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RESEARCH

Democratic Participation
and Civic Engagement
for young people
in the Balkans

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ABOUT DEMPOD PROJECT



DEMPOD - “Democratic Participation and Civic Engagement for young people in the Balkans through podcasts and vidcasts” is a 3-year initiative supported by the European Union through the Erasmus+ "Virtual Exchanges in Higher Education and Youth" program.

The project aims to empower disadvantaged youth to use podcasts as a tool in their local contexts in order to increase their civic engagement and their participation in the democratic life.

The project focuses on the three areas of action of the strategy:

- **ENGAGEMENT** of young people in the analysis, research, reflection and organization of sociocultural processes.
- **CONNECTING** young people from different countries to create networks of collaboration and international cooperation.
- **EMPOWER** them as active digital citizens who are able to perform as main actors in a new concept of digital environment to overcome contradictions and social, environmental, economic and cultural crises that transcend the reality of today's world.



ABOUT RESEARCH



The research aims to explore the nature and dimensions of digital civic engagement of young people in the five European Countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Montenegro and Romania) and identify emerging trends and challenges in the digital civic space and to understand the opportunities and obstacles digital activism poses to young actors. The goal of the research is to contribute to the development of more effective strategies for promoting democratic participation and civic engagement among young people in the region, and to lead to more in-depth research and dialogue between stakeholders interested in advancing digital youth activism and civic engagement.

Methodology

The methodology used for the analysis presented in this document combines both desk research and primary data collection through quantitative and qualitative methods. The research covers five partner countries: Albania, Greece, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro, and Romania.

Desk Research:

The desk research component provides an overview of the legislative frameworks and policies that affect young people across the partner countries. Each country conducted a thorough literature review, focusing on several key areas:

- Legislation impacting young people
- National Youth Strategy
- Institutions responsible for youth policies
- National studies and reports on youth inclusion in democratic processes
- Demographic data on youth (ages 18-29), including gender distribution and education levels

This section aims to map the existing legislative and institutional landscape that shapes youth engagement in each country, providing a contextual backdrop for the primary research.



Quantitative Method:

The quantitative approach involved a national survey conducted online using Google Forms. Each country surveyed around 100 young people, resulting in a total sample size of 497 respondents. The survey was designed to be gender-balanced and geographically representative, composed of 16 questions covering:

- Demographic details
- Youth engagement in democratic processes
- Online and offline activism
- Use of digital tools for political and social participation

The survey, administered in the native languages of the partner countries, was disseminated through social media and the snowballing method to reach young civic actors aged 18-29 between April and May 2024.

Qualitative Method:

To complement the quantitative data, the research also involved collecting best practices from various organizations, including NGOs, formal and non-formal groups, youth councils, youth forums, and youth networks. Each partner organization contributed three to four best practice examples, providing a qualitative understanding of successful youth engagement strategies.

By combining desk research with extensive quantitative and qualitative data collection, this study provides a holistic view of the factors influencing youth engagement in the Balkans, offering valuable insights for fostering a more inclusive and participatory democratic culture.



DESK RESEARCH

Youth policies in five partner countries:
Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece,
Montenegro, Romania.

YOUTH POLICIES IN ALBANIA



According to Institute of Statistics of Republic of Albania, the population of Albania on January 1, 2023 is 2,761,785 inhabitants, suffering a decrease of 1.1 %, compared to January 1, 2022. The median age has increased is 38,8 years, from 33 years in January 2011. According to INSTAT, youth population (ages 15-29) in Albania has shown a decline, decreasing from 24.91% in 2016 to 23.4% in 2020 and further to 21.3% in 2023.¹

Sex ratio of total population in 2023 has decreased compared to 2022: from 98.6 to 98.0 males for 100 females. Sex ratio at birth has decreased, marking 107.4 in 2022, from 107.6 which was in 2021.

The population of Albania has also experienced a major decline since 1990 because of emigration. In January 2023 the number of emigrants was 46,460 persons: 10.5 % more compared to the year 2021. In January 2023 the youth dependency ratio decreased compared to January 2022: from 24.0 % to 23.8 %, while the old dependency ratio increased: from 23.1 % to 24.4 % during the same period.

When it comes to statistics on youth participation in politics, The National Survey made by WFD² is one of the only sources where this information is displayed. 71% of the Albanian youth perceive emigration as part of their short or mid-term plans, while only 11% are undecided. When it comes to education, we see that in the school year 2022-23, 432,870 pupils and children were enrolled in pre-university education, marking a decrease of 4.7 % compared to the 2021-22 school year.

Enrolment rates in the pre-university education system dropped to 72.9%.¹⁰ The current enrolment in basic education stands at 286,486 students, with 158,528 in primary education and 127,958 in lower secondary education. Survey, Q2 – 2023 developed by INSTAT, 15 unemployment rate was at 22.3%, compared to 2020 when the official youth (15-29) unemployment rate was 20.7%, as of December 2020.

Youth migration plays a huge role in the unemployment rates because it significantly impacts on the labor force and social capital where two of the most important effects are being noticed in the brain drain and labor shortages, especially those that rely on lower-skilled or entry-level workers.

[1] <https://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/popullsia/#tab3>

[2] https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/national-survey_young-people-and-politics-in-albania-final.pdf



Legislation that addresses policies impacting young people

Several key legislative and policy initiatives are currently shaping the landscape for young people in Albania. These initiatives focus on various aspects such as education, employment, civic engagement, and social entrepreneurship.

Youth2030 Strategy: This initiative, spearheaded by the UN in Albania, aims to address the challenges young people face in transitioning from education to the labor market. It also seeks to mitigate high youth emigration rates and improve youth engagement in policy-making processes. The strategy includes a UN Youth Task Force and the UN Youth Advisory Group to promote youth involvement in various sectors including climate change, health, and migration.³

National Youth Strategy 2022-2029: This strategy was developed with the support of UN agencies like UNDP, UNICEF, and UNFPA. It aims to create a comprehensive framework for youth development in Albania, emphasizing the importance of coordinated efforts across different ministries and local governments to better address youth issues.⁴

Civic Engagement and Participation: The Youth Participation Index highlights the involvement of young people in decision-making processes and social life. Despite improvements, there are still challenges in ensuring that youth voices significantly impact policy decisions. Efforts are ongoing to increase youth participation in governance through structures like youth parliaments and councils.⁵

Economic and Social Reforms: Structural reforms supported by the EU and other international partners aim to create a more conducive environment for youth employment and entrepreneurship. These reforms include promoting good governance practices, enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations, and supporting philanthropic activities.⁶

[3] <https://albania.un.org/en/261823-un-albania-resident-coordinator-remarks-youth-2030-conference-tirana-26-february-2024>

[4] https://riniafemijet.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SKR29_Anglisht.pdf

[5] <https://youthwbt.eu/youth-participation-index-2021/>

[6] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/Albania%202022%20ERP%20assessment%20SWD_2022_120.pdf#:~:text=URL%3A%20https%3A%2F%2Fneighbourhood

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Youth National Strategy

The National Youth Strategy⁷2022-2029 is the main regulatory framework document, following Law No. 75/2019 that regulates the youth sector and young people in terms of participation in Albania. The strategy is a result of extensive consultations with young people across Albania, who shared their concerns and ideas. It aims to align national youth policies with the European Youth Strategy 2019-2027, focusing on various areas such as employment, education, technology, arts, sports, and volunteerism.

For implementation, the strategy has allocated a budget of approximately ALL 5.6 billion (USD 50.1 million) over eight years.⁸ This funding covers various policy objectives, combining state funds and contributions from donors. The strategy also highlights the importance of youth work as a recognized profession, aiming to formalize and support youth work through a National Qualifications Framework.

The policies designed for the purposes of this strategy comprise the following goals:

- Youth actively participating in society and feeling empowered to speak for themselves.
- Building youth employment skills, supported by youth-oriented career counseling and employment services, increasing and improving opportunities to enter the labour market on the basis of equity and equal chances.
- Active, healthy, physical, social and mental well-being of youth.
- Innovation and quality education to support youth in achieving their full potential
- Youth safety, protection and inclusion across their diversity, particularly at risk or vulnerable youth.
- Coordinated, evidence-based cross-sectoral youth policies with well-funded provision, monitoring and horizontal and vertical evaluation mechanisms.

[7] <https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Permbledhje-e-ligjit-dhe-akteve-n%C3%ABnligjore-n%C3%AB-fush%C3%ABn-e-rinis%C3%AB.pdf>

[8] Minister of State for Youth and Children | Official website (riniafemijet.gov.al)



National Institutions responsible for formulating and executing youth policies

- Central government;
- The Minister of State for Youth and Children is an institution established by the new government in 2021, and it plays the main and fundamental role in organizing and supporting youth. The Minister is responsible for general youth policy and legal framework, monitoring the implementation of youth policies and representing the Government of Albania at the international level regarding youth issues;
- Until 2021, the Ministry of Education and Sports had a youth portfolio and was fully responsible for youth policies. A Deputy Minister dedicated to Youth was a vital part of the general youth policy framework, while the Directorate for Youth within this ministry was responsible for issues related to youth policies. This ministry continues to play an important role in youth policies, because it is responsible for two important areas in the lives of young people aged 15- 29, such as education and sports;
- The Ministry of Finance and Economy is responsible for supporting entrepreneurship, VET and innovation;
- The Ministry of Justice is responsible for matters of juveniles in conflict with the law;
- The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) is responsible for youth health and social inclusion;
- The Ministry of Culture is responsible for arts and culture policies aimed at youth;
- State administration bodies;
- Local government bodies;
- NGOs;
- Student parliaments and other legal entities in order to improve the status of young people, their personal and social development, as well as their involvement in social issues.

Studies and reports developed at the national level for the inclusion of young people in democratic processes

Article 3, paragraph 3, of the updated Electoral Code in Albania, as of 2020, states that “Every Albanian citizen who has reached the age of 18, even on election day, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, political belief, faith, physical ability or economic status, has the right to vote and be elected, in accordance with the rules provided in this Code”.

The last central government elections in Albania took place in April 2021. The overall turnout, according to statistics provided by the Central Election Committee (CEC), was 46.33%. However, the CEC does not provide data about youth turnout. Data are disaggregated for women voters. However, it offers data on first-time voters, which refers to the category of citizens turning 18, rounding 107 thousand first time voters.



Other than the CEC as a key source of information, there have been a lot of studies and reports done to provide more insight on the inclusion of Albanian youth in democratic processes.

National Survey: Young People and Politics in Albania, is a survey published by Westminster Foundation for Democracy in 2019. This survey brings a deeper view on the perception that Albanian young people have on political participations. Throughout the whole study we can see how the inclusion of the youth in political and democratic processes declines with each year. All the information gathered in the survey shows the youth's opinion on political participation while revealing that most of the Albanian young population distance themselves from any form of political engagement. This survey identifies several issues on the lack of political participations these youngsters have, from lack of long-term programs and strategies focusing on integrating youth in the political system, to the deficit in local youth plans.

Albanian Participation, a report published by The Council of Europe shows that the turnout of the last elections in 2023 gave the lowest results of voters, with an even lower percentage of first-time voters, at only 13.5%. This study gives a more updated perspective on the situation, raising the alarm that as the years go by, the trust of the young people in the political systems fades away.

Youth Political Participation in Albania is another very insightful report by Partners Albania for Change and Development. This report focuses more on the legal frame regarding youth issues and their engagement in political and democratic processes. According to this report, there has been an improvement on the youth legal frame, while recognizing the lack on implementation.

YOUTH POLICIES IN GREECE



Young people aged 18-29 in Greece are estimated at about 12% of the total population, i.e. about 1.2 million people (Statistics.gr). Around 40% of young people aged 25-29 have a university degree, while a significant proportion are pursuing postgraduate and doctoral studies. Unemployment remains a major issue for young people in Greece. The unemployment rate for young people aged 15-24 was 36.8% in 2023, while for the 25-29 age group the rate was 24.4% (Fpress.gr).

Recent studies and surveys suggest that young people in Greece are more interested in alternative forms of political participation beyond traditional elections. Their political participation is often expressed through social movements and actions, while digital platforms and social networks play a key role in informing them and organising political activities (Statistics.gr) (Fpress.gr).

Legislation and policies affecting young people in Greece include various initiatives and strategic plans aimed at enhancing youth participation, education and employment.

The Ministry of Education has declared 2024 as the Year of Youth with objectives such as promoting the democratic and active participation of young people in decision-making processes, improving policies affecting them and enhancing their skills for their integration into society and the labour market. Actions are foreseen for young people's professional initiative, inclusion and mental health (Today.gr) (Alfavita).

Strategic Plan for Vocational Education and Training. It includes measures to acquire skills and competences that contribute to young people's professional and personal development (Alfavita).

National Strategy for Youth Employment: This strategy includes several strands covering education, vocational training, entrepreneurship and support for youth employment, with the aim of improving the employment prospects of young people and reducing unemployment (Ministry of Labour and Social Security).

These initiatives aim to empower young people and ensure that their voices are heard and taken into account in decisions that affect them.

Youth National Strategy

The National Strategy for Youth in Greece is a comprehensive framework that aims to empower and support young people in various fields. This strategy includes a series of policies and initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges young people face and creating opportunities for their personal and professional development.



Key elements of the National Youth Strategy:

Education and Training: The Strategic Plan for Vocational Education, Training and Lifelong Learning 2022-2024 includes policies to upgrade education and enhance the skills of young people to enable them to integrate effectively into the labour market and achieve economic autonomy (Youth Wiki Uniwa Gr).

Employment: The National Youth Employment Strategy (2021-2027) focuses on reducing unemployment among youth by providing incentives for youth recruitment, supporting entrepreneurship and enhancing vocational training (Ministry of Labor and Social Security).

Social Inclusion: It includes measures to support vulnerable groups of young people and provide opportunities for social and economic participation (Youth Wiki Uniwa Gr).

Democratic Participation: The strategy promotes the participation of young people in decision-making processes, enhancing their democratic skills and civic participation through initiatives such as the Year of Youth 2024, which aims to activate and engage young people in public affairs.

These policies and initiatives form a coherent framework aimed at improving the quality of life of young people in Greece and strengthening their contribution to society and the economy.

National Institutions responsible for formulating and executing youth policies

In Greece, several national institutions are responsible for the formulation and implementation of youth policies. These institutions work together to ensure that policies respond to young people's needs and aspirations, and promote their inclusion, employment, education and social participation.

Key Institutional Bodies:

- **Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs:** The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (MoEET) is responsible for the development and implementation of policies related to education and training of young people. It includes departments and services dealing with primary, secondary and higher education, as well as lifelong learning and vocational training (Youth Wiki Uniwa Gr).
- **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs:** The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for youth employment and social security policy. Among its responsibilities are the development of strategies to reduce youth unemployment, support youth entrepreneurship and promote social inclusion (Ministry of Labor and Social Security).



- **National Youth Council (NYC):** The NSYN acts as an advisor to the government on youth issues and represents the views and interests of young people. It participates in the formulation of policies and programmes that concern them and promotes the active participation of young people in decision-making processes (Youth Wiki Uniwa Gr) (Youth Wiki Uniwa Gr).

Studies and reports developed at the national level for the inclusion of young people in democratic processes

In Greece, there are several studies and reports focusing on the inclusion of young people in democratic processes. Some of them highlight the challenges faced by young people and the efforts made to enhance their participation.

EUact2 research project: The EUact2 project, developed by ELIAMEP, aims to increase the participation of young people in democratic processes, especially in European Parliament elections. It includes actions such as focus groups, public debates and digital discussion spaces to encourage young people's participation in public life (ELIAMEP).

ENA Institute report: A report by the ENA Institute analyses the dimensions of youth political participation in Greece. According to the report, young people often move away from traditional forms of political participation, such as elections, but seek new, alternative forms of participation that better meet their expectations and needs (Ena Institute).

UNICEF initiatives: UNICEF in Greece, through its Youth 2030 strategic framework, supports the empowerment and participation of young people in decision-making processes. It emphasizes social inclusion and the use of innovative solutions to support young people, especially the most excluded populations (UNICEF).

The above studies and programmes indicate the importance of young people's active participation in democratic processes and the efforts made to encourage them to actively contribute to society.

YOUTH POLICIES IN BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA



Young people aged 18-29 in Bosnia-Herzegovina are estimated at about 17% of the total population, i.e. about 561,000 people. Around 30-35% of individuals in this age group either pursuing or having completed a university degree.

The unemployment rate among Bosnians aged 15-29 was 34% in 2019, according to International Labour Organization figures. Among the youth, particularly those aged 18-29, employment is challenging, with significant numbers engaged in either formal or informal sectors.

BiH does not have a national youth law. At a national level, the youth policy issues are in jurisdiction of the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH. The BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs has the competence over the work of this Commission.

However, most of the constitutional competencies regarding youth issues are exercised at the entities' government level: RS, FBiH and BD. Accordingly, the three entities have a youth related law, namely the RS Law on Youth Organization 2004, the FBiH Youth Law 2010 and the BD Youth Law 2017. These laws define the youth policy framework in BiH and all three laws set the age limits for the youth as a target group aged 15-30.

The goals and scope of the law on Youth in the FBiH are:

- Creating and implementing youth policies at all levels of government in FBiH, through a cross-sectoral approach and taking into account the needs, demands, and interests of youth.
- Establishing criteria in line with European principles in the work of public administrations when implementing youth policies.
- Determining and defining measures and recommendations regarding youth work and youth activities.
- Strengthening the participation and inclusion of youth and their information at all levels of decision-making in the Federation through structured participation mechanisms.
- Enhancing youth volunteerism and their voluntary engagement in activities related to youth issues.
- Implementing principles of non-discrimination, solidarity, and ethics in all activities related to youth issues.
- Strengthening the human, technical, and administrative capacities of youth associations.



The goals of the RS Law on Youth Organization are:

- Encouraging systematic improvement and development of youth organization and youth policy with active youth participation.
- Mobilizing youth.
- Affirmation of youth activities.
- Advocacy for the interests and rights of youth.
- Promoting youth participation in decision-making processes.

Youth National Strategy

BiH does not have a national youth strategy, however each entity has their own youth policies. Strategies have been developed or are under development by each entity.

The RS National Assembly adopted the fourth RS Youth Policy 2023-2027 in January 2023 ; with a focus on four strategic priorities:

- Improve opportunities and interests of youth for a better life (sustainable stay and return) in RS.
- Encourage youth initiative and responsible action in the community.
- Promote the development of healthy lifestyles among youth and responsible environmental attitudes.
- Promote excellence and serve as examples for youth.

The BD Assembly, in a session held in February 2023, adopted the BD Youth Strategy 2022-2026. The strategic objectives of the BD Youth Strategy are:

- Empowered employment support system, competitive economy of the BD BiH, and improved education system serve as a platform through which BD responds to the needs of youth, creating concrete opportunities for youth in the labor market in BD.
- Enhanced systems and services to support youth in the field of social care, information, and health create a better living environment for the youth BD BiH.
- BD BiH recognizes youth as active actors who actively contribute to the development and implementation of youth policies and programs and EU integration.

As for the FBiH Government, in October 2023, upon the proposal of the FBiH Ministry of Culture and Sports, a session was held during which the FBiH Government adopted a Decision initiating the process of drafting the FBiH Youth Policy until 2027. The Federal Ministry of Culture and Sports coordinates and leads the process of drafting the Youth Policy.



National Institutions responsible for formulating and executing youth policies

The responsible authorities for the implementation of the youth strategy in BiH are multiple and fall respectively under the different levels of political governance (national, federal, cantonal, local).

At a **national level**, the youth policy issues are in jurisdiction of the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH, which consists of nine members : four representatives come from the government institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2 representatives; FBiH Ministry of Culture and Sports, 1 representative; RS Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, 1 representative), while there are five representatives of the youth NGO sector in BiH. In 2009, following a Decision of the BiH Council of Ministers, the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH became a stranding body within the Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, hence granting competence to the latter Ministry over the work of the Commission.

At the **entity (federal) level**, the competencies in the field of youth are within the following institutions: RS Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports, FBiH Ministry of Culture and Sports, Assembly of BD. Moreover, BiH has three major youth councils: Youth Council at the RS ; the Youth Council in FBiH ; and the BD Youth Council. All three councils deal with the representation of youth issues at a higher level, build a dialogue with government institutions with the aim of improving the position of young people and building partnership relations, and cooperate at the international level.

At the **cantonal level** in the FBiH, youth issues are under the jurisdiction of the cantonal ministries of education and some of the cantons have a cantonal Youth Council that is a member of the FBiH Youth Council.

At the **local level**, which is the last level in the distribution of responsibility for youth issues, each municipality has a youth officer in the Department for Social Activities. At the local level, municipalities have youth councils that bring together youth organizations, and municipality councils are members of the Youth Council at cantonal and entity levels.

Studies and reports developed at the national level for the inclusion of young people in democratic processes

The “Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina” published in 2019, addresses, among other topics, the question of whether youth can be considered a vibrant force that wishes to strengthen democracy in BiH. The study recalls that the country is still in a precarious state in which the achievement of democracy should not be taken for granted.



As the study underlines, young people strongly support their right to vote, but do not want to engage in daily politics. The lack of trust towards BiH political institutions and politicians explains why the democratic participation of young people is very limited. Furthermore, international actors are deemed more trustworthy than local institutions, the EU being the most trusted of all political actors. Young people see the EU as a role model in many aspects, especially employment and economic welfare, two issues of particular interest among youth in BiH. According to the study, 85 percent of the youth in BiH support the country joining the EU.

In a report published in November 2023 “From aspirations to action: youth inclusion in the EU integration process of the Western Balkans”, the organization *Connecting Youth* highlights the importance of involving youth in the EU integration process of the Western Balkans. The study recognizes the efforts of BiH in establishing and consolidating the youth policy framework, by adopting relevant laws and strategies. Yet the study also deplores the lack of political will in fostering youth engagement and participation in decision-making, as well as the obstacles that young people encounter toward meaningful political involvement. Key concerns for young people revolve around issues like youth unemployment and limited economic opportunities. These challenges create uncertainty about their future, which, in turn, prompts emigration and diminishes their motivation to contribute to their communities. Concrete recommendations were formulated by this study, in order to address these challenges. The recommendations tackle three crucial issues: the education and skill development; the transparency and accountability in implementing youth-related policies; and the importance of collaboration and partnerships to support youth engagement.

The *Prism Research and Consulting Agency* conducted in 2016 a survey titled “Socio-economic Perspective of Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. It appears from this study that young people are dissatisfied with the political, economic and social situation. Young people believe that the political development in BiH is stagnating, and that the ruling structures are not adequately dealing with a multitude of problems that BiH is facing. Young people do not trust the ability of the authorities to deal with the current problems, and they believe that the citizens should be drivers of change in the society. Despite such perception, only very few young people volunteer or are politically active, and they most often state that the reason for their political passivity is the lack of interest in political life.

Another study carried out by the association *Academy for Women*, called “Youth in the Statutes of Political Subjects in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, underlines the discrepancy between the statistical representation of youth in the total population (over 22%) and the low percentages of youth engagement in political activities, which indicates a very poor identification with the existing political system and institutions, but also their skepticism about having any influence on political processes and decision-makers.

YOUTH POLICIES IN MONTENEGRO



According to the 2011 census, Montenegro's total population stands at 620,029. Within this population, there are 44,093 individuals aged 15 to 19, 42,816 aged 20 to 24, and 45,793 aged 25 to 29. This results in a total of 132,702 individuals between the ages of 15 and 29, representing 21.4% of the population. In other words, approximately one in every five citizens of Montenegro is a young person aged between 15 and 29.

Within this demographic, 68,198 are male and 64,504 are female. This translates to 51.4% of young people being male and 48.6% being female. These figures highlight the relatively balanced gender distribution among Montenegro's youth. When it comes to living in urban or rural areas, 66,1% of young people aged 15-29 live in urban areas, while a third of young people 33,9% live in rural areas. This structure easily changes, as there is a high level of inter migration due to education and work, which makes a prediction that there are more young people in urban areas than there numbers show.

The main legislative document that impacts young people in Montenegro is the *Law on Youth*.⁹ This law regulates youth policies, measures and activities that shall be used to determine and improve rights and position of young people in Montenegro. According to this Law, **young people are considered all individuals who are between 15 and 30 years old**. As children are considered to be persons under the age of 18, there is a certain overlap between the group of children and young people.¹⁰

Moreover, this Law specifically mentioned the *Youth National Strategy* (hereinafter: Strategy) as a main document containing directions of development and progress of youth policies, which is adopted by the Government, based on the proposal of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, for the period of at least 4 years. Each year, the Ministry is obliged to create a yearly report on the implementation of the Strategy.

The *Labour Law*¹¹ is also a significant aspect of youth policy in Montenegro. Under this law, the minimum legal working age is set at 15 years. However, it further stipulates that individuals who are 15 years old and still undergoing compulsory elementary education, as mandated by a specific law, are prohibited from employment. Legislation regulating education also impact young people, especially *Law on Primary Education and Upbringing*,¹² *General Law on Education and Upbringing*,¹³ as well as *Law on Higher Education*.¹⁴

[9] Law on Youth, Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 025/19 of 30.04.2019 and 027/19 of 17.05.2019

[10] Istraživanje i procjena lokalnih politika koje se odnose na mlade i potrebe mladih u 15 lokalnih samouprava, Regionalni program lokalne demokratije na Zapadnom Balkanu, 2022.

[11] Labour Law, Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 74/2019 and 8/2021

[12] Law on Primary Education and Upbringing, Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 45/2010, 40/2011 - 39/2013 i 47/201

[13] General Law on Education and Upbringing, Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 146/21 from 31.12.2021

[14] Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 74/2020

These laws establish policies that ensure access to quality education, promote equitable educational opportunities, and support the comprehensive development of young people at all educational levels.

The Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings¹⁵ also impacts young people until the age of 18, by establishing a legal framework that ensures their rights are protected during criminal investigations and trials. This legislation emphasizes rehabilitation over punishment, with an aim to integrate juvenile offenders back into society effectively.

Youth National Strategy

Youth National Strategy in Montenegro is defined by Law on Youth and represents the most important document that regulates youth policies and its directions and objectives. By the end of 2023, the Government of Montenegro has adopted a National Youth Strategy for 2023-2027.

The four operational objectives of this Strategy are:



- developing a sustainable and high-quality system of services and programs to support youth in their transition to adulthood;
- creating conditions for young people to be active citizens, involved in the creation and implementation of public policies;
- achieving intersectoral contributions to improving the overall status of youth;
- enhancing mechanisms for the effective creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policy.¹⁶

National Institutions responsible for formulating and executing youth policies

The primary and most significant state institution responsible for youth policies is the **Ministry of Sports and Youth**. On the basis of Law on Youth, in order to encourage the development of youth policy, the Ministry establishes a **Youth Council**, as an expert and advisory body. Law on Youth also foresees and regulates, The Ministry of Sports and Youth provides the conditions for the work of **Youth Services** (that includes a Youth Club and Youth Center), while the space for each Youth Service is provided by the local municipality administrative body. Having this in mind, **Local Municipalities** also play a crucial role by implementing national youth policies at the community level, providing resources and support tailored to local needs.

[15] Law on the Treatment of Juveniles in Criminal Proceedings, Official Gazette of Montenegro, Nos. 064/11 from 29.12.2011, 001/18 from 04.01.2018

[16] Vlada usvojila Strategiju za mlade 2023-2027. godine, Vlada Crne Gore, 19.10.2023. <https://www.gov.me/clanak/vlada-usvojila-nacrt-strategije-za-mlade-2023-2027-godine>



Five years ago, the **European Youth Card EYCA**¹⁷ was established for young people from the age of 13 till the age of 29. This card is a joint initiative of NGO Centre for youth education and Ministry of sports and youth, and offers valuable discounts to young people in various industries.

The **Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation** significantly shapes youth policies by developing educational programs and initiatives that promote scientific literacy and innovation among young people. The **Ministry of Human and Minority Rights** ensures that youth policies uphold the rights and protections of all young citizens, including those from minority groups. The **Institute for Social and Child Protection** contributes by offering services and programs aimed at safeguarding the well-being and development of children and adolescents.



Another, crucial national body that impacts youth is the Employment Institute of Montenegro, as many young people turn to this national body the moment they want to enter the work market. Together, these national bodies collaborate to create a comprehensive framework that supports the educational, social, and legal needs of Montenegro's youth.

Studies and reports developed at the national level for the inclusion of young people in democratic processes

When it comes to most recent studies on youth and on national level, the first worth mentioning is the UNICEF's "**Research on the Status of Youth: A Contribution to the Development of the Youth Strategy**",¹⁸ published in 2023, which serves as an essential and comprehensive data source on youth in Montenegro. This study aimed to gather data to better inform policymakers in developing a new Youth Strategy for Montenegro. It provides valuable insights into young people's attitudes towards various significant societal issues. Moreover, the research evaluated the effectiveness of youth services in Montenegro and the perceived roles of young people within these services. It also examines critical areas such as youth participation and democratic values, information sources, media literacy levels, internet safety, and personal data protection practices. The study investigates youth mobility, societal polarization, leisure activities, and health perspectives. This study is conducted to support the formulation of the Youth Strategy (2023-2027) and the findings offered policymakers both quantitative and qualitative data on topics previously emphasized in the 2017-2021 Strategy, as well as new areas identified by stakeholders involved in drafting the new Strategy.

[17] Svečanost povodom petogodišnjice projekta Evropska omladinska kartica, 15.12.2023, <https://www.gov.me/clanak/svecanost-povodom-petogodišnjice-projekta-evropska-omladinska-kartica>

[18] Istraživanje o položaju mladih, Prilog razvoju Strategije za mlade, United Nations Children's Fund, 2023.



Another interesting and also comprehensive report and research analyses on youth in Montenegro is the "*Youth Study Montenegro 2018/2019*."¹⁹ This study is part of a broader initiative examining youth across Southeast Europe, conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. It provides an in-depth look at the experiences, attitudes, and aspirations of young people in Montenegro for the 2018/2019 year, thus offering important insights to the regional understanding of youth dynamics.

Moreover, "*Research and Assessment of Local Policies Related to Youth and Youth Deeds in 15 Local Governments*" conducted by Regional Program of Local Democracy in the Western Balkans in 2022 is another valuable report and research on youth. This report used a comprehensive research strategy that aimed at investigating youth perceptions but also their knowledge about youth policies. It found that young people in most municipalities in Montenegro are not familiar with the legislative and strategic framework that applies to them, as well as mechanisms available to them for involvement in decision-making.²⁰ The biggest challenge youth face, according to this study, is youth unemployment and the business environment that is rated as unfavorable for young people.

Other documents worth mentioning are *Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence* with Action Plan 2017-2021 and *Strategy for Achievement of Children's Rights 2019-2023*,²¹ where each targets children younger than 18 years old, thus targeting youth from 15 to 17.

[19] Đukanović P, *Studija o mladima u Crnoj Gori 2018/2019*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019.

[20] Istraživanje i procjena lokalnih politika koje se odnose na mlade i potrebe mladih u 15 lokalnih samouprava, Regionalni program lokalne demokratije na Zapadnom Balkanu, 2022.

[21] Strategija za ostvarivanje prava djeteta 2019-2023, Ministarstvo rada i socijalnog staranja i UNICEF, Podgorica, Maj 2019.

YOUTH POLICIES IN ROMANIA



According to the latest Romanian census (National Institute of Statistics, 2022), Romania's youth population, specifically individuals aged 18-29, constitutes a significant portion of the country's demographic landscape. According to recent demographic data:

- The total population of Romania is approximately 19 million, with young people aged 18-29 making up around 2.7 million individuals.
- The gender distribution among youth is relatively balanced, with slightly more females than males in the 18-29 age group.
- Education levels: About 40% of young Romanians are enrolled in higher education institutions, while others pursue vocational training or enter the workforce directly. Despite improvements in educational attainment, disparities exist, particularly in rural areas, where access to education remains limited.



According to Eurostat (2024), youth unemployment Rate in Romania remained unchanged at 23.20 percent in June. Youth unemployment Rate in Romania averaged 21.93 percent from 1997 until 2024, reaching an all time high of 31.00 percent in October of 2011 and a record low of 15.30 percent in January of 1998.

Romania's youth policy landscape is shaped by both national and European frameworks, aligning with EU directives while trying to address the specific needs of its youth. The country's approach encompasses various laws, strategies, and institutions aimed at enhancing the social, political, and economic involvement of young individuals.

The responsibility for youth policy is shared between central and local authorities. The Youth Law (Law No. 350/2006) allows local governments to initiate youth programs with minimal national coordination.

Key instruments for implementing youth policy include grants for small projects targeted at youth NGOs, managed by the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities (formerly the Ministry of Youth and Sports). Various local entities, such as County Offices for Family and Youth and Cultural Student Centres, operate autonomously in organizing youth activities.

While this decentralization promotes access to youth services across diverse regions, it also leads to significant disparities in availability of services and opportunities for youth. Consequently, young people in certain areas lack resources and possibilities to connect and learn. The lack of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms further complicates national coordination.



Romania's legal framework for youth is based on several national laws promoting youth development, education, employment, and social inclusion. Notable legislative acts include:

- **Law no. 350/2006 on youth:** This law establishes the foundational principles for youth policies, defining youth as individuals aged 14 to 35, and promoting their involvement in social, economic, and cultural spheres. It emphasizes access to education, employment, and healthcare.
- **Education law no. 1/2011:** This law governs Romania's education system, ensuring that all youth have access to quality education from primary to higher education, and supports lifelong learning and vocational training to prepare them for the labor market.
- **Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child:** This legislation mandates state responsibility for the care, education, and legal protection of individuals under 18, emphasizing the importance of youth well-being.
- **Law no. 208/2015 on electoral processes:** This law facilitates young citizens' participation in elections, allowing them to engage in democratic processes from the age of 18.

Youth National Strategy

Since 2001, strategic documents, including the National Strategy for Youth Policy 2015-2020, have aimed to unify general and operational objectives for youth policy. However, the 2015-2020 strategy lacked an accompanying action plan, budget allocations, and a monitoring framework thus the implementation was deficitary.

Following 2020, the Romanian Government did not adopt a new Youth Strategy. Although this was drafted and presented for public consultation between 2021 and 2024, it was not formally adopted until March 2024. This gap has led to a lack of systematic coordination among authorities responsible for youth policy, hampering the effective implementation of youth policy objectives.

The National youth strategy 2015-2020 outlined four key pillars for youth development:

1. **Participation:** Encouraging young people to engage in democratic life and decision-making processes at local and national levels.
2. **Education, training, and employment:** Providing access to quality education and vocational training to reduce youth unemployment and enhance career prospects.
3. **Social inclusion and health:** Ensuring vulnerable youth, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, receive adequate social services and health support.
4. **Volunteering and civic engagement:** Promoting voluntary work and civic participation to help young people contribute to society and develop leadership skills.

Though initially designed for 2015-2020, the objectives of this strategy remain pertinent and are expected to influence future national strategies. The Romanian government has expressed intentions to renew and adapt this strategy, focusing on social inclusion and digital innovation to meet the evolving needs of young people.



National institutions responsible for formulating and executing youth policies

Until December 2021, the Ministry of Youth and Sports was the dedicated institution for youth policy in Romania, established in 1990. In January 2022, this responsibility shifted to the newly formed Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities. Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, and Ministry of Culture, also oversee various youth policy measures.

The Romanian youth policy, guided by the National Youth Strategy 2015-2020, encompasses several areas including education, culture, volunteering, political participation, sports, health, leisure, employment, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion. Since January 2022, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities has been the primary authority for youth, although it directly oversees only four main priorities: (1) Non-formal learning, (2) Youth volunteering, (3) Youth public and political participation, and (4) Youth leisure.

Youth considerations are often not central in other policy areas, and there are limited measures specifically targeting young people, as detailed in the Youth Wiki - Romania. The National Youth Strategy was designed with a cross-sectoral approach, but the lack of an action plan has led to isolated interventions across different ministries.

Data on Romanian youth is primarily sourced from the Youth Barometers, conducted biennially by the former Ministry of Youth and Sports from 2012 to 2020, and subsequently by NGOs and research centers in 2022.

Several national institutions play a role in shaping and implementing youth policies in Romania:

- Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities: The main governmental body for youth policy development and implementation, coordinating with other ministries to meet the diverse needs of young people.
- National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption: This authority focuses on child protection and addresses issues affecting individuals up to age 18, ensuring they receive necessary support for their development and integration.
- National Agency for Community Programs in the Field of Education and Vocational training (ANPCDEFP): Responsible for programs like Erasmus+, this agency promotes youth mobility and skills development.
- Romanian Youth Council (CTR): An umbrella organization representing youth organizations nationwide, CTR advocates for youth interests and influences national youth policies.

These institutions aim at working collaboratively to ensure that Romania's youth policies align with national priorities and EU directives, fostering a comprehensive approach to youth development. However, in reality, this could be enhanced.



Studies and reports developed at the national level for the inclusion of young people in democratic processes

Romania has produced several studies and reports aimed at assessing and promoting the inclusion of young people in democratic processes. Key reports include:

- **Youth in Romania** – Social profile and attitudes towards democracy (2019): Published by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, this report analyzes the social and political attitudes of Romanian youth, highlighting low levels of political participation but an increasing interest in civic engagement and volunteerism.
- **National report on youth in Romania (2018)**: This government-commissioned report identifies challenges such as unemployment, political disengagement, and social exclusion among young people, urging the need for targeted policies to enhance their involvement in democracy.
- **Romanian youth barometer (2015)**: Conducted by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES), this study gathers youth opinions on political participation, education, and employment, revealing a sense of disconnection from formal political processes and the need for initiatives that foster greater engagement.

These reports provide essential data for policymakers, informing strategies that promote youth inclusion in democratic activities. The National strategy for social inclusion and poverty reduction (2022-2027) outlines measures to support youth, focusing on housing, integration of individuals leaving foster care, and enhancing participation in decision-making. Key initiatives include increased financial support, vocational education grants, the “Second Chance” (A doua şansă) program to reduce school dropout rates, and campaigns against school violence. The strategy prioritizes young people with disabilities and immigrants, while also supporting employment services for at-risk youth and promoting social housing for those exiting foster care.

Responsibilities for implementing these measures are distributed among various agencies, including the National Employment Agency, the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption, and the Ministry of Education. Previous strategies, such as the National Strategy on Social Inclusion (2015-2020) and the Youth Strategy (2015-2020), continue to influence policies designed to assist vulnerable youth. Ongoing programs include the “School after School” (Școală după școală) initiative and efforts to enhance the socio-professional integration of youth leaving protective care, through mechanisms like transit centres and social housing. Youth work in Romania lacks a centralized authority, with various programs and grants funded by the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities and NGOs providing social inclusion services. Specific initiatives target young migrants, Roma, and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, training for youth workers is supported by programs like Erasmus Plus, with funding from the European Social Fund and European Economic Area grants.

KEY FINDINGS

ENGAGE

JOIN

PARTICIPATE

UNITE

INVOLVE

YOUTH ACTIVISM IN BALKAN COUNTRIES



The following sections summarize the data collected via online survey, interviews and consultation, reflecting the perceptions and responses of young people in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Montenegro, and Romania.

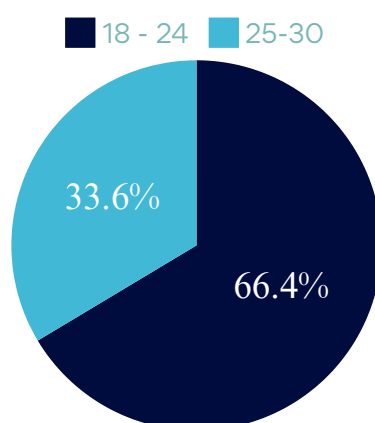
Demographic Data

The quantitative approach involved a national survey conducted online using Google Form. Each country surveyed around 100 young people, resulting in a total sample size of 497 respondents. The survey was designed to be gender-balanced and geographically representative. The survey, administered in the native languages of the partner countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Montenegro, Romania), was disseminated through social media and the snowballing method to reach young civic actors aged 18-30 between April and May 2024.

- **Age distribution**

The majority of respondents fall within the 18-24 age group, accounting for 66.4% of the total sample. The remaining 33.6% are aged 25-30.

Graphic 1: Age group

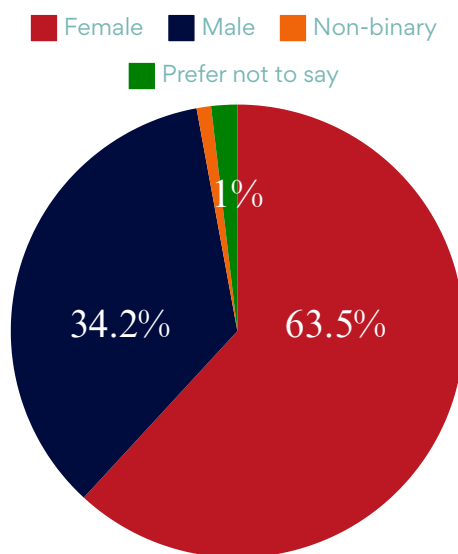


- **Gender identity**

In terms of gender identity, the sample is predominantly female, with 63.5% identifying as such. Males constitute 34.7% of respondents, while 1% identify as non-binary, and another 1% prefer not to disclose their gender.

The overrepresentation of females might suggest higher civic engagement or greater responsiveness to survey participation among young women in these regions.

Graphic 2: Gender identity

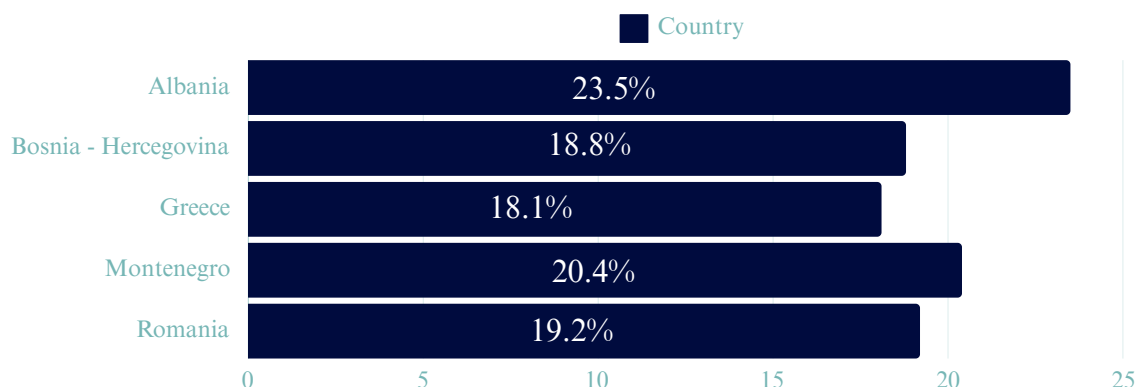


- **Country representation**

The survey achieved a balanced representation from the five partner countries: Albania (23.5%), Bosnia-Hercegovina (18.8%), Greece (18.1%), Montenegro (20.4%), Romania (19.2%).

This distribution ensures that the findings reflect a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives from across Southeast Europe, providing a comprehensive understanding of youth civic engagement in the region.

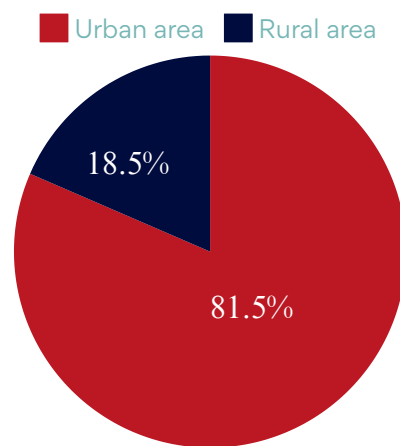
Graphic 3: Country representation



• Urban vs. Rural residence

A significant majority of respondents, 81.5%, reside in urban areas, while 18.5% come from rural areas. This urban predominance is reflective of global trends where urban centers typically offer more opportunities for civic engagement, education, and employment. The lower rural participation might indicate limited access to digital tools or lower levels of engagement in civic activities among rural youth.

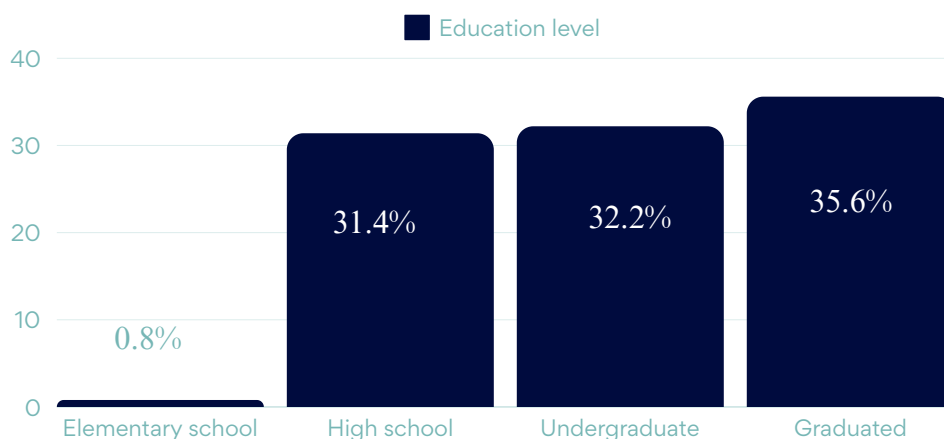
Graphic 4: Urban vs. Rural residence



• Educational background

The respondents' educational levels are distributed as follows: High School (31.4%), Undergraduate (32.2%), Graduated (35.6%). This distribution suggests that a substantial portion of the respondents are well-educated, with nearly 70% having pursued or completed higher education. This high level of education is likely correlated with greater awareness and involvement in civic activities, as well as better access to online platforms used for the survey.

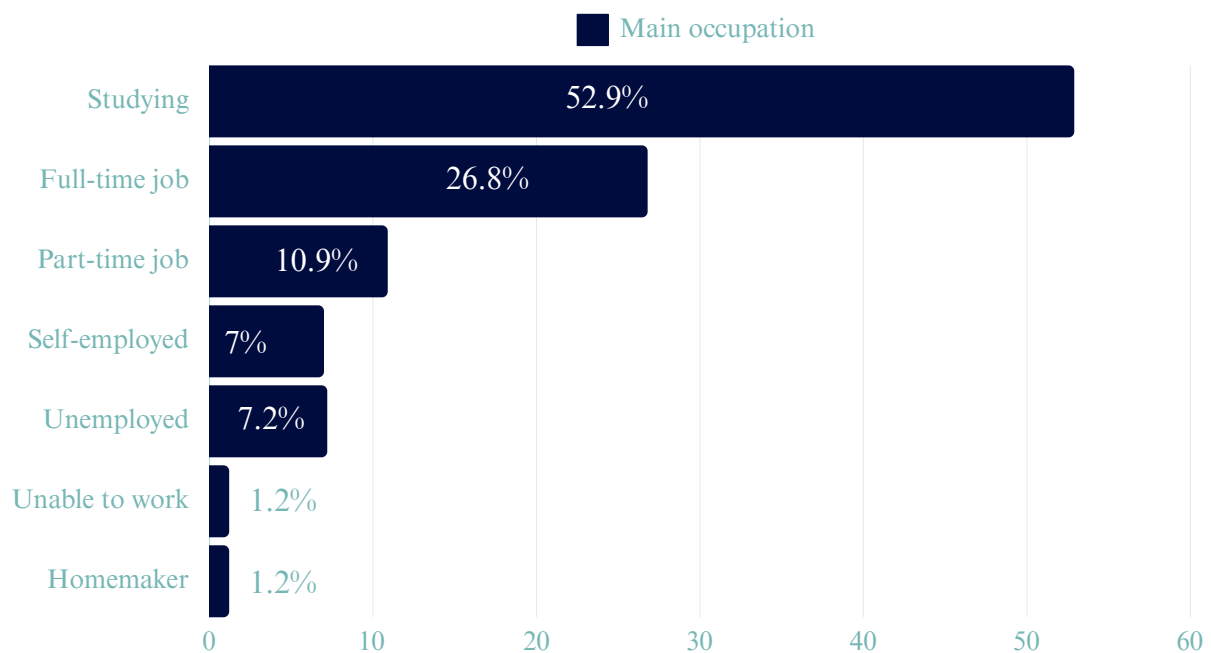
Graphic 5: Education level



- **Main occupation**

A notable majority of respondents, 55.1%, are currently studying, indicating that a significant portion of the sample is still in the educational phase of their lives. The second largest group, at 25.8%, comprises those with full-time jobs, reflecting a substantial integration into the workforce. The presence of part-time workers (10.7%), self-employed individuals (5.2%), and the unemployed (6.5%) showcases the economic diversity among the respondents. Additionally, 1.5% are unable to work, and another 1.5% identify as homemakers, indicating a small but notable segment facing specific life circumstances impacting their employment status.

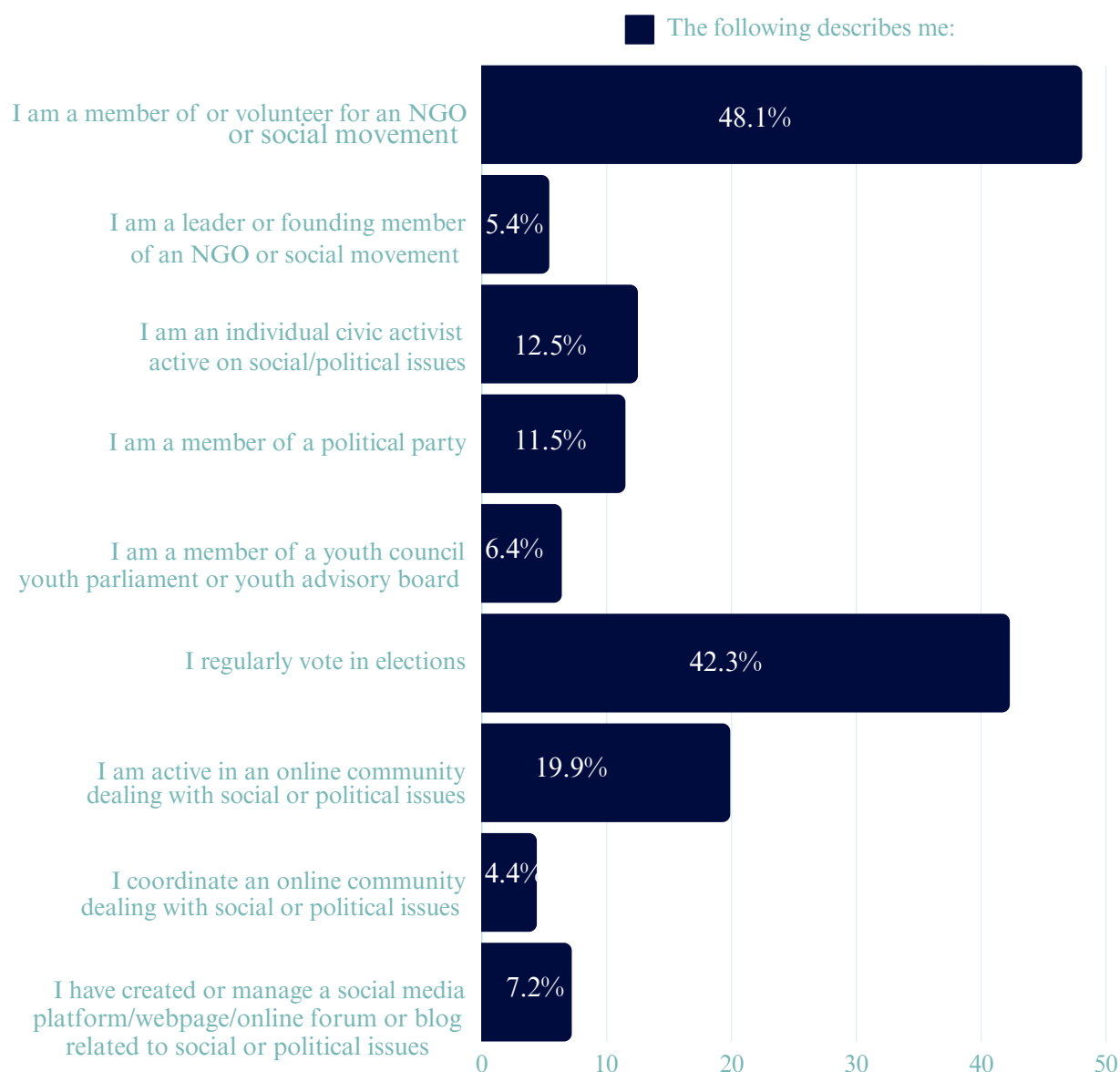
Graphic 6: Main occupation



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

Analysis of civic engagement among young people in Balkan Countries

Graphic 7: Youth engagement in democratic processes



The research explores the civic engagement of youth in Balkan countries, focusing on their participation in a range of social and political activities. The survey aimed to capture the extent and nature of youth participation in NGOs, social movements, political parties, and online communities, as well as their voting habits and leadership roles.



Involvement in NGOs, youth councils, political parties and social movements

- Membership and volunteering

Nearly half of the respondents (48.1%) reported being members of or volunteers for NGOs or social movements. This significant level of involvement highlights a strong inclination among young people towards collective action and community service. NGOs and social movements often serve as platforms for addressing social issues, advocating for change, and providing services to underserved communities. The high membership rate indicates that many young people in the region are actively seeking to make a positive impact through organized efforts. A smaller, yet noteworthy, percentage of respondents (5.4%) identified themselves as leaders or founding members of NGOs or social movements. This indicates a subset of the youth population that is not only participating in collective action but also taking on leadership roles.

- Civic activists



Beyond organizational involvement, 12.5% of respondents consider themselves individual civic activists, engaging in social or political issues independently. This form of activism is often characterized by personal initiatives, such as organizing community events, participating in protests, or advocating for specific causes. The presence of individual activists underscores the diverse approaches to civic engagement, where formal membership in organizations is not a prerequisite for contributing to societal change.

- Youth councils and parliaments

The data reveals that 6.4% of respondents are members of youth councils, youth parliaments, or youth advisory boards. These institutions provide young people with structured opportunities to voice their opinions, influence decision-making processes, and engage with policymakers.

- Regular voters

42.3% of respondents reported voting regularly in elections. Considering that the survey targeted young people over 18—an age eligible for voting—this rate of regular voters is relatively low. Voting is a fundamental aspect of democratic participation, and low turnout among young voters is a challenge observed in many countries, particularly in the Balkans, as other research has also shown.



More specifically, the turnout among young people in **Romania** is generally lower than the turnout of elder people. Youth turnout has fluctuated in recent years. According to a study conducted by the Romanian Youth Council, 39.45% of young people ages from 15 to 30 have engaged by voting in the elections in November 2019 and only 25.9% of young people participated in the parliamentary elections in December 2020.

Young people in **Montenegro** (16-28 years of age) are less involved with politics than their older counterparts (55+ years of age) - they follow political affairs (28.6% against 53.0%) and understand the most important political issues in the society (41.6% against 60.0%) less often than older population. Additionally, only a small portion of them (20.3%) follow political affairs via media outlets very or quite attentively.

The level of civic engagement among young people in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has increased slightly compared to 2018, but the overall share of those active is still low. Most young people are not interested in political or social topics and are unconvinced that political parties and civil society organizations (CSOs) work in citizens' interests.

The young people of Albania are distanced from politics, studies show. Only 13% of first-time voters decided to go out and vote in the last elections in 2023. The numbers keep declining each election as a consequence of lack of interest in political parties, lack of trust, and even emigration. The participation of young people in Albania in the political system is displayed at low levels. Forty (40%) percent of young people have never engaged in public hearings or in signing petitions. Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents believe that participation and engagement in public life by young people has increased, while 37% of the respondents believe it has remained the same or has decreased.

- **Online civic engagement**

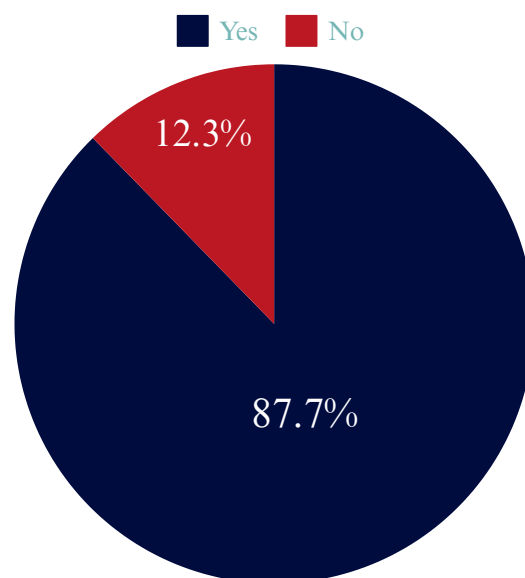
The study found that 19.9% of young respondents participate in online communities focused on social or political issues, using these platforms for discussion, advocacy, and mobilization beyond geographical limits. Additionally, 4.4% of respondents coordinate these online communities, organizing activities and moderating discussions to keep them active and effective. Furthermore, 7.2% of the respondents have taken initiative to create or manage social media platforms, webpages, forums, or blogs dedicated to these issues, showcasing their entrepreneurial spirit and ability to influence public discourse and engage more people through digital means.

Challenges and opportunities in youth political and civic participation across 5 EU Countries

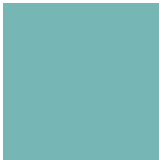
The political and civic participation of young people is a fundamental aspect of democratic societies. This study investigates the perspectives and experiences of youth in five European countries — Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Montenegro, and Romania — concerning their political and civic engagement and its potential to effect meaningful change in their communities.

The young people were asked: *"Do you believe that your political and civic participation & involvement can bring about meaningful change in your community?"* A substantial majority of 87.7% of respondents answered "Yes," while 12.3% responded "No." Despite this overall optimism, significant barriers such as corruption, distrust in political processes, marginalization of minority voices, and practical constraints impede the full engagement of these young people.

Graphic 8: Belief in the impact of political and civic participation on community change



Young people from Albania reported the highest level of disbelief in the potential for their political and civic participation to bring about meaningful change in their community, with 19.9% expressing this view. This was followed by Romania at 16.1%, Montenegro at 13.7%, Bosnia-Herzegovina at 9.8%, and Greece at 6.7%. These percentages reflect varying levels of skepticism across the surveyed countries.



When queried, "If not, why?" respondents from all four countries frequently cited corruption as a significant obstacle to meaningful civic engagement. The prevalent view that politicians and government officials prioritize personal interests over public welfare contributes to widespread distrust and disillusionment.

Albanian youth expressed profound disillusionment with the political landscape, emphasizing the pervasive issue of corruption. Respondents noted rampant self-interest and clientelism, resulting in a government that prioritizes personal gains over public welfare. Consequently, public funds are often misallocated, with minimal investment in essential sectors such as public works, education, and culture.

“Because people in Albania primarily prioritize self-interest, this has led to rampant corruption. It has resulted in a clientelist government and administration. Public funds go towards salaries for clients and do not contribute in any way to public works, education, or culture.”

A young person from Albania

In Greece, respondents highlighted a general disinterest in political engagement. Corruption emerged as a major concern, leading to widespread distrust in politicians. Many young people believe that political outcomes are predetermined, rendering individual efforts ineffective.

“Because everyone pursues their own interests and not those of the country. I have not yet found anyone or any party that works for the interests of the state or the people.”

A young person from Greece

Young people across these countries share the sentiment that individual efforts are insufficient to bring about significant change. This belief is particularly strong in Albania and Montenegro. Montenegrin youth described a political environment where individual contributions are undervalued.

“

Because the political climate in Montenegro gives the impression that only the vote is important, so the people associate themselves with the fact that all work or influence is unimportant as long as the people are treated as a number.

Furthermore, votes are bought, blackmailed, etc. An individual cannot influence, if he is not in a group, the so-called group behavior in order to feel any influence...

A young person from Montenegro

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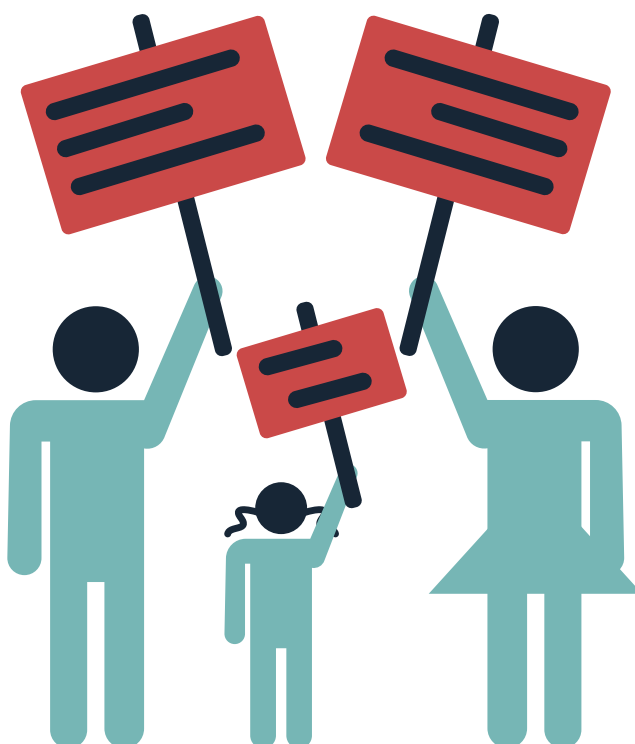
In both Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, respondents noted that young people and minority voices are often marginalized and ignored by those in power. The lack of responsiveness to youth protests and initiatives further discourages engagement and fosters apathy.

“

I wish we made a difference, but I don't think we really do. We are only included for photo or when politicians want to show off. In reality, they don't care about our opinions, and they never ask what we want or need.

A young person from Romania

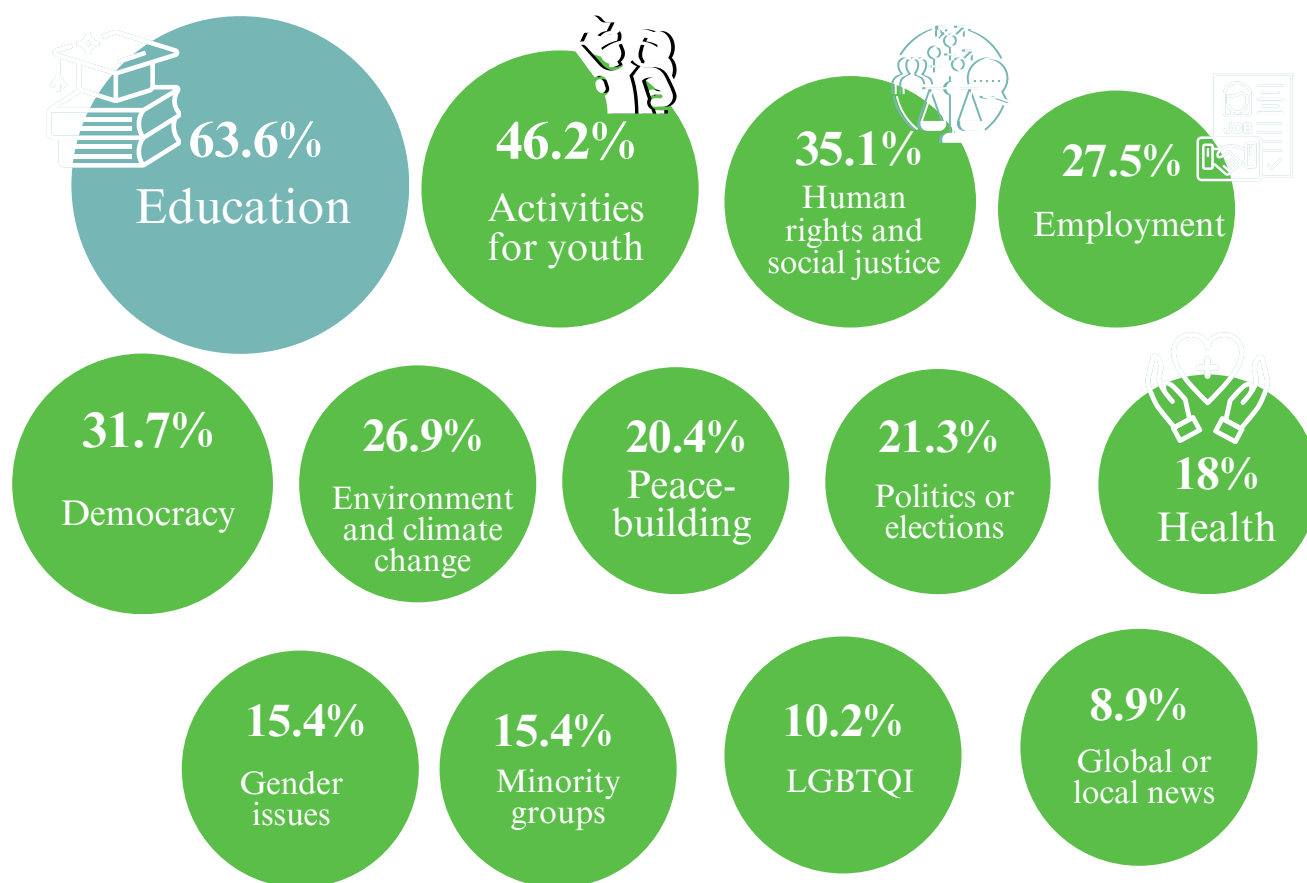
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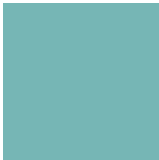
KEY AREAS OF YOUTH ACTIVISM IN THE BALKAN REGION

Participants were asked to select from a list of activism areas in which they are currently involved. The data revealed that young people are most active in sectors that directly impact their personal development, community welfare, and social justice causes. Below is a detailed breakdown of the areas where youth activism is most prevalent:

Graphic 9: Areas of youth activism



Education stands out as the most significant area of youth activism, with **63.6%** of respondents actively involved. This reflects the important role education plays in shaping individuals and society at large. Since education affects nearly all aspects of life, activism in this area can have a widespread and lasting impact. Youth who focus on education-related initiatives may feel that by improving educational systems, they can indirectly influence other issues, such as employment opportunities, civic engagement, and societal well-being.



The second-highest area of engagement focuses on **activities for youth**, where nearly half of the respondents are involved (**46.2%**). These activities not only benefit youth but also foster a sense of community and collective growth. A significant percent of young people are actively participating also in movements related to **human rights and social justice (35.1%)**, demonstrating a commitment to addressing inequality and advocating for marginalized groups.

When it comes to the causes that mobilise young people in Balkan countries to engage, **democracy** is also the most reported topic (**31.7%**). This suggests that many young people are aware of the importance of democratic processes in ensuring their voices are heard and that they are advocating for systems that support participation, representation, and fairness.

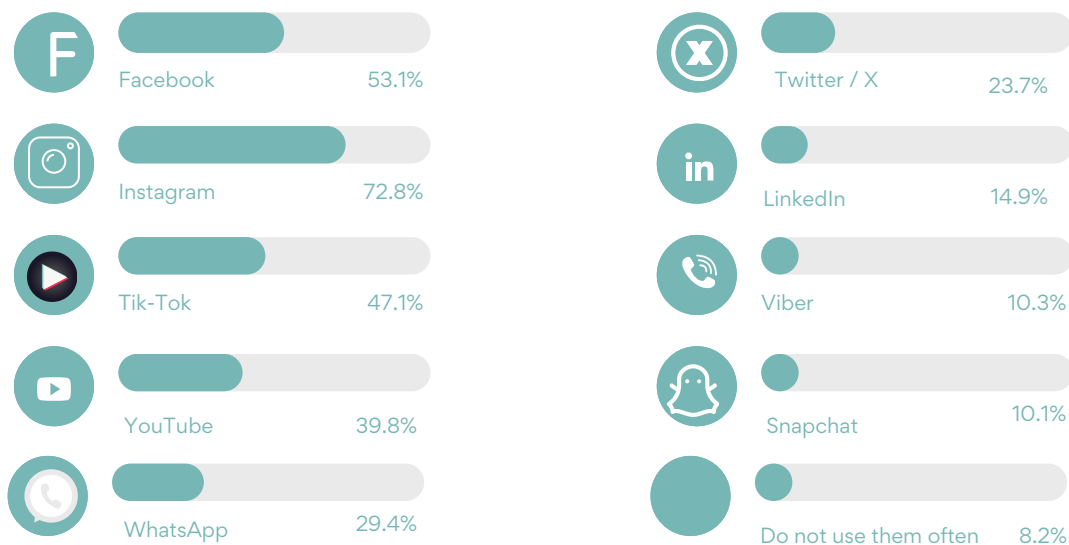
Employment-related activism (**27.5%**) points to the challenges young people face in finding job opportunities and securing economic stability. This area of engagement could include advocating for job creation, better employment conditions, fair wages, and training programs that equip youth with the necessary skills for the labor market.

Environmental and climate change activism is another significant area of focus, with over a quarter of young respondents involved (**26.9%**). This reflects the global trend of youth-led climate action movements, where young people have become vocal advocates for sustainability and climate justice. Their participation is driven by concerns over the future of the planet and the need for urgent action to mitigate environmental damage.


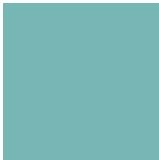
YOUTH DIGITAL ACTIVISM IN BALKAN COUNTRIES

Based on the analysis, the most frequently used social media platforms to follow developments in social and political issues are Instagram, Facebook, Tik-Tok and YouTube. Instagram and Tik-Tok were seen as the platforms mostly used by the younger age cohort (18-24 years old), while the use of Facebook is dominant for the older cohort of youth. Platforms such as LinkedIn, on the other hand, were less used for activism and more for professional activities. The analysis shows a clear trend towards visual and interactive platforms among young people for following political and social developments, with a strong shift away from traditional media sources like TV. It reflects a generational shift in how information is consumed and shared.

Graphic 10: Most frequently used social media platforms by young activists to follow social and political issues



- **Instagram** is the leading platform, used by 72.8% of respondents, making it the most influential for engaging young people in social and political discourse. Instagram's focus on visual content, stories, and short videos resonates well with this demographic.
- **TikTok** also ranks highly at 47.1%, underscoring the growing popularity of short-form, easily consumable content. Its rise reflects young people's preference for entertainment-driven, yet potentially informative, content.



Facebook, despite being considered less popular among younger demographics for casual socializing, is still used frequently by **53.1%**. This indicates that it remains a key platform for accessing social and political information, possibly due to its broad content-sharing capabilities and diverse user base.

YouTube (39.8%) continues to be a significant player, particularly for in-depth or longer-form video content. Educational videos, podcasts, and political commentary are widely available, making it a strong tool for political engagement.

WhatsApp (29.4%) and **Telegram (5.6%)** show lower engagement compared to more visually driven platforms but are still relevant for direct, personal communication and closed-group discussions, which could be important for political activism or peer discussions.

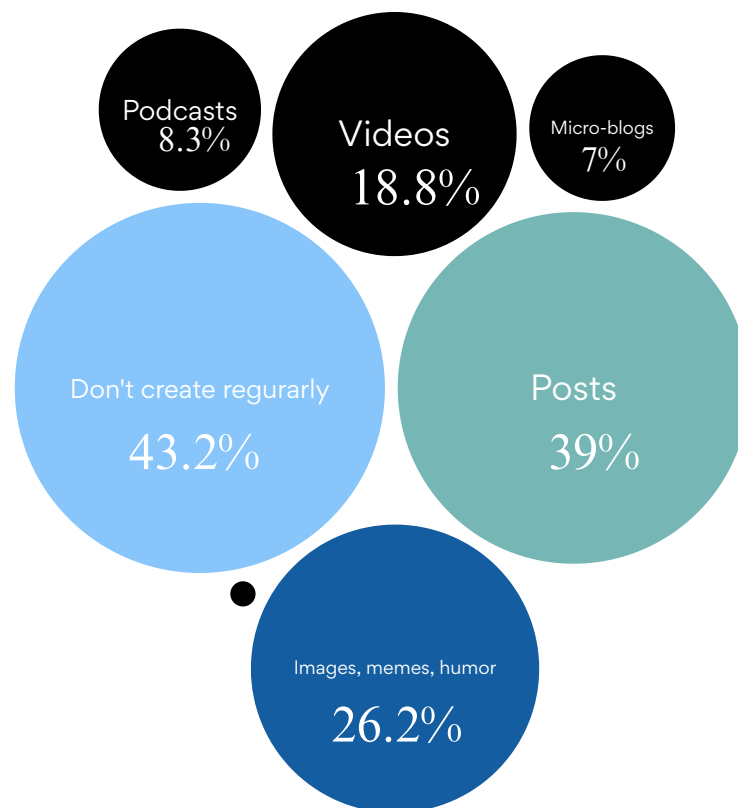
Twitter (23.7%) and **LinkedIn (14.9%)** reflect a more niche use—Twitter is often popular among users who seek fast updates or engage in political discussions, while LinkedIn's relatively lower usage (14.9%) suggests that it is not yet a major platform for political discourse among youth.

Media TV is barely used (0.2%), highlighting the declining relevance of traditional broadcast media among young people in the context of social and political issues. This aligns with global trends where younger audiences prefer digital platforms for news consumption.

Non-Users - A notable **8.2%** of respondents claim they don't often use social media. This might include individuals who rely on traditional news sources or other means of staying informed.

When looking at how social media are used, written posts or images and memes are the main types of content created or shared, while it is obvious that many also prefer to use social media in a more passive, receptive way, without creating or sharing content. Men respondents tended to be more active in creating content on social and political issues on social media, notably videos and images, memes and humorous content, while also being more present on YouTube than women.

Graphic 11: Types of content created and shared on social or political issues by young activists online



Young activists favor quick, visually engaging content over more in-depth or time-consuming formats, highlighting the importance of easily shareable, relatable messaging in social and political activism.

Given the strong preference for **images, memes, and short posts**, activism campaigns aimed at young people should prioritize creating visual, shareable content. Memes and images can be particularly powerful in distilling complex ideas into simple, relatable messages.

Campaigns or movements that require deeper engagement (**e.g., videos, podcasts**) will need to find ways to make these mediums more accessible. As these formats allow for more detailed discussions and nuanced debate, encouraging their use could enhance the quality of dialogue around political and social issues.

DIGITAL ACTIVISM: INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH



The rapid growth of the internet, social media platforms, and digital tools has transformed how youth can participate in activism, making it more accessible, far-reaching, and impactful.

In the past, traditional activism often required physical presence at events, protests, or community meetings. Today, digital activism allows young people to organize, mobilize, and advocate for causes without the constraints of geography. Through platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, young activists can raise awareness, share information, and gather support for movements quickly and efficiently. This online space enables youth to voice their concerns, form networks, and build communities around issues such as climate change, social justice, and human rights.

Moreover, digital activism allows young people to amplify their voices on a global scale. Movements like Fridays for Future and Black Lives Matter have demonstrated the power of youth-led initiatives to garner international attention and influence public opinion and policy. The use of hashtags, viral campaigns, and online petitions has become an essential tool for bringing issues to the forefront of public discourse.

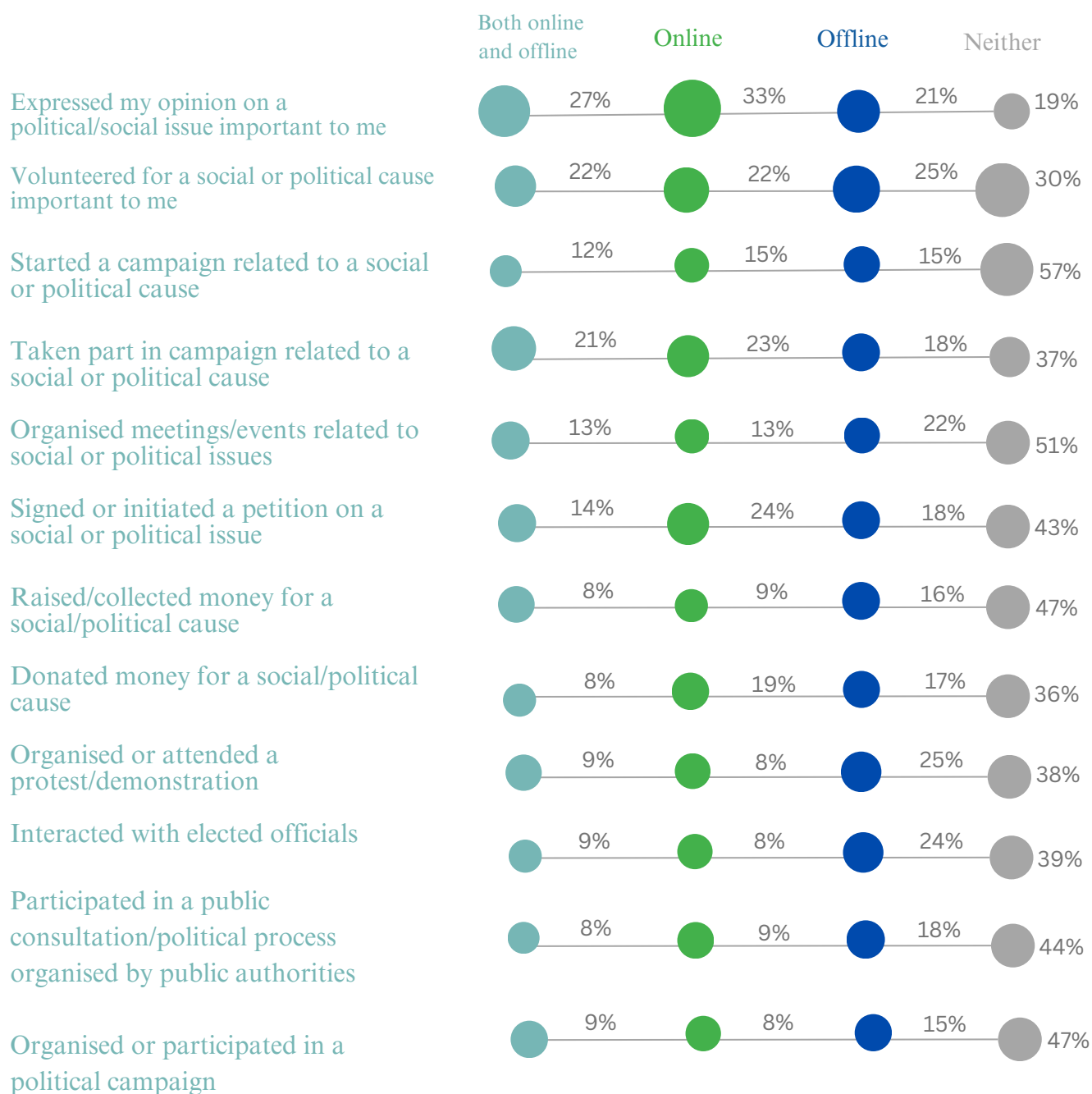
The accessibility of digital tools also democratizes activism, allowing youth from diverse backgrounds to participate in ways that might not have been possible in traditional forms of engagement. Furthermore, digital activism offers opportunities for creative expression, with young people utilizing multimedia, videos, art, and memes to communicate their messages and connect with broader audiences.

The data provided below reflects the diverse ways in which young people have engaged in digital and offline activism over the past year.


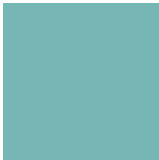
Offline vs. Online Activism:

- In almost all categories, neither online nor offline engagement constitutes a significant portion of responses, reflecting that a notable percentage of young people remain disengaged from activism altogether, whether due to lack of opportunities, motivation, or resources.
- When youth do engage, online platforms often rival or surpass offline methods, particularly in expressing opinions, participating in campaigns, and signing petitions. This reflects the shifting nature of activism toward digital spaces, where accessibility, speed, and reach make it an attractive option for young people.

Graphic 12: Most common civic activities young people had participated in during the past 12 months, online and offline



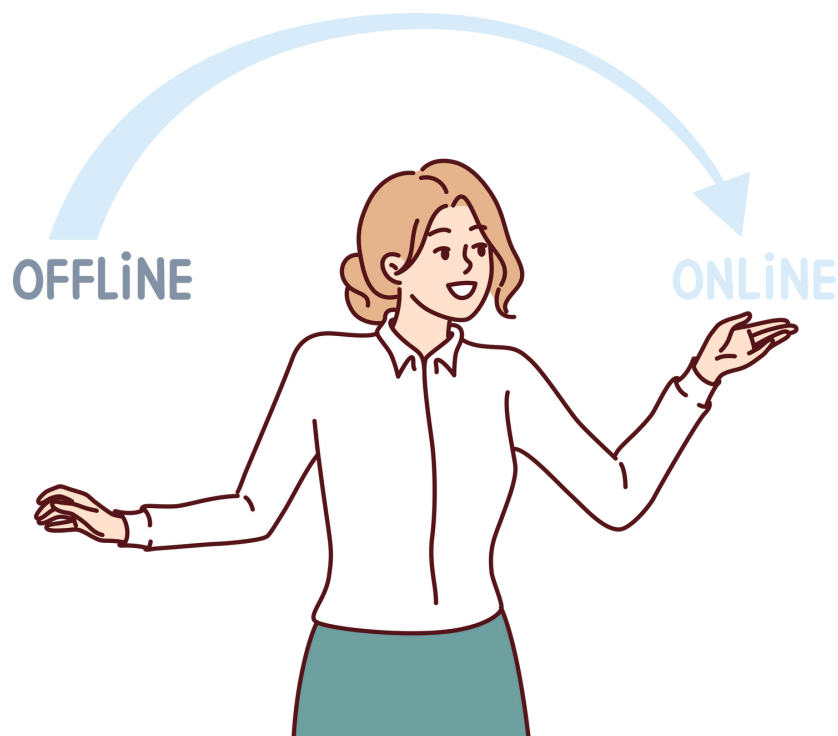
The data reveals diverse ways young people engage in digital and offline activism. Online activism (33%) surpasses offline (21%) in expressing opinions, with a notable portion of youth (27%) using both channels, but 19% remain disengaged. While offline volunteering (25%) is slightly more popular than online (22%), many young people (30%) do not volunteer at all, likely due to barriers like time or resources. Campaign initiation rates are low (57% neither online nor offline), but participation is higher, especially online (23%).



Online petitions (24%) are gaining popularity, while fundraising for causes remains low (16% offline, 9% online), and 47% neither raise nor collect funds. Protests are still largely offline (25%), while online protests (8%) lag behind. Political campaign engagement is similarly low, with 47% neither participating online nor offline.

Interacting with officials (24% offline, 8% online) and public consultations (18% offline, 9% online) show limited engagement, reflecting barriers in traditional civic processes. Overall, many young people remain disengaged, though online platforms often rival or surpass offline methods for activism.

In conclusion, digital activism has expanded youth participation in expressing opinions and joining movements. However, traditional activism like volunteering and engaging with officials remains less common. To boost engagement, strategies should encourage participation in both online and offline activism.



BARRIERS TO EQUAL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

The major barriers to young people's participation in online activism are varied, but a lack of interest and doubt about the impact of activism stand out as the primary challenges. Educational gaps, including insufficient knowledge on how to engage and weak media and digital skills, further hinder participation. The data provided below offers a comprehensive view of the obstacles young people face in participating in online civic engagement.

Graphic 13: Obstacles young people face in participating online

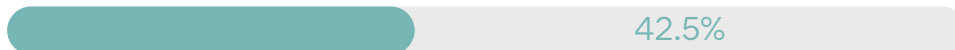
Lack of interest in civic engagement in general



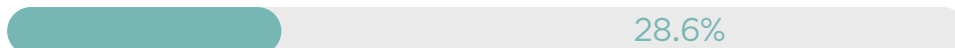
Lack of confidence in the impact of civic activism



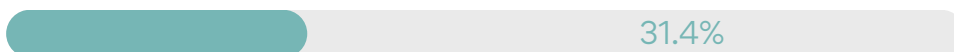
Lack of knowledge on how to advocate and participate online



Lack of access to internet (coverage, quality, cost) or phone/PC



Insufficient media and digital skills



Data surveillance and risks to data privacy



Internet restrictions (some platforms/websites are not available)





1. Lack of interest in civic engagement

- The most significant barrier is a lack of interest in civic engagement. Over 60% of respondents indicate that they are not motivated to participate, highlighting a major challenge in mobilizing young people. This suggests that the root of the issue might lie in a disconnect between the platforms or causes and the interests or priorities of youth. Efforts to foster interest in civic issues and demonstrate their relevance to young people's lives are critical.

2. Lack of confidence in the impact of civic activism

- Nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) express doubt about the effectiveness of civic activism. This suggests a deep-seated skepticism about whether individual or collective actions can lead to meaningful change. It reflects the need for success stories, case studies, and examples of impactful activism to restore faith in civic engagement. Demonstrating the real-world effects of online activism can play a significant role in boosting confidence.

3. Lack of knowledge on how to advocate and participate online

- Lack of knowledge is another major obstacle, with 42.5% indicating that they are unsure how to advocate or participate effectively online. This points to the need for education and resources that teach young people how to engage with online platforms for activism. Training programs, workshops, and toolkits could be vital in equipping youth with the skills and confidence to navigate online advocacy spaces.

4. Insufficient media and digital skills

- Closely related to the lack of knowledge is the insufficient media and digital skills reported by 31.4%. This shows that despite widespread internet use, many young people lack the technical abilities required for effective online activism. Enhancing digital literacy through education, particularly in underserved communities, would be a key strategy for overcoming this barrier. Additionally, partnerships with tech platforms to provide free or low-cost digital training could be impactful.

5. Access barriers

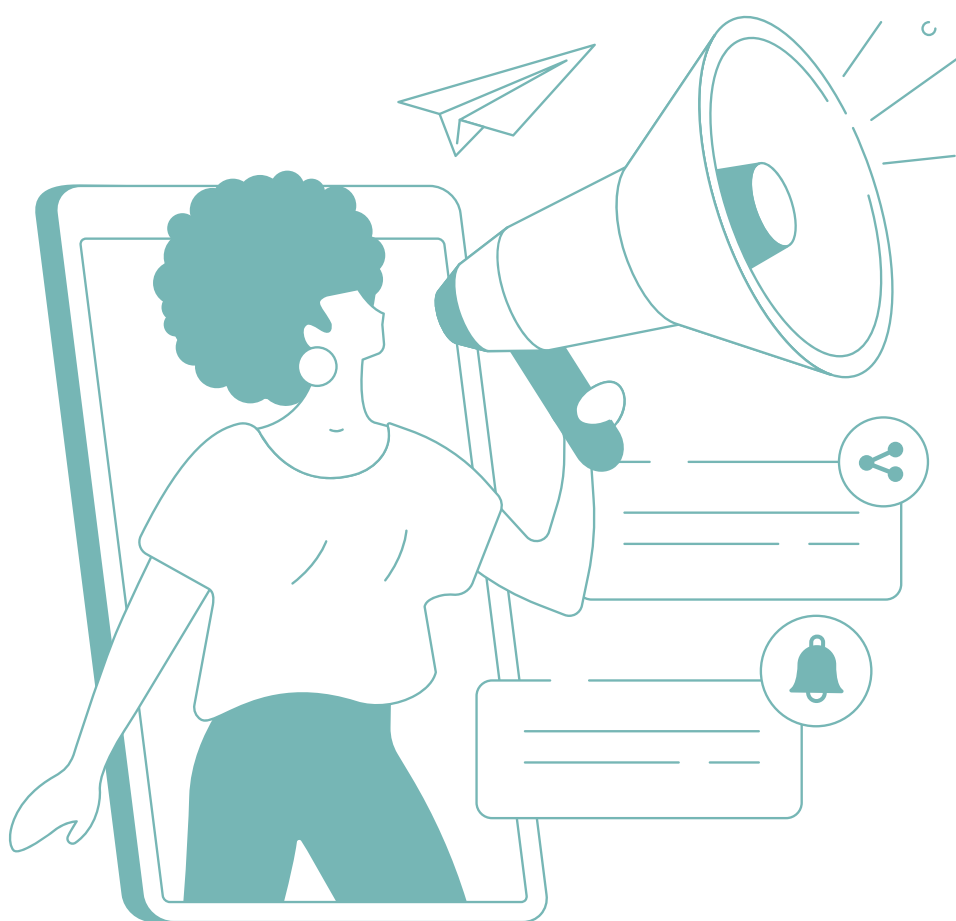
- Lack of access to the internet or devices is a significant barrier for 28.6% of young people, particularly those from rural areas. This digital divide means that a portion of the population cannot participate due to cost, poor quality, or lack of coverage. Addressing infrastructure gaps and providing affordable access to the internet and devices are necessary steps to ensure more equitable participation. The fact that this barrier is more pronounced in rural areas emphasizes the importance of targeting digital inclusion initiatives in these regions.

6. Data privacy concerns

- Concerns about data privacy and surveillance are reported by 27.6%, reflecting growing awareness of the risks associated with online activism. Young people are increasingly cautious about their personal data being monitored or misused, which could deter their participation. This calls for stronger data protection policies, transparency from platforms about data use, and educating young people on how to safeguard their privacy online.

7. Internet restrictions

- Internet restrictions are also a barrier, particularly in regions where certain platforms or websites are inaccessible. The 18.3% reporting this obstacle indicates that governmental or institutional restrictions may hinder their ability to participate freely in online activism. Advocacy for internet freedom and the promotion of digital rights is essential to ensuring that young people can fully participate in civic activities online.

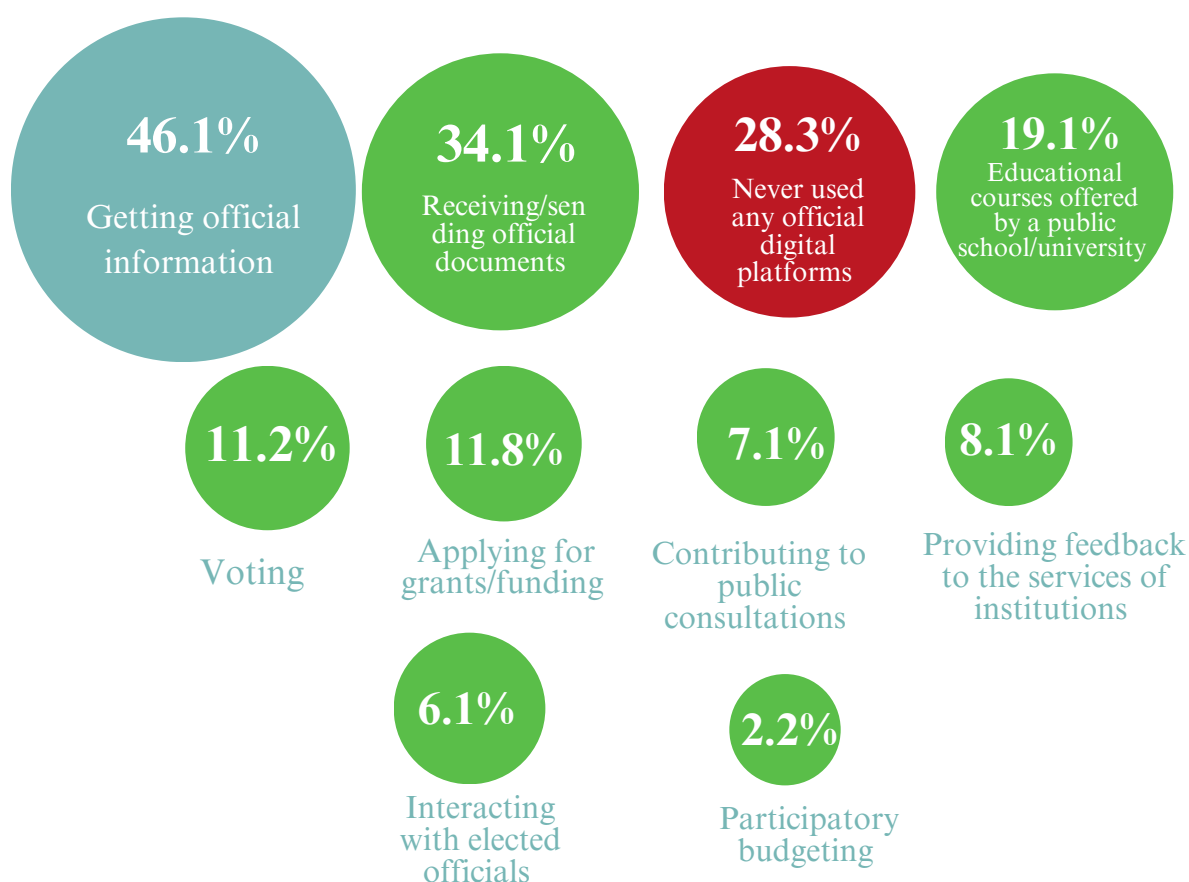


USE OF E-GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS

E-government can be defined as the use of information technology to more effectively and efficiently deliver government services to communities and businesses. The interest of the public and young people in particular in digital platforms has incentivised innovation in the public sector, leading to the development of different e-government solutions to facilitate the interaction between the people and institutions. Based on the online survey, young civic actors made use of e-government platforms mostly for finding official information (46.1%) and receiving or sending official documents (34.1%).

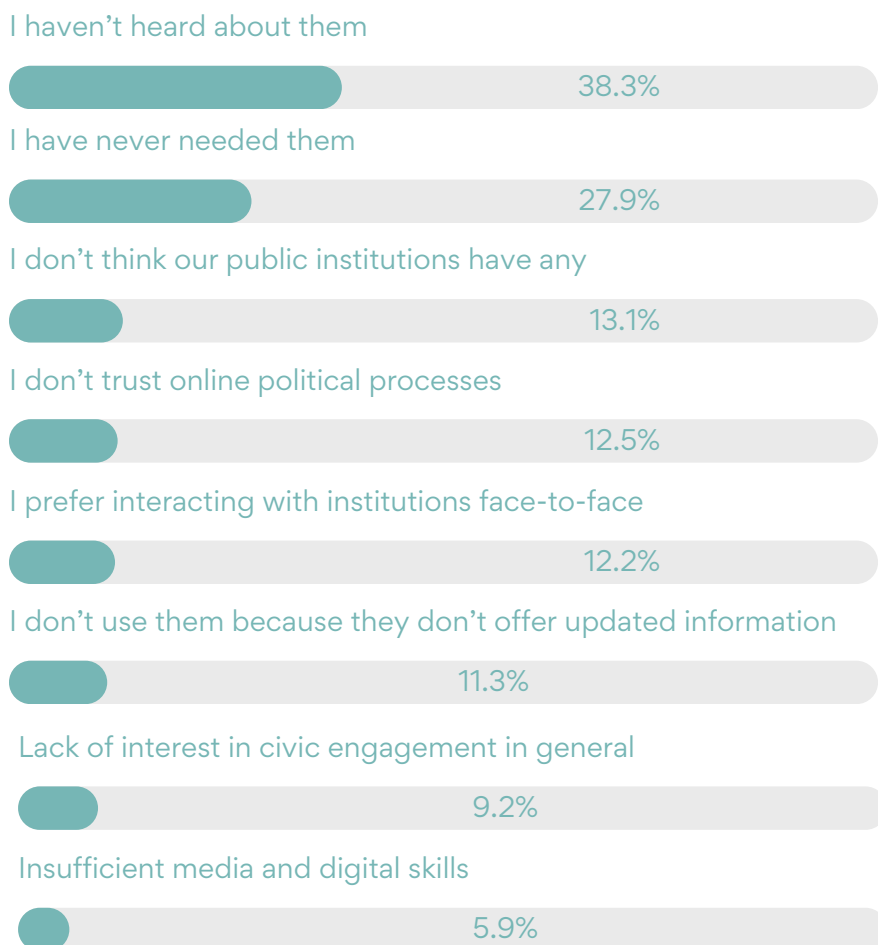
Only about 20% of respondents or less used e-government platforms for education, providing feedback, participating in public consultations or interacting with officials.

Graphic 14: Young activists' use of government digital platforms or e-government solutions



At the same time, 38.3% of the young survey respondents said they did not use any e-government platform. Among the reasons for which they had not done so, not knowing about them or not having these available were the most common. This highlights the need for greater outreach and communication from public institutions to inform citizens about available digital services. The data indicates that while many young people are using government digital platforms for basic tasks like getting official information and handling documents, engagement in more participatory activities (like public consultations or voting) remains low. The primary barriers include lack of awareness of these platforms, distrust in their effectiveness, and a perception that digital government services are outdated. Addressing these issues through improved communication, platform updates, and civic education could boost the use of e-government solutions and foster greater civic participation.

Graphic 15: Barriers to using official digital platforms for civic engagement



RECOMMENDATIONS



The research “Democratic Participation and Civic Engagement for Young People in the Balkans” aimed to explore the landscape of digital civic engagement in five European countries—Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Greece, Montenegro, and Romania. The goal was to uncover emerging trends and challenges within the digital civic sphere, while also exploring the opportunities and obstacles that digital activism creates for young people in these regions. A number of recommendations can be proposed, based on the survey findings and discussions with youth actors and experts, to strength youth civic participation online and promote a youth-inclusive and youth-led civic space.



01.

Expand digital literacy for civic participation - Establish educational initiatives to equip young people with the skills necessary to effectively engage in digital civic activities. These programs should focus on navigating digital platforms, identifying credible sources, and participating in civic discussions. Practical training in using e-government tools, online petitions, and social media advocacy, alongside privacy protection and data security, will empower youth to confidently engage in online political processes.



02.

Strengthen youth activists’ capacities in the field of digital activism, by empowering them to explore and adopt innovative forms of digital participation. It is essential for all stakeholders in the youth sector to advance their digital competencies to effectively engage in digital spaces. Training programs should be developed and tailored to the evolving needs and interests of young people. These opportunities should be designed for youth, youth workers, public servants, and educators, equipping them with the necessary skills to participate meaningfully in digital environments.



03.

Foster regional cooperation among youth civic actors - Promote collaboration and knowledge sharing among youth-led digital activist networks across the region.



By enhancing visibility and recognition of these networks, young civic actors can learn from one another, share best practices, and work together on common challenges. Partnerships with regional youth institutions can further amplify these efforts, fostering a more connected and collaborative civic space in the Balkans.



04.

Protecting and promoting the rights of young digital activists, by safeguarding the civic space against barriers to freedom of expression or other anti-democratic tendencies is needed for young people to participate in civic life safely, both online and offline. A better understanding of the types of threats young civic actors face, across identities, cultures, and communities, is the first step in ensuring better protection.



05.

Bridge the gap between traditional civic participation and digital activism: Encourage dialogue and cooperation between traditional civic actors and young people engaged in online activism. Creating new spaces where youth-led organizations can collaborate with decision-makers and government representatives will foster mutual understanding and trust. It is important to acknowledge and give credit to youth-led organizations for their role in representing young people's voices and addressing their issues.



06.

Build trust in digital civic participation - To increase youth confidence in online civic processes, governments and institutions must ensure transparency, particularly around data privacy and the impact of youth participation. Clear communication about how data is handled, as well as feedback mechanisms that demonstrate how youth input influences policy decisions, will build trust in digital participation platforms.



07.

Ensure Equal Access to Digital Tools for Civic Engagement - Address the digital divide by making sure all young people, especially those in rural or underserved areas, have access to affordable internet, devices, and digital platforms. Governments and organizations should invest in digital infrastructure development and provide affordable data plans, enabling young people to engage fully in civic activities online.



08.

Improve E-Government Tools to Foster Youth Engagement - Develop more accessible and user-friendly e-government platforms to help young people better understand government operations, access information, and engage with decision-making processes. Strengthening these digital tools will enhance interactions between youth and their governments, encouraging greater youth participation in governance, policymaking, and democratic processes.



09.

Promote digital advocacy and activism through creative campaigns - Support the use of creative digital campaigns, such as storytelling, multimedia content, and social media challenges, to engage youth in civic participation. Encouraging young people to express their views and advocate for causes through creative outlets will help make civic engagement more relatable, widespread, and impactful.



BEST PRACTICES

The research also involved collecting best practices from various organizations, including NGOs, formal and non-formal groups, youth councils, youth forums, and youth networks. Each partner organization contributed three to four best practice examples, providing a qualitative understanding of successful youth engagement strategies.



AKTIVIZON.AL

e-Learning platform for youth workers and practitioners

The Aktivizon.al platform is a virtual platform for youth workers and practitioners in Albania, which comes with an asynchronous learning approach.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Online training and mentoring

The platform provides access to learning through the use of online training without the need to meet face-to-face with a trainer/facilitator.

On the platform you will find 5 modules built by relevant experts in 5 different topics of work with young people, according to the model of European Competencies and the comprehensive educational theory of non-formal education and self-directed education.

The platform also has integrated a number of digital tools padlet, mentimeter, kahoot etc., which will make the learning more interactive for the users. Each training aims to raise the capacities of the trainees by improving their knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavior. A trainer/facilitator support trainings during the periods where courses are opened.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Beyond Barriers Association



Effectiveness

There are 5 modules online in the platform:

1. Human Rights Education with young people in youth work
 2. Non formal education and competences approach in youth work
 3. Social rights
 4. Volunteering, values and benefits for young people
- Intercultural learning in youth work



Transferability Assessment

In September 2024, staff of BBA will start preparations to incorporate another module in the platform through support of cascading funds of Horizon program. The module will contain online methods to train young researchers in the ORRI methodology through e-learning tools to get equipped and apply it in the youth sector and other fields.

TIMELINE

Started in November 2022
(first courses)

LOCATIONS

Online platform, Albania

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The courses in the platform are opened based in a calendar scheduled by BBA, are free to anyone and from any part of Albania - internet access is enough - and it is all in the Albanian language so that any young Albanian who has basic knowledge of internet navigation can easily use it.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Qëndresa Qytetare

Student Congress

The Student Congress is Albania's most important national student event, bringing together students from across the country to discuss, advocate, and act on issues impacting their education and lives.

Organized annually in November by Qëndresa Qytetare in partnership with the National Student Board and ELSA Albania, and supported by the Olof Palme Center, the Congress provides a platform for students to elect representatives who will convey their concerns and proposals to Albania's highest institutions. Each year, 130 student delegates represent the voice of 120,000 students, working together to create a "National Agenda" aimed at improving student life and raising the quality of education.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- **Election of student representatives:** Students elect representatives to ensure their voices are heard in the public institutions.
- **Issue-based discussions and presentations:** Delegates share experiences, discuss challenges, and present on topics including student rights, academic integrity, transparency, and educational policy.
- **Development of a National Agenda:** The Congress produces a "National Agenda" focused on student life improvements and educational quality enhancement, informed by student input and debates.
- **Formation of the Student Congress Commission:** Delegates elect a representative body, the Student Congress Commission, to advocate for student concerns at the national level.
- **Use of multimedia engagement tools:** To foster participation and engagement, organizers use multimedia methods such as podcasts, online surveys, and petitions, which also serve as platforms for communication and student feedback.



Effectiveness

The Student Congress has proven effective in creating a national platform where student voices can influence education policy. Through structured discussions and advocacy, students are empowered to address key issues in higher education. The creation of the National Agenda and the formation of the Student Congress Commission have provided a structured approach for students to advocate for change, with clear outcomes such as policy recommendations on student rights, transparency, and academic ethics. The Congress has raised awareness of student needs among policymakers and strengthened the role of students as active stakeholders in their education.



Transferability Assessment

The Student Congress model is highly transferable to other countries seeking to empower student voices in higher education. Key elements that support adaptability include partnerships with national student boards, the use of representative bodies like the Student Congress Commission, and the annual focus on policy and advocacy outcomes (such as the National Agenda). The use of digital tools like podcasts, online surveys, and petitions further enhances engagement and could be easily adapted to fit other cultural or institutional contexts.

TIMELINE

Yearly

LOCATIONS

Albania

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA)

Increasing Roma access to online public services in E-Albania

This initiative aimed to enhance the Roma community's awareness and skills in accessing services via the E-Albania digital platform. The project responded to the challenges faced by Roma in adapting to the Albanian government's shift to online public services. A mobile office was used to facilitate access to public services for Roma in remote areas of Divjake and Lushnje municipalities.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Information sessions for members of the Roma community on how to access online services in the E-Albania portal

Information sessions in groups with 10-15 participants were organized near Roma settlements. The IRCA's local facilitators trained the community members how to open a personal account on the online portal; how to generate the documents they need from the portal according to the relevant sections: family, work, education, health, etc.

Direct assistance for Roma to access online services

Direct support was provided via an improvised mobile office (minivan) for those without internet access or electronic devices, including the elderly and individuals with limited abilities..

ID Card Provision

100 Roma community members were assisted with ID card applications, crucial for accessing the portal, by providing coupons to offset costs.



Effectiveness

The project successfully piloted in two remote Albanian municipalities, organizing 10 information sessions with nearly 150 Roma participants. It directly assisted 100 individuals in accessing online services and acquiring ID cards, significantly improving their ability to use the E-Albania portal.



Transferability Assessment

The digital skills and knowledge gained by participants will enable continued access to online services beyond the project's duration. Participants can also transfer their knowledge to others in the community.

TIMELINE

August 2023 – February 2024

LOCATIONS

Municipality of Lushnje and Divjake in Albania

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Roma community often has low education levels, with many illiterate individuals. The project highlighted the ongoing need to enhance digital skills. Young people, who adapt quickly to technological changes, were identified as key targets for short-term interventions since they can assist other family members. Tailoring approaches to individual needs through face-to-face meetings and small group work proved effective for transferring knowledge to vulnerable groups.



Improving quality of life and social inclusion of women living with psychosocial disabilities in the area of TK

The project aims to improve mental health and social inclusion of people with psychosocial disabilities.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Suicide prevention seminar and workshops.
- Maintenance of self-help groups.
- Trialogue including people, their families and experts.
- Exchange experiences with international organizations.



Transferability Assessment

The mentioned educations and practices can always be implemented and usually bring positive results.

BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Association for mutual assistance in mental distress "Feniks"



Effectiveness

The effectiveness of self-help groups lies in open communication between people where people state the challenges they face every day as a person with mental health problems. The goal is to build trust, exchange knowledge and experiences.

Holding seminars and suicide prevention among young people and suicide prevention campaign among young people is a practice that lasted for several years and brought together important actors from the community such as schools and institutions that work with children.

It enabled youth participation, awareness and education. In addition, young people were open and had a desire to share their own experiences.

Holding workshops with people with mental disorders and their families creates better relationships, new perspectives and improves communication.

TIMELINE

2022 - 2024

LOCATIONS

BiH, Slovenia, Sweden





RESPONSIBLE
AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Teenage Club

United for community

Boosting activism in Simin Han and making it better for living.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Workshops for youth and elder groups.
- Cooking workshops
- Self defense
- Chess
- Board games

Effectiveness



Older people in the community feel forgotten and they think that they can't teach youth anything, so we had effect of transfer of knowledge from youth to elders and vice versa.

Transferability Assessment



This project was non-formal, and that is what we should do when working with people, more than formal educations. In every small community we need that.

For people to have space to talk to each other. You do not need a lot of money for that and you can do it even outside everywhere. It is easy to do it anywhere.

TIMELINE

January – April 2024

LOCATIONS

Bosnia-Herzegovina





BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Youth movement Revolt

Engaging youth in political processes on local level

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Video interviews with young candidates
running for local council.



Effectiveness

- Young people voting.
- Young people voting for young people.
- More young people in the city council.
- The problems of young people are more represented.
- Elected young politicians keep touch with young people who elected them.



Transferability Assessment

1 out of 4 young political
candidates are elected in city
council.

Video has been viewed and
shared couple of thousand
times.

TIMELINE

In the period of electoral
campaign.

LOCATIONS

Tuzla,
Bosnia - Hercegovina





Youth Action for Democracy

Promoting EU Rights and Values in Northern and Central Greece

MAIN ACTIVITIES

The project “Youth Action for Democracy: Promoting the Values and Rights of the EU in Northern and Central Greece” is designed to enhance awareness and understanding of the rights and values of the European Union among the youth. The ultimate goal is to encourage youth participation in public discourse and the consistent exercise of their democratic rights. The project is implemented in four municipalities—Thessaloniki, Themi, Komotini, and Larissa—each hosting active Municipal Youth Councils (MWC).

Effectiveness



The project has been effective in fostering greater civic engagement and increasing knowledge of EU rights and democratic values among young people. Workshops and guest speaker events have enriched participants' understanding, while youth councils and forums have provided a structured space for young voices in local governance. Social media campaigns have significantly extended the project's reach, engaging a broader youth audience across Northern and Central Greece. Digital literacy sessions have equipped participants with essential skills to navigate online platforms responsibly, further supporting active citizenship.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Hellenic Youth Workers Association



Transferability Assessment

The structured approach—including partnerships with local youth councils, workshops, and the social media campaign—makes it adaptable to diverse contexts. The project's documentation of methodology and best practices facilitates easy replication, allowing other municipalities to implement similar initiatives. Transnational adoption would require adapting content to reflect local legal frameworks, cultural contexts, and specific youth needs, but the core activities and goals are widely applicable.

TIMELINE

2023

LOCATIONS

Greece



Generation 2.0

For Rights Equality & Diversity

Our Strong Paper

The year 2019 signals a milestone in the history of the second generation, as it marks the year where the largest number of people of different ethnic backgrounds born and/or raised in Greece have the right to vote. With the conviction that citizenship is not just another paper, Generation 2.0 RED, as an organization founded by the second generation, is launching the campaign “To Dynato Mas Xarti” (Our Strong Paper)

MAIN ACTIVITIES

A campaign for people who have acquired Greek citizenship, either through the process for the second generation or by naturalization. The goal is for us to understand the weight of our vote and to exercise this newly acquired political right. As with all activities of Generation 2.0 RED, this campaign is not linked to and does not endorse any political party or candidate.

The Generation 2.0 RED are partners and official members of:

- The [European Network Against Racism](#) (ENAR), the only pan-European anti-racist network that combines advocacy for racial equality and facilitating cooperation among civil society anti-racist actors in Europe
- The [Racist Violence Recording Network](#) (RVRN), a big network of organizations with trained personnel which records racist violence incidents and drafts an annual report.
- The [Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants](#) (PICUM), a network of individuals and organizations that fight for social equality and human rights of undocumented migrants.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Generation 2.0 for Rights



Effectiveness

The purpose of the “To Dynato Mas Xarti” campaign is, among other things, to launch a dialogue on the importance of active participation. The Greek identity card (for those able to issue one) is not just a paper, which acts as a safety net for our stay in the country. It is a “strong paper”, which acts as an additional tool for civic participation.



Transferability Assessment

It is important for us to understand the weight of our vote, so that we can go to the polls informed. Now that we also have the right to decide, it is up to us to be informed about the positions of the candidates.

TIMELINE

Since 2019

LOCATIONS

Athens, Greece



RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

The Whole Story Sole Proprietorship Publishing Company

INSIDE STORY

Here you won't find the news you read elsewhere. We do not focus on the "news" of the day. You find these everywhere. We write about new and unexpected topics. We are constantly updating our content. We are changing the way we write, read and understand the news.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Documented research and analysis.
We invest our time for better research.
We do investigative journalism with international methods and ethical standards.

We view the story behind the news so that we can expose its ramifications, perceive the connections, and ultimately be able to understand what is happening.

We have opinions, but we don't dictate them. The inside story is a digital medium available on desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone.



Effectiveness

INSIIDE STORY is a team that believes in the power of independent investigative journalism, and in the ability of each of us to think and judge for ourselves.

We believe there is a need for a new news reporting proposition: we seek to provide audiences with original and creative content, research, explanation and evidence-based analysis by developing a community of conscious members who co-create our stories. Ad-free, funded by our readers and with transparent finances, we are free to choose and consider the issues that really concern us.



Transferability Assessment

Inside story relies entirely on subscriptions to survive. The subscription costs 6 euros per month. As members you are the first to read our new articles, participate in the dialogue with the editors and of course support our independence and quality journalism.

TIMELINE

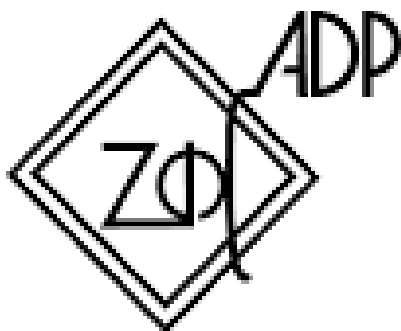
Daily

LOCATIONS

Greece

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Inside story is a group that believes in the power of independent investigative journalism, and in the ability of each of us to think and judge for ourselves.



V for activism

The V for Activism project encourages young people to engage more actively in volunteerism and activism, promoting solidarity, volunteer work, and enhancing youth capacities for social involvement in Montenegro. Through workshops, training, and initiatives, participants gain skills in volunteer management, participate in collaborative actions, and support the creation of a more inclusive society.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Opening new voluntary clubs in high schools;
- Training about volunteering management for professors;
- Conference about volunteering;
- Organizing 17 different voluntary actions in the community;

Effectiveness



- Youth Participation and Engagement: Over 50 young people were directly involved in the project, and more than 1,000 participated through one-day activities.
- Skill and Capacity Development: Both young people and teachers gained essential competencies needed to lead volunteer clubs in schools.
- Community Impact: The effect on the community is significant, with 17 different volunteer activities implemented in each city.
- Sustainability and Long-Term Impact: We continue to support existing volunteer clubs, while also working on establishing new ones. So far, we have 23 volunteer clubs in 23 high schools.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

ADP-Zid



Transferability Assessment

The workshops, training sessions, and initiatives used in this project have had a long-term impact on the entire program. The materials used for training at that time continue to benefit participants today.

TIMELINE

2019

LOCATIONS

Montenegro

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The program's sustainability is reflected in the ongoing implementation and creation of high school volunteer clubs, the strengthening of existing ones, and the collaborative development of activities.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Network for Youth Activism of Montenegro

Administration for Citizens

More inclusive and transparent implementation of Montenegro's National OGP Action Plan through enhanced citizen participation .

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- **Training of Trainers** – 16 young people had the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, competencies, and skills needed to become trainers in youth participation, with a focus on the participation enabled for young people through the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative.
- **18 Info-stands in 17 Montenegrin cities** - Network for Youth Activism of Montenegro set up info-stands in 17 cities throughout Montenegro, where activists engaged with over 1750 citizens.
- 3 Workshops for CSOs (Bijelo Polje, Bar, Podgorica) were held with three groups of civil society representatives on the topic of open data, aimed at helping organizations learn more about where to find open data, as well as how to use it and apply it in their daily work.
- 24 Workshops for young people (multiple workshops in 17 Montenegrin cities) - Workshop participants gained knowledge about existing mechanisms at the local and national levels that provide citizens with opportunities to participate in public policy-making, including the e-participation portal, public discussions, and consultations.
- A Short Guide to Open Government for citizens was also created as a lasting document of exceptional importance for the further improvement of the National Action Plan.



Effectiveness

The "Administration for Citizens" project proved highly effective through targeted activities and outcomes. 16 youth trainers were trained in youth participation and conducted 24 workshops across 17 Montenegrin municipalities, reaching 517 young people. Additionally, 18 info-stands were set up, allowing citizens to discuss community issues, with identified concerns forwarded to local administrations—some resolved, others pending. A Short Guide to Open Government for Citizens was also created to educate citizens on the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and encourage active societal participation.



Transferability Assessment

The activities and methods applied in the project are easily transferable to other regions and countries, as they are based on universal principles of civic participation, transparency, and open data. Organizing training for young trainers, setting up info-stands in local communities, and utilizing promotional materials and digital campaigns on social media can be applied in any society aiming to increase citizen involvement in public life. Additionally, the content of the Short Guide on OGP and training on open data can be adapted to meet the local needs and context of other countries.

TIMELINE

Aug 2023 – Dec 2023

LOCATIONS

Montenegro



Entrepreneurial clubs

The Entrepreneurial Clubs project, led by the Union of Young Entrepreneurs of Montenegro, aims to build a supportive ecosystem for youth entrepreneurship at the local level across Montenegro. By establishing entrepreneurial clubs in partnership with local governments, the project empowers young entrepreneurs (ages 18 to 35) through training, advocacy initiatives, and networking opportunities.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- **Collaborative partnerships:** Establish partnerships with municipal authorities across nine municipalities (Podgorica, Nikšić, Bijelo Polje, Tivat, Kolašin, Kotor, Bar, Tuzi, Danilovgrad) and sign Memorandums of Cooperation to secure municipal support and space for club activities.
- **Club formation and engagement:** Open a call for young entrepreneurs to join the clubs, hold regular meetings, and select coordinators to lead each club's activities.
- **Training on public advocacy:** Organize a two-day public advocacy training for club coordinators and representatives from each municipality to equip them with skills for effective engagement with local authorities.
- **Advocacy initiatives and public events:** Develop local advocacy initiatives to address business challenges faced by young entrepreneurs, such as proposing tax exemptions and mentorship programs. Present these initiatives at public events with local government representatives, with a total participation of 120 young entrepreneurs across municipalities.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

Union of Young Entrepreneurs of Montenegro



Effectiveness

The project successfully established entrepreneurial clubs in 9 municipalities, creating a sustainable support network for young entrepreneurs.

Through signed agreements with local governments, the clubs gained access to municipal spaces, ensuring ongoing support. Public advocacy training empowered club coordinators to effectively address local entrepreneurial issues, leading to tangible proposals such as tax exemptions for young entrepreneurs and mentorship programs.



Transferability Assessment

The Entrepreneurial Clubs model has proven to be highly transferable. Inspired by the project's success, the municipality of Kotor independently funded an entrepreneurial club, and the OSCE Mission in Montenegro supported four additional clubs. The adaptable framework—comprising municipal partnerships, club coordinators, and a standardized advocacy training program—allows other regions to implement similar initiatives. The project's structure is replicable across diverse communities, with flexibility to adjust to local needs, making it a viable model for regional and international adoption.

TIMELINE

Sep 2023 – Dec 2024

LOCATIONS

Montenegro



GaminGEE

GAME-based tools to Foster an INtegrative model for early Gender Equality Education

The project aims to prevent inequality gender from early ages, fighting high-risk behaviours such as gender-based violence (specifically, sexual violence, but not restricted to that) and discrimination against women and LGBTIQ+ people through video games.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Focus groups in the partner countries with 8-10 kids and teenagers and the other with 8-10 teachers and parents, to prepare a collaborative game plot.
- A testing game activity involving kids and teenagers from 9 to 15 years old.
- A training programme activity - "Playing the game", involving educators, experts on matters such as gender-based equality, sexuality, children's rights, psychologists with experience in LGBTIQ+ issues, social workers, and game developers.
- The guidelines' revision activity, involving 3 educational professionals and 3 families per country .
- Two multiplier events organized with participants comprising teachers, principals, social educators, social workers and community workers involved with the youth and the childhood, civil society and advocates, policymakers, public administrations, regional entities and officers involved.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

GEYC, CATNESS GAME STUDIOS, UNIVERSIDAD DE BURGOS, SENIOR EUROPA SOCIEDAD LIMITADA, Queer Geography, z. s., and MTÜ Lastekaitse Liit



Effectiveness

Gender Equality Education in GaminGEE promotes a holistic approach, covering bio-psychosocial aspects such as emotions, relationships, respect, diversity, and consensual behaviors. Outputs include a toolkit to combat gender inequality in schools and families, an impactful graphic adventure video game for children and teens on popular platforms, and resources for educators and families.



Transferability Assessment

Resources for educators and families were designed, validated, and promoted by engaging entities with high multiplier potential. In schools, these resources can be integrated as cross-sectional competencies or adapted to specific subjects based on teacher goals. For families, the resources offer tools to support children in understanding equality, promoting respect for differences, and self-acceptance.

TIMELINE

Jan 2022 - Dec 2024

LOCATIONS

Romania, Estonia, Czech Republic, Spain



Counter Climate Change Disinformation
through youth E-participation

DisinformACTION!

Counter Climate Change Disinformation through Youth E-participation

The project aims to foster the ability of young people to identify online climate change disinformation and misinformation, while simultaneously encouraging them to become active citizens in their local communities on issues related to climate and the environment.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Developing the Climate Change Ambassadors Methodology, which, through non formal education methods, will tackle subjects such as critical thinking, media literacy, digital tools for e-participation, climate change disinformation, effective online communication;
- Empowering 480 students directly with media literacy and e-participation skills through school workshops;
- Training 60 teachers to implement the methodology, reaching indirectly 800 more students;
- Facilitating the exchange of good practices between the teachers and improving the methodology;
- Communication and dissemination activities

ROMANIA

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

GEYC, RESOPA, MiHi and EuroMuevete



Effectiveness

The findings indicate significant success in increasing media literacy, fostering democratic engagement, and enhancing community involvement. This project has not only countered climate change misinformation but also empowered a generation of informed and engaged citizens committed to positive change. More details in the Impact Report <https://www.geyc.ro/2024/06/publication-disinformation-impact.html>



Transferability Assessment

The Climate Change Ambassadors Methodology <https://www.geyc.ro/2024/09/publication-climate-change-ambassadors.html> can be used and replicated in other contexts to both for training the teachers and for working with students.

TIMELINE

Nov 2022 - Oct 2024

LOCATIONS

Romania, France, Latvia and Spain

More information on the general activities and the ones implemented in Romania can be found here: <https://www.geyc.ro/search/label/disinformation>



RAISE - Young Refugees' AI Student Empowerment Program

The project aims to support the target group of young migrants and refugees new to the European Union to better integrate into the labour market by developing an AI assessment and coaching tool.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- AI skills assessment
- Customised course plan
- Practical guidance and support for offering workshops
- Personalised coaching

The project is Funded by: Erasmus+, KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth

100 Volunteer Educators and 60 mentors are involved in the project.

Effectiveness

- 2 courses launched for young people: “Impactful Workshop Planning – Tips and Tricks” – A compressed course on how to create and deliver workshops effectively, and “Become a Volunteer Educator” – A comprehensive course that includes the framework for creating and delivering workshops, along with pedagogical and intercultural communication topics. These strengthened community bonds, developed leadership skills and empowered participants to become changemakers in their communities.
- 1 course for educators/ youth workers/ active youths who were interested in mentoring and guiding the next generation, gaining valuable coaching and mentoring experience while contributing to the community.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

TEACHSURFING GEMEINNUTZIGE UG – HAFTUNGSBESCHRANKT (Coordinator), PADAGOGISCHE HOCHSCHULE, CESIE, CSI CENTER FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION LTD, GEYC

Transferability Assessment



The Educators tool and courses, available in English, Romanian, Italian, and German, are replicable across various contexts. The project used an AI skills assessment tool with a modular, scalable framework that supports smart assessment and personalized coaching, saving time and resources. The AI Assessment & Coaching Tool incorporates two decision models: (1) an 'expert knowledge base' built by educational coaches and (2) a 'data-driven model' based on historical data, which together recommend customized learning plans and workshop topics. Future implementation will focus on making these models dynamically modifiable, modular, and reusable, aiming to offer the project as an open-source tool. Publications include an online handbook and a brief scientific article.

TIMELINE

May 2022 - Nov 2024

LOCATIONS

Germany, Italy, Romania, Cyprus

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More details here: <https://evelp.teachsurfing.org/raise-lp/>



EFIVOS

EFIVOS in Europe - Youth Involvement in the European Democratic Debate through Journalism

The project aims to increase the knowledge and awareness on EU institutions, policies and democratic procedures, empower youth to counter disinformation and enhance the democratic participation of disengaged youth through journalism and media.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Seminars, workshops and debates teaching the participants about the EU elections, the EU as an institution, election related topics (eg. climate change, borders etc.), democracy
- A training on Journalism and Media literacy
- the creation of online newspaper publications and radio programs leading up to the EU elections, a monthly newspaper and a monthly podcast/ radio show.
- Organizing National Debate Days and a National Info Day.
- Having an online conference with youth & stakeholders at the end of the project.

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY/ORGANIZATION:

GEYC, Δίκτυο για τα Δικαιώματα του Παιδιού, Citizens In Power, Dedalus Cooperativa Sociale, Crossing Borders, Pacto Verde, Health & Social Development Foundation



Effectiveness

The project offered hands-on workshops, which built youth's knowledge and awareness on institutions, policies and democratic procedures, as well as empowered them to get involved and make their voices heard in order to enhance the democratic participation of young people in their local communities.



Transferability Assessment

A series of articles were published on the partners' websites, aiming to raise awareness and inform youth on several important issues. Besides, a series of podcasts and interviews were published on partners' social media, aiming to promote activism, youth participation and critical thinking, and inspire other young people.

TIMELINE

Mar 2023 - Aug 2024

LOCATIONS

Romania, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Denmark, Spain, Bulgaria



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