

ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL PROMISES OF POLITICAL ENTITIES' YOUTH - ELECTIONS 2024



Analysis of the youth issues in presidential candidates' programs and the electoral programs of political parties and coalitions

and

Analysis of the youth issues in the 2024- 2028 Government Work Program, August 2024

Implemented by:



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems



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This analysis is made in the frames of the Electoral Support Programme of the Government of Switzerland, implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The views, opinions and content expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect those of the donor, the project or the implementer.

In 2024, presidential and parliamentary elections took place in the Republic of North Macedonia. The first round of presidential elections was held on 24 April, while the second round was held concurrently with the parliamentary elections on 8 May. In the presidential pre-election campaign, citizens had the opportunity to be informed of the strategic intentions and goals presented in the presidential candidates' programs, while the preelection campaign for election of Members of the Assembly brought the citizens closer to the electoral programs of political parties and coalitions.

The subject of this analysis is presented at two levels:

1. Representation and inclusion of young people in the programs of presidential candidates and in the election programs of political parties and coalitions for the parliamentary elections. The analysis elaborates the programs of the following political entities and presidential candidates [1]

- VMRO-DPMNE, Platform "Makedonija povtorno gordna (Macedonia Proud Again)" of the presidential candidate Gordana Sljanovska Davkova and the electoral program for the parliamentary elections entitled "Platform # 1198".
- SDSM and the Coalition for European Future, the electoral program of the presidential candidate Stevo Pendarovski "Nasiot pretsedatel Stevo (Our President Stevo)" and the electoral program for the parliamentary elections titled "Program for European Future 2024".
- European Front, Decalogue of the European President of the presidential candidate Bujar Osmani and the electoral program for the parliamentary elections "Europe 2030".
- Coalition Vlen (Vredi), the election program of the presidential candidate Arben Taravari "Presidential Platform" and the electoral program for the parliamentary elections "Plan 2030".
- Levica, the electoral program of the presidential candidate Biljana Vankovska "Go vrakame dostoinstvoto na nacijata (We restore the dignity of the nation)" and the electoral program for the parliamentary elections "Nepodmitlivite vo Sobranieto (Incorruptible in the Assembly)".
- GROM, the electoral program "Hrabro za Makedonija (Brave for Macedonia)" of the presidential candidate Stevcho Jakimovski.
- The program of the presidential candidate Maksim Dimitrievski was not available online.

[1]Titles of electoral programs and names of political entities are taken from the front pages of presidential candidates' programs and the electoral programs for parliamentary elections. The same titles will be used in a uniform way throughout the whole document. Any other official terms used in the document, such as the name of the country, will be used identically as in the original electoral programs of presidential candidates and electoral programs for parliamentary elections.

2. Scope and treatment of youth issues in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program, through analysis of the electoral programs of political entities represented in the Government, i.e.:

- VMRO–DPMNE's electoral program "Platform # 1198".
- Coalition "Vlen" electoral program "Plan 2030".
- Movement ZNAM– electoral program "Proglas za dostoinstvena Makedonija (Proclamation for a Dignified Macedonia)"

From one election cycle to another, youth issues have been addressed in one form or another in the electoral programs of political entities. Numerous analyses, on the other hand, show a low degree of implementation of electoral promises related to youth issues. This is indicative of a superficial treatment of these issues, sometimes as declarative commitments that lack detailed analysis of the real needs or undertaken international obligations, including the already established standards within the legal framework. It is therefore important to ascertain whether political entities have strategies with regard to youth issues in this election cycle, and to propose recommendations to implement future specific measures and policies, both nationally and locally. In fact, one of the aims of this analysis is to facilitate a public discussion which can be then utilized in the public discussion related to the presidential and parliamentary elections, but also in the period before and during the upcoming 2025 local elections.

02 Representation of youth issues in presidential candidates' programs

The general analysis of presidential candidates' programs leads to the conclusion that pursuant to the powers associated with the position of a President, the programs mainly focus on the constitutional order, rule of law and justice, preservation of the security and national identity, foreign policy, NATO and EU membership and unification of the country, but less on cross-cutting issues and policies such as youth issues. Yet, the electoral programs of political parties such as SDSM and the Coalition for European future, VMRO–DPMNE and the European Front or the Coalition Vlen embrace issues related to youth. Short overview of elaborated youth issues in the programs of presidential candidates is presented below.

Scope of youth-related issues

The scope of youth and youth-related issues varies across all candidates' programs, except for the program of the candidate of Levica and the candidate of the Coalition Vlen where youth issues are only indirectly addressed. According to the program of the candidate of Levica, a new younger diaspora has been created over the years and their capacities have still not been recognized, even though they have the potential to be our best ambassadors. On the other hand, establishment of innovation schools, headed by the cabinet of the President, is announced in the program of the Coalition Vlen candidate. No special measures or commitments have been singled out in the program of the candidate of GROM.

Decalogue of the European President, European Front

The European Front candidate's program stipulates the "establishment of a special team for creation, implementation and monitoring of youth policies in the country", as well as the position "Presidential youth advisor".

Extract of the Decalogue for European President of Bujar Osmani, European Front

The program of the candidate of the European Front includes 10 commitments addressing various priorities, with one special section/commitment on youth entitled State plan for prospects for young people and ways to prevent them to leave the country. In this section, the presidential candidate pledges to ensure prospects for young people through "enhanced educational opportunities, as well as active measures for entrepreneurship, start-ups and embracing the modern business

developments in order to keep the focus of young people on activities and potentials offered in the country". Under this section, mechanisms are envisaged for the President to work directly with and for The European Front candidate's program stipulates the "establishment of a special team for creation, implementation and monitoring of youth policies in the country", as well as the position "Presidential youth advisor". Extract of the Decalogue for European President of Bujar Osmani, European Front 3 the young people, such as special team for creation, monitoring and implementation of national youth policies and presidential advisor for youth issues. Even though the title of this section refers to a special plan, the wording itself is more of a commitment rather than concrete plan with solutions for all young people, pursuant to the legal framework and youth policies in the country. Furthermore, the section/commitment Education and innovations, includes commitments regarding the promotion of education for young people in line with modern technological trends and innovations, creation of an educational model that complies with the changes in labor demand and new jobs that differ from the existing ones, for which our students need to be prepared, including the opportunity to utilize the potential of young people living abroad. This section also underlines the increase of education, science and research budget and that scientific research centers will be established at each university. Under the section/commitment Framework economic agreement, a specific measure is foreseen "Agreement for admission of best students with full scholarship at the ten top ranked business universities worldwide, by giving priority to vulnerable categories of citizens". These measures showcase a concrete approach to empower the youth as vulnerable category.

Our President Stevo, SDSM and the Coalition for a European Future

The program of the presidential candidate of SDSM and the Coalition for European Future also includes a special section dedicated to youth. The section specifically notes that for young people to be able to realize their potentials and talents, they need support, and that is both an obligation and duty of every institution and public office holder. It is also stated that demographic trends and migration have led to the emigration of young people, and therefore more focused measures are needed to maintain contact with young people who are abroad and to ensure they are involved in the societal developments in the country and beyond.

Two specific measures are stipulated in the program with regard to young people:

- * establishment of a special advisory body to work on reducing negative demographic trends, by promoting active demographic policie

The presidential candidate of SDSM and the Coalition for European Future identifies himself in the electoral program as “Promoter of the rights of young people and vulnerable and marginalized communities”.

Extract of the electoral program “Our President Stevo” of the candidate of SDSM and the Coalition for European Future, Stevo Pendarovski



- * establishment of a central database of all young people who are in the educational process or utilize their knowledge and skills by working in foreign companies and organizations, with a view to maintain contact with all these young people.

Furthermore, the program specifies the continuation of the tradition of the School for young leaders, under the auspices of the President, as well as introduction of political education in secondary school curricula. In his program, the presidential candidate of SDSM and the Coalition for European Future shows commitment to the integration of North Macedonia in EU, underlining that the benefits of integration will be mostly felt by young people “especially in educational policies, technological development and socio-economic policies in order to bolster their social and economic status and reduce emigration.”

Macedonia Proud Again, VMRO-DPMNE

The program of the candidate of VMRO-DPMNE includes a special section dedicated to youth, entitled Youth Friendly President. Young people are defined as political entities with leadership potential who are conducive to positive changes. Young people are not only declaratively addressed through commitments, but also through concrete measures for youth participation in consultative processes and creation of opportunities to be promoted, both in the country and abroad. Young people are also seen as individuals who need to be included in order to actively contribute to the development of the nation, both in the country and internationally.

Two key measures are stipulated with regard to young people:

- * Introduction of a Youth Advisor position in the cabinet to run the newly established Youth Council,
- * Establishment of a Youth Forum under the auspices of the President. The Forum is conceptualized “as a structured platform to make their voices heard, seeking to foster a more inclusive, vibrant and progressive political environment. The Forum would work on implementing activities in several areas, such as, education, culture, technology, sports, etc.”

“My goal is to empower young people – recognizing them as key partners in shaping the future of the Republic.”

Extract from the election program Macedonia Proud Again of Gordana Siljanovska Davkova, VMRO-DPMNE

Furthermore, the following measures are announced:

- * youth internship in the President's cabinet
- * young people appointed as Goodwill Ambassadors "from among our young professionals in the country and worldwide, who already have or build successful careers in the field of international economy, politics, international relations and science" and
- * continuing the tradition of the International school of leaders.

03

Concluding observations on the presidential candidates' programs

This in-depth overview of presidential candidates' programs points to a conclusion that the scope of cross-cutting issues is generally insufficient.

There is an evident effort by some of the presidential candidates to include youth and youth-related issues in their programs. However, this is just a starting point, providing a basis for the future presidential candidates to operationalize them in practice. Presidential candidates who address youth issues in their programs can be seen as willing to give young people a chance, expressing confidence that young people can and should provide consultative support to the President, while enabling them to voice their needs and take part in decision-making of national importance through newly established youth-led bodies and positions such as councils, forums, ambassador, advisors, etc.

The mainstreaming of youth related issues in the national legal and institutional framework is a reality, however, strengthening the practical implementation will be required. The commitments of presidential candidates for this groups of citizens need to be further strengthened and translated into more concrete measures, also through the program and measures of the political entities represented in the future Government. When a message is conveyed from the highest level by a President of the country that any issues affecting youth rights should be placed high on the agenda of both national and local institutions, that would be indicative of the required consistent implementation, coupled with adequate allocation of human and financial resources.

The analysis of electoral programs of political parties and coalitions for the 2024 parliamentary elections shows that measures and policies targeting the youth are represented in the electoral programs. Some of the political entities, such as Levica, included such measures and policies across special areas/sectors, while other entities such as VMRO-DPMNE, Coalition Vlen and the European Front dedicated special sections on youth. This is indicative of the efforts made by the political entities to introduce a strategic approach to youth related issues.

Similar measures prevail across the electoral programs, and political entities with bigger parliamentary representation provide a wider range of measures and policies in several areas. However, it can be noted that all political entities address the key issues that affect young people such as education, employment, standard of living and participation. Furthermore, the programs include some of the already existing and implemented measures, as well as completely new measures or discontinuation of some existing measures. The detailed analysis of youth related issues in the electoral programs for the parliamentary elections is presented below.

Detailed overview of Electoral Programs

Dedicated sections on Youth


As noted earlier, youth issues have been included in the electoral programs for the parliamentary elections. However, this is done to a limited extent by most of the political entities as they fail to provide real mainstreaming of measures and policies across all areas and at all levels. An exception are the political parties with bigger parliamentary representation and despite of lacking depth, their youth policies are to a certain extent integrated across the whole program.


The overview of the scope of youth issues is divided in two parts:

- Focus on youth policies
- and
- Cross-cutting youth policies

The Platform # 1198 of VMRO-DPMNE


This program focuses on youth issues in the section VI. Rights and freedoms, under the special part It is the time of young people. It stipulates the following:


 Economic measures for young people, such as: exemption for 70.000 newly employed young people from personal income tax up to age of 29, guaranteed job offers for 500 best graduates, part-time work for students, 5.000 one-year ICT trainings for young people, as well as certification of ICT professionals, and 5 million Euro for youth entrepreneurship initiatives.


 The section Stimulate employment in new professions stipulates the digital connections worldwide, digital innovation hubs, support for youth volunteer work in public institutions, e – voucher for additional trainings and informal education. A special measure is targeting the young farmers up to the age of 40, which is planned to support additional 5.000 young farmers.

“Instead of empty rhetoric and promises, VMRO-DPMNE offers a vision for creation of the necessary conditions for young people from Macedonia to build their future at home, how to empower them through education and skills development, bolster youth participation in decision-making processes and promotion of entrepreneurship and innovations“.

Extract of the electoral program Platform #1198 of VMRO-DPMNE






 The section Youth standard stipulates a mobile application that provides young people with discounts on admission tickets for theatres, museums, cultural institutions, public transport (bus and railway), sport tournaments and other events, and free internet as special measure for young people in all dormitories, libraries, reading rooms, youth centers and faculties, squares and other urban locations.

 The section Education and European student standard includes a pledge to renovate all dormitories and provide decent meals to all students, 50 million Euro for student scholarships, e-libraries at the faculties, reading rooms, and career centers for young people.

 The section Youth organization and representation stipulates the establishment of a Ministry of social policy, demography and youth as part of the existing reorganization of ministries, as well as opening of youth centres in several towns. However, this segment fails to include specific measures to strengthen the implementation of the Youth Participation and Youth Policies Law.

The Program for European Future 2024 of SDSM and the Coalition for European Future

This document includes a special chapter VII. Young people – pillar of the future, i.e. Youth Manifesto. It includes numerous commitments and a group of measures related to improving the position of young people. They include:

-  The first commitment refers to Quality job positions on a competitive labor market through: universal minimal wage, access to quality job positions, concept- Salary for leading a normal life
-  The commitment Access to quality and inclusive education and training stipulates available, accessible and quality education for all young people through: implementation of the European child guarantee, curricula driven by creativity, motivation and critical thinking, introduction of comprehensive sexual education in schools and lifelong, and informal learning and training.
-  The commitment Youth standard refers to the promotion of youth participation through: care for mental health of young people, programs for financial strengthening of young people's standard of living, available and accessible public transport and establishment of Ministry for youth
-  The commitment We want to live in a functional state-functional system for all stipulates a society free of corruption by introducing a progressive tax conducive to sustainable society, transparency of the public administration, digitalization of all institutional processes and documents, efficient and independent judiciary free from political influences and universal access to quality health care.
-  The commitment Available, affordable and dignified housing will be realized by setting a ceiling on the real estate rent, plan for public housing for young people up to 29 years of age, "We stand for equal opportunities for quality and dignified life and prosperity and fight for affordable quality public services and services for citizens – housing, health, education, transport, which must be universally accessible to all citizens, not only those with the highest incomes." Excerpt from the election program Program for European Future 2024 of the Coalition for European Future 7 program with subsidized and affordable prices for young people up to 29 years to buy their own home, independent assisted life for people with disabilities, and energy efficient homes that improve the environmental footprint of housing.

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“We stand for equal opportunities for quality and dignified life and prosperity and fight for affordable quality public services and services for citizens – housing, health, education, transport, which must be universally accessible to all citizens, not only those with the highest incomes.”

Excerpt from the election program Program for European Future 2024 of the Coalition for European Future

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The Program Europe 2030 of the European Front

This program focuses on youth issues in Chapter 3 Agreement for economic consensus in the special segment, 3.5 Active young people and equitable society and special section Active young people.

This part includes commitments and youth measures to improve the status of young people, as follows:

-  The general commitment Young people, culture and sport refers to the introduction of equal representation in financial support distribution to civil society organizations, with focus on youth organizations that work on the development of young Roma people.
-  Furthermore, as stated, the aim of the European Front is "To develop and implement an integrated youth strategy that provides an environment for young people to develop their full potential, by offering support to detect their individual needs and promote their talents, interests and creativity".
-  Active participation of young people in decision-making at various levels, including at institutional level, regarding policy creation and education. This will be ensured through implementation and monitoring of the effects of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, as well as by providing a new legal framework on youth participation.
-  Support for youth activism, as well as activism in the digital space through promotion of digital literacy and use of digital tools.
-  Support for the youth sector, and especially for activities with young people from rural areas, and support for youth work through recognition of the profession – youth worker and respective capacity building..
-  Guarantee equal access and quality education for young people.
-  Economic empowerment of young people through establishment of a National multisectoral council tasked with ensuring constant and sustainable employment for young people, activation of young people who are neither in education or employment (NEET), connecting the businesses with schools and universities, support for entrepreneurship and start-ups.
-  Commitments to raise the quality of life for young people through promotion of healthy life style, physical activity and fight against addictions.
-  Pledge to combat violence and strengthen the safety of young people.



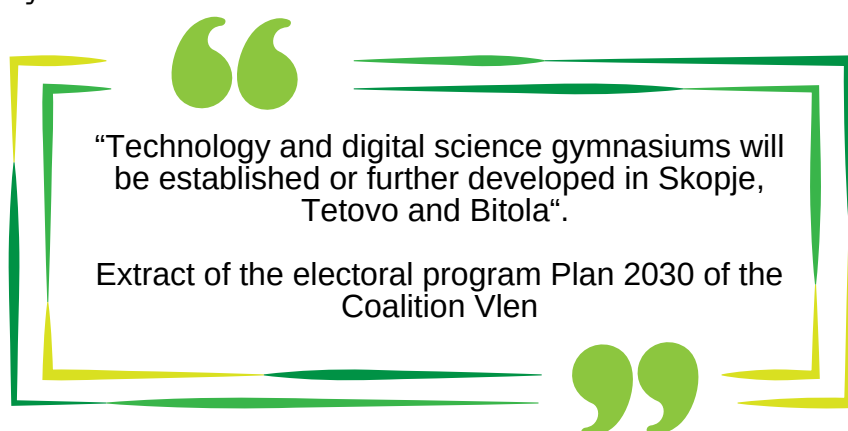
The vision of the European Youth Front is "A society where young people will be treated as equal partners in the creation and implementation of youth policies, without discrimination and prejudice".

Extract from the Europe 2030 election program of the Front for Europe

The program Plan 2030 of the Coalition Vlen

In the program, youth issues are mainly addressed in the special chapter VI. Young people, education and training. This chapter includes several segments with commitments and measures aimed for young people, that is:

- The segment Children and young people – game, sport and culture, stipulates the construction of 200 sporting fields in the Albanian areas and 5 Albanian cultural centers, as well as support for elite sportsmen.
- Schools are conceptualized to become community centers which are equipped with physical and digital libraries and free Internet access.
- The segment National education and training, includes a pledge to equalize teaching curricula with the curricula from Albania and Kosovo, establish a joint institute, and foster a culture of language and speech. It is planned to introduce a strong gymnasium education for all who pass the entry exam, and all other students to be enrolled in vocational schools.
- Furthermore, pledge to provide quality vocational education, increased safety in schools and strengthening the quality of universities.



The Incorruptible in the Assembly

The program includes specific youth measures in Chapter I. Labor and social justice, special section Youth.

These measures include::

- Creation of conditions for health and pension insurance for young freelancers up to the age of 26 .
- Establishment of multipurpose youth cultural centers on the whole territory of the Republic
- Establishment of special networks and funds to support young talents in all areas of art,
- Development of specialized institutions for young talents from earliest age,
- Discounts for so-called cultural packages for young people up to the age of 29, discounts for inter-city transport for young people up to 26 years of age,
- Increased subsidies for organic production of autochthonous varieties and crops aimed for young farmers,
- Subsidies for social apartments for young people up to 29 years of age, as well as for young married couples (with or without children).

Cross-cutting youth policies

Apart from addressing the youth policies under the segment “It’s time for young people”, the Platform #1198 of VMRO–DPMNE includes cross-cutting youth policies across several chapters, i.e. institutional sectors.

This is also highlighted in the introductory address of the party leader, saying that young people have central place in the electoral program that stipulates measures to support youth participation in politics, support and development of sports, quality of education, scholarships and support for entrepreneurial aspirations.

Chapter I Fight for quality of standard of living, under section 2 Competitive private sector stipulates the support for the ecosystem of start-up initiatives and entrepreneurial aspirations of young people. This support is foreseen in the form of new legislative solutions that stimulate entrepreneurial initiatives, legislative solutions for business angels, as well as support through free use of business premises.

The section 3 Support for innovation and ICT sector, includes several measures for digital skills development in young people, such as technology talents in primary and secondary education (algorithmic thinking, operating with data, disruptive technologies, artificial intelligence and generative artificial intelligence, basics of computer programming, work with multimedia content, online safety), IT module for secondary-school students to ensure intermediate level of digital literacy for every young person aged 18, as well as 15.000 ICT trainings for Macedonian citizens. A pledge is made to establish a technological park Skopje with jobs for young people with IT skills.

Under the section 4 Productive and high-paying jobs, a pledge to provide strong financial support of 15 million Euro for the labor market.

Section 5 National Demographic Plan promises a new approach to young people to offer them affordable education, stable jobs and salaries that can cover the cost of living and raising children. The same section also provides for economic measures for families, i.e. a measure Youth Home by improving the measure Buy a House aimed for young people.

In section 7 Agriculture and Food for Macedonia, under Rural Development, non-refundable funds are planned for young farmers – for projects with an offered business plan for starting an agricultural business and financial support for young married couples who will return to rural areas and start a business.

Chapter III Institutions that work according to laws, stipulates a reorganization of the ministries, whereby youth issues will be in the remit of the Ministry of social policy, demography and youth.

In Chapter IV Functional system for citizens, under section 1 Ensure quality health system, a pledge to provide significant support to young medical doctors through development of National health strategy and Strategy for young medical doctors and guarantee a decent work in the health system. There is a plan to support young resident medical doctors who are the future of the Macedonian health system, by ensuring twice as many residency programs in deficient areas and strategic planning of residency programs. Also, as part of the strategy for young medical doctors, it is planned to include a career plan, dignified financial allowance and paid on-call duty for resident doctors. Numerous measures are listed in section 2 Education for the future, that either directly or indirectly, influence the development of young people in the country.

In 10 the area of primary and secondary education, the following measures are planned to serve as basis for success: revision of curricula and teaching programs, schooling in one shift and extended stay at school for every student, textbooks for every student and overall revision of the primary education concept. Furthermore, it is foreseen to strengthen the professional orientation of students, provide practical work for students in companies, establish centers for talented students and regional centers for vocational education and training. Also, the aim is to strengthen the socio-emotional support for parents and students and enhance student safety through special Program to tackle violence in schools and ensure safe school environment. With regard to high education for young people, it is planned to develop programs for students' practice in companies and institutions during graduate studies, to strengthen the dual degrees studies at high educational institutions which are deemed important for enhanced knowledge and skills, and to introduce international programs with universities worldwide, as well as to provide incentives for student enrollment at faculties of natural sciences and mathematics and faculties of technical-technological and bio-technical sciences, by providing exemption from payment of tuition fees and increasing the monthly scholarship. With regard to inclusive education, further improvements are foreseen via improved and increased support for students with disabilities, educational assistance, assistive technology, trained teaching staff and inclusive school environment. In respect of educational infrastructure, an investment of 25 million Euro is planned for complete renovation and reconstruction of dormitories, ensuring dignified living and learning conditions for students.

Chapter V. Patriotism that unites, under section 1 National priorities of the Macedonian foreign policy stipulates the measure intern.mk, that opens the doors for internship for students of political sciences, law and diplomacy.

Section 2 Security and defense stipulates measures aimed at increased safety in schools through establishment of a state security agency that will provide security services to schools, measures to eliminate and prevent peer violence as well as measures to provide employment for the best graduates at the Ministry of the Interior and security agencies.

"Through programs of the Employment Agency aimed at youth employment measures, creating skills and qualifications, retraining and retraining of vulnerable categories, training in skills needed for the labor market, supporting entrepreneurship, as well as co-financing training in the use of new technologies, we will enable the creation of new jobs and more productive workers."

Extract from the election program Platform #1198 of VMRO-DPMNE

Section 3 Culture as a pillar of the Macedonian state stipulates the promotion of possibilities for cultural development of youth through creation of appropriate cultural and cultural-educational programs aimed to develop and educate children and young people and improve their creativity. This will entail increased support for music, film and television production for children and youth in Macedonian language, as well as systemic concept for development of cultural-educational programs which are available to the public.

Section 4 Macedonia as attractive tourist destination stipulates the improvement of vocational tourism education by promoting practical work with secondary schools, cooperation with foreign companies, and modernization and improved quality of curricula. Furthermore, it is stated “we shall work on reducing the gap between education and employers in the field of tourism “. In addition, one-year specialized tourism studies are foreseen under this section.

Section 6 Sport as national pride includes youth measures pertaining to improved conditions and support for sportsmen. In the thematic area Sportsmen are important to us, measures are foreseen to ensure that every child is engaged with sports through provision of adequate conditions for physical education in every primary and secondary school. The programs to support sport clubs will serve as stimulation to ensure that as many children as possible actively participate in professional sporting activities. The state will subsidize the monthly membership fee in sporting clubs for talented children from financially deprived families. Also, one of the measures is to introduce student sport leagues.

the Program for European future 2024 of SDSM and the Coalition for European Future, cross-cutting youth measures and policies are integrated across several sectors.

Chapter I New economic energy for European growth and standard stipulates measures to strengthen the capacities of young people and improve their economic status and independence.

o The section New economic energy stipulates a measure to provide 200 Euro for the first employment of young people up to the age of 26 as financial stimulus to enable them to make their dreams come true in their country. Furthermore, measures are foreseen to strengthen the human capital by harmonizing the education with the demands of the labor market, and to introduce new curricula that integrate entrepreneurial way of thinking in the overall educational system. One special segment will be the establishment of entrepreneurial centers. Scholarships for doctoral studies in the domain of smart specialization are also planned as well as introduction of digital educational programs, such as promotion of STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics) and another measure aimed to stimulate entrepreneurship with tax exemption for newly established companies by young people up to the age of 29, until they reach a turnover of 4 million denars.

o Section 2 Macedonia with European infrastructure, stipulates a measure aimed at construction of apartments for young people and young families. The project entails the construction of commercial apartments for young people up to the age of 29, whereby the Government will subsidize certain percentage of the overall amount. The measure aimed towards strong and standard-based civil engineering sector and new human capital includes free-of-charge studies within the national quota for all students who enroll the Faculty of civil engineering (all program studies) and for students who enroll the Faculty of architecture.

o Section 4 The taste of Macedonia stipulates measures for young farmers up to the age of 40 who start an agricultural business, with grants of up to 10.000 Euro and 50% grant increase from 10.000 to 15.000 Euro, starting from 2026. Young farmers who take over the agricultural family business will receive a grant of up to 20.000 Euro, 100 % growth in subsidies for direct payments in the first 5 years also for young farmers that take over the business and are registered in the Single register of agricultural businesses. 40% increase is stipulated regarding student scholarships for agriculture, forestry and veterinary studies at high educational institutions, from 18.000 to 25.000 denars for a nine-month period throughout the year, starting from 2025, and guaranteed employment for all graduates.

Chapter II Good governance – better and just system for all, aimed to ensure efficient institutions and motivated administration that will operate to the satisfaction of citizens. Furthermore, it is planned to introduce incentives in order to retain the best university students in our public sector, whereby graduates who are winners of awards and national and international recognitions, completed internship and participated in conferences and seminars during the university studies, will have guaranteed jobs in ministries or municipalities.

Chapter III Care for All, section 1 More and better for all, stipulates to further extend the youth guarantee to include 35.000 individuals. For the first time, there is a plan to introduce a software for youth work and to create a system for psychosocial support for young people and mental health promotion. Other measures include promotion of online counselling centres, application of new models for citizen support via online psycho-social support and counseling, with special focus on survivors of gender-based and domestic violence and support for young people. Furthermore, it is planned to develop youth centers for psychosocial support aimed for children, young people and parents, that is, opening of eight regional counseling centers for children and young people, and promotion of safe focal points for young people in every inter-municipal center for social work aimed to improve access to mental health services for young people, including the design of services which are tailored to the needs of young people, and promote the importance of mental health and how to improve one's wellbeing. A pledge is made to introduce a new support system, the so-called school bonus with one-time financial allowance in the amount of 6.000 mkd as package

to support the families of all first-graders in primary education and every first-year secondary school student. Another measure is aimed to increase the amount of youth allowance, including changes in the criteria for beneficiaries of the measure –Increased inclusion of young people

„Young people are our future and that is why the future government led by SDSM is creating a measure to provide favorable housing units for young married couples.“

Extract from the election program Program for European Future 2024 of the Coalition for European Future

from vulnerable families, by providing them with work opportunities and increasing the monthly allowance from 3.000 to 5.000 mkd, based on amendments in the Law on Youth Allowance. Another measure is the development of a software “E-youth job” based on the Slovenian model “Economic stability and youth independence – crucial for development of the society“. This system is an electronic platform that assists secondary school students to find temporary and part-time jobs. In the first two years of introducing the system, the aim is to help activate 65% of the young people.

o In the section 2 European standards for the Macedonian health, a pledge is made to improve the conditions for medical education by “increasing student quotas at state high education institutions, or specifically, to double the quotas at the medical faculties, faculties of dentistry and faculties of pharmacy. This will assist a 100% personnel increase and will generate quality staff. All students will be exempted from payment of costs that will be reimbursed by the Government from the Budget of the Ministry of education and science. The annual number of residences will be increased and the status between those who attend “state and private” residency programs will be equalized. Job positions will be created for all participating graduates in residency programs, with focus on the priority medical fields and cities across the country. All resident doctors will exercise all their rights during the residency program, having a full health insurance coverage and monthly allowance of 60.000 mkd.” Another important measure entails the plan to develop a Faculty of medical sciences at the University St. Climent Ohridski in the south-western part of the country. Furthermore, there is a plan to develop a national strategy on enrollment of students in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy studies, as well as residency programs, tailored to the needs of the country by ensuring equal distribution of high education institutions, with a ultimate goal to provide quality high education.

o The key policies under section 3 Education and skills for European future include: improved safety conditions in schools and improved living conditions in the dormitories (safe students, free meals for all primary school students, sanctions for bullying, free educational excursion, free public transport, IT equipment and assistive technology for every school, improved conditions in student dormitories); scholarships for gymnasium students and 3000 denars subsidy for school materials and teaching aids for every student; subsidized meal for every secondary school student in the amount of 180 mkd daily or 900 denars weekly; improved work with talented and gifted students; support for students with disabilities in primary and secondary education; and stimulating the interest for enrollment at teaching faculties. In addition, free transportation is planned for all university students, student meal in the amount of at least 200 mkd, abolishment of the exam registration fee, creation of research and innovation culture by applying a concept for a responsible research and innovation strategy“, and clear policies for improved quality of high education. Furthermore, the focus is on retaining the best students and recruit young people in high education and academic institutions throughout the country.

Chapter V Safe Macedonia, under section 1 Stronger with NATO stipulates active measures to encourage young people with scholarships for best achievers in studies of critical importance.

Chapter IV European quality of life includes measures under section 4 Sport for all, which are expected to stimulate an equitable, inclusive and sustainable sports system which is conducive to healthy youth and provides motivational contents for young people. The aim is to ensure that citizens massively take up sports as well as to improve the results in all sports.

Chapter VI #MK in EU 2030 highlights the importance of Young people for #MK in EU2030, who are deemed crucial for the European future of the country. Furthermore, as part of the measure – Young people as active “ambassadors” of their country in the EU member-states, there is a plan to establish a Fund for support of young talents – “ambassadors – MK talents“ who should take a leadership role in future development. Another measure is the establishment of a network of start-up ambassadors, between our citizens who work and live in North Macedonia and high-profile enthusiasts who live and work in big technological and advanced centers in Europe and worldwide. The ambassadors are young people who serve as promoters of Macedonian start-up companies before potential foreign companies and business angels.

The program Europe 2030 of the European Front focuses on young people in several sectoral areas:

Chapter 3 Agreement for economic consensus, under the section 3.1 Competitive economy and digital transformation, includes measures on quality education and working capacity. One measure refers to strengthening the dual degrees, access to vocational training, and access to adult education programs. Furthermore, there is plan to introduce the European framework of digital skills in the national curricula, and establish “smart” primary and secondary schools with IT tools and Internet infrastructure. Another general commitment refers to improving the quality of teaching in primary, secondary and high education through reforms of curricula and models for evaluation of educational processes. New entrepreneurship support schemes will be undertaken in parallel to the educational reforms. Active measures for the labor market are also included under this section.

o In section 3.2 Sustainable development and green transformation, as part of the measures for Rural and agricultural development, it is planned to stimulate farmers below the age of 40 through the Program for agricultural financial support and the Program for rural development.

o In section 3.3 Modern infrastructure and equal regional development, in order to ensure equal development, it is foreseen to provide tax exemptions for all recently established private companies by young people up to the age of 30, specific programs to stimulate employment of women and young people through trainings, subsidized salaries and support for employment, as well as practical training programs to increase the employability of young people, women and other vulnerable categories. These programs especially focus on the most affected regions: Polog region, North-eastern region and South-western region, where the unemployment rate is highest. To assist young people and women who want to start social enterprises, it is foreseen to adopt a Law on Social Entrepreneurship. As part of the measure Attractive planning regions with improved local services and effective access to the labor market by ensuring enhanced gender equality and effective social protection of most vulnerable categories, the following is foreseen: increasing the Fund for social housing in poor areas, improving the activity and employability of young people on the labor market, ensuring that programs and measures are implemented with regard to employment and education, with focus on young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

"Institutionalization of the Youth Guarantee through the adoption of a special law. This will provide a sustainable structure to support young people for employment, including programs and services that assist them in finding and preserving the workplace."

Excerpt from the electoral program Europe 2030 on the European Front

The Plan 2030 of the Coalition Vlen includes cross-cutting youth policies across other parts of the program, such as:

Chapter III Macroeconomy for citizens, stipulates the strengthening of free economic zones by introduction of Albanian free economic zones. One such zone will be the Youth free economic zone aimed for businesses of young people, with incentives for start-ups and companies in the technological sector.

Chapter V Diaspora and return of our citizens stipulates that profit tax will be halved and credit system will be applied for citizens who will return to the country to start businesses that employ young people and women. The same chapter stipulates zero interest for purchased apartments by young married couples.

The program The Incorruptible in the Assembly under Chapter I. Labor and social justice, apart from the special segment on youth, also includes other cross-cutting youth-related measures, such as:

o Under the section Worker's rights, benefits are stipulated for the first employment of young people.

o Under the section Victims of violence, in order to prevent juvenile delinquency, the system of special schools will be reintroduced for children with behavioral problems and inappropriate and violent conduct.

o Under the section Persons with disabilities and special needs, pledge by the Ministry of education to recruit educational assistants in order to assist the students with special needs, as well as providing free retraining, university scholarships for persons with disabilities, options for elective subjects based on the preferences of people with disabilities and introduction of free secondary education for children with disabilities.

o Under the section Child protection, a National program "Employment for everyone" is foreseen, including measures to integrate young people without parents and parental care on the labor market.

Chapter III Political system and administration, under the section Information society and digital transformation of public services stipulates measures for cooperation with IT companies to provide professional guidance to young and elderly people. Novelties in the section on digital services refer to the introduction of e-diary, e-index as well as e-textbooks for students.

Chapter VII Culture, tourism and sport, section Art, music and film stipulates the establishment of a separate network of support centers for young talents from earliest age, in all areas of art, and under the section Amateur sports - amusement parks, skate-parks, zip-line and children's playgrounds with entertaining and recreational contents at several locations in Macedonia, including a state program for assistance in sports, such as free membership in sporting clubs for children from socially deprived families in order to increase sporting activity since earliest age for all.

Chapter VIII Education and science stipulates measures to improve the standard of students, such as free textbooks, free meals, free public transport, discounts for driving tests and package of minimal cultural and social activities. The section Students' rights refers to free-of-charge high education, guaranteed employment of students with highest achievements, uninterrupted work of reading rooms at faculties, changes in the system for awarding scholarships for studies abroad, changes regarding the student representation, establishment of student clubs, etc.

Chapter IX Health guarantees the employment of students of medical studies with best achievements in the public health system, fair subsidizing of young medical doctors in the primary health care with special focus on medical doctors working in deficient areas and in rural environments, improved status of resident doctors through a set of measures such as regular advertising of residency programs, free-of-charge residency, increased monthly allowance for resident doctors, improved mentorship and education during the residency program, health insurance coverage for resident doctors attending private residency programs, etc. Provision of free basic dental services is foreseen for young people (up to 21 years of age).

Chapter X Agriculture stipulates a measure for establishment of educational centers to provide mentorship support for farmers, in particular to capacitate and include women and young people, as well as "setting a separate category for subsidies – young farmers, particularly with regard to: milk production, crafts, new crops, eco-farms and eco-tourism".

„Distribution of free land parcels to young individual farmers, for a long-term lease, under the obligation that certain percentage of the production is shared with the local self-government – in order to respond to the needs for food in social institutions (such as meal centers, canteens, kinder gartens, schools, etc).“

Extract of the electoral program The Incorruptible in the Assembly of Levice

In Chapter XII Public Security and National Defense, in the section Police, measures are envisaged for the renewal of the secondary police school, i.e. the Center for training of personnel in the field of security at the Ministry of Interior, and the mandatory employment of all cadets from the Training Center and all graduated criminologists from the Police Academy. In the section Army, the mandatory employment of cadets graduated from the Military Academy is promised – in the Ministry of Defense or in the army.

This in-depth analysis of political parties' and coalitions' electoral programs demonstrates that youth-related issues are extensively covered. This especially refers to youth policies and measures which can be found in each of the political entities' electoral programs for almost every societal area.

Proposed measures in almost all electoral programs are neither supported by timelines for implementation, or any indicators are proposed to monitor the implementation. Therefore, it is almost impossible to assess whether any of the proposed measures are feasible and what type and volume of human and financial resources are needed to implement the programs.

It can be noted that the electoral programs of political entities are marked by support for young people and making pledges to improve quality of life and status of young people in the country. Some political entities stipulate measures that have already been initiated or have been promised in previous election cycles. „Distribution of free land parcels to young individual farmers, for a long-term lease, under the obligation that certain percentage of the production is shared with the local self-government – in order to respond to the needs for food in social institutions (such as meal centers, canteens, kinder gartens, schools, etc.)“ Extract of the electoral program The Incorruptible in the Assembly of Levice 17 entities stipulate measures that have already been initiated or have been promised in previous election cycles.

Pledges to improve education and employment through already known approaches are prevailing, such as revision of curricula, strengthening of vocational education, more practice, active measures to support employment (trainings, internship, support for employers recruiting young people), and support for entrepreneurial initiatives. Some political entities quote concrete numbers regarding employment, as well as specific salary amounts for first employment of young people.

Development of digital skills and competencies in young people through formal and informal education, as well as support for ICT-based initiatives and businesses are given prominent place in the electoral programs. Furthermore, political entities attempt to address the problem of youth emigration in their electoral programs, by recognizing the problem and aiming to find solutions by means of demographic measures, general improvement of young couples' standard of living, career development in the country and cooperation with young people in diaspora who possess the skills and knowledge to assist the country's progress.

Measures in the field of culture and sport, healthy lifestyle, opening of youth centers, construction of sport fields, support for youth sport, etc., are unavoidable part of the electoral programs like in any previous electoral programs. Current electoral programs repeatedly include the support for young farmers through grants and rural development programs.

Interestingly enough, electoral programs of several political entities now include concrete measures to tackle the problem of school violence, bullying, support for parents and young people etc. Measures to enhance youth participation at all levels are rarely stated, coupled with minimal measures to strengthen the implementation of the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies as well as measures aimed for young workers and youth organization support.

06 Recommendations

It is of utmost importance to ensure that citizens are familiar with the scope of youth-related issues in the electoral programs. This will enable them, either individually or supported by the civil society, to hold both national and local authorities accountable.

Even though the scope of youth-related issues can be more thorough and strategic, still, it is very important to ensure that any of the foreseen measures are ultimately translated into concrete programs, coupled with financial projections, necessary budget for implementation as well as potential sources of funding

Given the existing large number of priorities of the Government and a tendency to marginalize youth issues, it is very important that there is commitment and active lobbying for these measures by the civil society and citizens to ensure that these measures are implemented, by continuously monitoring the work of the Government.

Dialogue and public discussion will be needed in order to operationalize the youth related measures from the electoral programs of political entities. Public discussions should open a possibility for equal representation of the needs and solutions on regional, ethnic and gender grounds.

The scope of youth-related issues in the electoral programs that specifically refer to smaller ethnic communities should be more extensive, coupled with increased number of measures and approaches to address the needs of these communities.

The analysis of the electoral programs for the 2024 parliamentary elections of political entities which are represented in the Government (VMRO-DPMNE, Coalition Vlen and the Movement ZNAM) shows that youth related measures and policies have been addressed in the electoral programs. Specifically, the political entities represented in the Government, VMRO-DPMNE and the Coalition Vlen dedicated special chapters to young people, while the Movement ZNAM included several measures targeting young people as part of the thematic areas of their program. This illustrates the promises of political entities also for a more strategic approach to youth-related issues.

This comparative analysis aims to explore to what extent any of the promised measures targeting inclusion of young people that were part of the electoral programs of the now ruling parties, are included in the 2024-2028 Government Work Program. More specifically, the analysis will explore the electoral promises within:

- VMRO-DPMNE's electoral program "Platform # 1198".
- Coalition "VLEN" electoral program titled "Plan 2030".
- Movement ZNAM electoral program titled "Proclamation for a Dignified Macedonia".

Movement ZNAM electoral program titled "Proclamation for a Dignified Macedonia"

Issues concerning young people were singled out as separate chapters in the electoral programs of VMRO-DPMNE and the Coalition "Vlen". Additionally, youth as a category were included across various sectoral policies of these political entities and only partially included in the electoral program of the Movement ZNAM. Youth policies can be found under the thematic areas of education and employment, agriculture, as well as digital transformation and ICT.

COMMITMENTS and measures from Platform #1198 – key findings

Chapter VI. Rights and Freedoms – program focus – IT IS THE TIME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Platform # 1198 of VMRO-DPMNE focused on youth issues in Chapter VI. Rights and Freedoms, program segment –It is the time for young people. The 2024-2028 Government Work Program includes these issues within the same chapter, while the program segment is renamed Youth in Focus

In general, the foreseen youth-related measures in the Platform #1198 are kept under this chapter. And while the electoral program also lists quantitative indicators for investments in young people (such as the amount of student scholarships, the number of young farmers to be supported, the amount for funds that would be invested in support of entrepreneurial initiatives, etc.), the 2024- 2028 Government Work Program lacks quantitative indicators on the largest number of measures, and therefore the measures lack precision and cannot be measured, making it difficult to monitor the implementation and success of these measures.

Specific promise was made in the Platform #1198 about the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, and this has already been implemented. However, even though improving youth participation is listed as one of the Government's goals within the Youth in Focus program segment, no measures can be seen on how to improve youth participation, or measures aimed to open youth centers in different cities.

“Platform #1198”. (electoral promises)

2024–2028 Government Work Program (extracts)

Economic measures for young people such as: 70,000 newly employed young people, personal income tax exemption for young people up to 29 years of age, guaranteed job offer for 500 best students, part-time work for students, 5,000 one-year ICT trainings for young people, as well as certification of ICT professionals, and EUR 5 million for entrepreneurial initiatives for young people.

Measures:

- A program to provide job offers in the public and private sector to 500 undergraduate students with the highest academic achievement;
- Legislative changes to create the opportunity for each student to work part-time without losing their full-time student status;
- Up to 5,000 one-year trainings for advanced digital skills according to the needs of domestic ICT companies;
- Co-financing for international certification of young ICT professionals 20 in order to increase workers’ productivity;
- Funding for youth entrepreneurial initiatives as a comprehensive program to support youth employment;
- Advisory services aimed for young people who will start a business regarding legislation, finance and taxes, administrative operations, IT tools, marketing and other appropriate programs to support them in starting their own business.

In the area of Fostering employment in new professions, it is stipulated to provide digital connectivity with the world, digital innovation hubs, support for youth volunteering in public institutions, e-vouchers for additional training and non-formal education. A special measure is aimed at young farmers up to 40 years of age, with support planned for 5,000 new young farmers.

Measures:

- The Government will support the establishment of digital innovation hubs, youth innovation centers with educational and technical resources and space for work.
- Co-financing of trainings through a voucher system, on well-known online platforms for education of talented students;
- Public institutions will be open for volunteering and internship;
- Increased initial financial support for young people who will start farming.

The section Youth Standard stipulates the provision of a mobile application through which all young people will have the opportunity to use discounts for admission tickets for theaters, museums, cultural institutions, public transport (bus and rail), sports competitions and other events, as well as a special measure of providing free internet to young people in all student dormitories, libraries, reading rooms, youth centers and faculties, squares and other urban locations.

Measure:

- Access to free internet will be provided in all student dormitories, libraries, reading rooms, youth centers and faculties.

The section Education and European Student Standard includes a promise for renovation of all student dormitories, a dignified meal for all students, EUR 50 million for student scholarships, e-libraries at faculties, reading rooms, career centers for young people.

Measures:

- The government will work on a comprehensive renovation of all student dormitories in the state, which will provide overall improvement of residential conditions, as well as raising the student standard.
- The funds allocated for scholarships for university students and high school students will be increased, and by digitizing the application process, corruption will be prevented.
- Full scholarships will be provided for the deficient and high-paid professions, and the participation fee for university studies will be reduced for all students up to 25 years of age, who are parents.
- Scholarships will be provided for students who achieve successful results at world olympiad, or international and national competitions in various subjects.

In the section Youth organization and representation, there is a promise for a Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth and opening of youth centers in several cities.

Measure:

- The measure Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth was implemented.

There are no other measures.

CROSS-CUTTING youth policies

From among the cross-cutting youth policies in the Platform #1198 of VMRO-DPMNE that were included under Chapter I. Fight for a quality standard of living (in the Government Work Program it is called Quality Standard of Living – A new cycle of economic growth) almost all measures have been retained, although some of them in modified form. For example, quantitative indicators are missing for some of the measures in the area of Productive and high-paying jobs, i.e. indicators about the number of trainings to be funded. Also, in the electoral program, most of the measures for young people across different sectors are divided under subsections, while these subsections are omitted in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program, which makes it difficult to associate these measures with young people.

Some measures have been qualitatively modified, such as the measure to establish a technology park under the section Support for innovation in the ICT sector, which now reads as follows: preparation of a study and development project for a multifunctional technological innovation park.

Comparative analysis Table 4– Comparison of Platform #1198, cross-cutting youth policies vis-a-vis the 2024–2028 Government Work Program, Chapter I. Quality standard of living – A new cycle of economic growth

“Platform #1198”. (electoral promises)

In Chapter I Fight for quality standard of living, under section 2 Competitive private sector, it is foreseen to provide support for the ecosystem of startup initiatives aimed to support the entrepreneurial spirit among young people. The planned support includes new legislation to stimulate entrepreneurial initiatives, legal solutions for business angels, as well as support through the provision of free premises.

2024–2028 Government Work Program (extracts)

Support for a competitive private sector

Commitment:
Commitment: The entrepreneurial spirit of young people and experienced people who have new ideas for business start-ups must be supported, because it creates potential for economic growth.

- Measures:
- Amendments to the legislation aimed at encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial initiatives;
 - Promotion, revision and adoption of legislation on formal venture capital and 22 crowdfunding will be undertaken in order to increase competition and access to finance for start-up companies;
 - State premises which are not used will be converted into business premises in order to be used by start-up companies for a minimum fee.

In section 4 Productive and high-paid jobs, a promise is made for strong financial support of EUR 150 million for the labor market.

Productive and high-paying jobs

Measures:

- Budget of EUR 150 million will be provided through programs of the Employment Agency aimed at youth employment measures, skills and qualifications development, retraining of vulnerable categories, training in skills needed for the labor market, supporting entrepreneurship, as well as co-financing of trainings on the use of new technologies.

Section 5 National Demographic Plan includes a promise for a new approach targeting young people to offer them affordable education, stable jobs and salaries that can cover the costs of living and raising children. The same section also stipulates economic measures for families, or the so-called Home for Young People measure that implies improving the measure Buy Your House aimed for young people.

National Demographic Plan

Commitment:

- We will adopt a new approach targeting young people, which will provide them with affordable education, a favorable standard of living and human dignity in order to reduce the number of those who are forced to leave Macedonia. One of the most important prerequisites to improve the demographic picture of Macedonia are stable and secure jobs and opportunities for economic activity, especially for young people to have wages that enable them to cover the costs of the average consumer basket and the costs of raising children.

Measures:

The Government will re-introduce and improve the measure "Buy Your House aimed for young people", through:

- payment of monthly subsidies for the construction of a house or payment of subsidies for down payment for loans to construct a house;
- a program will be developed to provide one-off financial support to young couples moving to the countryside aimed for the purchase, construction or extension of a house;
- We plan the sale of state-owned undeveloped land at a preferential price per square meter, as well as several types of house-building projects for free that would further reduce family costs and support energy-efficient renovation of young people's homes.

In the section 7 Agriculture and Food for Macedonia, under Rural Development, it is planned to provide irrecoverable funds to young farmers - for projects based on business plan for agricultural business start-up and financial support for young married couples who will return to rural areas and start a business.

Advanced agriculture

Measures:

- irrecoverable funds for young farmers.
- financial support for young married couples who will return to rural areas and start a business.

From among the cross-cutting youth policies in the Platform #1198 of VMRO-DPMNE that were stated in Chapter IV. Functional system for citizens (in the Government Work Program, it is renamed as Functional institutional system) almost all measures have been retained, although some of them in modified form. For example, in the thematic section on health, there are no specifics about the support provided to young resident doctors.

The measures stated under the thematic section Education for the Future in the Platform #1198 have been generally kept, although some measures lack specific quantitative indicators, such as the amount of investment for the renovation of school and student dormitories.

Comparative analysis Table 5- Comparison of Platform #1198, cross-cutting youth policies vis-a-vis the 2024-2028 Government Work Program, Chapter IV. Functional institutional system

Platform # 1198 (electoral promises)

2024 – 2028 Government Work Program (extracts)

Under section 1 There will be a quality health system, significant support to young doctors is promised through development of a National health strategy and Strategy for young doctors to provide them with dignified work in the health system. Young resident doctors – the future of the Macedonian health system, are planned to be supported by twofold increase of the number of resident doctors in deficient areas and strategic planning of residency programs. It is planned that the Strategy for young doctors will include the design of a career plan, setting a decent financial compensation for resident doctors and paid on-call duty.

Quality health system

Measures:

- The Government will prepare a National Health Strategy and Strategy for young doctors and propose it to the Assembly. It will stipulate the methodology, concepts and methods on how to support young doctors and provide them with decent work in the health system.
- Depending on the economic possibilities in the country, a plan will be designed to ensure gradual and equitable employment of all employees in medical institutions whose employment status has not been resolved for years, medical staff for deficient professions and increase the number of young resident doctors in deficient areas.

In the section 2 Education for the future, in the area of primary and secondary education, in order to ensure success, measures have been foreseen such as revision of curricula and programs, schooling in 1 shift and extended stay in school for every student, as well as overall revision of the concept on primary education. Furthermore, it is foreseen to strengthen the professional orientation of students, provide internship in companies for students, presence of real companies in the schools, centers for talented students, as well as establishment of regional centers for vocational education and training. Also, there is a commitment to strengthen the socio-emotional support to parents and students and enhance the safety of students through special Program on prevention of school violence and safe school environment.

Education for the future

Measures:

- Overall revision of the Concept on primary education will be undertaken.
- The Government will continuously create infrastructural conditions for schooling in 1 shift and for extended stay at school (whole-day schooling), as well as providing every primary and secondary school student with textbooks for every subject as of academic year 2025/2026. The Government makes a commitment to provide the textbooks for the academic year 2024/2025 in timely manner.
- Professional orientation and career counselling in primary education will be provided to students and parents, in order to become aware of various career possibilities and labor market trends. To bolster the entrepreneurial spirit among students and alleviate the transition from school to employment/self-employment or further education, we will assist the opening of real companies² in the secondary schools. Modern career centers will have prominent place in the secondary schools in order to provide real professional guidance to students.
- In the period from 2025-2028, the Government will pilot the implementation of the STEM concept in the educational system, tailored to the needs of students and parents, in certain number of primary and secondary schools, as well as faculties. We also plan to establish special support centers for talented and gifted students.
- Programs for prevention of school violence and safe school environment. Programs for prevention of violence will aim to promote the development of emotional intelligence, empathy, support for mental health in students, effective communication and how to prevent adversities, misunderstandings and peer violence.

Under High education for young people, it is foreseen to develop internship opportunities for students in companies and institutions throughout their studies, strengthening of the dual diploma programs at high educational institutions which are deemed important in order to increase knowledge and skills, and introduction of international programs with universities worldwide, incentives for enrolment of students at faculties for natural sciences and mathematics, technology, biotechnology by exempting them from payment of participation fee and by increasing the monthly scholarships.

- Development of internship opportunities in companies and institutions for students, throughout their studies;
- Strengthening the dual diploma programs at high educational institutions;;
- Incentives for enrolment of students at faculties for natural sciences and mathematics, technology, biotechnology by exempting them from payment of participation fee and by increasing the monthly scholarships

Under inclusive education, further improvement is foreseen by providing improved and increased support to students with disabilities, educational assistants, assistive technology, trained teaching staff and inclusive school environment.

- We will improve the inclusive education through better and increased support to students with disabilities, educational assistants, assistive technology, trained teaching staff and inclusive school environment.

Under educational infrastructure, an investment of EUR 25 million is promised for complete renovation and reconstruction of student dormitories in order to ensure decent living and studying conditions for students.

One of the goals of the Government is to ensure overall improvement of educational infrastructure.

Measures:

- Funds will be invested in order to fully renovate and reconstruct the dormitories so that students can live and study in decent conditions.

From among the cross-cutting youth policies in the Platform #1198 of VMRO-DPMNE, included under Chapter V. Patriotism that unites (in the Government Work Program it is named as National Priorities) the measure intern/mk has not been included at all.

Some of the measures in the areas of Security and Defense, Culture as Pillar of the State and Sport as National Pride that were stipulated in the Platform #1198, have not been included in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program (see Table 6).

Comparative analysis Table 6– Comparison of Platform #1198, cross-cutting youth policies vis-a-vis the 2024–2028 Government Work Program, Chapter V. National Priorities

Platform # 1198 (electoral promises)

2024 – 2028 Government Work Program (extracts)

Chapter V. Patriotism that unites, under section 1 National priorities for the Macedonian foreign policy stipulates the measure intern.mk, that opens the doors for internship aimed for students of political sciences, law, diplomacy, etc.

PPriorities in foreign policy

- No measures

Section 2 Security and defense stipulates measures to strengthen the safety of schools through establishment of a State agency for school security, elimination and prevention of peer violence, as well as measure for employment of the best students at the MOI and the security agencies.

Security and defense

The measure- State agency for school security is included in Chapter IV. Functional institutional system.

- No other measures.

Section 3 Culture as pillar of Macedonian society stipulates the opportunities for youth cultural development through creation of adequate cultural and cultural-educational programs for development and education of young people, aimed to bolster their creativity. Culture for children and youth will include increased support for music, film and television production for children and youth in Macedonian language, as well as systemic concept for development of cultural-educational programs which are easily accessible to the audience.

Culture as pillar of Macedonian society

Measures:

- Creation of adequate cultural and cultural-educational programs aimed towards the development and education of children and youth and bolstering their creativity;
- We will significantly increase the support for music, film and television production aimed for children and youth in the Macedonian language.

Section 4 Macedonia- attractive tourist destination stipulates the improvement of vocational education for tourism by promoting practical work in the secondary schools, cooperation with companies, modernization and improvement of the quality of curricula. Further, it is stated that "we will work on reducing the gap between education and employers in tourism". In addition, one-year specialized tourism studies are foreseen under this section.

Developed tourism

Measures:

- The Government will work to improve the vocational tourism education, through promotion of practical work in secondary schools, cooperation with companies, modernization and improvement of the quality of curricula. To increase the interest for specific scientific fields and increasing the tourism personnel we will stimulate the creation of specialized study group that will work on the development of tourism culture.

Section 6 Sport as National Pride includes measures aimed for young people in terms of improving the conditions for doing sports and support for sportsmen. Measures included under the area Sportsmen matter to us refer to sport for every child by providing adequate conditions for physical education in every primary and secondary school. The programs for supporting the sporting clubs aim to stimulate increased number of children to actively engage with professional sporting activities. The state will provide subsidies for monthly membership in sporting clubs for talented children from financially deprived families. Also, one of the measures is the introduction of student sport leagues.

Sport as National Pride

Measures:

- The Government will provide adequate conditions for physical education in every primary and secondary school that will contribute to better psycho-physical development of children.
- Furthermore, increasing number of children will be actively engaged with professional sporting activities through programs for supporting the sporting clubs.

Commitments and measures from Plan 2030 – key findings
Chapter VI. youth, education and training

The Program Plan 2030 of the Coalition Vlen focuses on youth issues in a separate chapter VI. Youth, education and training.

Some of the measures from Chapter VI. in Plan 2030 have been included in the same or similar form in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program, and generally coincide with the measures stipulated in the Platform #1198.

Measures relating to education such as strengthening of gymnasium education, unifying the curricula with the curricula in Kosovo and Albania, establishing a joint institute for preserving the speech and language, have not been included in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program.

Comparative analysis Table 7– Comparison of Plan 2030, focus on youth policies of Chapter VI. Youth, education and training vis-a-vis the 2024–2028 Government Work Program, program segment Youth in Focus

Platform # 1198 (electoral promises)

2024 – 2028 Government Work Program (extracts)

The segment Children and Youth – Play, Sports and Culture, includes promises for construction of 200 sports fields in Albanian areas, 5 Albanian cultural centers and support for elite sportsmen.

Measures for the construction of sports infrastructure are stipulated under the section Sport as National Pride, however, there are no specific measures specifically related to areas where the Albanian ethnic community dominates.

Schools are planned to become community centers, which are equipped with physical digital libraries and free internet access.

Such measure is stipulated as part of the specific youth policies under the section Youth in Focus.

Measures:

- Free Internet access will be provided in all student dormitories, libraries, reading rooms, youth centers and faculties.

In the segment National Education and Training, promises are made to unify the curricula with the curricula from Albania and Kosovo, to establish a joint institute, and to cultivate the speech and language. It is planned to introduce strong gymnasium education for all who pass the entry exam, while all others to be enrolled in vocational schools. Furthermore, in the field of education, promises are made to provide quality vocational education, increased safety in schools, and strengthened quality of universities.

Measures included in the section Education for the future:

- Programs for prevention of school violence and safe school environment;
- Professional orientation and career counseling in primary education will provide both the students and parents with relevant information about various career opportunities and trends on the labor market. To stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit among students and alleviate the transition from school to employment/self-employment or further education, we will assist the opening of real companies in secondary school. Modern career centers that provide professional guidance to students will have prominent place in secondary schools.

CROSS-CUTTING youth policies

Cross-cutting youth policies in the Plan 2030 of the Coalition Vlen are as follows:

- Youth Free Economic Zone intended for youth businesses, supported by incentives both for start-ups and the technological sector.
- Reduce the profit tax by half and apply the credit system for returnees from diaspora who open business and employ young people and women.
- Zero interest rate for buying apartment, intended for young married couples.

Youth Free Economic Zone and reducing the profit tax by half for businesses that employ young people have not been included in the 2024–2028 Government Work program.

The measure to provide zero interest rate to young married couples who bought apartment is similar to the more comprehensive measure “Buy your home for young people”.

Commitments and measures from the proclamation for dignified Macedonia – key findings

The following youth-specific measures were included in the Proclamation for Dignified Macedonia:

- Long-term loans for newly established companies by young people, and subsidized interest rates by the state.
- Monthly scholarships in the amount of Eur 500 for best students.
- Employment for the best 200 students in the scientific institutions and institutions of the system.

It can be said that these measures are generally included in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program in the sections– Youth in Focus, Education for the Future and Productive and High-paying Jobs. The measures have been modified, but generally serve the purpose for which they were proposed in the Proclamation for Dignified Macedonia, i.e. support for start-up initiatives, support for students and support for employment of best students. The measures in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program, which also include specific measures from the Proclamation for Dignified Macedonia, are not accompanied with quantitative indicators.

General observations

The format of the 2024–2028 Government Work Program is based on a list of commitments, activities and measures. However, the goals lack precision and clarity with only some quantitative indicators and even less qualitative indicators. Also, the 2024 – 2028 Government Work Program lacks the subsections and topics that were included in the electoral programs, which further confuses the monitoring of the scope of some measures, as well as the target groups for those measures. The 2024– 2028 Government Work Program also lacks a timeframe for the implementation of the special measures, which further complicates the monitoring of the measures implementation of interest in this analysis. This format prevents the public from knowing what are the specific goals to be met during the four-year term of the Government, and what results are expected, i.e. what should be the effect of stipulated measures. Part of the quantitative indicators that were promised in the electoral program of VMRO-DPMNE "Platform #1198" are missing in the 2024 – 2028 Government Work Program. This makes it even more difficult to monitor the fulfillment of electoral promises. The 2024 – 2028 Government Work Program was mainly designed on the basis of the "Platform #1198", while youth related measures from the programs of other political entities forming the Government have not been addressed separately or specifically integrated, that is, only measures that were already planned in the Platform #1198 have been included.

Specific observations

Regarding youth-related issues, it can be said that largely they have been translated from the "Platform #1198" into the 2024–2028 Government Work Program. Some of the measures that were quantified in the "Platform #1198" lack the quantitative indicators within the 2024–2028 Government Work Program. For example, the number of newly created jobs for young people is not mentioned at all, as well as the number of young trained people and the amount of investments in dormitories. Youth-related measures from the "Plan 2030" of the Coalition "Vlen" are partially translated into certain measures in the 2024–2028 Government Work Program. Youth-related measures from the "Proclamation for Dignified Macedonia" of the Movement ZNAM are generally addressed in the 2024– 2028 Government Work Program.

- Considering the format of the 2024-2028 Government Work Program, it is possible that some of the measures that lack clarity and precision, as well as some of the commitments, will be further elaborated within the special sectors and ministries. Therefore, it is recommended to additionally plan and carry out a monitoring of promised youth related measures which are addressed in the national strategies, plans, ministry strategies and similar working documents in order to determine whether the commitments, as well as the measures that lack precision and clear indicators will be operationalized in future
- It is recommended that specific goals, timelines, clear expected results and quantitative indicators are part of the future planning of the Government and the Ministries for 2025, in order to enable the monitoring of the fulfillment of given promises.
- It is recommended to further disseminate the results of this analysis in order to reach out to the citizens, thus informing the citizens of the priority given to their needs in the 2024-2028 Government Work Program and to advocate for further implementation.
- It is recommended that active CSOs at local level undertake an ongoing monitoring of the annual work programs of local self-governments units to determine whether some of the youth related issues will be transposed at the local level, in what form and to establish a plan for further monitoring of the implementation. This is especially recommended with regard to the monitoring of the programs of local self-governments, given that they will implement the promised support of EUR 250 million for local self-governments.
- Civil society organizations should present their requests to the Government, competent ministries and agencies, so that parts of the programs that include commitments can be further operationalized and implemented as concrete measures.