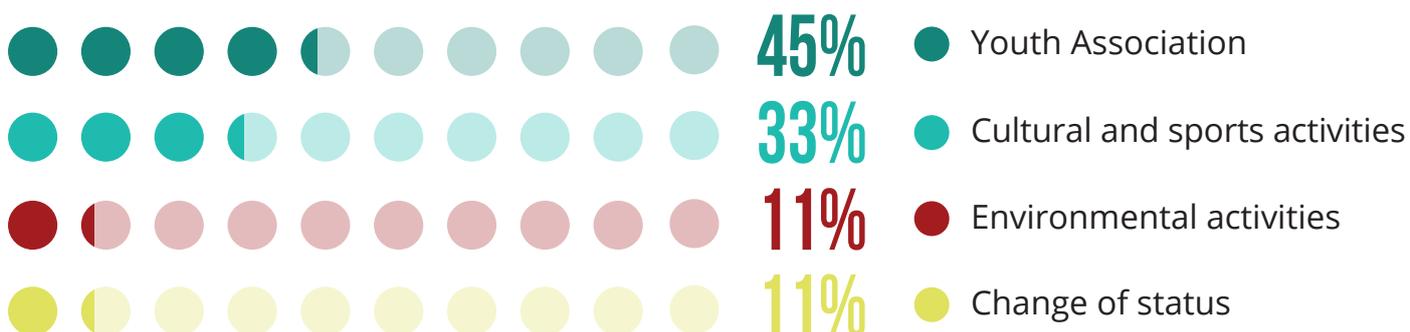
Almost all respondents generally agree that there is no functional Youth council in Gostivar. (Graph No. 2)

Is there a youth council in municipality of Gostivar?



Respondents shared many ideas what should be the focus of work of the youth council, and as many as 45% of the respondents believe that the mission of the council is to

Does the Municipality publicly, transparently and timely publish public calls?



## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Implemented activities clearly show that young people want to be involved in local policy creation and to actively participate in public life. They want to be heard and actively contribute to improving the living conditions for citizens of the municipality of Gostivar.

Therefore, support for youth participation is very important for development of effective youth policies and taking decisions together with institutions as it provides for better life for young people and strengthens the democratic capacities of the community.

### *Recommendations for local authorities:*

- 1 Start the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy  
For the first time, local youth organization and participation are regulated in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy.
- 2 Establishment of Local youth council (LYC)- The existence of local youth council will increase the participation of young people from the municipality and local communities. Successful functioning of the Local Youth Council needs to take account of the specific needs, requests and interests of young people in the local community. Therefore, the municipality needs to adjust the processes to the real needs of young people and the characteristics of the local community, and encourage youth participation irrespective of gender, ethnic background, political affiliation. The Local youth council, as municipal body, is composed of members who represent various forms of youth organization. The LYC has uneven number of members, not less than five and not more than one third of the members of the Council of the municipality of Gostivar. Municipality of Gostivar should take the following steps for establishment of Local youth council:
  - Statutory decision of the Council of municipality of Gostivar for change and/or amendment of the municipal Statute – Establishment of special municipal body: Local youth council. Decision can be taken pursuant to Article 16 of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy, as well as Article 36 of the Law on Local Self-Government, and in compliance with municipal statutes which stipulate that municipal councils may take a decision on establishment of special bodies that act as advisory municipal bodies.
  - The municipality publishes a Call for establishment of Initiative board (IB). This call is published pursuant to Article 17 of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy. Members of the IB can be youth organizations, organizations of young people, youth political branches, pupils' and students' organizations and other forms of youth assembly that operate on the territory of the municipality and are willing to partake in the establishment of the Council.
  - Call for membership in the constitutional local youth assembly –The Initiative Board, through the municipality, publishes a Public call for membership in the Local youth assembly. The Public call includes the method of application, required criteria and deadline for application.

- Constitutional session of the Local youth assembly. The Initiative board invites the elected delegates of the local youth assembly to take part in the constitutional session which is chaired by the IB together with a responsible person from the municipality. Three-member commission is elected and voted from among the members of the local youth assembly. It is composed of young people and is tasked with monitoring the overall process of electing the members of the Local youth council.
  - Call for election of members of the Local youth council. The first session of the Local youth assembly (after the constitutional session) is convened by the already elected chair of the Assembly. The rules of procedure, drafted and proposed by the commission, are adopted at the session and decision is taken to publish the Call for establishment of Local youth council of the municipality, based on the criteria specified in the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy.
  - Elected members of the Local youth council are verified by the Council of the municipality after the municipal youth assembly submits the decision for election of members. Once the election is verified, the verification commission of the Local youth assembly drafts a report/minutes with the list of elected members, which is then adopted by the Local youth assembly and submitted to the Council of the municipality to verify their mandates.
  - Following verification, president and deputy president of the Council are elected at the first meeting of the Local youth council and Rules of procedure are adopted together with the members. At the first working session, opened and chaired by the oldest elected member, members of the Local youth council elect the president and deputy president from among the members and adopt the rules of procedure.
- 3** Appointment of youth officer in municipality of Gostivar. Municipality of Gostivar to open a Youth office that will coordinate the municipal work on youth matters and will be the primary contact point for young people at local level. The municipality should appoint a youth officer for that purpose, who will be in charge of the Youth office and the coordination, implementation and monitoring of matters in interest of young people within the remit of the institution. Contact details of the youth officer should be made available on the website of the municipality of Gostivar.
  - 4** Organization of trainings for young people to be able to be actively involved in public policy creation and decision-making processes. To be able to get actively involved in public policy creation processes, young people need information and education on the following topics: mapping of all relevant stakeholders in the country that create and implement youth policies; evidence-based advocacy for youth policy before relevant stakeholders and decision-makers; leadership and motivation for engagement and contribution in the socio-economic development of the country through youth policy creation about ongoing matters that affect the young people; youth participation at local level; introduction to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies; identification of problems in the municipality and potential solutions through youth participation and engagement.
  - 5** Continued support for ongoing youth programs to ensure continuity and sustainability of already taken initiatives. That is, support for the work of the Youth resource center, co-working space for young entrepreneurs and people who work remotely, scholarships for young talented sportsmen.

- 6** Drafting the Youth Strategy of the municipality of Gostivar. Local Youth Strategy is a municipal strategic document in compliance with the National Youth Strategy. The Strategy entails the mid-term objectives and priorities for development of youth policies and promotion of youth interests at local level. It also specifies the organizational, financial and administrative measures for its implementation. The local strategy includes an Action plan with defined activities, dynamics, persons in charge of activities and budget projections, as well as conditions and indicators for evaluating the implementation of the Local youth strategy. The Local youth strategy is developed by the municipality in cooperation with the Local youth council, and is then adopted by the Council of the municipality for a period of five years. It is implemented with municipal budget funds.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies 2020, <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>
- Official website of the municipality of Gostivar [www.gostivari.gov.mk](http://www.gostivari.gov.mk)
- Guide for local youth councils [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/c/491135.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23D5\\_ds7wLn5p4o2p9UWltXtXj20q3YgHH4zrA3DOcZ16aG5JsQ\\_PhQjM](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/c/491135.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23D5_ds7wLn5p4o2p9UWltXtXj20q3YgHH4zrA3DOcZ16aG5JsQ_PhQjM)

# SOLUTIONS FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN STRUMICA

Proposed measures and policies

- *Hristijan Velkov*



## SUMMARY

There is a strong immigration trend among young people in the country and they are the most represented population among immigrants. Further, there is an alarming unemployment rate in the country among the most mobile part of the population – young people (less than 50% of unemployed citizens, who are able to work, are young people), that is, 2.5. times lower employment rate than the average in the country<sup>82</sup>. Also, according to certain authors, “recent surveys show that young people do not think they are involved in social-economic developments in the country which additionally increases their desire to leave the country”<sup>83</sup>. This reality is largely reflected at local level – in the city where the author lives and actively works - Strumica. Being cognizant of the everyday situation whereby young people, as well as people from the immediate and extended surrounding, continuously leave the country, it is exceptionally important for decision-makers to offer adequate solutions aimed at young people and their needs.

So far, any promises or proposed measures have originated mainly from the political parties who fail to make broad consultations. At the same time, such ideas have been implemented in practice to a small extent. In this context, key problems, expectations and disappointment of this category of our fellow citizens need to be identified based on quantitative and qualitative data and adequate estimation of the current situation in the life and productivity of young people in Strumica. Based on such findings, the study that helped the creation of the vision for this initiative – Solutions for young people – offers several key aspects that require urgent involvement of the local community. This study aims to adequately influence the creation of future decisions both by the local and central institutions in Republic of North Macedonia.

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Irrespective of the fact that Strumica is one of the most developed municipalities in the country, notably there is major lack of opportunities and infrastructure for young people. Political parties’ programs included promises for numerous youth projects.

*Promises from the electoral campaign of VMRO-DPMNE in Strumica*



Општина Струмица #СекогашРабота #НоваЕра

In 2017, the current authorities made promises about several crucial projects, that is, new secondary school dormitory, youth cultural center, cinema hall, scholarships for the best 50 students, renovation of the existing football pitches in the settlements where football is actively played, construction of two small playgrounds next to the municipal area with artificial grass, as well as construction of new multifunctional playgrounds. Four years later, most of the listed projects were not completed.

<sup>82</sup> Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia“ No. 113/07 and 136/11.

<sup>83</sup> See fva.gov.mk.

ЖИВОТ ВО СТРУМИЦА! ЗА СИТЕ

#### ПОВЕЌЕ ПАРИ ЗА ГРАЃАНИТЕ МОЖНОСТИ ЗА СИТЕ

- Ја активираме спиралата на поклучување на платите. Носиме директна поддршка за домашните фирми, пред сè за малите и средните претпријатја.
- Обезбедуваме повеќе пари за општините, а со тоа и повеќе можности и повеќе пари за секој граѓанин на локално ниво.
- Обезбедуваме еднакви услови и за странските инвеститори.
- Вложуваме во младите, отвораме центри за отпочнување и развој на бизнис.
- Ги здружуваме бизнисите, општината и граѓаните, со единствена цел – нови и подобро платени работни места.
- Ја вложуваме бизнис заедницата во дефинирање на приоритетите на општината и воведуваме бизнис форуми како работна активност за проактивно и следење на локалниот економски развој.
- Посветената и одговорна работа ги носи парите директно кај граѓаните.



*Pre-election promises in the Program of the SDSM candidate for mayor*

This is further related to the poor realization of activities and policies for youth that derive from the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, which can bring benefits for young people. Even though the municipality of Strumica established the Youth council and appointed a Youth officer, the work of these body remains invisible. The Municipality also failed to adopt the local youth strategy and establish the youth office and youth center.

Given the above, it is also relevant to point to the results of the public poll from June 2021 with over 700 respondents aged 18-29 on the territory of municipality of Strumica. The following conclusions can be drawn from the data presented in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5:

- **First**, 66% of the respondents think that the mayor is not successfully doing his work;
- **Second**, 55% of the respondents think that the municipal council does not engage in its work;
- **Third**, young people are dissatisfied with their involvement in decision-making processes and public policy creation.

## KEY PROBLEMS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT LOCAL LEVEL

Apart from clearly manifested dissatisfaction from the attitude of the local self-government towards their needs, young people in Strumica, who were respondents in the public poll, also stated their inclinations, desires and needs. According to the data in Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8, the following six relevant conclusions are drawn:

- **First**, Poor urbanization in the city, i.e. lack of quality streets and parking space is convincingly the most significant problem in Strumica. This is further supplemented with polluted air, cleaning practices and road infrastructure maintenance, lack of youth cultural center and poor sport infrastructure;
- **Second**, other listed significant problems are public cleanliness, air quality as well as sporting and cultural infrastructure;
- **Third**, individually, the respondents showed major disappointment about non-construction of cycling paths in Strumica, public transportation, as well as students' standard;
- **Fourth**, according to the respondents' opinion, they highly rated the renovation of schools and kindergartens as well as the design for new parks in the municipality;
- **Fifth**, major problem, again, are the corruptive practices in the work of the municipality, illegal landfill sites and education;
- **Sixth**, according to the respondents, the average score for the local self-government performances on a scale 1-5 is 2.5.

### *Implementation of the Law on Youth participation and Youth Policies*

The Law on Youth participation and Youth Policies (colloquial, Law on Youth) is a cross-party project that was voted by all parliamentary parties at the Assembly in January 2020. As a pioneer law for tackling youth issues, the law stipulates several aspects and tasks for the municipalities throughout the country.

One key objective of the Law is to enhance youth participation in youth policy creation, active outreach, promotion and protection of youth interests, as well as raising awareness about the importance of young people and their role in the society. In respect of representation, the Law aims to encourage a structural dialogue both at central and local level<sup>84</sup>.

Article 16 of the Law stipulates that the „municipalities, municipalities in the City of Skopje and the City of Skopje stipulate the establishment of local youth councils in their statutes. “In this context, local youth councils have advisory and advocacy role in the municipalities for youth issues and policies, are competent to propose items on the agenda of the municipal council and to initiate issues about youth in the realm of the municipal work.

The Youth council has been functioning for some time in the municipality of Strumica, however, as a quasi non-governmental organization. After the adoption of the Law, Strumica is one of the first municipalities in the country that established a representative youth body, based on the legal provisions. Even though no detailed information is available about its functioning, the initial step for youth participation in decision-making has been taken.

Article 20 of the Law on Youth participation and Youth Policies stipulates the adoption of local youth strategy. In this context, even though the municipality has adopted the 2015-2020 Youth strategy, still, there is no information after the adoption of the new law whether the local administration initiated the adoption of new Youth strategy.

Article 21 of the Law stipulates the establishment of a youth office that will coordinate the municipal work for the youth. Even though the deadline for establishment of such office expired in January 2021, there is no information whether this contact-point has been established in Strumica.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

Solutions to problems faced by young people need to be identified in direct contact with them.

Young people need to be asked about their situation and everyday problems in the society and this should be appropriately linked with possible solutions as well as with the decision-makers at local level.

This way they can underline and point to their main problems. Such analyses need to be complemented with proactive approach by decision-makers. Along with young people, decision-makers can define the key proposed youth policies within the defined priority areas for young people.

<sup>84</sup> Article 2, Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, Official Gazette of RNM, No. 10 from 16.1.2020.

Given the above, the proposed measures aimed at improving the overall situation of young people are presented below. Also, given that the author is a political party member, the proposed measures are divided according to the political election cycle in 2 phases:

- **First**, pre-election phase: period until the Day of elections (18 months to the Day of elections);
- **Second**, post-election phase<sup>85</sup>.

PRE-ELECTION PHASE		
ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE
Survey about young people's needs	Political representatives, municipal administration	Genuine information about problems of the youth
Workshop for creation of local program	Political parties, CSOs	Inclusion of young people in the process of creating the political offer
Defining priority youth related areas	Political representatives, municipal administration	Planned and systematic approach to young people-
Determination of specific projects for matters of biggest interest for the young people in Strumica: education, infrastructure, sport and recreation possibilities	Political representatives, municipal administration	Realization of measures that have real importance for young people
Appointment of young people on the election lists (at least 1 seat in the Council of the municipality)	Political parties and list submitters	Inclusion in the representative bodies at local level
Communicate the electoral program with solutions for young people directly to them	Young people on electoral lists, main decision-makers	Familiarize and inform the young people about measures foreseen for them
Direct call to young people to take part in campaigns and political movements	Political representatives, CSOs	Involvement of the young people in the political process

<sup>85</sup> Best practices in electoral security, a guide for democracy, human rights and governance programming, usaid.gov.

FAZA POSTZGJEDHORE		
AKTIVITETI	MBARTËS I AKTIVITETIT	QËLLIMI
Fulfillment of all legal requirements deriving from the Law on Youth (Youth office, Youth strategy, Youth center)	Political representatives, municipal administration from own resources and with assistance from partner organizations	Real solutions for matters foreseen in the laws related to young people
Undertake a process of broad consultations for the adoption of new Local youth strategy and Action plan for realization	Municipal administration in cooperation with youth representative bodies and CSOs	Systemic approach in defining the basic aspects of the municipal work for the young people
Definition of immediate, short-term, mid-term and long-term activities and targeting the priority areas	Municipal administration in cooperation with youth representative bodies and CSOs	Systemic treatment of priority areas that affect the young people
Enhanced activity of the Local youth council	Local youth council of Strumica, Council of the municipality of Strumica	Enhanced participation of young people in the elaboration, debates and adoption of decisions
Opening of the Youth office	Municipal administration	Creation of contact-point for communication between the young people and the municipality
Allocation of part of the municipal budget for youth activities	Municipal administration from its own budget (recommendation to allocate 0,1% of the budget)	Allocation of required funds for full realization of the measures
Platform for monitoring the realization of youth measures, policies and	Municipal administration in cooperation with youth representative bodies and CSOs	Real implementation, accountability and transparency in the work of the municipality
Regular measuring of citizen satisfaction (youth)	Political representatives, municipal administration with own budget resources	Accountability, pro-activity and responsiveness about the work of the municipality

## USED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A Guide to Political Party Development, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), 2008;
- Best practices in electoral security, a guide for democracy, human rights and governance programming, available at [usaid.gov](http://usaid.gov);
- Enhancing youth political participation throughout the electoral cycle, - a good practice guide, available at [undp.org](http://undp.org);
- How youth can be involved in municipal elections, available at [ceyc.ca](http://ceyc.ca);
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- 2018-2020 Program for economic reforms, Ministry of Finance, January 2018, available at [finance.gov.mk](http://finance.gov.mk);
- Youth employment in Republic of Macedonia – basic study and recommendations, available at [hepi.org.mk](http://hepi.org.mk);
- 2016 – 2025 National youth strategy of Republic of Macedonia;
- From youth for the youth: perspectives for the social challenges – Skopje, Institute for European policy, available at [epi.org.mk](http://epi.org.mk);
- Official website of the Municipality of Strumica, [strumica.gov.mk](http://strumica.gov.mk);
- SDSM Program for municipality of Strumica, local elections 2017;
- Youth strategy of the municipality of Strumica 2015-2020.

# ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

for Increased Economic Independence of Women in the Rural Areas of the Municipality of Kocani

- Ivana Maksimova



## SUMMARY

This document presents the analysis of the needs and priorities of women and girls from rural areas on the territory of the Municipality of Kocani.

Experiences and research so far show that most of the girls and women living in rural areas in the Republic of North Macedonia face a number of problems, ranging from the distance from the services they need for normal functioning, to economic dependence, limited opportunities for success and progress, to parts with complete isolation of women from social processes.

This document contains the primary information and interpretations obtained from the answers resulting from the online questionnaire-based survey aimed at identifying the needs and problems of women and girls living in the rural areas of the Municipality of Kocani and the results of the three focus groups conducted with girls and women living in the same environment.

The results show that there is a great economic dependence of women; even though they enter into subsidy agreements for a certain agricultural crop or livestock, they are not the ones who manage the funds, they are not familiar with the possibilities of joining cooperatives and applying for such possibilities, nor have they ever been part of any type of association of women in rural areas. Also, none of the women surveyed was familiar with the new package of measures which specifically covers the Municipality of Kocani, which they can use to apply with their ideas for small businesses.

All previous analyses of the available documents from the policies and strategies of the Municipality of Kocani regarding gender equality, agricultural development and utilization of IPARD measures indicate that there is no clear plan, nor a strategy for informing, or for encouraging young girls and women to get involved in the processes, change their economic situation and be active actors in society. That is the reason why we chose these two areas to be covered by the initiative, as we believe that they require a thorough analysis through involvement of the general public, which will help identify problems, possible solutions and priorities that the municipality will need to allocate funds for from the municipal budget, but also amend the existing gender equality strategies.

### PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

North Macedonia is an EU candidate country and is proud of its established equal opportunities' mechanisms aimed at achieving gender equality. Encouraged by the EU Common Agricultural Policy, Macedonia is setting its own rural development policy. This is particularly important as 45% of the country population lives in rural areas. When defining development priorities in the rural development policy, as well as in other policy areas (such as education, health, social protection and economy), integrating the gender perspective is indispensable as 49% of the rural population are women.

In accordance with Article 24 of the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development (no. 134/2007), rural areas are defined as a "geographical area" defined by the following criteria: small population or low population density; specific socio-economic characteristics". The criteria are defined in detail by a government decree, based on which a list of rural settlements has been published in the Official Gazette.

The cross-analysis of the list, the sites and the official statistics from the last census from 2002 lead to the conclusion that 45.2% of the total population on Macedonia (i.e. 915,665 inhabitants) live in rural areas. The economic participation of rural women is mostly limited to agricultural activities, and while their participation in the individual/family type of agricultural business is balanced with the participation of men, their participation in companies is lower than the one of men.

According to the census in agriculture, conducted in 2007, there is a total of 192,675 individual agricultural enterprises, which basically include family farms (for a detailed and complete definition, please refer to the Census Methodology (SSO, 2007). In total, 471,069 household members work on individual agricultural enterprises, and 202,325 of them are women, which means that the participation rate of women is almost 42.8%. Formal employment of women in agriculture, forestry and water economy is 20.3% of the total number of women employed in the Republic of North Macedonia. A large section of the Municipality of Kocani is part of the rural areas, where most of the population is engaged in agriculture. Besides Kocani, which is the geographical centre of the municipality, there are 27 other settlements (rural areas) in in the municipality of Kocani. About 80 percent of the settlements are in the hilly and mountainous part, and about 20 percent are flatland.

Rural women represent the female population living in rural areas. Indeed, rural women are the bearers of agriculture, and thus also of the economic stability of this whole region. Their state of economic instability is the reason why they do not have higher education and why they are constantly involved in agriculture without being active holders/owners of an agricultural farm, which is the very connection with state-level institutions that can truly help them change their situation. Women facing economic dependence and lack of education are almost unfamiliar with the political processes, and it is the very active participation in these processes that can improve their position in society, but also improve the situation of all women in their environment.

The Municipality of Kocani has prepared a gender responsive strategy for sustainable development of the Municipality of Kocani 2019 - 2023. The Strategic Plan for Gender Responsive Economic Development is a framework for action, which takes into account the available resources, obstacles and opportunities that lead to a specific approach and to the desired overall economic development. In this context, the Strategy of the Municipality of Kocani focuses on the sustainable development goals by considering the local context and needs, especially:

- Planning of local economic development by setting development and structural priorities, in order to ensure sustainable and balanced economic development and reduce social and economic disparities between different groups in the community;
- Conducting local economic policy and implementing measures and activities for finding the right conditions for improving the quality of life of the citizens of the municipality, with a special consideration of the needs of marginalized groups and women;
- Supporting entrepreneurial initiatives and development of small and medium enterprises at the local level, and development of the local community and network of institutions and agencies by promoting partnership and rational use of natural resources;
- Planning of measures and activities arising from the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in local life

As part of its strategic goal Support of small and medium enterprises, the Municipality of Kocani has planned the realization of the following actions:

- Attracting new investments, by providing benefits from the municipality,
- Business-related education (education that creates workers needed by the business),
- Promotion of the active employment and entrepreneurship measures of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia,
- Introduction of "Traders' Day",
- Support for female entrepreneurship,
- Support for social entrepreneurship,
- Support for young entrepreneurs.

In the Strategic Goal 2, agriculture is recognized in the municipality of Kocani as a lucrative branch that the citizens are engaged in and therefore implementation of following actions is planned:

- Incentives for young farmers and women farmers,
- Increased use of IPARD to support agriculture, especially by women,
- Encouraging organic rice production,
- Effective cooperation of the competent ministry with the farmers.

The economy is singled out as a priority area for intervention in the Municipality of Kocani, primarily due to its vital importance for the municipality. In addition, under the area of economy, the municipality has included all economic and service branches, except for tourism and agriculture which are separated as separate strategic areas.

The use of renewable energy sources, but also the support of the municipality for the development of social entrepreneurship among women are both recognized by the municipality as the greatest opportunity for development.

The Budget of the Municipality of Kocani for 2021 provides for Programme 10 Gender Equality, sub-program 46 Subsidies and transfers, item 464 Various transfers, with a total budget of 308,000.00 denars, compared to the previous year when a total budget of 240,000.00 denars was provided for this Programme.

The quarterly report on the execution of the Budget of the Municipality of Kocani for the period 01.01.2021 - 31.03.2021 does not foresee any financial resources for greater participation of rural girls and women in policy making in the Municipality of Kocani.

### ***Methodological approach***

The methodological approach in the research of this problem consisted of a survey conducted on a representative sample of 100 women and girls from different villages and covers the general female population of different ages, different social backgrounds and different ethnicities. An assessment of the local needs and problems of women and girls living in the rural areas of the Municipality of Kocani was done by designing and conducting an online questionnaire survey through the official Facebook page of the initiative "Чекор кон најдоброто" and the local women's Facebook groups, which contained structured questions related to 2 areas: agriculture, and involvement in social and political processes. A total of 21 girls and women, mostly unemployed, participated in the focus groups.

The analysis of the questions that are part of the online survey point to the need for economic empowerment of women. Women who live in the rural areas of the Municipality of Kocani are almost unaware of the open opportunities for financial support to agriculture.

When asked whether they have concluded contracts for agricultural production in their name, 100% of the respondents answered no.

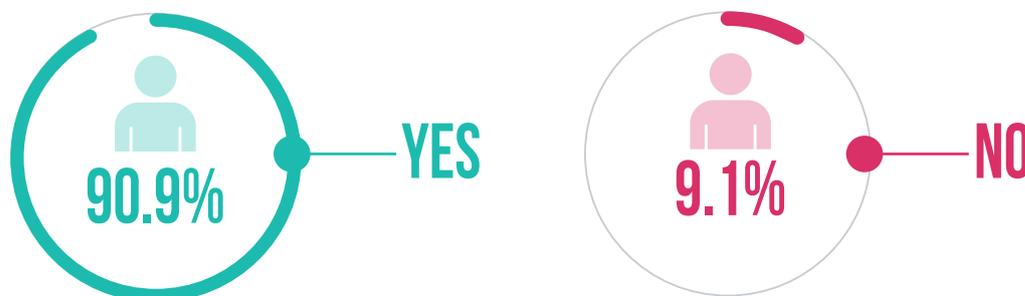
Those who were aware of the financial support do not feel encouraged to apply, because they do not know the conditions, and they do not have the property (land plot in their own name) that is necessary for registration as a woman - farmer.

Three quarters of the surveyed women were not familiar with the legal framework for registration and running an agricultural activity, i.e. 50% answered that they were not familiar at all, and 33% that they are very little familiar.

The answers obtained show the fact that women do not know the competencies of the municipality, the way in which they can be directly involved in them. They do not know how the municipal budget is brought, nor do they know the tools they can use to influence it.

However, at the same time they would like the municipality to have special programs to improve the situation of girls and women in the municipality of Kocani.

In your opinion, should the municipality create special programs within the Gender Equality Strategy to improve the situation of rural girls and women in the municipality of Kocani?



Only 1% of the women believe that they can make a difference if they are active in politics and in political parties.

The first perceived negative finding in the analysis of the situation of girls and women living in the rural areas of the Municipality of Kocani through the implementation of focus groups is their great economic dependence. Of all respondents, only one woman stated that she had property in her own name. This seriously affects their economic dependence, because women without property in their own name cannot apply for the opportunity woman - farmer, and thus have their pension and disability insurance paid. Many women only enter into subsidy agreements for a particular crop or livestock, but the very assets and the management of the transaction accounts are not in their hands. Everyone fits into the "family budget". One of the participants said: "I milk the sheep, shear them, make milk and cottage cheese, and yet not a single one of them is mine. I cannot point to a sheep that is mine. And I have no money at all."

None of the women knew what the Agency for Direct Payments in Agriculture was, although some of them have entered into subsidy agreements. Their ignorance is an indicator that they are powerless and that they do not manage the assets, revenues and contracts.

Women do not know of the opportunities for joining cooperatives and applying for those opportunities, nor have they ever been part of any kind of association of women in rural areas.

Only 3 of all the women present were familiar with the IPARD measures. None of them knew about the new package of measures that specifically covers the Municipality of Kocani, which they can also use to apply with their ideas for small businesses.

*I want to apply for the IPARD measures to open a bakery in my village, but my husband tells me - it is not that easy, you are not up to the mark-* as one of the participants said.

*The things with the documents are complicated, why not have one of us trained and then she could inform us all about everything-* one of the participants suggested.

These statements made by the respondents clearly show that there is a gap between the institutions of the system and the girls and women living in the rural areas.

The younger girls who participated in the focus groups stated that they stay informed about some of the measures in agriculture through the Internet, but it is not complete information that they can use to apply and start their own business.

Not coming across an “open door” and the unprofessional approach of the institutions to this category of citizens discourages them in their attempt to overcome their problem with the economic dependence, but also to fulfil their dreams.

None of the women ever got a bank loan in their own name, nor did they know the requirements for it.

One of the women has an idea about starting an innovative business, but she does not know who to turn to or how to apply.

Women are not familiar with the Gender Equality Strategy of the municipality and they do not think that they should know about it, as it would not change anything in their lives.

Half of the women cannot look for a job in the town, nor can they go there often because there are no regular bus lines so they could plan their time. None of the women present owned a vehicle in her own name and they all stated that they had to arrange with their husbands one day in advance if they wanted to come to the town. Fifteen women stated that they would like to be retrained and trained further to increase their employment opportunities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### Recommendations for improving the information and training of women from the rural areas in the municipality of Kocani:

- 1 Opening offices or creating a mobile team of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy that will visit women in rural areas.
- 2 Training women-leaders from rural areas who will provide women with the necessary information on applying for open programs, but who will also serve as a kind of a bridge between women and institutions.
- 3 Trainings for economic empowerment: representing the interests of women from rural areas, creative work, creating products with added value, etc.
- 4 Regular contact with the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men at the Council of the Municipality of Kocani.
- 5 Advocacy for changing the legislation for concluding contracts of purchasing companies with women farmers.
- 6 Creating measures for guaranteed purchase of agricultural products produced by women farmers.
- 7 Trainings for innovative solutions and application of innovative projects by women and girls living in rural areas, to motivate them to change their living conditions, but also the ways to promote and improve agriculture and its placement.

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# YOUTH AT HOME

Youth career center in Delcevo

- *Katerina Antovska*



## SUMMARY

This policy brief elaborates the problem of youth immigration not only in municipality of Delcevo, but the whole of Republic of North Macedonia. Republic of North Macedonia is faced with the so-called “white plague” with unstoppable and worrisome proportions, especially in the eastern part of the country. According to economists, young people are dominant category of immigrants which negatively impacts the overall labor market. It is a real exodus that every third educated person leaves the country, and eighty percent of students at technical faculties either think or plan to leave the country after graduation.

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the problem in the municipality of Delcevo and also to raise the awareness among policy creators, and especially youth policy creators, of how important is to retain the young people home. Policy creators need to be cognizant and design policies that would connect young people with the business sector, so that both sides are mutually supportive and act as strong partners in developing better economic and career climate in Delcevo. That would be conducive to increased municipal development and retaining the young population that is capable of work and is prerequisite for such development.

Establishment of youth career center is one possible solution to mitigate the problem. There, young people can match their aspirations and needs with the needs of the business sector. Career centers will strive to identify businessmen or entrepreneurs from the municipality who will assist the development of young labor force that will be recruited in their businesses in future, possibly by granting scholarships for university education, whereas young people will commit themselves to return to the municipality and apply their knowledge in companies that invested in their education.

Establishment of a career center is one concrete step to reduce the massive immigration of young people from Delcevo and raise awareness of the necessity for development of small municipalities by investing in young generations. It is the first time that some solution is planned for such long-lasting problem. Apart from providing insight in the staffing requirements of the existing industries, it can provide accurate plan for development or career guidance for young staff who want to stay in their native place.

### PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Republic of North Macedonia is faced with the chronic problem of unemployment and immigration, which is further aggravated with the corona crisis. The number of unemployed people since the beginning of January last year accounted for 104.409, and by the end of May (in just 5 months) increased for additional 16.800 people. Specifically, from March to May – when the economic crisis escalated due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the number of unemployed people increased for around 15.400 people.

Detailed analysis of official data shows increase in youth unemployment in all age categories during the analyzed period. Total of 25.886 unemployed people, aged 15-29 were registered in May by the Employment agency, and compared to January it shows an increase of additional 5.063 unemployed young people. World Bank published that until 2013, 600 thousand people left North Macedonia; according to the Statistical office of the European Union – Eurostat, around 230 thousand people left North Macedonia from 1998 to 2011 and biggest number were young people.

Only in five months, the number of unemployed people aged 15-19 increased for 146, in young people aged 20- 24 for 2.458, and number of unemployed people aged 24-29 increased for 2.459. That is, 21,4% of registered active job seekers in May were young people. With the growing health crisis, from the beginning of March to the beginning of July, the number of unemployed young people increased for additional 3.482. Apart from the Employment Agency, the State Statistical Office also measures the unemployment rate.

At the end of the first economic quarter, highest unemployment rate (proportion of unemployed and job seekers) of 34,9% was registered among young people aged 15-24, and at the same time, this age group was registered with the lowest employment rate of 20,8%. There were over 7.800 graduates from faculties and colleges in the country last year, according to the State Statistical Office. For them, employment is the first step towards financial and social independence, that opens the window of opportunities in the world of adults. Their quality of life, self-confidence, and practical decisions on housing and family planning depend on their employment.

According to official statistics, the number of unemployed young people was on the decrease from 2015 to the end of 2019. However, the trend of decline in youth unemployment stopped in 2019 when bigger number of unemployed people were registered annually compared to 2018. Why increase? Employment agency officials stated that this is mainly due to two reasons, both related to previous poor registration of youth unemployment. First, the introduction of Youth guarantee measure that mobilized young unemployed people for the first time to be registered as unemployed. Second, the changes to the Law on Social Protection from May 2019, when the Employment Agency of RNM started to register all unemployed members of a households that use guaranteed minimal assistance, including young people up to age of 29. According to a survey administered in the eastern part of the country with respondents of age up to 35, 77,3% of them gave affirmative answer that they want to leave the country. On the question why they want to leave the country, as many as 57 percent answered that they would like to earn for life, whereas only 15 percent stated that they would leave the country for tourism purposes. 80% of the respondents agree that other countries offer better opportunities for young people. Some leave the country for education, career, and others to survive. However, all who decided to leave the country, stated that they cannot imagine themselves living in this country. Survey data also show that the average income of 500-700 Euro is what immigrants would like to have as prerequisite for possible return to the native country.

There is a persistent trend of immigration among the young people in the Republic of North Macedonia and the state lacks statistics on immigration. There are thousands of young people who immigrated according to international organizations' surveys, meaning that Republic of North Macedonia loses the human potential and power needed for future development. Young people still dream about leaving the country. The state not only lacks strategy how to stop this trend, but has no statistics about the exact number of people who left the country. This opens the question on how this will be reflected in the long run, and how the deficit of qualified staff can be tackled. As many as 53 percent of the young people want to leave the country, as shown by Friedrich Ebert Foundation study. World Bank published that until 2013, 600 thousand people left North Macedonia; according to the Statistical office of the European Union – Eurostat, around 230 thousand people left North Macedonia from 1998 to 2011 and biggest number were young people.

Republic of North Macedonia does not have its own statistics about the citizens who immigrated. The last population census in the country was conducted back in 2002. The alarming situation with immigration of young and educated people is also identified in the document "2013-2020 National Strategy for Networking, Cooperation and Reducing the Brain Drain". Around thirty percent of people with university degrees live and work abroad.

The governmental model for dispersed studies in small cities was a concept that only increased the number of people who completed education and seek jobs. There is also increased dynamics of exporting labor force for various crafts which is increasingly needed in western countries. People from age categories of 15-24 and 25-40 are the ones who most frequently leave the country. Medical doctors, engineers, scientists and some other technical and social science professionals. Over 1780 doctors from the region left the country in the past five years, desiring professional development and higher income.

The new 2016-2025 National Youth Strategy of the Ministry of education and science identifies the key problems such as financial status and other quality of life aspects. Off the record, even those who get employment in the first year after the studies, think about immigration. To tackle the problem, one has to consider the experiences from other countries, but also to develop a strategy how to retain the staff, but also to ensure that those who left will return to the country.

### **The situation in the municipality of Delchevo**

To tackle the youth immigration problem, the needs both of young people and businesses sector in the municipality of Delchevo need to be identified, so that municipal authorities can be clear about the method of finding solutions for this burning issue. Therefore, workshop was held with 20 young participants and another workshop with representatives of the business sector in Delchevo, i.e., textile industry, catering industry, processing of artificial fertilizers and other agricultural materials, clothing shop owners and other retailers, restaurant owners, etc. Also, interviews were conducted with 20 young respondents who are still developing their professional orientation and career.

Over half of interviewed young people see their future outside of the country. In their opinion, people aged 30 are the ones who most frequently leave the country. Immigration happens for various reasons, and usually it is a mix of reasons. Young people never leave the country for just one, such as economic reason, but their decision is under impact of the political developments and the legal (un)certainly. Young participants in the workshop showed that they are cognizant and rational in their observations about the immigration problem.

Business sector representatives were also given opportunity to present their views about this problem. Their dissatisfaction with the training provided to young people is obvious and therefore they lack qualified staff that can be immediately recruited. On the other side, they are in need of labor force. In their opinion, young people are not willing to work but want to have money; effects and profit from one's own business can be seen only in 10 years and one cannot become a businessman overnight as it requires a lot of effort and work; leaving the country should not be their primary goal; there is work here and work is required; workers' productivity is very low; age structure of workers is 35-40 years and above.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Results from all previous surveys also point to the some indispensable factors to tackle this exodus, such as creating a favorable business climate, stimulating youth entrepreneurship and improving the social services. However, the transition from education to the labor market also plays an important role. Three types of services are especially relevant to support youth employment and development of required skills: career guidance, internship and training for employability skills.

There is a career center at the secondary school in municipality of Delcevo and some services are also provided by the Employment Agency. Notably, these endeavors do not produce the expected results. Establishment of a career center is one possible solution to tackle the problem. A municipal career center will provide: access to quality career services for young people to assist them in developing career skills; coordination and cooperation among relevant stakeholders to ensure that young people easily detect the available career guidance services; and access to relevant career information so that young people utilize the training opportunities for development of employability skills. A municipal career center would ensure better inclusion of young people from Delcevo in career counseling services (career information, career counselling and career education). The municipal career center will establish efficient coordination and cooperation mechanisms for various institutions dealing with career guidance. Such mechanisms are also relevant from the aspect of policy creation – ensure that policy fragmentation and duplication of efforts are avoided, and also from the aspect of young people – easy identification of available opportunities.

Several industry branches in Delcevo lack appropriate, educated and competent staff to ensure further industrial development, such as: textile industry, wood industry, agriculture and forestry, machinery and equipment industry, as well as food production and dairy industry. The career center will provide networking for business owners and young educated people in the municipality. It will offer a mutual support program and will design of plan and strategy for their cooperation. This will be backed up with labor market analysis and concrete efforts by all stakeholders to identify appropriate and sustainable solutions. Young people will be offered opportunities to receive financial support from entrepreneurs, such as scholarships, internship placements and employment after graduation in those companies where they will invest their knowledge for development of the respective sectors. The municipality will also take part in supporting both the young people and businesses and offer incentives such as additional scholarships and promotion of businesses that join the programs of the career center. Other measures are also required to tackle the youth immigration in the municipality of Delcevo, and those should be implemented in parallel with the initiative for opening of a municipal career center.

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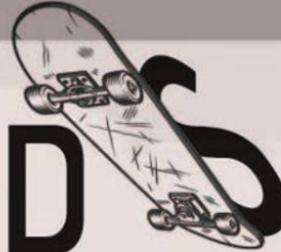
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# ADRENALIN PARK IN KUMANOVO

Proposed measures and policies

*- Nenad Bojkovski*



PEACE LOVE AND  SKATE

## SUMMARY

Municipality of Kumanovo is urban municipality lacking enough green areas and places for recreation. Young people spend most of their leisure time in coffee bars and in front of computers. Due to the current pandemics, young people are also isolated, become asocial and avoid spending time together and having fun. For these reasons, young people need to have their place where they can gather and do the things they like.

The purpose of this document is to improve the communication among young people and stimulate young people to spend more time together doing physical activities and adrenaline sports. This will help them grow in healthy, morale and social personalities who are aware of their status in the society and are ready to tackle problems based on sporting principles of competition and team work. This can be achieved through construction of a recreational facility (modern adrenaline park) with a skating park, cycling park and climbing wall.

The skating park will be also enriched with graffiti culture, and local artists will decorate the place with graffiti so that the park can also be a place for creativity, gatherings and fun for all young people, free of prejudices and divisions. This initiative aims to bring the life in Kumanovo to one higher level, and to provide a place that benefits all, not only young people but also parents as they can bring their small children for a walk, while elderly people can sit, read a newspaper and remind themselves of their youth and when they made friends free from prejudices. The intention is to develop an environment with cheerful people, place for fun and recreation, as well as place for sharing new ideas, making new friends, finding new love or place for all young people from Kumanovo. If young people do not have places for fun and gatherings in Kumanovo, they definitely have a lot of adrenaline which can be used in creative activities.

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Municipality of Kumanovo is the biggest municipality in Republic of North Macedonia. According to the last census of population from 2002, there were total of 105.484 citizens in Kumanovo, out of whom 25 771 were young people aged 15- 30 (according to the last census of population from 2002, State Statistical Office). The nationality structure of the population in the municipality of Kumanovo is the following: Macedonians 59.58%, Albanians 26.44%, Turks 0,28%, Roma 4,03%, Vlah 0,14%, Serbs 8,59%, Boshnjaks 0,02% and other 0,64%.

Given that local development depends on the ability of local people to mobilize resources and identify local problems, young people are also an invaluable resource as they develop skills, self-esteem, self-respect and leadership abilities through engagement and cooperation with adults and organizations. Their motivation for civic activities plays an important role in the development of the community. This is also the focus of many surveys and developmental programs. Youth workers and local authorities that are cognizant of all aspects can better understand how to utilize these powerful resources and stimulate local development in the long run. To be effective, youth participation must be embraced by institutions and young people should be also participating in the processes that affect their everyday life.

CSOs on the territory of Republic of North Macedonia have notably increased their involvement in policy creation and adoption of laws. Several documents provide the grounds for public participation in the process of enactment of laws, and special progress has been made with the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy. The Law stipulates measures for improved youth participation through mechanisms at local level that would ensure youth representation and participation in the processes of public policy creation and decision-making in the interest of young people. The law stipulates the establishment of local youth councils, appointment of youth officer and opening of youth centers. The implementation of the law was started and it is an ongoing process.

Municipality of Kumanovo has not adopted a new local youth strategy. The last Youth strategy of municipality of Kumanovo is for the period of 2014-2019 and stipulates specific steps for development of youth sector in the municipality to serve as platform for increased youth participation in decision-making processes. The Strategy identifies 6 strategic priorities, and projects that address youth problems, among others.

Having in mind that Kumanovo is a multiethnic city, special attention will be required on creating contents where young people can meet, spend time together and share their views and ideas. Best way to bring young people together, irrespective of their ethnic background, is through sporting and recreational activities and this will be helpful for building cohabitation, team work and fair play.

As part of the innovative initiative Skatelend-Kumanovo, implemented by Nenad Bojkovski in the framework of the "Support for Electoral Reforms" project, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), several activities were implemented from 16 to 23 July to scan the situation on the ground with regard to youth policy creation and implementation and the extent to which youth needs in Kumanovo are embraced. This was considered from the aspect of the priorities stated by survey respondents.

The analysis included 200 young people from the municipality of Kumanovo who took part in the survey by completing a survey questionnaire. 52 respondents completed the online questionnaire which was posted on the portal kumanovo news. Constituent part of the analysis are also the results from two focus group discussions with 20 participants from various age groups and professions (representatives from institutions, business sector, local youth NGOs). This policy brief was prepared based on the obtained results. The presented conclusions reflect the current situation, while the recommendations refer to the conditions for improved quality of life for young people from Kumanovo. The analysis, based on the survey, reflects the answers to previously stated survey questions:

- Extent of provided information and extent of existing communication between young people and institutions that develop youth policies at local level;
- Extent of developed strategic planning in institutions that create and implement youth policies;
- Level of interest for increased involvement of young people in policy creation;
- Quality of life of young people in municipality of Kumanovo, based on respondents' statements;
- Definition of one priority for the youth of Kumanovo;
- Message to the authorities.

According to the survey results, 65 % of the young respondents have never approached an institution for solution to a problem, while 35 % of the respondents who approached the institutions are mostly employed people (indicative of the fact that university and secondary school students are inactive).

Respondents who approached the institutions, usually addressed the mayor with a request for construction of cycling paths and cultural events, as well as approached the municipality about problems and needs such as “there is not enough space for young people to gather and do sports”, recreational park and place for gatherings in my settlement, skatepark, walking path along the river quay, request to the public enterprise for garbage collection, request for playground, outdoor space for promotion of young talents, walking paths along the river quay, problem with stray dogs and requests for opening of youth centers.

The term “youth policy” and the related processes is recognized only by 39 % of the respondents, meaning that as many as 61 % of the respondents do not know what is youth policy. With regard to youth participation, on the question “Have you ever been consulted by your municipality during the creation of Youth program, either through public discussion, debate or any other form of public participation”, only 17 respondents stated that they were contacted.

Even though small percentage of young people were contacted and involved in the public policy creation, the percentage of interested young people to take active part in policy creation is quite high, while 20 % have no interest. According to 42% of the respondents, quality of life for young people in Kumanovo is poor, for 40 % it is satisfactory and only 10 % stated that quality of life is very good, and 6% that it is excellent. Only 8% of the respondents think that young people are active in the community, 67 % think there is no youth activism, while 25 % have no information about youth activism and did not answer. One thing which is common for all respondents is that they single out the need for adrenaline park as priority for the young people in Kumanovo.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Several recommendations are drawn from the survey in terms of improving the youth participation as well as quality of life for young people in Kumanovo. Key recommendation to improve the quality of life for young people from Kumanovo is the construction of an adrenaline park.

Adrenaline parks have recently become very popular in developed and surrounding countries. In fact, these are well conceptualized grounds that offer fun and recreation through physical activity. Adrenaline parks offer wide range of activities as they can be used by people of various age and various physical fitness. Generally, they are designed as height range among trees or pillars, connected with ropes and cords and provide for several alternatives, such as rope polygon, height polygon, low polygon, zipline etc.

Adrenaline parks bring together the educational, developmental and recreational objectives. Apart from fun, most commonly referred results from use of adrenaline parks are: improved cooperation, good decision-making, increased self-esteem, taking risk, better connections, trust, increased self-respect, setting goals, better team work. All this is accomplished through physical activity.

Many adrenaline parks have been constructed throughout the region, that is, in residential settlements, in large urban areas and most often in touristic places to enhance the attractiveness of the tourism offer. Croatia is in the frontlines when it comes to adding value to the classical tourism offer, so we would mention the following adrenaline parks: in eco-village Zumberak (2006); in Konavele, Poljica (80m, 2013); Auto-camp Strashko, Novalja, etc. There is zipline in Dzurdzevica Tara and in Servudska suma in Montenegro.

From the Croatian examples, one can single out the adrenaline park Rizvan City located on Lika in the village of Rizvanusha in the national park Velebit.

Two adventure parks have been constructed so far in Macedonia: Park panorama Pehcevo and Sporting-adrenaline park in Karposh- Skopje.

The adventure park Panorama Pehcevo is 600 meters long, with 36 ramps, that is, 24 ramps only for adults and 12 for children. The Park consists of two parts: adrenaline path which is 360 meters long and requires good physical and mental fitness, aimed for adults; Zip-line, 240 meters long, both for adults and children which is part of the eco-system "Ezerce".

Sporting-adrenaline park in Karposh consists of climbing rock, adrenaline section, football pitches and sand volleyball, square, skating park and new urban equipment. Previously presented experiences can be taken into account for the design of the adrenaline park in Kumanovo.

In this context, the initial activities include:

- 1 Mapping the location of the adrenaline park;
- 2 Concept design for the adrenaline park project;
- 3 Preparation of an elaborated report for the adrenaline park;
- 4 Voluntary action to clean up the selected location for adrenaline park;
- 5 Providing the required funds and implementing procedure for selection of contractor;
- 6 Construction of adrenaline park.

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# WHO REPRESENTS YOUNG PEOPLE?

Proposed measures and policies  
to improve the situation of youth

- *Nikolla Cvetkoski*



## SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to raise the awareness and level of information about issues related to challenges that young people face. Surveys conducted within the project are indicative of young people's hopelessness in the society and therefore they refuse to take part in societal activities, whereas those who have already taken part in civic and political initiatives later withdraw.

### PROJECT CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Young population in the country, and especially in the Skopje municipality of Centar has insignificant impact on the society. This group of fellow citizens is an exceptionally inactive social group of voters with pronounced feeling of repulsiveness to take part in ongoing political processes at local level. This reality has the following effects:

- **First**, youth are insufficiently represented in local institutions;
- **Second**, youth insufficiently participate in ongoing political and societal processes at local level;
- **Third**, there is pronounced lack of information and ignorance about local political dynamics and the challenges of the local community.

The above stated is supported by three groups of arguments:

- **First**, out of total of 23 councilors in the Council of the Municipality of Centar, only one is aged below 29;<sup>86</sup>
- **Second**, similarly, out of 120 MPs in the Assembly of North Macedonia, only 1 MP is aged below 29;<sup>87</sup>
- **Third**, the term "youth policies" was not used in our legal system for 19 years<sup>88</sup>.

It does not seem sound for a liberal and democratic system, such as the Macedonian system, that young people, who bring new ideas and are ambassadors of free-thinking and progressiveness, refuse their participation in the political life, such as taking part in the electoral process as minimum. Politically passive youth can never be a positive societal characteristic. Apathy is recognized not only in insufficient your participation and organization, but also in their participation in decision-making at local level. Young people believe it is futile to take any such steps, as they are not given adequate opportunities to participate in the process and therefore conscientiously decide to remain on the margins. As young and socially active person, I believe that this should be changed immediately. I do believe that the promotion of adequate youth participation and social representation will impact at least one aspect in this area, that is, create new situation where this negative image will change.

### Project methodology

Encouraging the youth participation in the political processes at local level relies on the basic assumption that young people need to be heard. This is the main objective of this initiative.

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86 See [centar.gov.mk/?page\\_id=4992](https://centar.gov.mk/?page_id=4992), July 2021.

87 See [sobranie.mk/segashen-sostav-2020-2024.nspix](https://sobranie.mk/segashen-sostav-2020-2024.nspix), July 2021.

88 See <https://bit.ly/2PA80LU>, July 2021.

Given the above, the following activities were taken for attainment of this objective:

- **First**, design of comparative analysis of the legislation;
- **Second**, design of survey questionnaire and conducting a public poll;
- **Third**, organization of a thematic workshop with participation of 20 young people.

The Comparative analysis of the legislation provided a detailed and comprehensive overview of all regulations on youth participation and youth policies, that is:

- Law on Youth Policies and Youth Participation;
- 2021 Program for education and youth participation
- 2015 – 2020 National Youth Strategy.

The analysis also provided detailed overview of the remit as well as the activities of the following entities:

- Youth office in the municipality of Centar;
- Local youth council;
- Youth center, as well as
- Youth officer.

Finally, the document ends with a comparative analysis using the example of Republic of Croatia, that was selected as reference country due to the shared past as well as common European future. The aim is to make positive impact, that is, apply the experiences to the Macedonian system from this very important country for us.

The main conclusion derived from the comparative analysis of the legislation is that the Law on Youth is implemented insignificantly which drastically reduces the opportunities for better youth organization, i.e. active involvement of young people in societal and political processes in the country.

*The survey questionnaire*, administered electronically with 55 respondents aged 18-29, from 7 to 16 June 2021, on the territory of the municipality of Centar, clearly reflects the impression that youth participation in local political and societal processes is poor. Specifically, this conclusion can be supported by the following eight facts:

- Young men show tendency for delayed (postponed) inclusion in societal and political processes at local level;
- Young women show tendencies for more pronounced refraining from political and social activism at local level, compared to men;
- Youth membership in political and social organizations is proportional to their knowledge about local political and social processes. Namely, increased familiarity implies increased engagement. And vice versa!;
- Formal education of young people is decisive for their inclusion in political and social processes at local level. That is, higher education implies more pronounced inclination to get involved and vice versa, lower education is an indicator of lower participation in political and social processes at local level by young people;
- Over half of the young people give legitimacy to NGOs rather than to political parties, which is indicative of the low trust in political parties;
- Also, data show that young people think pragmatically, that is, their attention and commitment are focused on students' organizations, as associations that deal with most burning youth challenges, or their studies and education;

- Lowest number of responses is that none of the organizations represent the young people and given that at least 1/8 of the respondents have given this answer, one can draw a conclusion that most of the young people in municipality of Centar feel not represented;
- Major motivation for young people to vote would be some new/more contemporary political candidates or political options that offer a different discourse about the governance in the state.

### **Mapping the most burning youth challenges**

Surveys undertaken within the project identified the following:

- **First**, unemployment;
- **Second**, education;
- **Third**, immigration;
- **Fourth**, political parties, as well as
- **Fifth**, political-societal apathy as most burning youth challenges.

Even though political parties were not included in the choices for answer, and respondents were given a free choice for answers, respondent gave a straightforward answer that political parties are the main youth challenge in the society that is simultaneously linked to all other challenges.

In terms of unemployment, surveys have shown that this phenomenon is in direct correlation with the problem of so-called “party employment”, as well as nepotism, corruption and appointment of inadequate staff at leading positions.

In terms of education, young people stated that the problem lies in the politics as it fails to enable more practical teaching, shows lack of care for the psychological health of students and imposes the narrow party interests in the educational institutions.

In terms of immigration, data show that young people mainly indicate the politicization of segments of the society as well as the low living and economic standard as reasons for increased process of immigration in the country.

In the surveys, political parties were indicated as the main youth challenge with direct interference in many social segments. This refers to the main youth challenges, that is: promotion on the workplace, as well as discrimination in employment based on membership, i.e. non-membership in a political party.

Last but not least, especially impressive are data according to which young people recognize and identify their political-social apathy in most of their answers, which was in fact the main subject of the analysis. In their opinion, this apathy exists due to the feeling of hopelessness that any youth engagement will not bring results. Finally, the effect is that young people are further demotivated to take part in political and social processes at local level and there is a worrying level of distrust in state institutions.

### **Youth perception about adequate solutions**

The youth perception about adequate solutions can be ranked as follows:

- **First**, higher social awareness;
- **Second**, meritocracy ;<sup>89</sup>
- **Third**, involvement in state institutions;
- **Fourth**, more cultural programs, as well as
- **Fifth**, leaving the country.

The youth perception about finding adequate solutions largely entails increased level of awareness about politics and processes at state level. Respondents also stated meritocracy as solution for unemployment, as well as increased opportunities for success as opposed to party employment, connections and nepotism.

Young respondents have the following perception about their engagement with state institutions:

- Need for increased interest of state institutions for young citizens;
- Increased and more direct access of young people to state institutions;
- Better information for young people about youth measures and opportunities;
- More adequate institutional mapping of the needs of young people;
- Better perspectives for taking strategic, sustainable and coordinated approach by all stakeholders;
- Increased employment opportunities for best students after completed education, as well as
- Further lowering of the age limit for retirement so that young people can replace the retired staff.

Given the above, it is a worrisome fact that significant number of young people who participated in the surveys think that immigration is the only best solutions for the challenges they face. They also demonstrate a pronounced skepticism about the existence of possibilities that the situation will soon improve.

## ALTERNATIVES

The following recommendations can derive from everything stated above.

- 1 Increased involvement of young people in the municipal council sessions especially for discussions on topics that affect the life of young people. In this context, organization of public campaigns to better inform the young people about measures, policies, and institutional possibilities, and to ensure increased accessibility and proper utilization;
- 2 Efforts on the part of the local and central authorities to raise the social awareness of citizens and inform them about their personal responsibilities and opportunities to improve the common societal circumstances;

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<sup>89</sup> Meritocracy is a system of governance or administration (such as business administration) where obligations are assigned to individuals based on merit, that is, based on their intelligence, ability and education, as shown by evaluations and surveys. Meritocracy is most commonly defined as conceptualized merit, based on tested competencies and abilities which are usually determined by IQ test or standardized tests. (See Levinson, David, Sadovnik, Ian R., Education and sociology: an encyclopedia, Taylor & Francis, 2002, стр. 436).

- 3 More direct networking of the institutions regarding official matters of same or similar nature, without creating need for additional institutional intermediaries;
- 4 Establishment of appropriate electoral and other mechanisms to eliminate or minimize the party-political influence in the election of youth representatives in the university organizations;
- 5 Increasing the number and quality of analyses related to youth challenges and perceptions so as to further improve the status of young people in the country;
- 6 Exemption from payment of tuition for students who will commit not to leave the country for ten years after completion of studies, as an instrument to prevent immigration.

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# CLEAN RIVERS FOR BETTER HEALTH

Proposed measures and policies

*- Rijad Fetaji*



## SUMMARY

Clean water is of vital importance for our health in economy. Manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, recreation, power generation, and other sectors of the economy need clean water to function and develop. However, conserving our environment has become one of the most sensitive challenges for many communities in the Republic of North Macedonia, which happens mainly because of non-compliance with environmental protection laws, low level of awareness among citizens about consequences from environmental pollution on human health and agriculture, as well as deficiencies in the functioning of public utility enterprises when it comes to pollution prevention and removal.

Although depositing waste in “nature” (away from human settlements) and in rivers risk spreading disease among residents and serious harm to farm produce irrigated from the river's water, such practices continue as the commitments from public institutions seem insufficient and lacking in continuity. Furthermore, this problem should be taken much more seriously by local authorities and communities, because higher concentrations of waste in the river's streambed create accumulation points which increase the flood risk in case of torrential rain - there have been such occurrences in the past in our country and neighboring countries, mainly because of geographical features and natural conditions.

On the other hand, looking at another long-term dimension, waste deposited in the river has the strongest potential to harm the environment, fertile soil and farm produce. Soil contamination is problem number one caused by improper waste handling and disposal. Some landfills end up releasing dangerous chemicals that penetrate into the soil. One such example is the case with plastic bottles. When they eventually decompose, they release a carcinogenic compound that has a direct impact on our health. Soil contamination not only affects plant growth - it is also unhealthy for humans and animals did use those plants as food.

Residents living near these dump sites are exposed to higher risks. Exposure to improperly treated waste may cause various infections and long-term health problems in humans. Measures for removing waste from the river carried out by local authorities and the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning were not enough to raise awareness among the residents to stop this from happening again. Besides, non-punishment of polluters and the failure to find long-term solutions sets the stage for discussions of other alternatives that might prove more efficient.

In this dimension, based on the analysis, we will offer short-term and long-term solutions that we believe will provide positive encouragement for improvements on these issues. Here, we are mainly talking about finding ways for durable and professional education of the residents about the multidimensional risks occurring as a result of the contamination of the streambed and harm to farm produce. We will also raise the issue of reexamining sanctions against violators and polluters, and finding other more efficient ways, such as applying community service orders/sanctions that might contributed to reducing the number of violators and polluters.

The data that will be presented in this document, mainly collected and analyzed during the implementation of the “Clean Rivers for Better Health” project, will serve to address current public policies in the treatment and prevention of these deviant phenomena that are hazardous to the health and economy of our country. Analysis of the data will also provide recommendations for improving and creating new public policies for river protection and waste management. In view of the vital role of water and clean environment in all aspects of our lives, a more integrated approach to these policies will help protect and conserve health, as well as the country that we live in.

## **THE PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE**

The streambed of Kumanovka river, which has segments going through the Lipkovo community, is overflowing with debris - which can be a hazard for the surrounding areas in times of intense precipitation. The accumulation of soil, gravel, plastic packaging, and other types of waste can be seen everywhere. This happens because careless citizens throw out their household waste, unaware of the consequences that might affect their property and their health in the future. Furthermore, aside from residents living in or around this community, it is not unusual for various private companies to deposit their waste into the river (construction materials, various chemicals etc.), which threatens the free flow of water, as well as the environment.

Another problem that is not talked about much are the short-term and long-term impacts of depositing waste into the streambed of Kumanovka river on farm produce. As most of the farmed land in the Lipkovo community is irrigated with water from Kumanovka river, the chemicals resulting from waste deposited in the river might have a direct impact on the health of the people who consume farm produce. The same could happen with the livestock watered from the same river.

Field monitoring showed that this village’s river is still polluted and continues to be degraded due to the impact of the human factor. This was documented by numerous photographs that show the irresponsibility of the residents when it comes to uncontrolled waste disposal.

It is also worth mentioning that there is more intensive pollution of the river around the inhabited areas, where uncontrolled waste disposal by residents is going on - especially organic waste (food waste). It is clear that the residents lack awareness about clean rivers and the dangers of river pollution, because the water from this river is used to irrigate numerous plantations in the flatlands of the village, where river pollution will have an impact on the quality of farm produce.

In addition to the site visits, we also interviewed some of the villagers who told us that the public utility company “Pisha” is in charge of waste collection in our village at this time, but it collects waste only from those houses that pay the waste collection bills. In those conversations we received information that only a few of the houses have entered into waste collection contracts, and that many of the houses around the rivers have no contracts with the company.

In view of that, we can say that the pollution of the village river mainly comes from the houses situated close to the river and the houses that have not entered into waste collection contracts with the public utility company.

This is a very serious issue that should be addressed by local authorities in order to find a long-term solution for the residents of the communities mentioned above, especially those households that have not entered into waste collection contracts with the public utility company.

On the other hand, discharge of wastewater into the village river happens because the village does not have a sewer network. Wastewater is a significant risk to our health for many reasons, as it causes many infectious diseases to spread. Human and animal excrement infected with various pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, or other parasitic organisms contain high numbers of such organisms or their eggs/larvae. If the drinking water, food, or pools get contaminated, the pathogenic microorganisms can be a source of infection for others. Unfortunately, our region still does not have a functional treatment station.

As part of the questionnaire and analysis of results derived using a standard instrument for discovery of factors, motives, and causes of contamination of the rivers in Hotle village in the city of Kumanovo, it was found that:

- River contamination is a result of lack of waste containers/dumpsters,
- Treating the river as if it were dispensable,
- Insufficient concern by the local authorities about the river, environment, and the residents' health.
- Insufficient concern by the company with respect to cleaning and waste containers around the river,
- Lack of interest in nature and health among the villagers themselves.

Assessing the relevant factors that were previously integrated into the indicators of the measurement instrument (questionnaire) to test their presence, the respondents revealed what they would do to change the present situation of river pollution, where one important factor are sanctions for those who pollute the river, maintenance of the streambed undertaken by the municipal enterprise, education for the residents on maintaining the river, as well as placing waste bins around the river and in the village, and creating sports activities around the river.

## **ALTERNATIVES - SOLUTIONS**

Based on the data presented above, it is clear that several activities must be considered in parallel to reach a solution for the given problem. That is why, in addition to cleaning the streambed of the river in Lipkovo (which will include cleaning up those spots that have become obstructions to the flow in the streambed, as well as areas along the river being abused as illegal dumping sites) we also plan to sensitize citizens about the need to conserve the environment, risks associated with pollution and depositing of waste in the streambed - such as flooding, contamination of farm produce or poisoning the livestock, as well as the health of the residents of Lipkovo and more distant communities. Educating all generations is of key importance for raising awareness about a clean and healthy environment.

To achieve this, appropriate measurements and analyses must first be undertaken by hygiene experts who will analyze the water and types of waste, and then explain the consequences of such waste dumping practices on the health of people and livestock through interaction with the citizens, while presenting findings from the analyses. This will make their presentations more convincing to the residents by directly showing the health consequences for those same residents, with recommendations aimed at raising awareness about Environmental Protection and informing the local authorities about potential polluters.

Health education is a general measure for health protection and promotion. This education should be carried out continuously, as a preventive measure. The main purpose of health education is to educate individuals or groups to value health and be ready to take responsibility for protecting their own health and the help of others in the community, making reasonable efforts towards that goal. The aim is to elevate each individual's level of responsibility for her/his health, the health of the family, and society at large. The goal of health education activities is to have the population accept and practice healthy living principles, reasonable and timely application of health protection measures, and make individual and collective contributions to improving their health and environmental hygiene.

Health education should be an active process of learning and training individuals and groups to use health knowledge to build proper attitudes towards healthy living and taking active participation in protecting people's health and the environment. Health education aims to inform and motivate individuals or populations to look after their health and avoid risk factors that could lead to disease. Modern definitions of health protection leads health professionals to educate in all situations and in social life, not only at the job or while on duty. Our health legislation requires all health facilities and health professionals to work on health education and integrate it into their everyday work. This means that every activity in the health protection sector should incorporate a health-education aspect. Health education is conducted in all stages and forms of epidemiological work.

From the viewpoint of violators and polluters, local authorities should consider changing the legal provisions and think about using the sanction of community service, aside from identifying perpetrators and imposing conventional sanctions. In such an arrangement, the convict would be sentenced to community service - doing work in the public interest without compensation, such as collecting waste along the river where waste gets accumulated. It is believed that applying such sanctions (community service) will win the favor of the community by removing waste from the streambed of the river on one hand, and on the other hand these work activities will also benefit the person serving the sentence, where the goals are particularly oriented towards re-education, creating suitable work habits and vocational training.

According to research conducted by the Ministry of Justice of the United Kingdom, comparisons of similar perpetrators and similar offenses show that community service sentences are 8.3% more efficient in reducing recidivism rates, compared to other types of sanctions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Based on the presented data, analyses, and field questionnaires with residents, it turns out that the steps that local authorities should undertake are the following:

- 1 Sanctions for individuals who pollute the river;
- 2 The public utility enterprise should be maintaining the river's streambed ;
- 3 Education/training for the residents on how to maintain the river;
- 4 Placement of waste bins/dumpsters;
- 5 Creating sports activities around the river.

To achieve the desired results, the relevant institutions (local community, public utility enterprise, municipal government, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, as well as medical authorities) should coordinate as soon as practicable and analyze the findings and collected data, submit a plan for continuous cleaning, plan education for the residents in parallel, and review the possibility of using community service that might result in a mechanism for reducing the number of violators and polluters. This will activate numerous institutions and involved many residents, there will be sensitization about this issue, discussion of possible solutions and proper orientation towards eliminating river pollution by the residents.

The residents of Lipkovo will derive the greatest benefit from the implementation of this initiative, because I believe that this project will achieve its goal of cleaning up the streambed of the river in Lipkovo, and will contribute to maintaining cleanliness, educating the residents about the hazards of waste dumping for their properties and their

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# MODERN TIMES, OLD PROBLEMS

Inadequate road infrastructure  
Berovic Quarry- Patrishka Reka  
village

*- Sinan Vejselovski*



**PATISHKA REKA**  
"Модерни времиња, стари проблеми"

## SUMMARY

The issue of interest in this policy brief is the lack of appropriate road infrastructure between Berovic Quarry and Patishka Reka in the Municipality of Sopishte. Although there has been at least one prior initiative for rehabilitation of the road, it was incomplete and covered a very short segment of the road; there has never been a comprehensive study and proposal for a sustainable solution. According to the preliminary estimate of required funding, 180,329,075.00 denars (almost 3 million EUR) would be needed for reconstruction of the road from Berovic Quarry to Patishka Reka in the Municipality of Sopishte. This document maps three mechanisms for funding municipal infrastructure projects that might be of interest for the Municipality of Sopishte: the state program for financial support of rural development, the IPARD program within the framework of European Union pre-accession assistance, and the “Local Roads Connectivity” project of the World Bank.

## METHODOLOGY

Different data collection instruments were used for this policy brief:

- **Estimate of the financial investment required for road renovation**, including field surveys/measurements.
- **Mapping of financial instruments** available to local authorities, aimed at sustainable funding of projects of this scale (loans, grants, self-funding etc.). As part of the mapping, meetings were held with representatives of the following institutions:
  - Deputy Director of the Agency for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Remzi Abdulai, and the former Deputy Director of the Agency (now Deputy Director of the Public Revenue Office) Mr. Abdul Selam Selami;
  - Representative of the Office of the Minister of Transport and Communications Blagoj Bocvarski;
  - Representative of EVN Macedonia KEC Skopje Aerodrom.
- **Meeting with the Mayor of the Municipality of Sopishte** Mr. Stefche Trkovski, where the concept was presented and possibilities for implementation of this intervention were discussed.
- **Conducted interviews/focus groups with residents of the villages Patishka Reka and Drazhilovo**, to study the need and justification for this kind of intervention, as well as preferred funding/financing modalities.

## TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND WIDENING THE BEROVIC QUARRY – PATISHKA REKA SECTION

A “Study for an Innovative Initiative for Reconstruction and Widening of Municipal Road from Regional Road Junction R1106 (Skopje – Makedonski Brod) to the Village of Patishka Reka, Section Berovic Quarry – Patishka Reka” was undertaken for purposes of this document. The road is local in nature and is located in the Municipality of Sopishte, with total length of 16.0 km. The road segment targeted by this initiative is 14.7 km long, from the quarry of Berovic company to the entry to Patishka Reka village. The road roughly follows Suva Reka river, until the confluence of Prisojna Reka and Patishka Reka, and from there along the course of Patishka Reka until the entry to the village.

In terms of traffic, the road is in the mixed-traffic category of roads. This means that aside from motor vehicle traffic, the road is intended for all types of vehicles and other participants in traffic (motor and animal-drawn vehicles, work vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, farm animals etc). The road analyzed here is linked to municipal road leading to the village of Drazhilovo and the village of Jabolci.

The significance of this road is reflected in the opportunity to offer better quality of everyday communication for the local residents by reconstruction and widening of the road. The major benefit is in opening up opportunities for development of this mountainous region, rich in wonderful natural features, as a tourism and recreation zone.

Reconnaissance of the road was carried out on 14.06.2021. According to the findings, the Berovic Quarry – Patishka Reka section of the road is in generally poor condition: parts of the road are with significantly damaged and varying quality of asphalt pavement, accumulation of rainwater was noted, there are neglected or non-existent shoulders, there are rock falls, curves with radii smaller than the prescribed standards, no road signage etc. The complete conclusions by the team of experts about the status of the road are given in Annex 1 of this document.

## VLERSIMI I INVESTIMIT TE NEVOJSHËM

According to the preliminary estimate of required funding, 180,329,075.00 denars (almost 3 million EUR) would be needed for reconstruction of the road. A detailed overview of expected costs is given below. The period of implementation is estimated at 18 months.

	Qty	Unit price	Total
Development of a study for the application	1	80,000.00	80,000.00
Study on sources of funding instruments, campaign, opinion polls, public presentation, and promotion of the innovation	1	120,000.00	120,000.00
Geodetic survey and preparation of updated geodetic base maps	14	14,000.00	196,000.00
Geo-mechanical testing and preparation of geo-mechanical elaboration document	14	45,000	630,000.00
Receiving/gathering required approvals	1	100,000.00	100,000.00
Development of basic construction design	14	120,000	1,680,000.00
Development of basic transportation engineering design	14	30,000	420,000.00
Development of environmental impact document	14	12,000	168,000.00
Review of all designs	14	35,000.00	490,000.00
Opinions and approvals about the designs from competent authorities	1	100,000.00	100,000.00
Construction of Section 1, cost increased by 25% for contingencies 1.25%*6,750,000	1	8,437,500.00	8,437,500.00
Construction of Section 2, cost increased by 25% for contingencies 1.25%*35,740,000	1	44,675,000.00	44,675,000.00
Construction of Section 3, cost increased by 25% for contingencies 1.25%*73,007,000	1	91,258,750.00	91,258,750.00
Construction of additions to existing pipe culvert with all required elements	2	350,000.00	700,000.00
Construction of new pipe culvert with all required elements	1	725,000.00	725,000.00
Supervision of the road construction	14	210,000.00	2,940,000.00
Preliminary technical acceptance	1	45,000.00	45,000.00
Technical acceptance and entry into service	1	60,000.00	60,000.00
<b>Total</b>			152,821,250.00
<b>VAT 18%</b>			27,507,825.00
<b>Total including VAT</b>			180,329,075.00

## MAPPING FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR FUNDING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Rural areas face significant challenges such as outmigration and diminishing economic opportunities. Good infrastructure (roads, water supply, sewer systems, flood prevention systems etc.) helps strengthen economic growth and improve the attractiveness of rural areas.

However, implementing large-scale infrastructure ventures, including proper maintenance and operation, is and will continue to be a massive challenge for the country, especially for the municipalities. A conceptual overview of different mechanisms available for funding this type of interventions is given below.

CATEGORY	FUNDING MECHANISM	CHARACTERISTICS
General purpose taxes	General taxes	Charged on salaries, purchases of goods and services, company revenues etc. Generally intended to feed the general government budget, but in some countries intended for designated road funds.
Taxes and fines for users of special-purpose roads	Vehicle taxes	Payments per vehicle on a one-time and annual basis. Payments vary depending on the vehicle characteristics. These taxes may be charged at the point of purchase or/and with periodic inspections or licensing of the vehicle for road use.
	Fuel taxes	Charges applied to petroleum products and diesel products consumed by the vehicle.
	Green taxes	Charges depend on the distance and/or polluting emissions.
Development cost collection (value capture)	Fees for access to commercial areas	Charges on new commercial zones where infrastructure is developed.
	Urban development fees	Charges municipalities or new residents where infrastructure is developed.
Grant funding		Non-repayable funding paid by one side. Aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion by correcting imbalances among different countries or regions within countries.
Private donations		Individuals, organizations, or business concerns may help maintain roads by using opportunities to contribute as volunteers or hire a maintenance service provider to perform the work on their behalf.
Hybrid funding mechanisms		For example, subsidized roads, partially awarded funding etc.

The following three schemes are specific mechanisms for funding municipal infrastructure projects: the state program for financial support of rural development, the IPARD program within the framework of European Union pre-accession assistance, and the “Local Roads Connectivity” project of the World Bank.

### STATE ANNUAL PROGRAM FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT 2021

Pursuant to Article 7 of the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development, the Government Cabinet enacts a three-year national program for agriculture and rural development, covering a period from three to five years. A program for financial support of rural development is enacted every year for implementation of the national program.

This year's program for financial support of rural development includes 3 measures that allow infrastructure projects:

- Measure 321 Improving the quality of life in rural areas (250,000,000 denars)  
Municipalities in rural areas may apply for investments in local road infrastructure (including bridges) for connecting villages to a regional road or to a town or city, up to 7 km in length.
- Measure 322 Rehabilitation and development of villages (90,000,000 denars)  
Municipalities in rural areas may apply for grant funding under this measure, which is related to investment for construction and/or reconstruction of village streets (including rainwater sewers and pedestrian elements) up to 1 km in length.
- Measure 323 Conservation and improvement of traditional values (140.000.000 denars)  
Under this measure, municipalities in rural areas may apply for local road infrastructure (including bridges) to link villages or towns to localities of significance for the way of life and work of the village population, up to 2 km in length.

Public announcements for payment of funds for support under these three measures have not been published yet for the year 2021<sup>91</sup>. This leaves room for the Municipality of Sopsishte to apply for support once the appropriate public announcements are published in the second half of 2021.

## IPARD PROGRAM WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF EUROPEAN UNION PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE

North Macedonia, being a candidate country for accession to the European Union, is entitled to use EU pre-accession assistance through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). Within the IPA framework there is a specific instrument for pre-accession assistance designated for rural development (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development - IPARD), which has two objectives - help the candidate country's rural sector become more sustainable, and harmonize it with the EU common agricultural policy. At this time, IPARD support beneficiaries are North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey. In the 2014-2020 period, IPARD II has an indicative budget of 3.3 billion EUR, of which 60 million are allocated in principle for our country<sup>92</sup>. IPARD III is being prepared at this time for the period 2021-2027<sup>93</sup>.

In each country, the IPARD program is planned around specific measures. For the period 2014-2020, IPARD included five support measures for our country, one of them being investments in rural public infrastructure<sup>94</sup>.

Municipalities with no more than 10,000 population may apply for this type of support. The Municipality of Sopsishte is part of the annex with rural areas that are eligible for this support: Barovo, Govrlevo, Gorno Sonje, Dolno Sonje, Drazhilovo, Jabolci, Nova Breznica, Patishka Reka, Rakotinci, Sveta Petka, Sopsishte, and Chiflik.

91 Agency for financial support of agriculture and rural development, rural development 2021, announcements. Available at: <http://www.ipardpa.gov.mk/> [Accessed 13.8.2021]

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One of the types of acceptable investments are roads, i.e. construction/rehabilitation of existing municipal roads and bridges (for example, roads linking towns with main roads, connectivity between towns, public access roads to businesses, farms, tourist facilities, buildings, or exterior areas of local, cultural, traditional, or natural significance, farmland and forests, including leveling and improving their surroundings and construction/reconstruction of the farm and forest road network (including fire prevention paths).

The mechanism for deciding which applications would be supported is a point system. Roads are given the highest priority (50 points) compared to other types of investments (between 20 and 45 points for water and sewage management, waste, power supply, village rehabilitation investments etc.). The highest number of points (30 points) may be won by a municipality with 10,000 population on the last census (between 15 and 20 points for municipalities with larger populations). Additional points may be won if the investments are located in mountainous areas (20 points) and inhabited communities that are more than 50 km distance from the center of the municipality (10 points).

With regard to the amount of support, the lowest amount of acceptable costs is 10,000 EUR, and the highest amount for municipal projects is 3,000,000 EUR. These projects envisage co-funding, i.e. 75% EU funds and 25% national co-funding. It is expected that approximately 9,000,000 EUR would be allocated for the investment in public rural infrastructure from the IPARD funds for North Macedonia for the period 2014-2020 (around 60 million). However, it seems that there is a delay in the utilization of these funds and there is a risk that the funds allocated under the measure rural public infrastructure under the IPARD II program might be lost. According to available information, the investment in rural public infrastructure measure has been in the process of accreditation since 2015, and this process is still ongoing<sup>95</sup> (for more details around the dynamics of the process and why the measure is still not accredited, see Annex 2).

We may conclude that the Municipality of Sopište would not be able to benefit from this opportunity until the enactment of the IPARD III program and proper accreditation of the rural public infrastructure measure.

### **“LOCAL ROADS CONNECTIVITY” PROJECT SUPPORTED BY THE WORLD BANK**

The country has taken out a loan (IBRD Flexible Loan) in the amount of 70 million EUR from the World Bank for implementation of the “Local Roads Connectivity” project, which aims to rehabilitate, reconstruct, and upgrade 450 kilometers of local roads in 80 municipalities in the country. The contract was signed in 2019, and it is expected that implementation would go on until 2024<sup>96</sup>.

According to the Government Cabinet, the second public invitation for reconstruction of local streets and roads published in March 2021 covers a total of 35 local streets in 21 municipalities and the City of Skopje with total length 35.5 kilometers and value of approximately 7 million EUR.

<sup>95</sup> IPARD Management Body, Measure 6: Investments in Rural Public Infrastructure (Accreditation procedure underway). Available at: <https://bit.ly/3seG9Qf>. [Accessed 13.8.2021]

<sup>96</sup> Loan Agreement (local Roads Connectivity Project) between Republic of North Macedonia and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2019). Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/162761577811634815/pdf/Official-Documents-Loan-Agreement-for-Loan-9034-MK-Closing-Package.pdf>. [Accessed 13.8.2021]

In the first phase, 27 streets were reconstructed in 17 municipalities, for the amount of 4.4 million EUR<sup>97</sup>.

The Municipality of Sopishte may apply for support on the next call for reconstruction of local streets and roads in the framework of the “Local Roads Connectivity” project supported by the World Bank.

## ROAD FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES USED BY THE MUNICIPALITY OF SOPISHTE

According to statements from the Mayor, the following reconstruction works have been carried out on the road section in question:

- In 2013, reconstruction of a 2km segment;
- One crossing was added in 2015, and additional three crossings in 2018 because of the river.

The intervention in 2013 was made with funds from the municipal budget, while those in 2015 and 2018 were implemented with support of the Agency for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural Development. At this time the municipality has no active projects supported by the Agency; however, it has 3 applications pending at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, for street 6 in Dolno Sonje village, street 1 in Gorno Sonje Village, and street 20 in Nova Breznica Village.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings, the Berovic Quarry – Patishka Reka section of the road is in generally poor condition: parts of the road are with significantly damaged and varying quality of asphalt pavement, accumulation of rainwater was noted, there are neglected or non-existent shoulders, there are rock falls, curves with radii smaller than the prescribed standards, no road signage etc.

According to the preliminary estimate of required funding, 180,329,075.00 denars (almost 3 million EUR) would be needed for reconstruction of the road from Berovic Quarry to Patishka Reka in the Municipality of Sopishte. In terms of funding opportunities, the following conclusions should be kept in mind:

- 1 Public announcements for payment of funds for infrastructure investment support under the three measures in the Annual Program for Financial Support to Rural Development have not been published yet for the year 2021. This leaves room for the Municipality of Sopishte to apply for support once the appropriate public announcements are published in the second half of 2021.
- 2 Until the enactment of the IPARD III program and proper accreditation of the rural public infrastructure measure, the Municipality of Sopishte would not be able to use this funding mechanism.
- 3 The Municipality of Sopishte may apply for support on the next call for reconstruction of local streets and roads in the framework of the “Local Roads Connectivity” project supported by the World Bank.

<sup>97</sup> Government Cabinet, Bocharovski: New public invitation for reconstruction of 35 local streets in 21 municipalities with total value around 7 million euros (2021). Available at: <https://vlada.mk/node/24557>. [Accessed 13.8.2021]

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# YOUTH FROM KRUSEVO

We know, We Can, We Want!

- *Sotir Gabeloski*



## SUMMARY

Socio-economic and political context in North Macedonia has serious and large impact on the young population. This conclusion is taken from the "Youth Study North Macedonia" prepared by the Foundation Fredrich Ebert – Office in Skopje. High unemployment rate in young people, coupled with low standard of living, are drivers of rapid and massive youth immigration to the Western European countries. This results from the fragmented strategic approach to youth policies and mechanisms, especially at local level. In addition, the consequences of the health crisis will require further detailed analysis. Youth participation on the territory of municipality of Krusevo is relatively low.

Youth participation in local processes is reduced only to cultural and sporting events, which is indeed in the realm of youth interest, however, youth policies have much bigger potential.

Low level of youth engagement is a problem in itself. Young people do not feel as part of processes in their interest or processes that address them, and have no stake in that. Further, poor youth engagement is the cause of other unwanted conditions and processes. Young people lose trust in institutions, do not identify themselves with projects implemented by the local self-government and do not feel that they are heard. In turn, young people feel as if they do not belong to the community where they grew up and live. Also, youth participation is reduced to some minor activities in important political party processes, such as ecological and blood donation actions, management of social media and support for event organization during electoral campaigns. Young people are not involved in the preparation of pre-election programs. This is the case with young people either individually, or as part of the party youth organization. This is especially true for the local elections because what is addressed in pre-electoral programs has direct impact on young people and the whole community. Pre-electoral programs include special sections about youth, however, the content, i.e. proposed projects and activities do not derive from young party members or public consultations with young people. Youth is poorly engaged in this form of planning and managing everyday life as well as in projects on the medium and long run. This also lowers their trust in the inter-party processes. This problem is then reflected further.

To address these problems and raise the level of youth participation in societal processes on the territory of municipality of Krusevo, this initiative is aimed at development of a document with proposed activities and project proposals. Those will be identified through surveys, focus groups and discussions between young people and stakeholders, such as the local self-government unit, experts, local NGOs and formal and informal groups.

The analysis was conducted to open a discussion about what is needed at local level, how can the community take care of its young people and hear their problems and approaches, how it can encourage and accept the young people as interlocutors in the decision-making processes. The analysis is aimed for everyone working on local community development and for all of us who work with and for the young people. Also, it is aimed for the decision makers at local level, the local youth council, representatives of institutions, CSOs, organizations for youth and youth organizations, and the local business community.

## PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE

Participation, as key concept of youth policy and youth work, is also closely related to the concepts of engagement, empowerment, inclusion, nationality, vote. Why has youth participation become so relevant in our society?

In January, 2020, the Assembly of North Macedonia adopted the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policy .

The analysis of opportunities for youth participation in the municipality of Krusevo shows that key local challenges for youth participation derive from young people's views and the fact that they only partially partake in policy creation. Also, there is strong distrust in institutions and poor education how to be actively involved in decision-making processes. However, there is also the notion of avoiding any responsibility as in "nobody is doing anything, why me".

Due to lack of population census in the past 18 years, we are handicapped in terms of data about the proportion of young people in the population of Krusevo. According to the data from the Census of population, households and apartments in RM from 2002 and from the 2009-2011 Local action plan for employment in the municipality of Krusevo from 2009, young people up to 20 years of age account for 39,4% and those below 40 years of age account for 69,0 %. This leads to the conclusion that young people are significant proportion of the population in Krusevo.

Despite the efforts for youth sector partnerships, established institutions, documents, appointment of youth officers, establishment of a dialogue among the Government, the Agency for youth and sport and the civic sector and the existence of youth participation law, the situation on the ground shows that young people are still not heard and do not partake in decision-making, especially at local level in small municipalities such as Krusevo. At this moment, a few municipalities have real and active youth councils. The survey conducted for the needs of this analysis shows that over 50% of the young interlocutors think that young people are "only decoration" in local decision-making processes.

Youth engagement on the territory of municipality of Krusevo is at relatively low level. Youth participation in local processes is reduced to cultural and sporting events, which is definitely in the realm of youth interests, however, youth policies have much bigger potential. Therefore, this initiative will aim to encourage and increase the youth participation on the territory of municipality of Krusevo. Poor youth engagement is problem in itself. Young people do not feel as part of the processes which are in their interest and they have no stake in processes that address the situation of young people.

Two focus groups, one "online" questionnaire and one workshop were conducted as part of the initiative 'From youth for youth'. The activities included around 70 young people from Krusevo, Sazdevo, Aldanci, Norovo and Buchin. To organize and implement the activities, young people were approached on the social media and via direct communication on the phone and in person. The project also included the preparation of two analyses by people who have over two decades experience in work with young people on the territory of municipality of Krusevo.

The first analysis elaborates the Law on Youth Participation and the extent to which it is implemented in the municipality of Krusevo. The second one, entitled “Analysis of youth participation opportunities in the municipality of Krusevo” recommends that a youth council should be established without any delay. The analysis concludes that young people are only partially included, and volunteer work is reduced only to taking part in the work of the party youth branches. “Analysis of youth participation in municipality of Krusevo” recommends that the municipality should improve the communication with young people. Communication channels need to be improved so that required information can reach more young people. During the focus group discussion with 18 young people from Krusevo and the settlements of Norovo and Bucin, young people identified a couple of needs, such as, sporting events and more places for cultural events in the city. Inadequate student transportation, inaccessible paths to the museums and lack of opportunities for informal education were identified as problems.



During the workshop, 24 young people from Krusevo agreed that as youth participation at the event is insignificant, therefore, youth participation, i.e. interest of young people should be generally increased and encouraged. The policy brief also takes account of the recommendation from the analysis that one should not wait for young people to approach the decision-makers, but decision-makers should approach and get closer to citizens. More debates with young people and more youth representatives in the council is one proposed solution in the “online” questionnaire. The local youth council should be immediately established, according to the changes in the respective law, to ensure bigger youth representation and advocacy in the council and to overcome barriers for increased youth participation.

Workshop participants made concrete proposals how to ensure bigger engagement of young people for their personal development and informal education, such as construction of playgrounds, youth cultural center, cinema, theatre, sporting clubs, etc. Activities which are part of the initiative “From youth for youth” are conducive to increased youth participation, while taken measures also help to solve detected problems. Solutions can be identified through such events, however, increased engagement at local level should be provided through concrete steps taken by the local self-government. Apart from conducted analyses, the Youth Strategy of the municipality of Krusevo, including the current situational analysis and concrete steps for improvement, can be also used as basis for any further efforts.

## RECOMMENDATION AND ACTIVITIES

Numerous measures and recommendation can be conducive to increased youth participation in Krusevo in terms of public policy creation. Those include communications, strategic documents and youth advocacy, but this document elaborates the following recommendation:

- 1 Krusevo –city of digital nomads – place where computer programmers, freelancers and IT experts stay for certain period of time, etc.

The era of digital economy opens new opportunities for jobs that do not require office space, while working hours are flexible and there is free choice about the methods of work. Internet, new communication tools and cooperation assisted the emergence of new methods of work and lifestyle- the so-called, digital nomads.

Digital nomads are individuals who make earning and live as nomads thanks to the new technologies. They change the traditional jobs and think of ways how to function in the virtual space. Using their IT skills, digital nomads enjoy their life in new environment and culture. Digital nomads make their earning from any job that does not require specific location, such as bloggers, web designers, online coaches, marketing, financial planning and investment experts, graphic designers, translators, organizers of trainings, etc. Currently, some of the most attractive locations for digital nomads are Estonia, Thailand, Cyprus, Norway, Portugal Great Britain.

According to the web service NUMBEO that measures life costs and standard of living, one can make projection of the difference in living costs between two places. That is in fact the main reason that digital nomads move and make their own choice about the place of living. According to this website, there is big difference in the rent costs between Skopje and a small city in Macedonia (e.g. Krusevo), that is, rent is 63% lower in the smaller town; catering services are cheaper for 38% and foodstuff for 20%. Cost proportions are even higher if compared to a city in middle Europe where living costs are pretty high. However, digital nomads take account of the overall quality of life offered in one place/country, such as laws that regulate their stay and labor relations, health care services, environmental attractions and pollution. Furthermore, some countries have already started issuing so -called “digital visas” that enable nomads to stay longer period of time in certain country. Estonia is such example in Europe, and Croatia is the first country in the region that introduced digital visas for foreigners that work for others and stay for a period longer than one year.

In North Macedonia, the Fund for Innovations and Technological Development made efforts to promote the country as destination for digital nomads. Contacts have already been made with many portals dealing with digital nomads and already included North Macedonia on the list of countries that offer such services. It is planned to promote this destination on websites dealing with digital nomads and also via recommendations made by digital nomads who already stayed here.

**Implementation:** To implement this recommendation, municipality of Krusevo will need to prepare and adequately promote the offer with support from the FITD, to be able to attract digital nomads in Krusevo.

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# INCLUSIVE AERODROM FOR EVERYONE

Policies and activities for more appropriate care for persons with specific needs

- *Stefanija Trajčeska*



## SUMMARY

Differences fit well only when we know how to accept and understand them. In this regard, it is important to underscore that there are no special things or special needs. Quite the opposite. There are only unique and specific things, i.e. specific needs. There are only specific children. Change starts with us, and we should know right from the beginning how to understand and help these categories of our fellow citizens to enable them too more easily integrate into the environment where they live, and thus make the country even more democratic and more progressive.

Persons with special needs are insufficiently integrated in society. Hence the main purpose of this document; namely, to encourage citizens to understand these people and help their integration.

### PROBLEM – CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE

That needs of persons with disabilities are a subject area that needs to be addressed equally by the state, civic organizations, private entities, as well as local governments. The Municipality of Aerodrom, being one of the largest municipalities in the country and a place pulsating with many events, has the option and the duty to set an example by trying to elevate standards related to improving living conditions, enhancing inclusion, and strengthening awareness about acceptance of persons with disabilities.

There is no registry of persons with disability in the Municipality of Aerodrom. In view of that, there is no clear concept about addressing some of the needs of this group of our fellow citizens. Instead, this type of problems affecting the children become predominantly a matter of concern of the parents, both from the aspect of interaction of healthy children with their fears who face such challenges and from the reverse aspect. Having in mind the overall purpose of this public policy brief, the importance of the problem will be explained in this segment through:

- **First**, overview of the legal framework;
- **Second**, overview of attitudes of parents;
- **Third**, overview of attitudes of professionals;
- **Fourth**, overview of attitudes of citizens.

#### Legal framework

The legal framework of North Macedonia in this subject area is determined, inter alia, by the Law on Primary Education<sup>98</sup>.

According to Article 11 of this Law, inclusive education is a process that takes into account the various individual development needs of the students, offering equal opportunities for exercise of fundamental human rights to development and quality education, being mindful of differences specific to each individual and enabling better socialization and suitable education.

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98 See Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette no.: 161, 5.8.2019.

The Law on Primary Education encompasses all students with disabilities with long-term physical, mental, intellectual and/or sensory impairments, as well as students with special education needs, students with disabilities and students with specific learning difficulties that include but are not limited to dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia.

According to paragraph 2 in Article 11, the Law envisages changes affecting the entire education process, i.e. changes in course content, approach, structures, and strategies. The aim of these changes is to have the children with special needs equally included in the education process together with their other peers. This law entails creating a special individual plan for children with disabilities that considers their capacities, i.e. functional and personal capabilities. This law includes measures for equitable accessibility for persons with special needs, adjustments to infrastructure, environment, physical surroundings, transport, and inclusion in information and communication technologies and systems in the primary schools.

### Overview of attitudes of parents

Based on focus groups with parents<sup>99</sup> organized in June 2021, the following prominent challenges may be emphasized:

- **First**, parents are familiar with the term inclusion, but introduction of full inclusion represents a major challenge for them;
- **Second**, parents whose children study with a child or children with special needs see that as a massive challenge and believe that their children would face problems because they are used to a completely different approach;
- **Third**, parents who have children with special needs point to hiring of personal assistants as a major challenge, in the sense of whether their children would be appropriately guided during the upbringing and education process;
- **Fourth**, all parents state that lack of readiness on the part of the schools is an additional problem, i.e. lack of sufficient assistive technologies, sensory rooms, ramps, lift, toilets, sufficient professional staff, as well as lack of appropriate training for the teaching staff that would need to work with persons with certain disabilities on a daily basis;
- **Fifth**, parents of children with special needs believe that their children are irritable when it comes to change or adaptation to new environments, especially person with autism spectrum disorder. In that regard, there are objective concerns about how these children would function in a larger group and whether their needs would be properly satisfied without triggering challenging behaviors.

In view of the above, in anticipation of the needs of the affected parents, it may be concluded that although our country is preparing to introduce a system of full inclusion, there is nonetheless pronounced skepticism about the way in which such a system would function. In that regard, there is some objective apprehension about whether the state is economically prepared for such a system.

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<sup>99</sup> Ten people participated in this focus group, all residents of the Municipality of Aerodrom.

## Overview of attitudes of professionals

Based on the focus groups held with professionals working in the subject area<sup>100</sup> conducted in June 2021, the following major challenges were emphasized:

- **First**, professionals point out that they had not been consulted during the creation of the legal framework that includes changes expected to start happening in September 2021;
- **Second**, it can be expected that insufficient training that personal assistants and teachers should undergo to be able to offer the appropriate approach to class work is going to be a particular challenge in the future;
- **Third**, professionals point out that they find persons carrying out the work of personal assistants without considering whether their education is suitable to their work;
- **Fourth**, insufficient monthly remuneration covered by the state paid to the personal assistants are a major challenge because they are quite low;
- **Fifth**, according to the professionals, persons with specific needs are not easily adaptable to change and many of them are not able to sit down for 45 minutes in class. In this regard, they believe that the aim is to assess each child's functional capabilities and use what the child can do to prepare her/him for everyday life activities;
- **Sixth**, although the professionals emphasized the fact that all children are special and that we are all specific in our individual special ways and that there should be no divisions among people, nevertheless it is not recommended for many of the children with special education needs do sit down for 45 minutes and listen to lectures that would not help them with their everyday functioning;
- **Seventh**, according to the professionals, inclusion should be implemented starting from the earliest ages, rather than primary education. Namely, psychologists point out the fact that many of the parents are confused and don't know how to act when their child's class includes a classmate with special education needs.

From the set of challenges listed by the professionals it may be concluded that if there were more public conversations, if more training events for parents, teachers and other professionals were organized, and if schools were fully ready, the decision for introducing full inclusion would indeed be far from the illusion that it is today.

## Overview of attitudes of citizens

Aside from parents and professionals, ordinary citizens also have their opinions on this subject. According to results of a public opinion poll conducted on the Internet in June 2021 on a sample of 100 respondents, the following prominent challenges could be emphasized:

- **First**, most respondents are in favor of better integration of persons with disabilities in society, emphasizing that the state should orient itself towards improving conditions in society and involving persons with special needs in social events;
- **Second**, most respondents are familiar with the concept of inclusion, as well as the concept of full inclusion. According to them, the concept of inclusion entails involvement in society and everyday functioning of old persons regardless of their specific personal traits and characteristics;

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116 Në këtë fokus grup morën pjesë 8 persona.

- **Third**, when it comes to implementing full inclusion most respondents do not agree with this solution;
- **Fourth**, most respondents believe that we are not ready for a system of full inclusion and that children with special needs deserve special approaches, and that each child with special needs must have a personal assistant, while being mindful of the educational qualifications of personal assistants, which most respondents believe is important in working with these children, as it is not a type of work that just anybody can do;
- **Fifth**, when it comes to monthly incomes of personal assistants, most respondents believe that the amounts of funding that the state allocates for personal assistants on monthly basis;
- **Sixth**, even though most respondents say that they do not know of a country with a system of full inclusion, nevertheless some of them list England, Croatia, Denmark, and Sweden as good examples.

In view of the above, one could you draw the conclusion that the public views the announced changes to the system of primary education with a certain dose of skepticism, especially with regard to the introduction of the concept of full inclusion whereby the state would not differentiate between children with special needs versus other children in the country in terms of the ways in which their primary education would be conducted.

## ALTERNATIVES – SOLUTIONS

The legal framework establishing inclusion in our country is more than 20 years old, but it deals with combined inclusion. It is important to clarify the following four concepts so that the purpose of this document can be anticipated more fully:

- **First**, combined inclusion. This concept entails education in regular schools, in contrast to education a) in special classes in regular schools, or b) education exclusively in special schools for children with special needs;
- **Second**, full inclusion. This concept means full integration of students in the regular/mainstream system of education, regardless of their individual needs and specifics;
- **Third**, students with disabilities. This concept includes persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual and/or sensory impairments, whose Full and effective participation in a society on equal basis with others might be impeded by various environmental barriers;
- **Fourth**, students with special education needs. this concept includes persons with disabilities and specific learning difficulties which include but are not limited to dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. In this sense, the new amendments to the Law on Primary Education enter into force in September 2021. Unlike in the past, these provisions stipulate inclusion of so-called “full inclusion”.

With these clarifications in mind, it is important to point out the system of full inclusion reflects an effort to prevent the possibility for parents to choose whether their child should attend a regular school or special school for children with special needs; prior to the introduction of these changes the parents or guardians of children with special needs had the right to make such decisions.

Based on everything listed above, the endeavors in this document are oriented in the direction of:

- **First**, further development of the culture of inclusion among all in the Municipality of Aerodrom;
- **Second**, further increasing of awareness about options and legal provisions concerning the relevant subject area;
- **Third**, making it possible for the voices of stakeholders to be heard and their proposals be considered in the process of creating and implementing policies at the local level.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

What is needed for implementing a system of full inclusion?

- 1 **First, sufficient numbers of trained professionals.** Comparative experiences from advanced European countries should be considered, and plans should be developed with a schedule for employment of professionals accordingly, so that this concept of full inclusion can be realized in practice;
- 2 **Second, adapted schools for persons with special needs: lifts, ramps toilets, assistive technology...** In this segment, institutions must rethink priorities around budget investments in education. Namely, regardless of the character of the legal provisions, no reform can be fulfilled unless it is supported by adequate funding that would enable full implementation of the planned activities;
- 3 **Third, each individual child should have a professional assistant, and more care staff, special educators, rehabilitators, and speech therapists should be hired.** This is probably the biggest challenge for institutions of the central government and local governments. Just like with the second conclusion, this part of the reform would also not succeed unless institutions revise budget policies in this segment by allocating funds to achieve objective;
- 4 **Fourth, organizing numerous training events for parents, teachers, and other professionals.** With respect to budget investments, this segment is equally important. Namely, the general climate that permeates a society may facilitate or impede the achievement of an objective. Hence, it is especially important that local governments inaugurate a comprehensive and modern approach whereby stakeholders and the society at large will develop a culture of acceptance, tolerance, and cooperation with all people regardless of their specific characteristics.
- 5 **Fifth, the Municipality of Aerodrom shares the fate of the country.** As part of this project, a stimulating brochure was developed that explains the concept of inclusion, the changes in legislation entering into force in September, as well as expectations and recommendations, for the purpose of collecting all the requisite information in one place and familiarizing the entire population (rather than just professionals and parents, who are the most affected in this case). This brochure was distributed to people who live on the territory of this municipality, thereby contributing in some ways to further strengthening of the residents' inclusivity with respect to children with specific needs. Of course, this is a first step that opens up a new horizon of opportunities for improving the conditions in this sphere, not just in the Municipality of Aerodrom, but throughout the country as well.

Only when these needs are met can we talk about inclusion, rather than illusion.

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# WHO STALLS WHAT?

Implementation of provisions of  
the Law on Prevention and Protec-  
tion from Violence against Women  
and Domestic Violence in the Mu-  
nicipality of Kumanovo

- *Teodora Dimitriovska*



## SUMMARY

Domestic violence is one of the major problems local communities face in our country. According to data for 2019, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy recorded 1,555 new cases of domestic violence, marking an increase of 30% in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Municipality of Kumanovo ranks high among the municipalities with high rate of domestic violence. According to the 2019 Gender Equality Index at the local level, the municipality of Kumanovo is ranked 55th with a total score of 22. This problem creates a series of negative consequences and challenges. The consequences of domestic violence are far-reaching both for its victims and for the direct witnesses. Incidents of domestic violence can also contribute to unhealthy personality development, mental illness, change in the value system, and even consequences for the person's life. Furthermore, domestic violence negatively affects one of the main pillars and institutions in the society - the family.

Few challenges are attached to this problem. Key among them is the inaction of the institutions and the lack of monitoring and coordination activities of existing legal mechanisms between state and local governments. Moreover, domestic violence is ascribed a low priority among the local authorities and there is a lack of transparency in the publication of related information. The problem can be tackled by various modalities; however, the primary need is to create a mechanism as a service provider in the form of one-stop-shop. This model combines various services for the victims of domestic violence to report violence, obtain legal aid, education, and employment assistance. The introduction of a one-stop shop is a long-term commitment that requires time and resources for implementation. The challenge in this model is that it requires inter-institutional cooperation and coordination, as well as the involvement of local actors in providing services to victims, such as the civil society organizations. This requires creation of chains for interventions, protocols and processes, as well as training of appropriate staff. The advantage of this model is that it avoids the trap of an "institutional maze" due to which victims give up the pursuit of addressing domestic violence.

### CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Domestic violence is the behavior of a family member who by using force, threat and intimidation commits bodily harm, emotional or sexual abuse and/or material, sexual or work exploitation of another family member. As such, it has a long-term negative impact on the personal and social development of the victims and the society at large.

How widespread is domestic violence in the Municipality of Kumanovo? What powers do local authorities have and what measures do they take to counter the problem? What are the possible solutions and recommendations to tackle the problem?

The document will look at the issue of domestic violence through the prism of the legal competencies of the Municipality with regard to protection of victims of domestic violence. In particular, we will look at the case study of the Municipality of Kumanovo. The document will also entail the current practice and (non) compliance with the state policy and its local implementation, as well as proposed corrective measures. The ultimate goal is to protect the victims of domestic violence and reduce the fear, insecurity and vulnerability they are exposed to.

## CHALLENGES, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

The significance of this issue and the lack of its regulation stems from the research about the current state of affairs in the Municipality of Kumanovo. According to the 2019 Gender Equality Index, the Municipality of Kumanovo ranks 55th, with a total score of 22. Out of 81 municipalities, the Municipality of Kumanovo partially meets the criteria for enabling promotion of gender equality. Data from the Center for Social Work from Kumanovo also indicate the high level of domestic violence in Kumanovo. According to these, in 2019 in Kumanovo, there were 229 reported cases of domestic violence, of which 59 were crimes and 170 complaints, whereas in 2020 there were 205 reports of domestic violence, of which 57 crimes and 148 complaints. Data shows women and the elderly are the most common victims of domestic violence, followed by children.

Despite the absence of a detailed research, the following are considered the most common reasons for the incidence of domestic violence in the Municipality of Kumanovo: (1) lack of permanent employment or temporary economic immigration - Kumanovo ranks high among municipalities with immigrant workers in the Middle East war zones, which leaves traumatic consequences on people and affects family relations; (2) largely patriarchal family relations, intertwined with unequal treatment of family members rooted in religious beliefs; (3) insufficient level of education of children and high school students on domestic violence and lack of sexual education and knowledge to tackle conservative attitudes and "taboo topics"; (4) specific community buildup that nurtures the children, i.e. values, knowledge and examples that parents pass on to the children. Unhealthy families, with social segregation where violence is commonplace will build individuals who emerge as perpetrators of serious offenses, crimes, and domestic violence.

A major challenge is the inaction of the institutions regarding domestic violence. In 2019, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) registered 1,555 new cases of domestic violence, while the analysis of the data from the monitored court proceedings in cases of domestic and gender-based violence of the Coalition "All for a Fair Trial", in the period from April to July 2019, showed several negative phenomena. Out of 35 cases of domestic violence registered throughout the country, 22 were in Skopje, 3 in Gostivar, 8 in Bitola, 1 in Prilep, 1 in Stip, 1 in Struga and 11 in Kumanovo. This means that domestic violence ends up in court only in the big cities, at a disproportionately low rate. Domestic violence gained further intensity and sparked public interest during COVID-19, when the MLSP data for May and June 2020, showed an increase in the number of domestic violence reports by 30% compared to 2019.

Another challenge is the lack of monitoring and coordination activities with regard to existing legal mechanisms between state and local authorities. There are several laws and state documents that regulate this issue. Article 22 of the Law on Local Self-Government determines the competencies of the municipalities with regard to social protection; The Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence lists the competencies of the local self-government units (hereinafter the LSGU) with regard to gender-based and domestic violence, and stipulates the financial implications and assistance services to victims provided by local authorities; The Law on Social Protection requires the LSGU to pursue the implementation of social protection in accordance with the law, as well as adopt programs in the field of social protection, under the National Programme for Social Protection.

In addition, there are several relevant action plans and programs. The Action Plan for Implementation of the Convention for Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Republic in North Macedonia 2018-2023 envisages activities for raising awareness of all forms of gender-based violence, promoting gender equality and eliminating stereotypes about gender roles in urban and rural areas, in cooperation with the local self-government, as well as introducing a strategic goal of preventing and protecting all forms of violence against women and domestic violence in the existing and future strategic documents of the local self-government units; The Government Programme for 2017-2020 envisaged the opening of new regional centers for care of domestic violence victims. These have not been opened to date, nor has the project been implemented in practice.

The seriousness of the issue requires better coordination of the resources required by the local community to provide quality service, European standards and safety for domestic violence victims. Although the legislation and bylaws are extensive and provide for a number of obligations for the LSGU, as well as comprehensive protection of victims, the situation in the municipalities does not compare to that of other, modern democracies. For example, the UK has adopted a new law at the end of 2020 that provides mandatory support for victims of domestic violence at the local level.

The next challenge is the low priority of domestic violence among the local authorities. Namely, in the Municipality of Kumanovo, despite the existence of the Sector for Social Protection in the municipal administration, which incorporates domestic violence and gender-based violence, the issue has not been processed and reviewed for several years. The inefficient, bureaucratized, extensive, and unprofessional municipal administration indicates that in the Municipality of Kumanovo the topic of domestic violence is not prioritized, and the focus is rather placed on one-time financial assistance, utilities, infrastructure, and other issues. According to research which we conducted in the Municipality of Kumanovo, the Municipality operates under an outdated Annual Plan (whose delayed update is ascribed to the COVID-19 crisis), however previous annual plans that provide the funds for improvement of the mechanism for protection of domestic violence victims have also not been updated. The Annual Programme for Social Protection and the specialized 2021 Programme fail to list persons - victims of domestic/gender-based violence, which means that the Municipality does not allocate funds for their support. Conversely, there is a certain degree of interest among the employees in the municipal administration to undertake activities in this area and increase the interest of local authorities in the issue, however no funds have been provided to implement these activities.

Another challenge is the lack of transparency in publishing information related to domestic violence. Article 14 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women lists the responsibilities of local self-government units in terms of providing equal opportunities for men and women. The law stipulates that "The bodies of the local self-government units, when adopting development plans and other acts and decisions, are obliged to review and take into account the proposed measures and activities by the Commission for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and the Coordinator for Equal Opportunities for women and men."

On the website of the Municipality of Kumanovo there is no information about the Equal Opportunities Coordinator or the members of the Commission for Equal Opportunities. According to the Law, the Municipality is required to appoint a Coordinator for Equal Opportunities for women and men and members of the Commission. The inefficiency in the work of the Commission for Equal Opportunities is primarily seen in the fact that in their three and a half years work, they have not carried out any activity, nor do they utilize a budget. Additionally, on the website of the Municipality of Kumanovo, activities of the Commission or the rights provided by the above law are not publicized. Based on a telephone conversation with the administrative officials from the Municipality of Kumanovo, we learned that there is an appointed Coordinator for Equal Opportunities who also serves as the head of the Sector for Social Protection. The Commission for Equal Opportunities for women and men is composed of four members, all of whom are women. The law provides for allocation of budgetary funds for the Commission and the municipal coordinator, to support the implementation of its responsibilities and exercise and protect the rights of local citizens. Pursuant to the above law, the Equal Opportunities Coordinator is obliged to submit a report to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy no later than March 31 on all measures and activities in the previous year, implemented in accordance with the National Action Plan for Gender Equality. The measures and activities of the municipal administration on gender-based and domestic violence are overseen by the Coordinator and the Commission for Equal Opportunities. The starting point should be the interest of the members of the Commission who have several times requested provision of minimal funds (up to 30,000 denars per year) for the implementation of activities and measures envisaged under the law.

The consequences of the current state of affairs are grave. Above all, there is the inefficient institutional environment for dealing with domestic violence, which leads to unresolved problems and the refusal of the victims to solve them. Domestic violence strongly affects children and their development and self-esteem, and, despite the lack of appropriate research, there are cases of criminal behavior of children who have witnessed domestic violence and/or have been its victims. In addition, there are psychological consequences for the victims and for its direct witnesses, which contribute to unhealthy personality development, mental illness, change in the value system, and life-time effects.

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Despite the scope and complexity of this issue, there is still room for progress through the implementation of appropriate solutions and policies. Advocacy by local authorities to change the legislation and intervention in the penal policy for perpetrators of domestic violence. The solution here is to create modern treatment centers (prison substitution) designed to build a real system of values, good habits, and treatment of bad habits and criminal behavior. This requires massive resources from the state and the local community, as well as an action plan based on good practices. A change in the penal policy can directly contribute to the reduction of domestic violence at the local level, where perpetrators receive additional measures for further education. This model is already practiced in the Netherlands.

Greater interest from the local government, i.e. prioritizing the protection of victims of domestic violence to: incorporate relevant activities in the annual plans and allocate funds to the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Such measures not only contribute to the fulfillment of the legal obligations of the local self-governments, but also generate outreach to the population in the municipality through the implementation of activities. The outreach is crucial as it touches on potential victims of domestic violence and the available alternatives.

Another measure is raising awareness through the implementation of education and information campaigns aimed at preventing domestic violence, primarily in educational institutions and in the general public. This measure attempts to directly address the causes of domestic violence, and raise awareness on the issue since its inception. However, the best solution at the local level is to create a system of one-stop shop. The model provides a service where in one place the victims can report domestic violence, obtain legal aid, education, and employment assistance. The suggested model is not new and is already being implemented in the United Kingdom and the United States. The challenge in this model is that it requires inter-institutional cooperation and coordination, as well as the involvement of local actors, such as civil society organizations, in providing services to victims. This means creating chains for interventions, protocols and processes, as well as training of relevant staff. The advantage of this model is that it avoids the trap of an "institutional maze" due to which victims give up the pursuit of addressing domestic violence. Thus, the victim is the one who should receive the greatest degree of protection, and the protection should not only include shelter care, but also education of victims, psychological assistance, reintegration into society, and re-socialization. It is very important that the victim is adequately protected; it is necessary to create a local mechanism for reintegration of victims who will receive free and non-discriminatory access to social inclusion and normalization of their lives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed solutions relative to the Municipality of Kumanovo need to be primarily initiated by the local government with equal involvement of the central government, as well as the civil society organizations and other stakeholders. With regard to the creation of one-stop shop as a proposed solution, the following activities and financial implications need to be considered.

- 1 Initiating a consultative process for the creation of one-stop-shop at the local level which will ensure the participation of all local actors, such as: police, social work centers, public health centers, civil society organizations, and others. This process will aim to determine the framework by which the one-stop shop mechanism will be created as well as the duration of the process. The process should be initiated and led by the municipal services.
- 2 Develop protocols between different service providers to establish victim support procedures, prioritize cases and ensure access to various services.
- 3 Identify the appropriate space that will serve this purpose.
- 4 Call for and selection of service providers within the one-stop shop mechanism.
- 5 Extensive training for all employees acting as service providers to work with victims of domestic violence.
- 6 Planning activities for community outreach concerning the work of the mechanism and the services it offers.
- 7 Long-term commitment of local authorities to maintenance of the mechanism.
- 8 Preparation of a strategic plan for the activities of the mechanism.

The introduction of a one-stop shop is a long-term commitment that requires time and resources for its implementation. It is very likely that the inception of the process would need to be supported by the central authorities and international foundations and organizations, primarily financially. The estimated timeframe for the implementation of the process is between 18 and 24 months. It is difficult to determine the financial implications at this stage, as they depend on the number of services and the intensity at which they will be offered. However, a basic estimate is that the introduction of such a mechanism at the local level in the Municipality of Kumanovo would cost between 80,000 to 100,000 EUR.

Other recommendations related to the challenges and alternatives

- 1 Appointment of an expert as an Equal Opportunities Coordinator. It is necessary to separate the function of Head of Sector and Coordinator for Equal Opportunities as these are different tasks and functions that require different energy, commitment, and knowledge.
- 2 Provision of financial support to the Equal Opportunities Commission. It is necessary to provide financial resources to the Commission for Equal Opportunities from the municipal budget which will contribute to the implementation of the activities of the Commission and its initiatives.
- 3 Drafting of a new Annual Programme of the Municipality of Kumanovo, inclusive of a special item designating the assistance for domestic violence victims.
- 4 Improved coordination between the central and local government on domestic violence. Coordination and cooperation of the municipality with the central bodies dealing with domestic violence is necessary in order for them to jointly improve, train and share experiences so that the municipality can implement at the local level and create its own mechanisms for the protection of its citizens. The initiative of the municipality is also of great importance.
- 5 Amendments to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. A positive measure to be taken by the municipality is to initiate and propose changes to the central authorities with regard to the legal solutions that will contribute to the effective work of the municipality. As such, an amendment to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men can be envisaged and initiated, specifically in Art.40 which stipulates fines for failure to appoint a coordinator for equal opportunities and Commission for Equal Opportunities for men and women. Namely, in the implementation of the project, some administrative workers lack interest in the issue and therefore it is necessary to hold public local debates and discussions to touch upon the amendments to the Art.40 of this Law, i.e. amendment to the fines, namely drafting of a new paragraph to provide for the measurability of the work of the Commission and the Coordinator for Equal Opportunities and sanctions for failure to implement envisaged activities.
- 6 Introduction of a coordination mechanism for all local actors on the issue of domestic violence. In order to regulate the situation in the Municipality of Kumanovo, which creates insecurity and mistrust in the local institutions, it is necessary to unite all stakeholders in the local community. The sensitivity of the topic and the need for better and more effective protection should overcome all barriers in the local authorities and provide political consensus on this issue, regardless of the political background of the local policy creators in the Municipality of Kumanovo.

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### Websites and Links

- Website of the Municipality of Kumanovo, <https://kumanovo.gov.mk/>



# FROM THE YOUTH FOR THE YOUTH OF OHRID

Proposed measures and policies

*- Tijana Tesalonika Shishkoska*



## SUMMARY

Young people in our country often do not participate in youth policies creation, for various reasons – both objective and subjective. Hence, policies are often imposed on them - without consultations about required implementation. For a long time, there were no systematic and legally regulated processes and procedures for their inclusion in the decision-making processes, until the adoption of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies in 2020.

The situation with the youth in the municipality of Ohrid is central to this policy brief. Unfortunately, in recent years, Ohrid has become a record holder in the emigration of young people. According to national surveys and local analysis, young people do not feel involved in creating policies at the local level. In the past few election cycles, young people were given promises about development of local youth strategy, youth office, local youth assembly of the Municipality of Ohrid, and infrastructure projects for young people. Many of those promises have not been fulfilled. Young people want quality education, to participate in policy making, more employment opportunities, culture, sports, i.e., better quality of life in the municipality. This policy brief aims to provide guidance and recommendations for the adoption of a comprehensive local strategy, whose postulates will be made by young people, and its solutions could contribute to improving the situation of young people in the city. The initiative applied a phased approach that included a comprehensive survey of the young people's opinions and views in the municipality of Ohrid, interviews with young people and youth workers, youth workshop, and preparation of a policy brief calling for the 2021 – 2025 local youth strategy development, designing of the process of adopting such strategy, areas it should cover, stakeholders involved and possible solutions that will be addressed in the strategy.

Therefore, the goal is by urging the local stakeholders to think about adopting a Youth Strategy in Ohrid, to encourage further thinking about projects and youth policies that will bring real results for young people.

## METHODOLOGY

The preparation of this document included a phased approach, that is, comprehensive survey of the opinions and views of young citizens of the Municipality of Ohrid, interviews with young people and youth workers (representatives of youth organizations and youth party branches that are active in the Municipality of Ohrid, young sportsmen, youth in the field of culture and councilors up to 29 years of age from the Municipality of Ohrid, and workshop with young people to determine the priority areas for young people. This policy brief calls for the development of a local youth strategy 2021 - 2025, outlining the process of adopting such a strategy, the areas it should cover, the stakeholders involved and the possible solutions that will be addressed in the strategy.

The document, in its essence, answered several key questions posed by the innovative initiative: 1) need to adopt a Youth Strategy of the Municipality of Ohrid; 2) involvement of parties and stakeholders in the process of adopting a Youth Strategy; 3) procedure for adoption of a Youth Strategy; 4) key areas within the Strategy; 5) Need for an Action Plan; 6) Involvement of young people in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy and its Action Plan.

During the preparation of the document, comparative analyzes of related strategies for youth at the municipal level (where they exist) were taken into account, as well as public opinion research conducted on a representative sample of 600 respondents from Ohrid and interviews with representatives of a wide range of active stakeholders in the municipality. In the framework of the analysis of the functional units, the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies was also taken into account, as well as world literature related to youth participation and youth strategies.

## CONTEXT AND RELEVANCE OF THE PROBLEM

***A quality youth strategy should be based on their real needs in society, outside of politics. Due to deep politicization, young people do not have a strategy outside the parties.*** - Professor Stefan Kanevche from a high school in Ohrid

Evidence-based, participatory and results-oriented youth policy must understand young people as a human resource, not as a problem to be tackled. Youth policies are "integrated policies aimed at young people, which are implemented together with young people and tackle the needs of young people in society."

In other words, young people should be considered a key driver in a given municipality. According to world experts, "a youth-friendly legal framework is crucial for enabling youth political participation." Faced with the main problem of youth emigration, the municipality of Ohrid must address its youngest target population. According to the survey conducted for the needs of this document, almost half of the respondents (49%) were thinking of moving to another country, and a large proportion of respondents or 63% know people who have emigrated to other countries in the past five years.

The adoption of a Youth Strategy in each municipality has been regulated by law since last year. The Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, adopted in January 2020, stipulates that municipalities have the authority to adopt a local youth strategy. Youth strategy is adopted by the Municipal Council or the Council of the City of Skopje for a period of five years. Local strategy, according to the law, is a "strategic document which in accordance with the National Youth Strategy, sets medium-term goals and priorities for the development of youth policies and promotion of the interests of young people at the local level and specifies the organizational, financial and administrative measures for implementation." However, there is evident lack of awareness in young people about the existence and role of such a strategic document within the municipality. According to the survey, 44% of young people believe that the municipality has developed a Youth Strategy - although the municipality of Ohrid has not adopted such a document, which clearly shows that young people are not properly informed. What is also striking is the fact that young people are not interested in such a document. Of the respondents who think that the municipality has not prepared such a document, or those who do not know if such document exists, only 30% would be interested in reading the document if it is available online. Coupled with young people's responses about social inclusion - where only a quarter or 25% of respondents are members of an association with societal goals, it is clear that young people do not have much interest for bigger social engagement.

## **PROCEDURAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR ADOPTING A YOUTH STRATEGY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF OHRID**

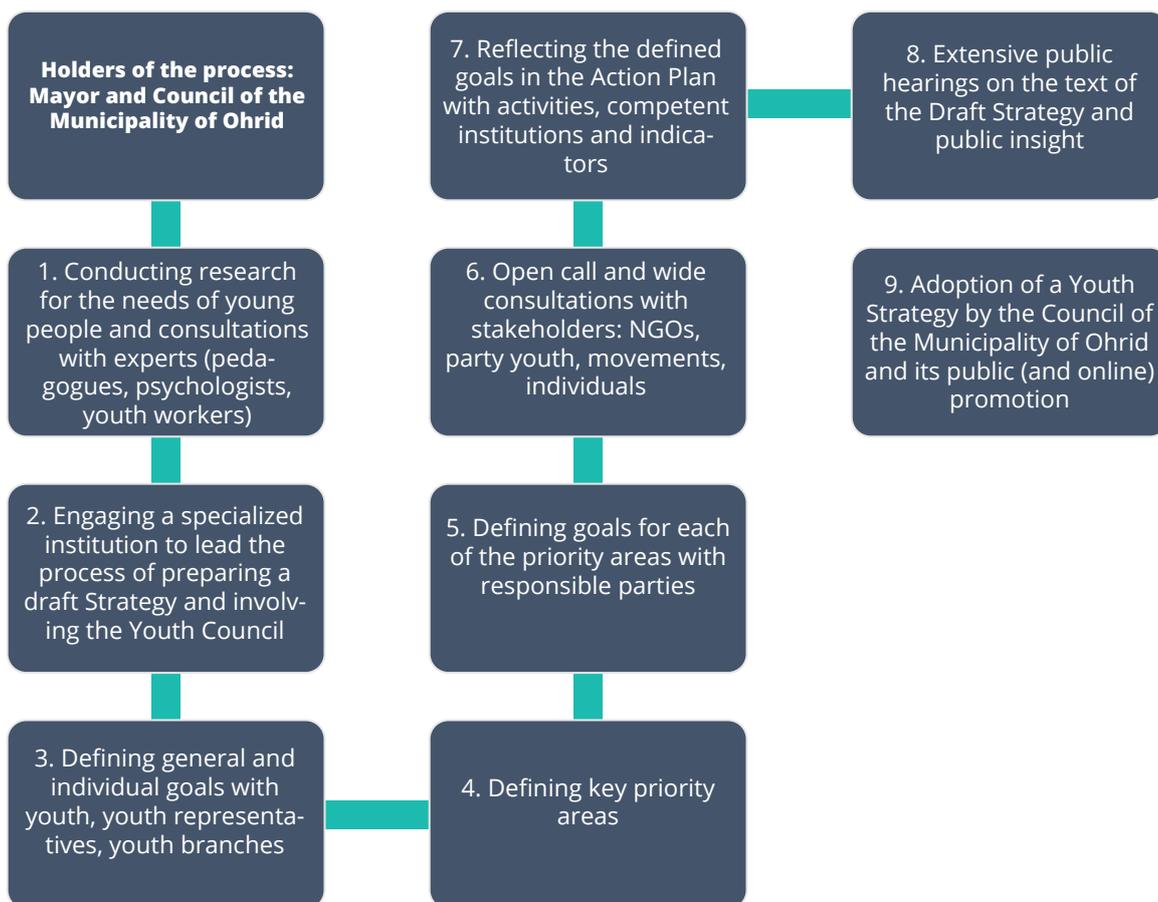
The local youth strategy is adopted by the Municipal Council, but it is developed in cooperation with the local youth council. This legal basis, in any case, is only a starting point for the stakeholders in the process of developing the strategy. Comparatively speaking, the National Youth Strategy of 2016 included several stakeholders, namely: national conference, open call for participation in thematic working groups for each citizen's association, informal group or individual. In addition to the national conference and the open call for participation, the Agency for Youth and Sports (AYS) organized public meetings of the working groups within the priority areas of the strategy, as well as 12 public debates across the country, including the final public debate in Skopje. which was attended by more than 130 representatives of state institutions, citizens' associations, local youth councils, informal groups and individuals.

The interviewed youth and youth workers especially point out the Mayor of Ohrid, the Municipal Council, the Youth Council, youth organizations operating in the municipality of Ohrid and youth organizations as stakeholders in the process of preparing a youth strategy. Furthermore, they also mention the youth branches of political parties, representatives of the high schools and faculties in the city of Ohrid.

The basis for initiating a strategy-making process should always be evidence-based. In that sense, before starting to develop a youth strategy, it is necessary to conduct research on youth trends, but also other comprehensive field / professional analyzes of young people's opinion on the situation in society, views and opinions of professional psychologists and pedagogues who work with young people in the municipality, and the requests of youth activists from all types of associations and in all areas.

In that sense, the Municipality of Ohrid should start a proactive, inclusive and thorough process of drafting a Youth Strategy, driven by the Mayor of the municipality and the young councilors from the Municipal Council. It is proposed that the municipality includes the Municipal Youth Council in all phases of the strategy adoption process. Furthermore, through an open call for participation, all stakeholders, youth from political parties operating in the municipality of Ohrid, youth organizations and organizations for youth, experts in the field of youth education, science experts, as well as interested youth movements and informal youth groups should be involved.

During the preparation of the Youth Strategy, the Municipality of Ohrid should define a phased process for the adoption of the draft text of the Strategy, which will guarantee the involvement of several stakeholders represented in the following scheme:



## KEY AREAS OF YOUTH INTEREST

In order to define key areas to be addressed by the Youth Strategy, a professional and expert process is needed to lay the foundations for taking further action based on the Strategy. The National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia recognizes several strategic priorities, namely: providing a better standard of living and equal opportunities for quality life; creating conditions for respect and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and systematic integration and interaction of different categories of young people; creating opportunities for youth involvement in monitoring and implementing policies and decisions that affect them; equal access to quality education and other forms of personal and professional development. The National Strategy also addresses several thematic areas: effective youth participation, reaching out to young people, local youth work, youth education, employment and supported employment, culture, sport, health and quality of life of young people.

If we look more specifically at the municipality of Ohrid, it is particularly important to look at the answers to the survey, which identify the biggest problems they face for which the municipality bears responsibility to tackle them. According to the survey, the most important local problem within the competence of the municipality stated by 12% of young people in the municipality of Ohrid is the poor connection with other municipalities. About 11% think that the most important problem is the lack of green areas, while 10% think that the poor street maintenance is the biggest problem they face in the municipality. . In terms of what the local self-government has done as a minimum, i.e. what is the biggest setback in the last 4 years, the respondents mention care for the lake and the coast (21%), the conditions for economic development of the municipality (17%), while (15%) think that the least is made for urban planning.

As can be seen from the other questions, young people from the municipality of Ohrid believe that the biggest problems are related to the rule of law, health and education. Asked about the biggest problem facing our country, young people from Ohrid mostly point out the dysfunctional legal system / corruption and crime (17%), dysfunctional health system, poor education system and protection of human rights (11% respectively).

The conducted workshops underlined these problems, adding the aspects of providing conditions for business and entrepreneurship for young people, new and high-paying jobs and opportunities for personal and professional advancement. Hence, the Strategy should cover several key priority areas:

- Representation, information and involvement of young people in decision-making at the local level;
- Quality education of young people that prepares them for personal success;
- Employment opportunities, starting one's own business and professional development;
- Sports, culture and social life;
- Environmental protection, Lake Ohrid and sustainable tourism.

The study provides a comprehensive elaboration of each of the thematic areas, which in our opinion is important for the project planning about the process of adopting the Youth Strategy. However, it is important to note that an expert team formed by the municipal authorities, in discussion and coordination with the widest possible circle of young people and organizations, should define key areas that will be a priority of the Youth Strategy. This does not mean that other areas would be excluded, but that the Strategy will have a particular focus on areas that have proven to be urgent / very important in that programming period. The above areas such as youth participation and information, youth employment, education, culture, sports and social development and environmental protection are, in the view of the authors, the main priority areas. Of course, this does not mean that they exhaust all the priorities, but it requires more comprehensive research.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

The adoption of the Youth Strategy does not end the process of building trust and cooperation between the young people and the municipality in which they live. The adoption of a Youth Strategy should not be an end in itself. On the contrary, the municipality, by designing appropriate measures to achieve the set goals in the priority areas, should offer its support to a real "practical implementation" of the Strategy. As already mentioned, the Strategy should contain an Action Plan, which defines specific measures and activities that the municipality undertakes to implement in order to achieve the objectives set out in the Strategy.

Otherwise, like many strategic and program documents, such a Youth Strategy in Ohrid will remain only a written text on paper. As regulated by the Law, Action Plans for the local youth strategy are prepared by the municipalities, in cooperation with the local youth council, and are adopted by the municipal council, for a period of one to three years along with a budget for implementation. Practically, this plan also serves as a tool for programming the activities of the municipality in the budget years (and related to the youth), for preparing the political program of the parties, but also for analyzing the transparency and accountability in the work of the municipal administration.

It is especially important for the strategy to establish a mechanism for ongoing monitoring of its implementation, which creates an early warning system in case of delayed activity implementation. Thus, the municipality should be obliged to prepare annual reports on the implementation progress, which would be reviewed by the Council and the co-management body. The workshop held with young people resulted in a proposal for the municipality to establish a civic co-management body with representatives of the civil sector, youth, as well as municipal bodies and bodies that would review the strategy and action plan implementation and would suggest ways to improve access and implementation.

In relation to the individual areas mentioned in the Study, in terms of participation in the work and youth representation and participation, the municipality should provide activities that will urge the associations to encourage active participation of young people in their legal and statutory bodies, but also will focus in particular on organizations that train facilitators and leaders of youth clubs and organizations, as well as youth workers.

In terms of representation, the municipality should encourage and urge the proper functioning of the Youth Council, to open its own Youth Office, as well as to enable the opening of a Youth Center.

Digitization of services and information through modern "smart" tools which are close to young people is also a very important aspect that bears fruit in all Western European countries.

Regarding employment, and in cooperation with the Employment Agency, the municipality should make an effort to make the local employment centers that offer specialist assistance truly operational. Furthermore, support measures should be dimensioned for the establishment of businesses, companies and cooperation among young people or groups of young people (to encourage social entrepreneurship), to attract investments that focus on employment of young people, to provide business premises, equipment, training and professional advice for people who want to start their own business or independent activity. Looking at the continuous development, in its action plan the municipality should pay great attention to the IT industry that forms its fast-growing businesses (so-called Start-up businesses and gazelles).

Regarding education, the municipality should envisage its active participation in the area of infrastructure, financial and other support that will increase the quality, availability and development of primary and secondary education. Particular attention should be paid to youth mobility, which will encourage young people, their organizations and schools, to actively participate in international twinning activities, in all types of exchanges and European networks.

Paying attention to the balanced development, the task of the municipality is to provide educational, employment, housing, transport and other sectoral policies that will reflect and address the special needs of young people living in rural areas. Also, special focus should be placed on non-formal education and the acquisition of life skills that young people do not have the opportunity to acquire elsewhere (IT skills and digital literacy, soft skills for public speaking, project management and emotional intelligence development).

## **CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS, MEASURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Solutions to the problems faced by young people should be found through direct contact with young people. Key aspect of the preamble to the Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life is the active participation of young people in the life of their immediate environment. According to the Charter, "the active participation of young people in decision-making and activities at the local and regional level is necessary if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and promising societies." Young people should be asked about the situations they face, about the problems in everyday society, and then link them to possible solutions, as well as to direct decision-makers at the local level.

Therefore, this policy brief, but also greater part of the literature on this topic, call for involvement of young people through youth organizations, organizations for young people and all other models of youth association, but also the youth not organized in any form, both in the drafting and in the adoption, as well as implementation of the future Youth Strategy of the Municipality of Ohrid. Only in that way one can guarantee successful completion of the process and successful realization of the goals foreseen with the Strategy.

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