



Albania
Montenegro
North Macedonia
Serbia
Turkey

**Monitoring report of Political,
Social and Economic Participation of Youth 2019**

Youth Participation Index

Impressum

YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX DEVELOPED BY:

Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation (Serbia)

Partners Albania for Change and Development (Albania)

Mladiinfo International (North Macedonia)

NGO Prima (Montenegro)

Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG)

www.ybhwbt.eu

info@ybhwbt.eu

PUBLISHER:

Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation

Ilije Garasanina 53/a, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

www.divac.com

ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLISHER:

Ana Koeshall, Ana and Divac Foundation

EDITOR:

Bojana Jevtović

LEADING RESEARCHER:

Ksenija Čović and Aleksandra Đurović

RESEARCHER:

Eriła Haska, Marija Jankuloska, Aleksandra Gligorović, Seda Karakaş
and Aylin Gülüm

CONTRIBUTORS:

Ramadan Sopotić, Aida Perović, Marjan Icoski and Gülçin Yüce

PROOFREAD BY:

Queen Victoria Education & Translations

INSIDE THIS REPORT

- 1 Introduction
- 2 About Youth Participation Index
- 3 Data on Political, Economic and Social Participation of Youth
- 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this annual monitoring report is to give an overview of the political, social and economic participation of youth in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey through a unique set of indicators.

Introduction

Youth Participation Index (YPI), measures the level of opportunity for young people to be involved in the decision-making processes. The YPI consists of three pillars: political participation of young people, social participation of young people and economic participation of young people.

The findings from YPI 2019 show that young people are still largely excluded from the prevailing social, economic and political processes, although there was some evidence of progress. Based on the identified challenges concerning absence of relevant youth-sensitive data and the low level of youth participation, this report outlines key recommendations.

Youth Participation Index was developed by the Youth Banks Hub for the Western Balkans and Turkey Network of youth organizations (YBH4WBT Network), to help decision-makers create frameworks and tools to ensure active involvement of young people in all decision-making processes that affect them. It was established in 2016 to ensure greater involvement of young people in Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The network's focus is on youth participation in decision-making processes, as well as on monitoring youth policy developments in the Western Balkans and Turkey with the aim of advocating for youth-related issues.

The network was established through the project Youth Banks Hub for Western Balkans and Turkey. The coordinator of this project is the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation from Serbia. The project is being implemented in partnership with Partners Albania for Change and Development from Albania, Association for Education - MLADIINFO International from North Macedonia, NGO Prima from Montenegro and Community Volunteers Foundation from Turkey (TOG).

About Youth Participation Index

Why do we need an index of youth participation?

About Youth Participation Index

Why is youth participation important?

The Youth Participation Index is a unique method for measuring **the level of opportunity that young people have when it comes to their involvement in the decision-making process**. Youth participation may refer to a process whereby the youth can engage and influence, and it may refer to an outcome, where the young people had a chance to contribute to a process. Different reasons for promoting participation have been mentioned in the literature, including the right of young people to participate and be heard in matters of their concern, helping them learn vital competences that every citizens needs, improving services concerning young people and creating inclusive local communities.¹

The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027² places youth participation at the forefront of youth policy. Member States are invited to encourage and promote inclusive democratic participation of all young people in democratic processes and society, to actively engage them, support youth representations at local, regional and national level and explore and promote the use of innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation e.g. digital democracy tools.

“Europe cannot afford wasted talent, social exclusion or disengagement among its youth. Young people should not only be architects of their own life, but also contribute to positive change in society.”
– EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027

“Children and young women and men are critical agents of change who will, in the new Goals, find a platform to channel their infinite capacity for activism into the creation of a better world.”

– Agenda 2030

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³ also recognizes the active role of young people as “critical agents of change”. More than one third of sustainable development targets reference young people explicitly or implicitly, with a focus on empowerment, participation and/or well-being.⁴

It should be noted that during the preparation of this report, the pandemic brought about a crisis which has taken its toll on young people. However, in these circumstances youth participation is going to be even more important. It has already been observed that the degree of participation of young people and youth representative bodies in European countries was often very low, and that

1 https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/59895423/Kiilakoski_Participation_Analytical_Paper_final%252005-05.pdf/b7b77c27-5bc3-5a90-594b-a18d253b7e67

2 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0269>

3 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

4 https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Youth/Fast%20Facts%20-%20Youth%20&%20SDGs_2017-January_final.pdf

“young people were forced to react but were not seen as an agent for their own account”.⁵ It has also been recognized that young people have demonstrated their capability and willingness to help and that the opportunities for youth participation in the future need to be of high importance.⁶

About Youth Participation Index

Why do we need an index of youth participation?

Recognizing the need to improve youth participation in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey, as well as the necessity to have reliable data and to contribute to raising awareness of this issue, the YBH4WBT Network developed the YPI.

Advantages of the YPI are:

- ✓ It can summarize complex, multidimensional youth-specific data;
- ✓ It is easier to interpret than many separate indicators;
- ✓ It can assess progress over time;
- ✓ It provides a mechanism for cross-country comparisons.

Disadvantages of the YPI are:

- ✗ It may send misleading policy messages if misinterpreted;
- ✗ The choice of indicators is limited to the data that is systematically collected annually and processed in the same way in all countries.

The main advantages of using an index are that it is simple and easy to understand. The message which is being communicated should be comprehensible for everyone and should have an effect on decision-makers. On the other hand, the index could oversimplify complex issues and be misleading. Considering all the above-stated aspects and taking precautions to minimize the disadvantages, the Youth Bank Hub has decided to create the YPI committed to the participation of youth with the aim of drawing the public's attention to the field of youth participation, since this issue is one of the most challenging ones in the countries included in the project.

At the beginning of the project, policy researchers tried to find the right set of indicators which would be applicable to all participating countries. However, bearing in mind that this index has been implemented in only 5 countries, the identification of applicable indicators is still ongoing. The main reasons for this are the unavailability of data and the changes of the officially recognized statistical methodologies in the participating countries. During the process of data collection, it was discovered that the Western Balkan countries have more or less the same official methodologies and statistics, unlike Turkey which in some cases uses different ones.

The YPI is created by the Youth Bank Hub as a non-governmental initiative, not by a public institution or government. The data has already been collected by the State or as a part of other official statistics. The purpose of this Index is to assess the already available statistics over time. Despite all constraints, YBH created the YPI and has continued to advocate for the youth sensitive data in order to draw attention to the status of youth.

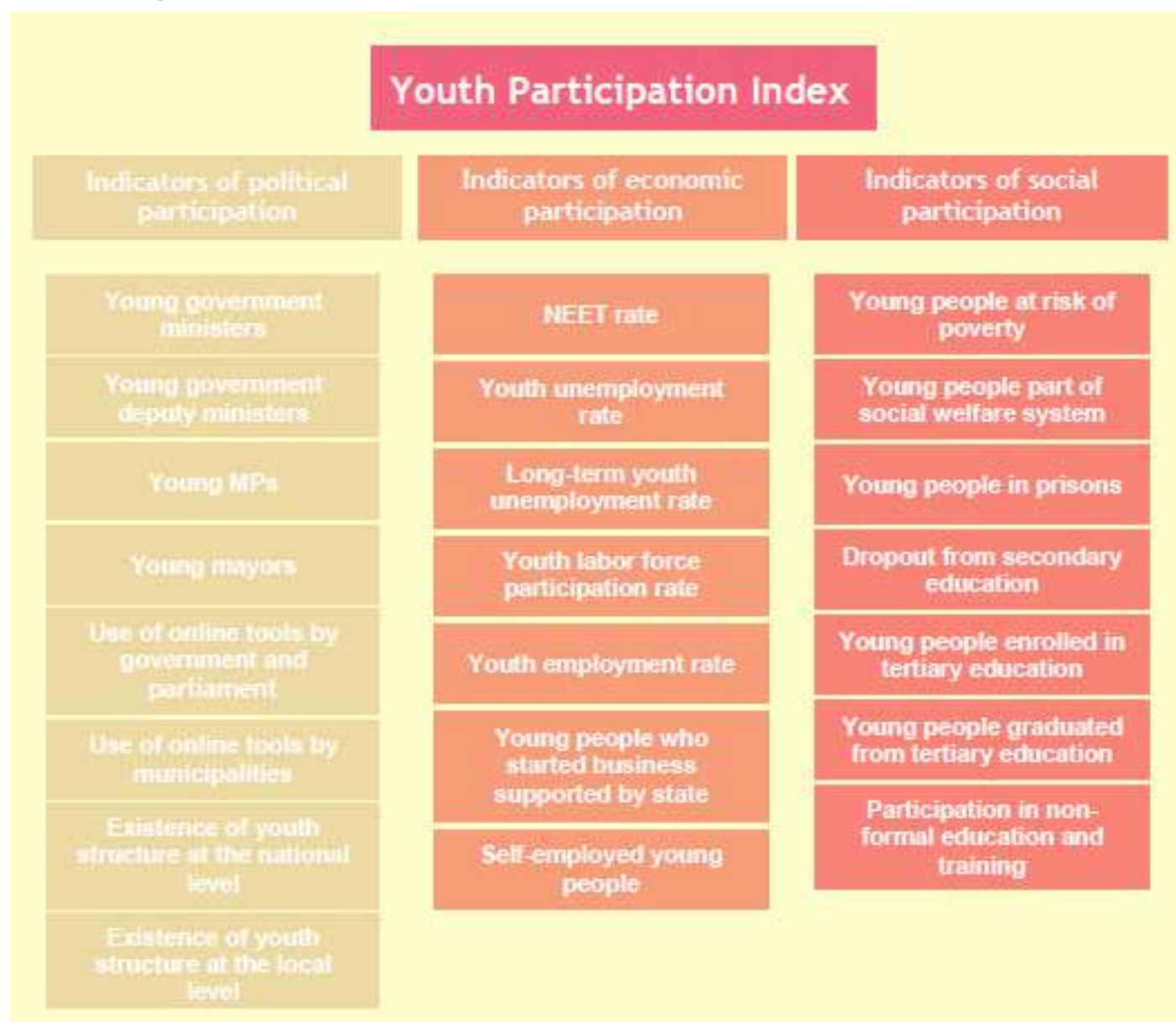
5 <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/72351197/Summary+13+Oct+2020.pdf/c8808ff7-25be-f7f9-3504-b2a189a64bd0>

6 <https://www.europeanyouthideas.eu/blog-posts/eye-online-youth-participation-times-covid-19>

Three key dimensions of youth participation

Youth participation index captures three dimensions of participation: the political, economic, and social dimension. Each dimension is assessed via a set of carefully chosen indicators (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Structure of the Youth Participation Index



Political dimension refers to the opportunities young people have to be involved in political processes - to be informed on the work of the government, parliament and municipalities, to be engaged in youth networks and to be elected to political positions. The participation of young people in political life has recently become a priority worldwide, as it is recognized that they should have a say in political decisions because they make up a substantial share of population and are disproportionately affected by certain political decisions (especially long-term ones).

Economic dimension refers to the degree of inclusion, or vice versa exclusion, of young people from the labour market. It captures the degree of their activity, employment, and self-employment. **Social dimension** refers to the active participation of young people in social life. It is assessed via the integration of young people in the community through formal and informal education, as well as absence of markers of potential exclusion - due to poverty, dependence on the social welfare system and time spent in prison or correctional facilities.

Availability of youth-sensitive data in the region

To create policy measures that successfully tackle the specific challenges young people face and to increase youth participation, it is crucial to have the most recent and relevant data. Moreover, youth organizations and young people themselves need to have easy access to all data pertaining to their situation.

The YPI represents a unique combination of indicators with the same type of data from the countries involved, allowing the data to be compared. The major challenge in the process of devising Youth Participation Index was to find the comparable indicators in each country, referring to the respective age group⁷ and using the same methodology during the calculation. The main problem regarding data collection is related to the social dimension, where researchers could not identify eight key indicators which would be comparable in all countries.

In the following text, the availability of data concerning youth political, economic and social participation is discussed. It should be noted that the current epidemiological situation and election process in some of the countries have made it difficult for researchers to obtain even some of the data which had been accessible during the previous years, as institutional capacities are overburdened. This was especially the case with Montenegro.

Availability of data on youth political participation

The data on political participation can be collected, although this process is done manually in each of the countries. There are no official statistics on the youth representation in parliaments and other political positions, nor on the existence of youth networks. It should be noted that the absence of systematic data and information on youth representation in parliaments has already been recognized at the global level, and in purpose of collecting the relevant data the Inter-Parliamentary Union periodically conducts surveys on youth participation in national parliaments.⁸

The main difficulty regarding the political dimension is the lack of data at a local level in Turkey. The reason for this is the fact that Turkey has 2951 municipalities, so the manual counting of online tools and youth networks at the local level is not feasible.

7 Youth between 15 and 29 years old

8 <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/youth-empowerment>

Indicators	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
% of young ministers in Government	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
% of young deputy ministers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
% of young MPs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
% of young mayors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online tools for information and participation in decision making of government and parliament	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online tools for information and participation in decision making of municipalities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on the national level	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on the local level	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

Availability of data on youth economic participation

The data on economic participation has been collected using official statistics, which are being published annually. The main source for data on indicators of youth economic participation is Labor force survey, which is conducted in each country by national statistical offices using official methodologies in line with EUROSTAT.

The only exception is the information on young people who started their own business with financial support from the state, measured as the percentage of young people who received subsidies among applicants. The data regarding this indicator is collected by the official institution in charge of offering subsidies, and in some cases it was difficult to obtain this information.

Indicators of economic participation	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
NEET rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth unemployment rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long-term youth unemployment rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth labor force participation rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth employment rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of the state	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Self-employed young people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Availability of data on youth social participation

Table on availability of data for indicators of social dimension of youth participation clearly shows that most obstacles have been encountered in segments of social participation. Researchers have faced challenges in choosing a set of indicators to adequately capture social participation of young people that all the target countries collect every year using the same methodology.

Availability of data for indicators of social participation per countries

Indicators	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
Young people at risk of poverty	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Young people part of social welfare system	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Young people in prisons	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
Dropout from secondary education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Young people graduated from tertiary education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Participation rate in non-formal education and training	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

Indicators related to the formal education system are usually collected by the national statistics offices. In this area it is crucial to ensure comparability of data, since countries sometimes use different methodologies when measuring drop-out, enrollment, and graduation rates. This is the case with Albania and Turkey. The educational system in Turkey is different from the one in other participating countries, so the data is not fully comparable. The data regarding education has its limitations, since in most countries it still cannot be collected by following young people through education until they drop out or graduate, using individual student registers.

In 2019, researchers have added an additional indicator related to education that comes from a Labor Force Survey and is currently available via Eurostat for all countries except for Albania. The indicator refers to participation in non-formal education.

The data on young people at risk of poverty comes from a Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), which is being conducted in all countries. The problem of missing data regarding this indicator is that the results of this survey are sometimes published after the completion of this report. For instance, INSTAT published the 2017 and 2018 SILC results in December 2019. The results for Montenegro and North Macedonia are expected in December.

When the Index was first getting developed, most countries did not have the data for young people in prisons. Over the past three years the system of recording and providing data has improved. For example, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia at first provided the number of young prisoners without the total number of prisoners, but in the second year it provided the percentage of young people in prisons. Only Turkey still has difficulties when it comes to collecting this type of data. The Ministries of Justice in each of the countries now collect the data by age groups. However, the data for this indicator could not be collected in Montenegro this year due to the epidemiological situation and election process which have hindered the data collection process.

Similarly, efforts are made to change the status quo regarding the social welfare system and to include youth sensitive data in this area as well. Serbia was, until this year, the only country that could provide this information. However, this year researchers have received negative responses regarding the availability of data for this indicator from the institution in charge.

Availability of data in the context of EU integration

Having reliable and transparent statistics is a major request from the EU to all the countries in the pre-accession phase in order to become a member state.⁹ It is required that Member States be able to produce statistics based on professional independence, impartiality, reliability, transparency, and confidentiality. Common rules are provided for the methodology, production, and dissemination of statistical information.

Negotiations under Chapter 18 relating to statistics include the harmonization of the legal regulations of the candidate country with the EU *acquis communautaire*. This chapter is considered especially important, as the positive changes resulting from a productive negotiation process will provide better quality, availability, and credibility of data. Reliable and comparable statistics are the preconditions for a successful negotiation.

As candidate countries, Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey are undergoing a process of appraisal of their ability to assume the obligations of a EU membership, and their progress concerning Chapter 18 on statistics is assessed within progress reports.¹⁰ According to the assessment in the latest reports, all of the countries are moderately prepared in the area of statistics, meaning that some progress was made but that further significant efforts are needed.

North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia need to work on strengthening human and financial resources of Statistical Offices, so that they can fulfil their responsibilities and ensure staff retention. Serbia should adopt the new statistical law to increase the independence of the Statistical Office. In Albania, the methods of data collection need to be modernized and the statistical production processes improved, and in Turkey the recommendation is to strengthen coordination between TurkStat and other data providers.

In the context of this report it is also important to state that the Labour Force Survey is conducted regularly in all countries, as well as the Survey of income and living conditions (EU-SILC). It is assessed that the labor market statistics are largely compliant with EU standards. In North Macedonia activities are underway to improve statistics on education.

Data comparison - what is the target in the area of youth participation?

Before presenting the data, it is important to note that, as in previous years, the data will be compared to the targeted percentages which stand for the desired outcome for the region. These percentages were proposed by policy researchers engaged in the preparation of this report. The sources of data were varied - from the percentage reached in the developed countries, which was the case for some indicators of political participation, to using targeted values from the EU2020 Strategy for some indicators of economic participation. Moreover, some targeted percentages were prepared based on researchers' opinions of what would be the desirable value of the indicator.

As it is shown in the table which presents the targeted percentages of each indicator, the targeted value for political participation is 43.23, while the targeted value for economic participation is 48.4. Summarizing those two dimensions, the targeted Youth Participation Index is 91.63.

⁹ Chapters of the *acquis*: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis_en

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/package_en

Indicators of political participation	Target percentage	Indicators of economic participation	Target percentage
Young government ministers	5%	NEET rate	15%
Young MPs	12.3%	Youth unemployment rate	19%
Young mayors	5%	Long-term youth unemployment rate	4%
Young government deputy ministers	10%	Youth Labor force participation rate	57%
On-line tools for information and participation in decision-making of government and parliament	100%	Youth Employment rate	75%
On-line tools for information and participation in decision-making of municipalities	100%	Young people that started their own business with the financial support of the state	60%
Existence of youth network—at local levels	100%	Self-employed young people	30%
Existence of youth networks—at the national level	100%		
Targeted index	43.23	Targeted index	48.4

Youth Participation Index 2019

A closer look at youth political participation

Key facts and findings

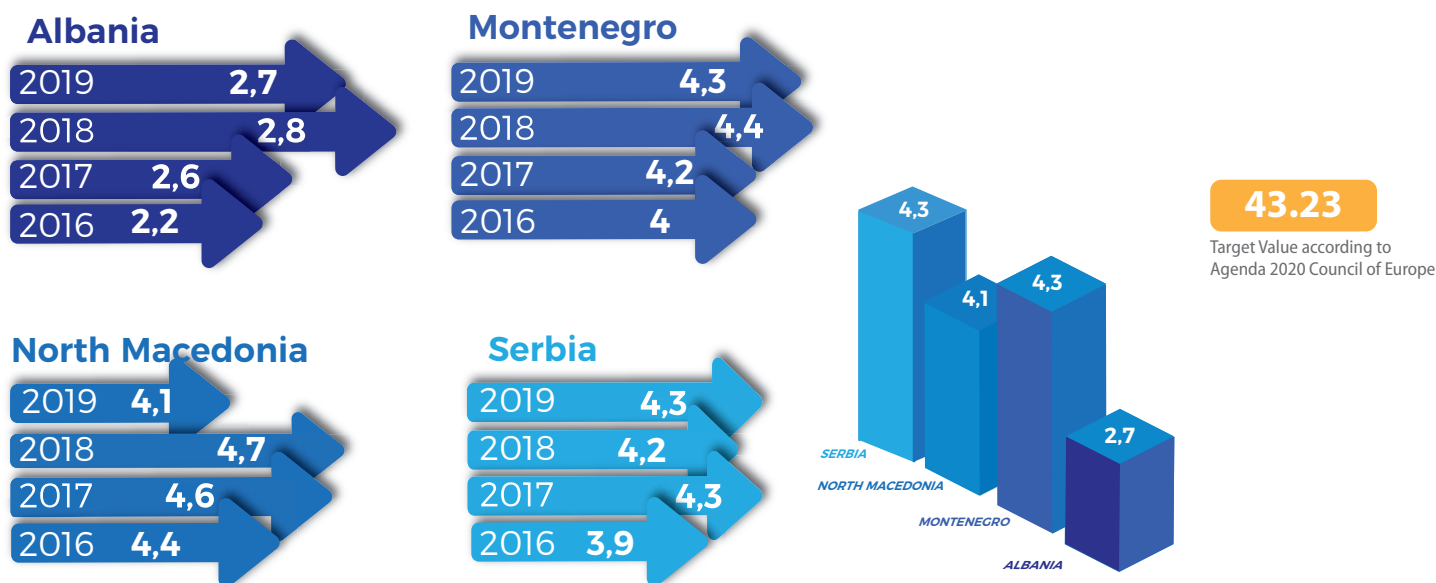
- ❖ Serbia has recorded a slight upward trend in political participation, unlike Albania and Montenegro, where a slight decrease in political participation index can be observed since last year, whereas in North Macedonia the value of this index has decreased considerably.
- ❖ **The Youth are vastly underrepresented in political life in all countries.** In 2019 there were no ministers in Government and almost no mayors under thirty. In some countries, there were no deputy ministers under thirty, the only exceptions being Albania and Serbia. Young people accounted for between 0.4% and 4% of MPs.
- ❖ In Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia there are **established youth networks at the national level**, whereas this is not the case with Albania and Turkey. This remained unchanged in 2019. However, in Albania the Law No. 75/2019 “For Youth” adopted in 2019 stipulates the creation of a National Youth Council. In Montenegro, Law on Youth adopted in 2019 prescribed that the “Alliance of non-governmental organizations (Associations) implementing the youth policy” should be established, which functions as National Youth Council.
- ❖ **The number of active local youth structures has been in decrease** in North Macedonia and Serbia. However, in the last four years, the number of municipalities that have established youth structures has increased by 39 percentage points in Albania, and by 23 percentage points in Montenegro.
- ❖ In Montenegro, North Macedonia, Turkey and Serbia **online tools for information and participation in decision-making processes at national levels** are the most developed (Serbia marked an increase in 2019). There is a downward trend in this area in Albania.
- ❖ Only Montenegro and Serbia have high availability of **online tools for information and participation in decision-making processes at the local level**. North Macedonia measured decrease in this regard - in 2019, around two-thirds of municipalities had websites, Twitter and Facebook accounts, and a similar case was in Albania.

What does political participation of young people look like right now? To answer that question using one number, we should look into the index of political participation. This index can be calculated for all countries except Turkey. Since there is no data regarding the three indicators concerning this situation at the local level, the index cannot be calculated.

Judging from the index calculated using the data on political participation over the years, several conclusions can be made.

- ❖ Firstly, the situation concerning political participation in all participating countries is not as good as it could be. The highest value of this index is still lower than number 5, which is significantly lower than the target value, being 43.2.
- ❖ Secondly, the situation in Albania concerning political participation is, judging from the index and the collected data, even more worrying than in other countries.
- ❖ Lastly, in some countries such as Albania, Serbia, and to some extent Montenegro, there is some evidence of progress in this area compared to 2016, although not to a significant degree. In North Macedonia there was some evidence of progress, but the situation somewhat changed last year, mostly due to decline at the local level - decrease of use of online tools for information and participation in decision making of municipalities and existence of youth structures at the local level.

YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION INDEX OVER YEARS



To examine this data more closely, we need to look at indicators and their values in more detail.¹¹

Youth are vastly underrepresented in political life

One of the key conclusions that can be drawn from the data is that in all participating countries youth participation in politics is at a low level, as it can be observed from the table. In 2019, young people accounted for between 0.4% and 4% of MPs, the smallest percentage being in Serbia and the largest in Albania. There were no ministers in Government and almost no mayors under thirty in any of the countries. Out of all the countries, there were deputy ministers under thirty only in Albania and Serbia.

11 The table with all data regarding political participation is in the Annex of the document.

Percentage of young people on political positions

Indicators	Albania	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Turkey
% of young ministers in Government	0	0	0	0	0
% of young deputy ministers	7	0	0	5	0
% of young MPs	4	2.5	3.3	0.4	1.3
% of young mayors	0	0	0	0.6	0

The situation is similar to the previous years, although there are some noteworthy trends. The largest number of MPs in any of the participating countries was registered in North Macedonia in 2016, when young MPs accounted for 8.3% and in Montenegro in 2018 when this percentage was 8.6%. However, in North Macedonia in the subsequent years there was a decline, the number being between 1 and 2% in 2017 and 2018, only to rise in the last reporting period to around 3%. In Montenegro, percentage of MPs dropped to 2.5% in 2019. Albania marked a rise from 2016, when this number was around 2%, to a double of that number in the subsequent years. In Serbia and Turkey, although there have been some slight changes, this number varied between 0.4 and 1.3% in the period from 2016 to 2019.

When it comes to other political positions, in all participating countries there have been no ministers under thirty in the period 2016-2019.

For a young person, becoming a mayor is also highly unlikely judging from the collected data. In 2019 only in Serbia this number was not 0%, although it was very low, only 0.6%. This year marks a significant decline of percentage of young mayors in Albania - from 6% in the period from 2016-2018, to 0% in 2019.

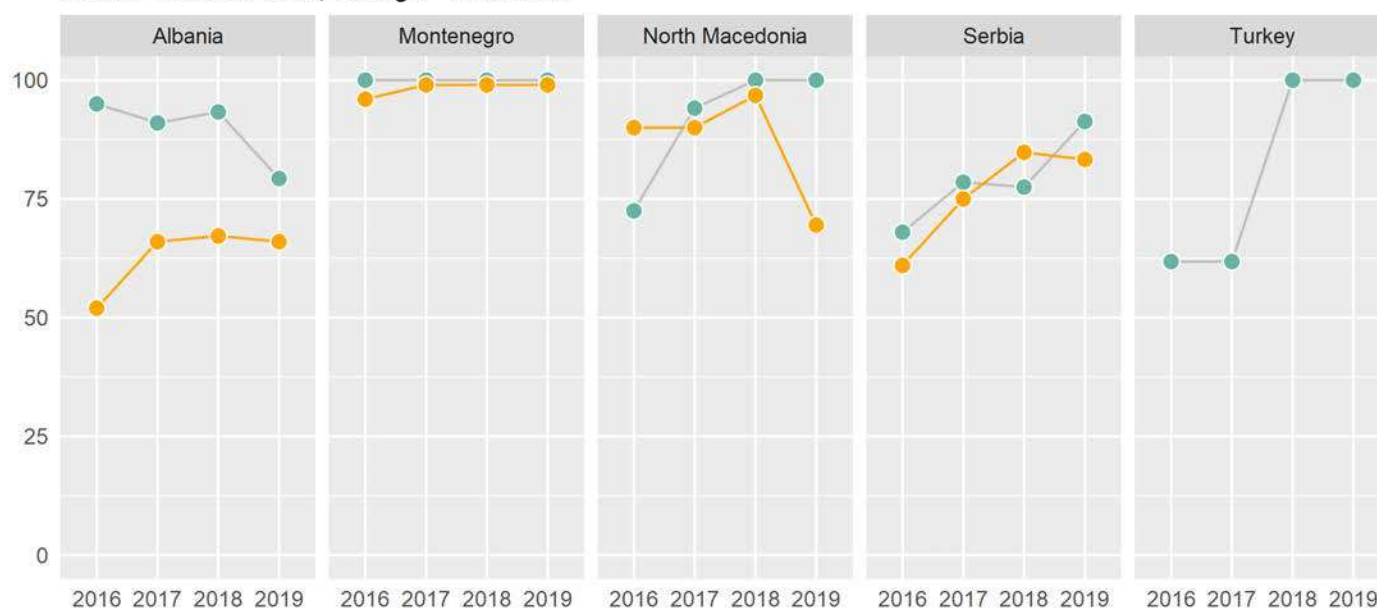
Moreover, in 2019 there were no deputy ministers under thirty in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Turkey, with the exception of Albania and Serbia, where the percentage was 7% and 5% respectively. This is an increase comparing to the previous years, for instance, in 2016 Albania had no young deputy ministers in the Government, whereas Serbia had 1%. On the other hand, Montenegro experienced a negative trend, in 2016 and 2017 the percentage of young deputy ministers was around 5%, only to decline to 0% in 2018.

It is interesting to note that in some countries there is a discrepancy between the likelihood that a young person will hold different political positions. For instance, in Serbia the number of young MPs was low and relatively unchanged in the period of 2016 to 2019, whereas the number of deputy ministers in the Government under thirty increased in this period. Albania registered a steady rise in percentage of young MPs, as well as a rise in the number of young deputy ministers over years, while at the local level for the first time registered no young mayors in 2019.

Online tools for information and participation of youth in decision-making processes of governments, parliaments and municipalities are still not completely utilized

Use of online tools on the national and local level (in %) over years

Green - national level; Orange - local level



The results of the survey for 2019 indicated that all the countries have more than 79% of online tools for information meaning that national bodies in those countries have websites, Twitter and Facebook accounts. Montenegro, North Macedonia, Turkey and Serbia have the most developed online tools for information and participation in decision-making processes at national levels. In Montenegro this percentage was 100% in each year, North Macedonia and Turkey reached 100% in 2018 and maintained that score, whereas Serbia marked an increase in this regard in 2019. Only Albania has a downward trend in this area.

In contrast to the situation at the national level, only Montenegro and Serbia have a high availability of online tools for information and participation in decision-making processes at the local level, 83% in Serbia and 100% in Montenegro. In North Macedonia there was a decrease in this regard in 2019 and similarly to Albania, around two thirds of municipalities had websites, Twitter and Facebook accounts. The data for Turkey is not available.

Existence of youth structures varies between countries

In Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia there are established youth structures at the national level, whereas this is not the case with Albania and Turkey. The situation regarding this remained unchanged in the period from 2016 to 2019.

It should be noted that the Law No. 75/2019 “For Youth” adopted in Albania in 2019 stipulates the creation of a National Youth Council, a consultative body aiming to propose strategies and policies with regards to youth to the responsible Ministry of youth. Moreover, although there is not a national youth council in Turkey on legal terms to date, the duties of the National Youth Council which operates under the Ministry of Youth and Sports are defined in the Article 215 of Presidential Decree.

In Montenegro, Law on Youth adopted in 2019 prescribed that the “Alliance of non-governmental organizations (Associations) implementing the youth policy” should be established, which functions as a National Youth Council.

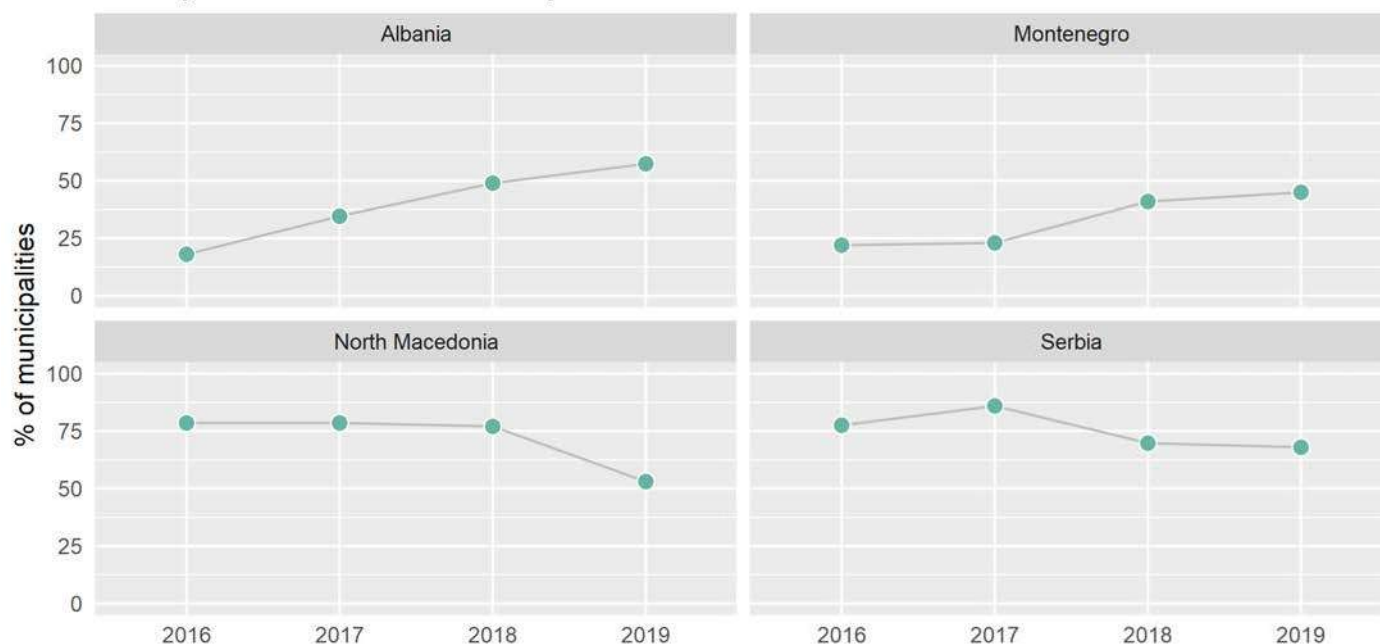
Country	Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on the national level	Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on the local level (in %)
Albania	✗	57.4
Montenegro	✓	45.0
North Macedonia	✓	53.0
Serbia	✓	67.9
Turkey	✗	

When it comes to the local level, the percentage of municipalities which have active youth structures (based on their websites and social network pages) ranges from 45% in Montenegro to 67.9% in Serbia.

Based on the information available online, it seems that the number of active local youth networks has been in decline in North Macedonia and Serbia. In 2016 North Macedonia and Serbia had 78.5% and 77.5% of active local networks respectively, only to drop to around 53% and 68% in 2019.

On the other hand, in the last four years the number of municipalities that have established youth structures has increased by 39 percentage points in Albania, and by 23 percentage points in Montenegro.

Local youth structures over the years...



For the purpose of better understanding youth structures, researchers decided to complement quantitative data on their existence at the national and local level with additional data on their role in the development and implementation of youth policy using available sources.

In some countries, researchers assessed that youth structures at the local level do have a role concerning youth policy. Such is the case with offices for youth at a local level in Montenegro.

On the contrary, in Albania, it is assessed that the Regional Youth Centers of the National Youth Service have not played any significant role in the development and implementation of youth policy. Local Youth Councils in North Macedonia and local youth offices in Serbia have an advisory role in the municipalities within the scope of the youth issues and policies. However, in both cases data on their impact upon local policies and their capacity to advocate is scarce, and their role differs from municipality to municipality which usually hinges upon the local context in which they are formed. In some cases they are absent from social media platforms, which leads to the low visibility of their work and subsequently even the quality of their work since this is the most frequent channel of communication with youth.

Youth Participation Index 2019

A closer look at youth economic participation

Key facts and findings

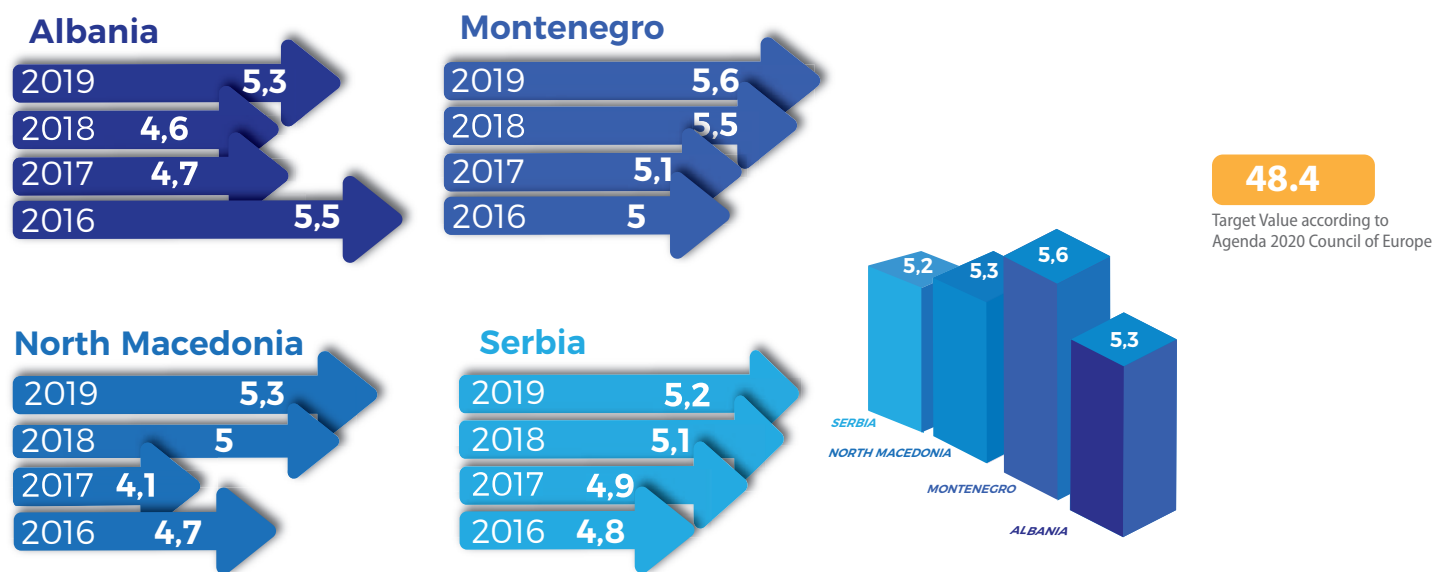
- ❖ Similarly as in the case of political participation, **the economic participation of young people in all participating countries is not as good as it could be**. The state of economic participation of young people is similar in all participating countries, although each country faces specific challenges. In all countries there is some evidence of slight progress in 2019 compared to the year before.
- ❖ **NEET rates are still high, ranging from 19% to 30%**. It can be observed that the situation is somewhat improving, since NEET rates had been slightly decreasing in almost all countries, with the exception of Turkey. NEET rates were higher for young women than for young men in almost all countries.
- ❖ **Youth unemployment continued its downward trend** in 2019 in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, whereas in Turkey it slightly increased compared to the previous year. Despite this decline **the situation of the youth in the labor market remains worrying**. In all countries, youth unemployment rate stood at around 22%, except North Macedonia where it dropped to 30% but remained the highest one of all participating countries. **Many young people are unemployed for longer than 12 months**.
- ❖ **Youth employment rates also continued to increase this year**, by 2 to 3 percentage points in all countries except Turkey, where it rose by 6.5 percentage points compared to the last year. In general, youth activity rates are quite high, however, in all countries labor force participation rates are considerably higher for young men than young women.
- ❖ **Not many young people are self-employed**. In 2019, the percentage of self-employed young people varied from merely 1.6% in North Macedonia to 7.8% in Albania. One in four young persons who chose to apply for subsidies for self-employment received them in Albania and Serbia, while this was the case with around two thirds of young people in North Macedonia.

What can we conclude about the economic participation of young people by looking into the index of economic participation? In interpreting the index it is important to note that the data for one indicator of economic participation could not be obtained for North Macedonia (concerning self-employed young people in the previous year) and Montenegro (young people that started their own business with financial support). Thus, this index is completely comparable only for Albania and Serbia over the years, since all indicators of economic participation are available for them. Due to the missing data, the index for Turkey could not be created.

Judging from the index created based on the data on economic participation over the years, several conclusions can be made.

- ❖ Similarly as in the case of political participation, the economic participation of young people in all participating countries is not as good as it could be. The highest registered value of this index is lower than the number 6, which is significantly lower than the target value of 48.4.
- ❖ Judging from the index and based on collected data, the state of economic participation of young people is similar in all participating countries.
- ❖ Lastly, in all countries there is some evidence of progress in 2019 compared to the year be-

INDEX FO YOUTH ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION INDEX OVER YEARS



fore, albeit not to a significant degree.

To examine this data more closely, we need to look at the indicators of economic dimension of youth participation and their values in more detail.¹² An overview of the economic indicator presented in the Table suggests that, in general, young people faced multiple challenges in 2019. There is a significant percentage of unemployed youth and some of them have been unemployed for longer than 12 months, which puts them in an even more vulnerable position. A considerable number of young people are not in employment nor in education and training. In some countries the youth activity rates are close to the EU-27 average, whereas youth employment rates are below the EU average.

¹² The table with all data regarding economic participation is in the Annex of the document.

Indicators	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey	EU-27
NEET rate	26.6	24.5	21.3	18.9	29.5	12.6
Youth unemployment rate	21.5	30.5	22.3	21.5	22.1	11.9
Long-term youth unemployment rate	11.5	23.1	13.8	10.0	4.5	3.4
Labour force participation rate	52.5	49.4	51.1	47.0	53.3	54.7
Youth employment rate	41.2	34.3	39.7	36.9	41.5	48.2

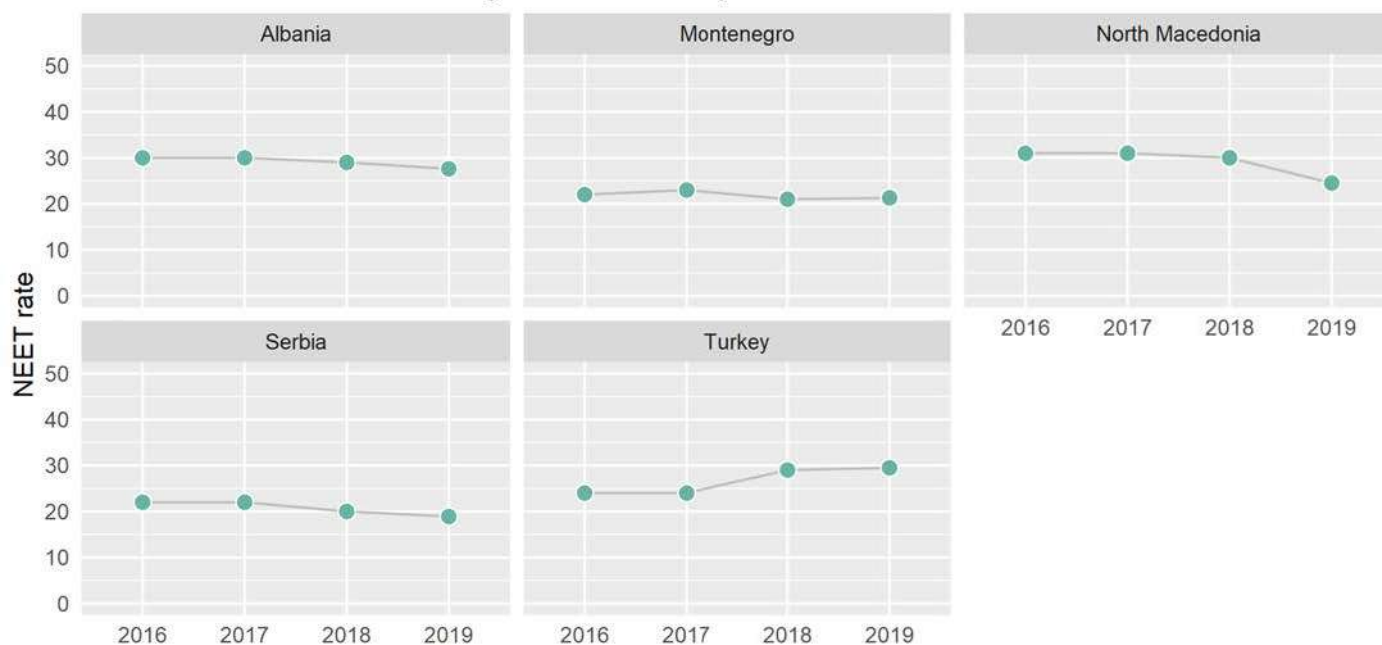
If we look at this data in more detail, what are some of the key conclusions that can be drawn?

Between one-fifth and one-third of young people are neither in employment nor in education and training.

In 2019, the percentage of young people neither in employment nor in education and training (neither formal nor non-formal) were still quite high in all participating countries, ranging from 19% in Serbia to almost 27% in Albania and 30% in Turkey. Compared to the EU-27 average, apart from Serbia and Montenegro, these rates are higher by 50% or more.

This is especially worrisome, since these young people are without a job or inactive and have limited learning opportunities, and thus are in danger to have even worse employment prospects in the future. Looking at the value for this indicator in the previous 4 years, it can be observed that the situation is somewhat improving, since NEET rates had been slightly decreasing in almost all countries. The only exception is Turkey, where NEET rate increased in 2018 from around 24% to 29% and this value remained almost unchanged in 2019.

How have NEET rates changed in the last 4 years?

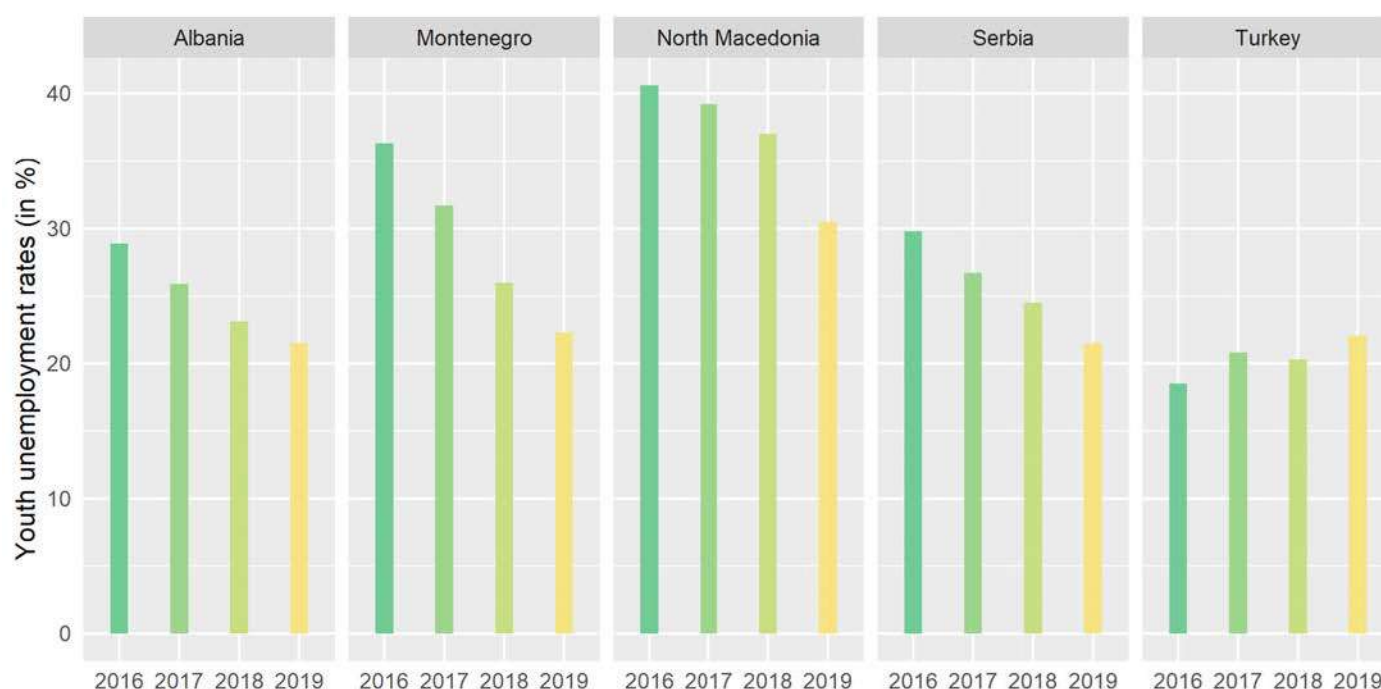


Youth unemployment rates are decreasing, but are still worryingly high

Youth unemployment continued its downward trend in 2019 in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. Despite the decline in unemployment the state of young people in the labor market remains worrying.

The situation is different in Turkey, where the youth unemployment rate has increased by 1.8 percentage points compared with the previous year. However, it is important to note that the youth unemployment rates for Turkey in 2016 were lower than the rates in other countries. Over the years the youth unemployment rates in Albania, Serbia and Montenegro dropped to the percentage registered in Turkey, around 22%, which is still well above the EU average (11.9 percent).

The unemployment rate of the population aged 15-29 in North Macedonia remained the highest one of all participating countries, although it continued to improve with each year, dropping from 40.6% in 2016 to 30.5% in 2019.



Youth employment rates also continued their increase this year, by 2 to 3 percentage points in all countries except Turkey, where it rose by 6.5 percentage points compared to the previous year. In 2019, these rates varied from around 34% in North Macedonia, to around 41% in Albania and Turkey, which is still lower than EU average of around 48%.

Youth labor force participation rates vary to a certain degree between countries - the lowest one was registered in Serbia (47%), the highest one in Turkey (53%), being close to the EU average of 54.7.

Many young people are unemployed longer than 12 months

Do young people remain unemployed for long? The answer to that question is found by looking at long-term unemployment rates, share of unemployed young people who haven't had a job for at least 12 months among active young people. The data tells us that, in all countries except Turkey,

10% or more of active young people have been unemployed for a longer period of time. Similarly as in the case of youth unemployment rates, this rate is highest in North Macedonia (23.1 percent), although it dropped by 6.6 percentage points compared to the value registered in 2016. In other countries the long-term unemployment rates continued to decline this year. This rate is the lowest in Turkey, 4.5%, and it's the one closest to the value of the EU average of 3.4%.

Not many young people are self-employed

Self-employment can also be a viable choice for many young people. However, not many of them actually opt for it. In 2019, the percentage of self-employed young people varied from merely 1.6% in North Macedonia to 7.8% in Albania. There were challenges in collecting the data in previous years, so we can compare these rates only for Serbia and Montenegro. In Serbia the percentage of self-employed young people stayed the same, and in Montenegro it dropped from 5.8% by 1.8 percentage points.

Indicators	North				
	Albania	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
% of self-employed young people among youth population	7.80	1.60	4.00	6.87	2.80
% of young people that started their own business with the financial support of state	26.00	64.40		24.35	

When it comes to the percentage of young people who received subsidies to start their own business among all applicants, in North Macedonia two thirds of them were successful. In Albania and in Serbia approximately 1 in 4 applicants received financial support.

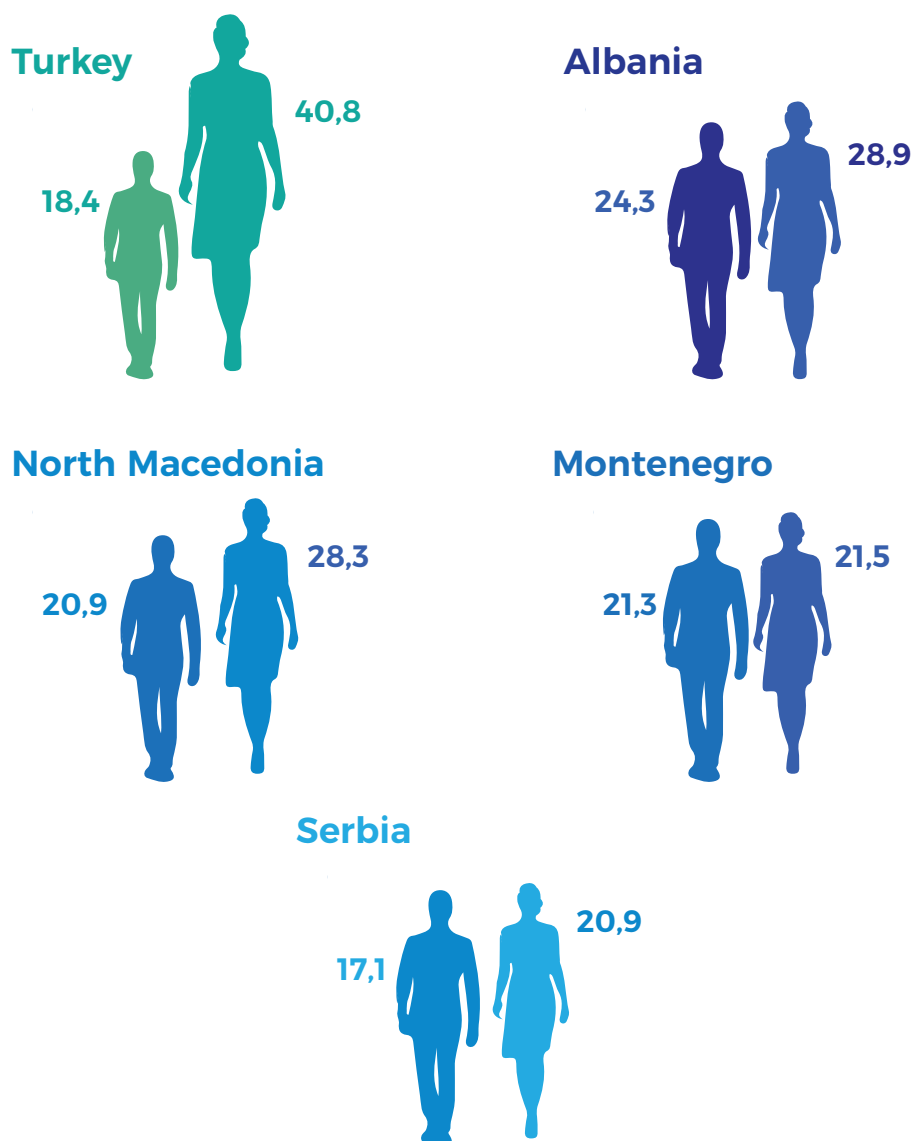
Youth economic participation revisited: A closer look at the data reveals gender gaps

Young people are not a homogenous group - they differ in many ways and policy measures need to take that into account. Considering the importance of better understanding the differences among young people, this year we have explored gender differences in indicators of youth economic participation. Do young women and men fare similarly at the labor market?

A closer look at the data, reveals that there are significant gender gaps that need to be taken into account.

NEET rates were higher for young women than for young men in all countries except Montenegro. The difference is particularly prevalent in Turkey - 22.4 percentage points.

COMPARING NEET RATES OF YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

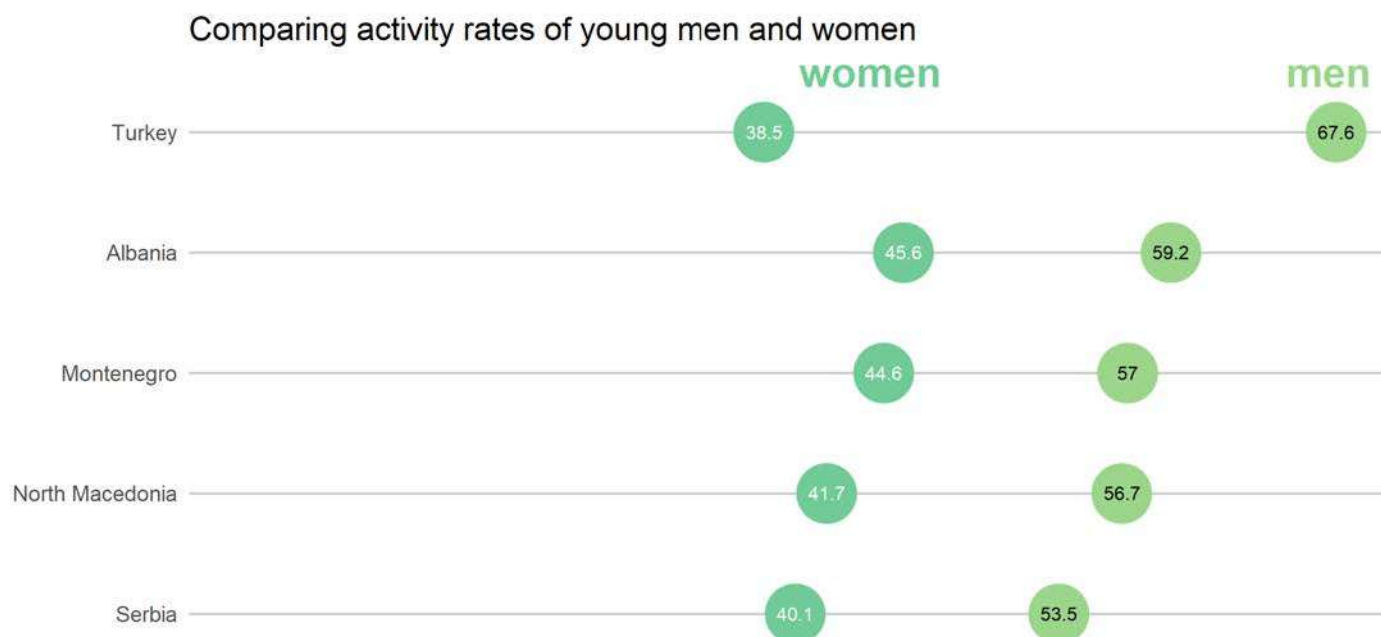


However, when we look at youth unemployment rates the gender differences are not prominent in most countries. In Albania differences in unemployment rates of young men and women were a mere 0.4 percentage points, 0.6 in Montenegro and 1.7 in Serbia. The unemployment rates were higher for young women than for young men in Turkey (26.7 compared to 19.5), and in North Macedonia (33% compared to 28.7).

Long-term unemployment rates were also similar for young men and women in Montenegro and Serbia. In North Macedonia, this rate was slightly higher for women (23.7 compared to 22.6), while in Albania and Turkey the observed differences were more prominent. Although long-term unemployment rate in general was not high in Turkey - 4.5%, for young women it was 7.3% and for young men around 3%. In Albania, 13.7% of young men have been unemployed for more than 12 months, whereas this was the case for 8.9% of young women (among active population).

Conversely, when it comes to youth labor force participation rates, considerable gender differences emerge. In all countries labor force participation rates are higher for young men than

young women. A striking difference is observed in the case of Turkey. However, in other countries the differences are also substantial - more than 10 percentage points.



Since NEET rates encompass both unemployed and inactive young people, it is possible that the observed substantial differences stem from difference in labor force participation between young women and men, which should be further explored in future analysis.

Youth Participation Index 2019

A closer look at youth social participation

Key facts and findings

- ❖ Due to the high number of indicators for which the data is missing, the social participation index could not be calculated. This challenge has been present for four years in a row indicating **significant challenges in obtaining data related to social participation of young people**.
- ❖ Between 39% and 60% of young people were enrolled in tertiary education. When it comes to the **rates of completing tertiary education, in the period from 2016 to 2019 this number was below 30% in all countries**. Montenegro still has the highest percentage of young people who dropped out of secondary education (5% in 2019). Young men are less likely to complete both secondary and tertiary education.
- ❖ A very **small percentage of young people reported that they participated in non-formal education and training** in the last 4 weeks - below 3% in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and 6.5% in Turkey.
- ❖ **One in four young people was at risk of poverty** in 2019 in Serbia and Turkey. Similar numbers were registered in North Macedonia and Montenegro in 2018.
- ❖ Approximately **one quarter of all prisoners were young people** in North Macedonia and in Serbia, and they were predominately young men.

Social Participation dimension still presents the main obstacle in the calculation of the YPI, since the majority of countries do not have available statistics for the same indicators regarding youth sensitive data collected by the same methodology.¹³ The comparative data obtained from the respective institutions is not available or does not match the indicators' target group, and in that way does not reflect the overall situation in many cases.

Participation of young people in formal and non-formal education Significant dropout from secondary education, not enough youth graduating from tertiary education, low involvement in non-formal education

In interpreting the rate of participation of young people in education, it is important to note that there are some methodological differences regarding the indicators. The National Institute of Statistics in Turkey does not calculate dropout from secondary education, only early leavers from education and training for young people at the age of 18-24 who have finished primary education and lower education and have not continued with any other education at all. The National Institute of Statistics in Albania calculates the gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education, expressed as a percentage of all enrolled persons, regardless of their age, against the 18-22 year old population.

Regarding young people's education, it should be noted that Montenegro still has the highest percentage of young people who dropped out of secondary education (5.4% in 2017, 4.6% in 2018 and 5% in 2019). According to the available data, the lowest dropout rate of young people from secondary education was registered in Serbia - where it stood below 1.5 over the years, and in North Macedonia where it dropped from 2.3 in 2017 to 0.5% in 2019.

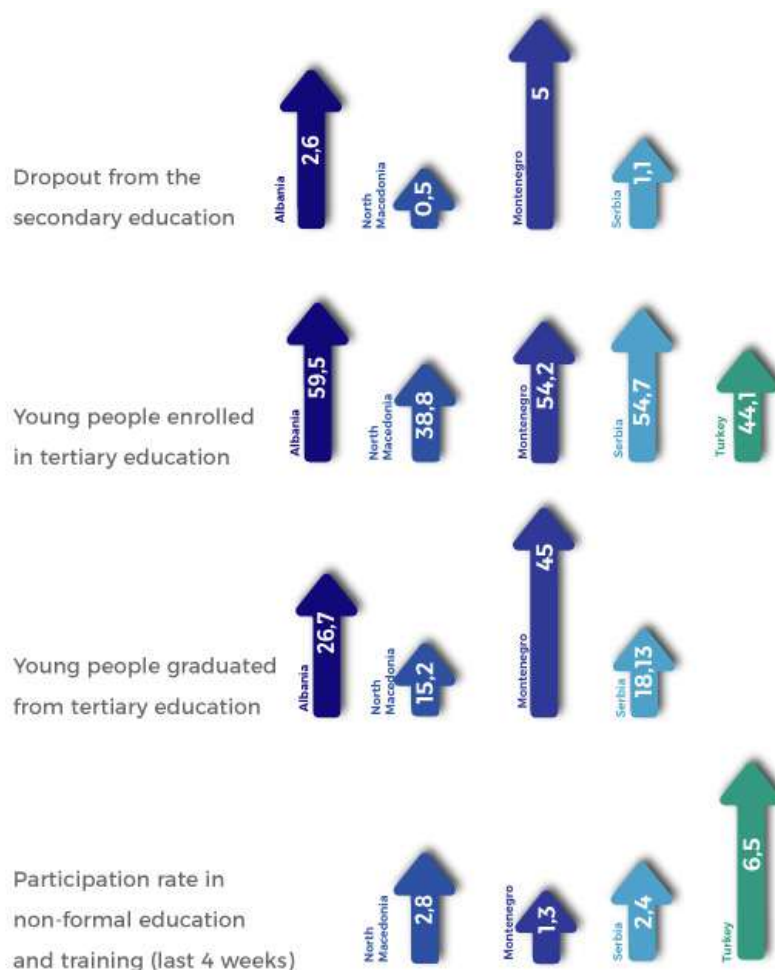
Between 39% and 60% of young people were enrolled in tertiary education. When it comes to rates of graduating from tertiary education, measured as a number of graduated/total of enrolled people, what can be concluded is that over the years this number was under 30%, the highest one being in Albania, where it leveled at around 26% in the last three years.

Recognizing the importance of non-formal education for young people, this year researchers decided to include an additional indicator which could help shed some light on youth participation in this type of education and training. What can we conclude looking at its values? An exceedingly small percentage of young people reports that they participated in non-formal education and training in the last 4 weeks - below 3% in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and 6.5% in Turkey. In Montenegro it was only 1.3%. This is far below the EU average of 10.8%.

13 The table with all the data regarding social participation is in the Annex of the document.

Indicators of participation of young people in formal and non-formal education

One in four young people is at risk of poverty



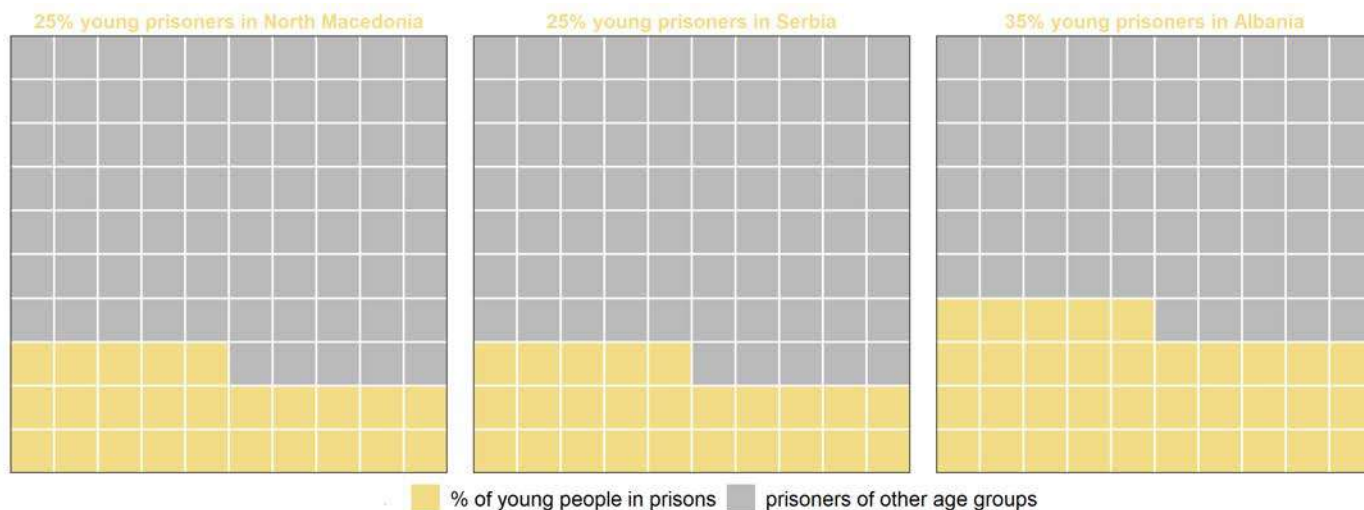
Due to the timing of the release of SILC Survey results, at the time this report was being drafted, the percentage of youth at risk of poverty could be obtained only for Serbia and Turkey. In Serbia, the value of this indicator dropped slightly from 26.6% in 2018 to 24.8% in 2019. In Turkey, this value (according to Eurostat) remained almost unchanged compared to the previous year and it stood at approximately 23%. In 2018, these rates were similar in North Macedonia (25.9%) and Montenegro (25.6%).

More than a quarter of prisoners are young people

During 2019, approximately one quarter of all prisoners in Macedonia and Serbia were young people. In North Macedonia, this value dropped by around 6 percentage points compared to the previous year, whereas in Serbia it dropped by only 1.6 percentage points. In Albania the percentage of youth in prison dropped from 46% in 2017 and 47.7% in 2018 to 35%.

In 2019, the data regarding young people in prison in Montenegro could not be obtained. However, it should be noted that the registered values were high - 33.2% in 2017 and 52% in 2018.

The values for this indicator for Turkey are still not available.



Youth social participation revisited: A closer look at the data reveals gender gaps

Once again, if we look at the data from a new angle and note the differences between young men and women regarding indicators of social participation, we can better understand the different challenges they face.

When it comes to indicators regarding education, we do not have complete data disaggregated by gender but the data we have indicates that **young men are more likely to drop out of education than young women**. For instance, in Albania, drop-out rates from the secondary education were 4.3% for young men compared to 1.2% for young women. The situation is similar in Serbia, although the differences are smaller. More young women enroll in tertiary education (71% compared to 48% in Albania, 64% compared to 46% in Serbia). The difference is considerable when it comes to the completion of tertiary education as well, although it is not that significant. These **discrepancies are not only a characteristic of participation in formal education, but of non-formal education as well**. Although the overall participation is low, it is even lower for young men. For instance, in North Macedonia this rate was 3.1% for young women and 2.5 for young men; in Turkey 7.3 for young women and 5.7 for young men.

Concerning data on young people in prisons, it should be noted that for all countries where this data is available, **there was a major difference in the number of imprisoned young men compared to young women**. In Albania 99% of young prisoners were young men, in North Macedonia it was reported that 98% of young prisoners were young men.

Youth Participation Index 2019

In interpreting the following data, there are several points that need to be taken into account:

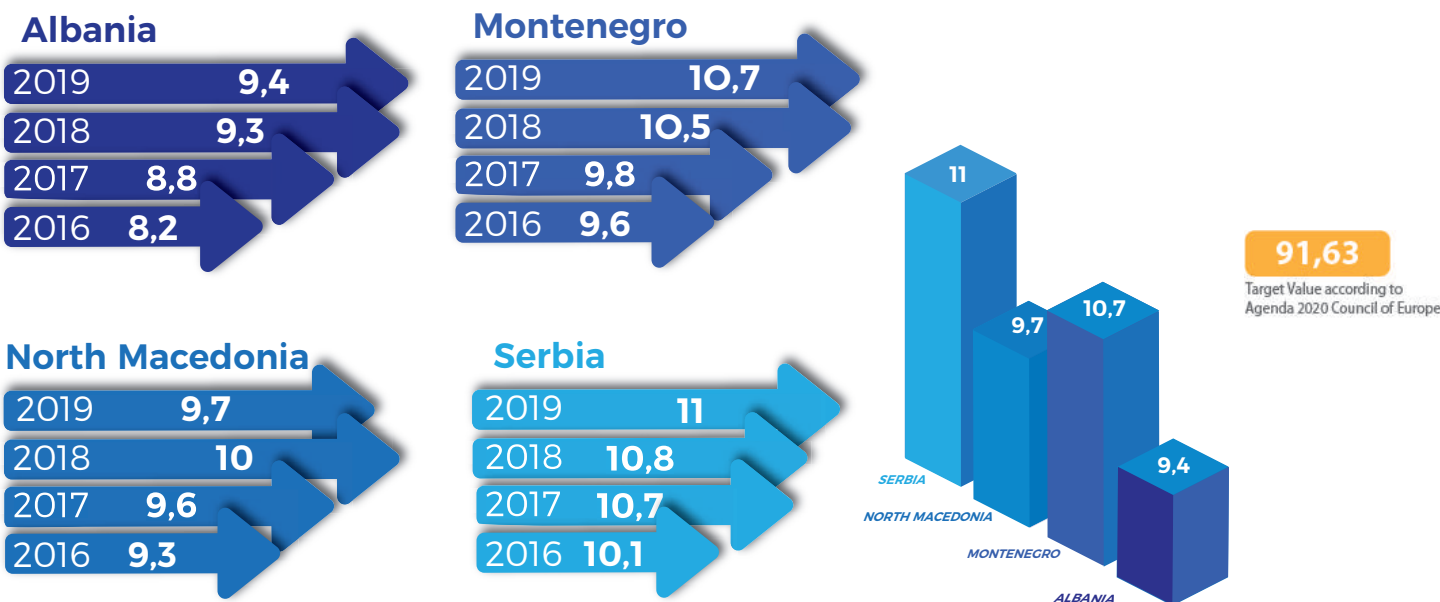
- ❖ The Youth Participation Index is prepared only by taking the indicators of political and economic participation into account, as the data for social participation is mostly unavailable.
- ❖ In order to make the index comparable between countries, two of the indicators of economic participation have been left out, due to missing values. This is the case with the data regarding young people who started their own business with the financial support of the state (missing

for Montenegro for all years) and self-employed young people (missing for North Macedonia for 2018).

❖ The data for Turkey was missing for several indicators related to political participation, as well as economic participation, and thus the Index could not be calculated.

Taking all the considerations into account, what can be concluded looking at the index?

YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX OVER YEARS



- 1 The first conclusion is that **a significant discrepancy exists between the current situation in the four participating countries compared to the target value**, which is 91.63.
- 2 **Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia are similar in terms of the state of the youth participation.** In all of them there are challenges concerning participation of young people in political, economic and social domain, as confirmed by previously reported research results, although the specific barriers faced by youth do sometimes differ. The situation, as the data for available indicators show, is similar in Turkey as well.
- 3 **The youth participation index has not changed considerably over the four years, although there is some evidence of progress.** There is a slight increase in scores in all countries compared to the previous year except North Macedonia, and a slight progress in all countries comparing to the score in 2016 (less than 1.5 point on the scale).
- 4 After four years it is **still not possible to obtain data for the same set of indicators of youth social participation.** Some of the key data on youth from vulnerable groups is missing.

Recommendations to improve youth participation

The Youth Participation Index is aimed at generating reliable data, i.e. data that accurately reflects the actual status of the variables which influence the youth participation.

YBH4WBT Network developed the YPI with the idea to:

1. Understand and start using data as a reliable base for any decision concerning youth;
2. Analyze and compare countries according to key indicators of youth participation in all three dimensions: political, economic and social;

3. Monitor progress in youth participation throughout the years in respective countries.

Since 2016, YBH4WBT Network has monitored the position of young people in the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey and has been publishing the Youth Participation Index (YPI). Based on the results of the YPI, we can see that the youth in our region can be identified as a vulnerable group and that they face major challenges such as risk of poverty, high unemployment and long-term unemployment rates, high NEET rates and underrepresentation in political life. Some of the challenges are even greater for young women, others for young men. Moreover, the difficulty of access to youth-sensitive data is of particular concern.

The YPI enables us to see that the economic participation of young people shows a positive trend in most countries, unemployment and NEET rates are decreasing and employment rates increasing. The level of political participation has, in some aspects, slightly improved over the years in some countries, mostly in the field of online tools for information as a first step in bringing young people closer to decision-making processes. However, values of indicators are still considerably different than EU average and results show great discrepancies in relation to the targeted values.

The large discrepancy between the current and targeted values should trigger changes in this field. Cooperation between all the stakeholders is vital in order to establish the different measures targeting actual needs of young people, but also in order to exchange examples of good practice which have been already created and implemented in our countries. Bearing all this in mind, the next steps should be advocacy activities with the focus of improving two main issues: **lack of data** and **low level of youth participation**.

I Recommendations concerning absence of youth - sensitive data

To address key challenges concerning the lack of youth-sensitive data, a set of recommendations is proposed in the following text.

1. **The institutions are to start collecting youth-sensitive data in the field of economic, social, and political participation for the category of youth as it is legally defined.**

Systematically collected data is the basis for creating high quality support measures for youth, especially vulnerable groups of young people. In particular, the system of collecting and processing data related to the social dimension of youth participation needs to be significantly improved. To harmonize statistics with the EU standard, legislative and institutional reforms should be implemented following the recommendations listed in annual progress reports.

Therefore, the YBH4WBT Network insists that institutions responsible for collecting and processing data (the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the Institute of Statistics in Albania - INSTAT, the Statistical Office of Montenegro - MONSTAT, the State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia and Turkish Statistical Institute - TurkStat), as well as other national institutions (Ministries in charge of youth, education, social protection and Local Governments) begin to collect data concerning the following:

- **Data related to young people in the social welfare system should be monitored and regularly reported.** Developing and improving the data collected on young people in the social welfare system is a key precondition for creating quality support measures for the most vulnerable youth. In 2019, this information was not available for any of the countries. YBH insists that each country use all available resources and begin to

monitor access young people have to social protection systems.

- **Data on young people holding political positions should be easily available.** The age of all of the Members of Parliament should be available on the websites of parliaments and the number of MPs under thirty clearly communicated.
- **Data on young people that started their own business with the financial support of the state** should be regularly reported. Many countries implement policy measures aimed at increasing self-employment. Therefore, this indicator would be useful for gaining insight into the success rates that young people have when applying for subsidies, and to plan how they should be supported.

2. Data concerning the youth should be easily accessible.

In some cases, the lack of publicly available youth sensitive data meant that data needed to be collected through official requests to institutions and depended on their willingness to share the data. Some of the data which was publically available was difficult to find. Thus, the recommendation is that data concerning the youth should be easily accessible:

- **Public statistical offices should dedicate a section to collected statistics concerning young people on their websites.** This would make it easier for anyone interested in youth-sensitive data, from policy-makers to youth organizations and young people themselves, to obtain it. Since all countries have youth policies, this will make it easier to work on reaching targets, as all those involved have direct access to relevant data. This also sends a clear message that statistics on youth are important and need to be taken into account. An example of a section collecting statistics from a range of other domains on which data is available segregated by age can be found on the Eurostat website: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth>.
- **The release of datasets obtained via publicly supported research studies involving youth in an open format, as open data, should be strongly encouraged by national institutions.** This is important in order to make it possible for researchers to explore further available data. Young people themselves could be encouraged to use these datasets and thus participate in the creation of youth policies using all existing data.

II Recommendations to address the low level of youth participation

Youth participation matters and the issue of youth disengagement continues to be a major problem faced not only by the Western Balkan region and Turkey, but also by modern democracies in the EU.¹⁴ Based on the results of the YPI, the participation of young people in the decision-making process is extremely low in the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey. In order to address the issues recognized within this report, recommendations are proposed in the following text.

1. The transparency of information and the establishment of better communication between state institutions and young people at the national and local levels must be improved.

The countries should strive towards ensuring online tools for information and participation of youth in decision-making processes within governments, parliaments and municipalities. The first step in encouraging youth participation is to provide information that is publicly available through online tools, such as websites and social networks. Consequently, it is necessary for all municipalities, governments and parliaments to have an online presentation and to publish information in a

¹⁴ Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis, Magdelina Kitanova, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2019.1636951>, 2019.

transparent manner. The YPI 2019 shows that this is still not the case in all participating countries, especially at the local level. It is very important that information is published in accordance with a culture of communication tailored to each target group. Bearing in mind that young people mostly use social networks as channels of communication, it is necessary for all relevant institutions to have official websites, as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts. This is a prerequisite for establishing communication between policy-makers and young people and enabling their participation in the decision-making process.

2. Youth institutional structure (councils/parliaments/unions) which ensures the participation of young people in the decision-making process at national and local levels needs to be established in all countries.

Albania and Turkey still haven't developed mechanisms for involving young people in the decision-making process at the national level in the form of youth structures. At the same time, the number of active youth structures at the local level ranged from 45% to 68%, and in some countries it even decreased compared to previous years. This indicates that it is necessary to advocate for the opportunity to build youth councils, parliaments and unions in order to ensure the participation of young people in the decision-making process at the national and local level.

3. Youth access to political positions needs to be improved, and in particular the number of MPs under thirty needs to increase.

Young people continue to be vastly underrepresented in parliaments. It is also highly unlikely that they become mayors, deputy ministers or ministers judging from the fact that there are almost no young people on those positions. According to the report on global youth participation in parliaments,¹⁵ improving youth representation can strengthen the legitimacy of parliament, achieve greater fairness in access to political decision-making, contribute to better policymaking and potentially help young people who are disinterested in politics to restore trust in political institutions.

To increase the number of MPs under thirty, governments, parliaments, political parties and youth organizations should adopt strategies to raise awareness about the importance of youth participation in politics. One of the options is also to introduce youth quotas, i.e. to reserve seats in parliaments to ensure youth presence. It would also be useful to establish youth caucuses in national parliaments in order to promote youth issues in public policy.

4. Measures for reducing youth unemployment need to be implemented in all countries.

Youth unemployment rates, although decreasing, are still worryingly high. Moreover, many young people are not in education and training, nor in employment, and many of them have been unemployed for more than a year, which puts them in an even more vulnerable situation. During the drafting of this report, it was evident that the pandemic would also have detrimental consequences on employment indicators and thus it would be crucial to implement measures for reducing youth unemployment in line with the results of the evaluation studies. CSOs working with the youth can contribute with sharing the information on existing measures, and information related to those measures should be disseminated via online tools used by young people. It is also highly important to include young people in the process of creating and evaluating these measures.

15 <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/youth-empowerment>

5. Participation of young people, especially young men, in secondary and tertiary formal education should be encouraged, as should participation in non-formal education and training.

Data indicates that young people, especially young men, are at a risk of failing to complete secondary and tertiary education. Given that the goal of Europe 2020, as well as of many national policy documents, is to increase the number of people who have completed tertiary education, this is a worrying finding. An in-depth analysis of the reasons behind this situation in each of the countries is needed, followed by specific measures to address any and all observed challenges.

Participation of young people in non-formal education and training is also quite low. This needs to be recognized in national policy documents and measures should be put in place to increase youth participation. Many civil society organizations are engaged in provision of this type of education and could offer valuable insights.

6. New support measures for specific vulnerable groups should be developed, taking into account gender differences.

The alarming number of young people at risk of poverty or in prisons, as well as a high youth NEET rate, leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to improve the situation of young people in vulnerable positions as soon as possible. The countries of the Western Balkan and Turkey should develop appropriate support measures in cooperation with CSOs to target vulnerable young people. When devising these measures, it is important to take gender differences into account- whilst a larger percentage of young women are not in education and training, nor in employment, more young men are imprisoned.

Since CSOs have continuous contact with young people and mechanisms to recognize their needs, a partnership between the CSO and the state is of high importance. Only a joint effort on new measures of support can ensure the appropriate response to the needs of young people. Further research studies are also needed to better understand specific needs required to support these vulnerable groups.

One of the possible solutions for increasing participation of young people at a local level - Youth Bank Hub

One of the most effective models of youth participation at the local level is the YouthBank model, a unique program that empowers young people to identify the key issues affecting their lives and those which inspire them to initiate changes. Youth banks are local organizations of young people who design and run their own projects, but also support other youth local initiatives via fundraising, project managing and project promotion. The value of the model is that it brings together local municipalities, the business sector, and young people. Young people should be recognized as partners of local self-governments. It is necessary to change the paradigm that young people are a big problem in this region. Instead, we should create enabling environments where the youth are part of the solution. Youth participation in local development processes encourages young people to recognize community issues and engage in their resolution, as well as reduce their vulnerability to economic, political, and social problems. A comprehensive and systematic approach is needed, allowing all relevant stakeholders to be involved in creating conditions for youth development and the establishment of local youth policies, as well as their implementation

and monitoring.

The YouthBank model is currently being used in 26 countries. The network provides support for the model to be implemented in Montenegro and Albania. YouthBank International (YBI) has achieved notable success in the past 4 years, scaling the YouthBank proposition to over 200 sites, supported by 26 networks on 4 continents and funding over 4500 small scale projects¹⁶.

YouthBanks are funds run by young people to support youth-led grass root projects that address community issues of importance to them:

- ❖ Involve young people in projects that they design and run themselves. We believe it is the most potent way of engaging young people in their community.
- ❖ Involve young people in grant-making because we know from experience that this makes them more aware of the needs and aspirations of their local community and HOW to make a difference.
- ❖ Encourage involvement in voluntary actions where the issues are more closely matched to young people's concerns. Creating dynamics where trustful, inclusive, empowering, respectful relationships can thrive and where positive change is created, and encouraging involvement of young people who are currently disengaged or disempowered by their respective systems, can inspire young people to give back to others and their communities.
- ❖ Devolve responsibility and accountability by placing decision-making about small scale resource allocation into the hands of young people who act philanthropically, bridge divisions, take leadership roles, and stimulate entrepreneurial spirit and opportunities. The YouthBank model provides clear evidence of the positive impact that young people can have on communities. This allows each YouthBank to be more effective in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to bring young people's perspectives to the national and international public policy debate.

16 YouthBank International, <https://www.youthbankinternational.org/>

ANNEX 1 - Data collected in the process of preparing this report

Political participation Dimension - 2016	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young ministers in Government M/F	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.00%
Young deputy ministers in government M/F	0.0%	0.0%	4.4%	1.0%	0.00%
Young MPs in the parliament M/F	2.1%	8.3%	1.2%	1.2%	0.90%
Young mayors	6.0%	1.3%	0.0%	2.5%	0.29%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process of government and parliament institutions	95.00%	72.5%	100.0%	68.0%	61.80%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process within municipalities	52.0%	90.0%	96.0%	61.0%	90.00%
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a national level	0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.00%
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a local level	18.03%	78.5%	22.0%	77.5%	

Political participation Dimension - 2017	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young ministers in Government M/F	0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.00%
Young deputy ministers in government M/F	3%	0.0%	5.0%	1.0%	0.00%
Young MPs in the parliament M/F	4.91%	1.7%	6.0%	0.4%	0.90%
Young mayors	6.00%	1.3%	0.0%	2.43%	0.29%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process of government and parliament institutions	91%	94.1%	100.0%	78.55%	61.80%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process within municipalities	66%	90.0%	99.0%	75%	90.00%
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a national level	0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.00%
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a local level	34.6%	78.5%	23.0%	85.9%	

Political participation Dimension - 2018	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young ministers in Government M/F	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.00%
Young deputy ministers in government M/F	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	0.00%
Young MPs in the parliament M/F	4.9%	1.2%	8.6%	0.4%	1.30%
Young mayors	6.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.60%	
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process of government and parliament institutions	93.3%	100.0%	100.0%	77.50%	100.00%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process within municipalities	67.2%	96.8%	99.0%	84.75%	
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a national level	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.00%
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a local level	49.0%	77.0%	41.0%	69.7%	

Political participation Dimension - 2019	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young ministers in Government M/F	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.00%
Young deputy ministers in government M/F	7.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	0.00%
Young MPs in the parliament M/F	4.0%	3.3%	2.5%	0.4%	1.30%
Young mayors	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.60%	0.00%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process of government and parliament institutions	79.3%	100.0%	100.0%	91.25%	100.00%
Online tools for information and participation in the decision making process within municipalities	66.0%	69.5%	100.0%	83.18%	
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a national level	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.00%
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a local level	57,4%	53,0%	45,0%	67,9%	

Economic participation dimension - 2016	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
NEET rate	30.0%	31.3%	22.3%	22.3%	24.00%
Youth unemployment rate	28.9%	40.6%	36.3%	29.8%	18.50%
Long-term youth unemployment rate	16.7%	29.7%	18.6%	16.7%	3.0%
Youth Labor force participation rate	45.7%	48.1%	49.5%	47.2%	56.10%
Youth Employment rate	32.4%	28.6%	21.0%	33.1%	34.20%
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of state	54.50%	47.7%		23.3%	22.62%
Self-employed young people	29.00%	6.0%	9.0%	0.6%	

Economic participation dimension - 2017	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
NEET rate	29.70%	31.1%	22.6%	21.70%	24.20%
Youth unemployment rate	25.9%	39.2%	31.7%	26.70%	20.80%
Long-term youth unemployment rate	13.8%	28.9%	18.5%	13.10%	3.3%
Youth Labor force participation rate	45.8%	49.7%	48.7%	47.6%	
Youth Employment rate	33.8%	30.2%	21.3%	34.9%	34.10%
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of state	0.0%	0.0%		19.50%	
Self-employed young people	18.3%	7.3%	8.4%	2.76%	

Economic participation dimension - 2018	Alba- nia	North Mace- donia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
NEET rate	28.6%	29.8%	21.0%	20.10%	29.10%
Youth unemployment rate	23.1%	37.0%	26.0%	24.50%	20.30%
Long-term youth unemployment rate	13.1%	26.3%	15.7%	11.70%	3.2%
Youth Labor force participation rate	50.1%	49.1%	48.2%	48.1%	44.00%
Youth Employment rate	38.5%	30.9%	35.9%	36.3%	35.00%
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of state	0.0%	13.7%		20.5%	
Self-employed young people	0.9%		5.8%	6.8%	

Economic participation dimension - 2019	Alba- nia	North Mace- donia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
NEET rate	26.6%	24.5%	21.3%	18.90%	29.51%
Youth unemployment rate	21.5%	30.5%	22.3%	21.50%	22.10%
Long-term youth unemployment rate	11.5%	23.1%	13.8%	10.00%	4.53%
Youth Labor force participation rate	52.5%	49.4%	51.1%	47.00%	53.30%
Youth Employment rate	41.2%	34.3%	39.7%	36.90%	41.50%
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of state	26.0%	64.4%		24.35%	
Self-employed young people	7.8%	1.6%	4.0%	6.87%	2.8%

Social participation dimension - 2016	Albania	North Mace- donia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young people at risk of poverty	(Poor peo- ple) 15%	(Poor people) 24.8%	27.9%	30.30%	27.10%
Young people in prisons	36.54%	0.20%	31.1%	32.70%	63.00%
Young people part of social welfare system				18.97%	
Dropout from secondary education	3.70%		5.50%	1.10%	
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	56.80%		33.90%	50.70%	40.53%
Young people graduated from tertiary education	21.48%		12.86%	20.00%	

Social participation dimension - 2017	Albania	North Mace- donia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young people at risk of poverty		22.2 %	26.2%		
Young people in prisons (<i>out of all prisoners</i>)	46.00%		33.2%	27.7	
Young people part of social welfare system				18.16%	
Dropout from secondary education	3.35%	2.30%	5.4%	1.30%	
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	53.9%	28.90%	34.5%	54.20%	42.43%
Young people graduated from tertiary education	25.19%	11.50%	14.51%	19.70%	

Social participation dimension - 2018	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young people at risk of poverty				26.6%	
Young people in prisons (<i>out of all prisoners</i>)	z	31.4%	52.2%	26.5%	
Young people part of social welfare system				18.1%	
Dropout from secondary education	3.2%	1.40%	4.6%	1.40%	
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	53.9%	14.50%	33%	54.70%	45.60%
Young people graduated from tertiary education	26%	16.50%	14.59%	18.10%	9.57%

Social participation dimension - 2019	Albania	North Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Young people at risk of poverty				24.8%	22.7%
Young people in prisons (out of all prisoners)	34.8%	25.3%		24.9%	
Young people part of social welfare system					
Dropout from secondary education	2.6%	0.5%	5.0%	1.10%	28.70%
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	59.5%	38.8%	54.2%	54.70%	44.10%
Young people graduated from tertiary education	26.7%	15.2%		18.13%	
Participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)		2.8%	1.30%	2.40%	6.50%