

# YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX

MONITORING REPORT OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH VOL. 9



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Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation – Serbia

NGO Prima – Montenegro

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Youth Alliance Kruševo – North Macedonia

Beyond Barriers Association – Albania

Institute for Youth Development KULT – Bosnia and Herzegovina,

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## **On behalf of the publisher:**

Ana Koeshall

## **Editor:**

Mirjana Miroslavljević Bobić

## **Leading researchers:**

Ksenija Čović and Aleksandra Đurović

## **Researcher team:**

Aleksandra Gligorović, Aziz Đipa, Burcu Oy, Biljana Stojceska, Prof. Marija Topuzovska Latkovitkj, Biljana Dukovska, Era Sherifaj, Ferid Murseli

## **Contributors:**

Amina Sadiković, Aida Perović, Evren Ejder, Yasin Bulat, Anelija Mitrova, Silvia Dervishi, Nevio Bruck

## **Design by:**

MiQ42, Serbia

## **Proofread by:**

[www.voyager.edu.rs](http://www.voyager.edu.rs)



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<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. It applies to the whole document.

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# Introduction

Creating space, opportunities, and support for youth participation is widely recognized as a priority in public policies and official statements. However, a gap often persists between policy commitments and their implementation at national and local levels. Restricted space for youth participation is reflected in the continued exclusion of many young people from education and quality employment, their limited presence in formal political decision-making processes, and reduced opportunities for those experiencing poverty, imprisonment, or other forms of vulnerability. Lingering barriers and limited space for youth participation can have far-reaching consequences. Limited opportunities may lead to prolonged unemployment, loss of skills relevance, and a reduced contribution of young people to economic and social development. Ultimately, it may contribute to increased emigration when young people perceive limited prospects in their countries of origin.

To summarize data on barriers to youth participation and provide a concrete, data-driven tool for policymakers and youth organizations, the Youth Hub for Western Balkans and Türkiye Network (YHWBT Network) developed the Youth Participation Index (YPI) 9 years ago. This index aims to provide a comprehensive overview of opportunities for youth through 25 indicators of political, economic, and social participation. The data in this index does not refer to the outcome – how frequently and in which ways young people participate, but to inputs - political, economic, and social contexts that shape youth opportunities to do so. The ninth edition of this Index includes data from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo for the second time, enabling a comparison with the previous measurement. The goal of the Index is to provide comprehensive information on the state of youth participation in the region.

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

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Policymakers, youth organizations, and other stakeholders working on youth issues can use the Youth Participation Index (YPI) to assess the current state of youth participation and identify areas for improvement. Since its introduction in 2016, the regular development and publication of the Index have enabled systematic monitoring of trends in youth participation over time. While each participant displays its own pattern of progress and setbacks, the YPI

facilitates cross-country comparisons to identify shared challenges and inform potential policy responses.

Insights from the Youth Participation Index (YPI) indicate that, although there are signs of progress over time, substantial challenges persist and the space for youth participation remains largely restricted. Persistent underrepresentation in political life, exclusion from employment and education, and a high risk of poverty continue to represent significant barriers faced by many young people in the region. At the same time, the YPI has enabled systematic tracking of progress, including improved access to previously unavailable data on youth participation (such as data on young people in prisons and those receiving financial support through social protection systems), as well as the identification of policy developments aimed at strengthening youth participation across the region. These advances demonstrate that progress is possible, but they require sustained commitment and coordinated efforts from public institutions, youth organizations, and other stakeholders. The Youth Participation Index is intended to serve as a supportive tool in this process, contributing to evidence-based policymaking and to creating opportunities, space, and support for young people's meaningful engagement and participation in society.

Youth Hub for Western Balkans and Türkiye Network  
(YHWBT Network)

## CHAPTER 1

# About Youth Participation Index

## // Why is youth participation important?

Youth participation can be defined as a “process of involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives”.<sup>2</sup> Many different reasons and arguments for promoting youth participation have been put forward, from the claim that young people have the right to be treated with respect and, when appropriate, be involved and consulted<sup>3</sup> to referencing a plethora of research results on the positive effects of participation at both personal and wider social levels.



Diagram 1 Potential benefits of youth participation

There is also a **continuous policy commitment to youth participation**. The Council of Europe member states’ recommendation to give high priority to youth participation in their public youth policies was included in the Committee of Ministers’ recommendation on citizenship and the participation of young people in public life as early as 2006. This document states that “education for participation and providing opportunities for experiencing participation is a prerequisite for the necessary and ongoing improvement of democracy”. The European Union’s (EU) Youth Strategy “Youth - Investing and Empowering” 2019–2027<sup>4</sup> places youth participation

<sup>2</sup> Kiilakoski, T. (2020). Perspectives on youth participation – [https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/59895423/Kiilakoski\\_Participation\\_Analytical\\_Paper\\_final%252005-05.pdf/b7b77c27-5bc3-5a90-594b-a18d253b7e67](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/59895423/Kiilakoski_Participation_Analytical_Paper_final%252005-05.pdf/b7b77c27-5bc3-5a90-594b-a18d253b7e67)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy (COM/2018/269), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0269>

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, to support youth representation at local, regional, and national levels, and to explore and promote the use of innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation. **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**<sup>5</sup> also recognizes the active role of young people as “critical agents of change”. The first priority of the UN 2030 Youth Strategy<sup>6</sup> is “Engagement, Participation and Advocacy – Amplify youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world”. Such policy commitments demonstrate clearly the importance of youth participation.

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*“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

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## // Rationale for using an index to represent youth participation

Using an index as a measurement approach offers clear advantages, but it also entails several important limitations that should be acknowledged.

### Advantages of using an index:

- ✓ It can summarize complex, multidimensional youth-specific data into a single, coherent measure;
- ✓ It is easier to interpret than a large set of separate indicators;
- ✓ It allows for the assessment of progress or change over time;
- ✓ It provides a standardized basis for cross-country comparisons.

### Disadvantages of using an index:

- ✗ The selection of indicators is constrained by data availability, as only regularly collected, harmonized data across the region can be included.
- ✗ It may mask substantial within-country variation by aggregating diverse indicators into a single score.
- ✗ It may lead to misleading policy conclusions if the index is

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<sup>5</sup> Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

<sup>6</sup> Youth 2030 – United Nations Youth Strategy – [https://5d962978-9e17-4b96-91be-93983605fae8.filesusr.com/ugd/b1d674\\_9f63445fc59a41b6bb50cbd4f800922b.pdf](https://5d962978-9e17-4b96-91be-93983605fae8.filesusr.com/ugd/b1d674_9f63445fc59a41b6bb50cbd4f800922b.pdf)

- ✓ It can serve as a useful screening tool to identify broad patterns or areas that warrant more detailed analysis.
- misinterpreted or its methodological assumptions are overlooked.

The main advantage of using an index is its simplicity and ease of interpretation. However, this simplicity entails the risk that the results may be oversimplified or misinterpreted if the underlying assumptions are not carefully considered. To address this concern, the YHWBT Network prepares annual reports that provide detailed interpretations of the index and its implications, while accounting for methodological assumptions and limitations. In addition, the research team from the participating region has been committed to continuously revising and updating the methodology.

## // Three key dimensions of youth participation

The Youth Participation Index focuses on three key dimensions of youth participation: political, economic, and social. These dimensions refer to opportunities for youth to participate in society.

- ⇒ **The political dimension** refers to young people's opportunities to get involved in political processes – to be informed about the work of government, parliament, and municipalities, to be represented by youth structures, and to be elected to political positions.
- ⇒ **The economic dimension** refers to young people's opportunities to be included in the labour market, whether employed or self-employed.
- ⇒ **The social dimension** refers to young people's opportunities to actively participate in social life – to be integrated into the community through formal and nonformal education. This dimension also refers to the absence of markers of potential exclusion of young people, due to poverty, dependence on the social welfare system, and time spent in prison or correctional facilities.

### List of indicators included in the Youth Participation Index

|                                       |                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Indicators of political participation | Percentage of young ministers in Government        |
|                                       | Percentage of young deputy ministers in Government |
|                                       | Percentage of young MPs in the parliament          |
|                                       | Percentage of young mayors                         |

|                                             |                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                             | Use of online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process of government and parliament institutions |
|                                             | Use of online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process within municipalities                     |
|                                             | Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) at a national level                                                 |
|                                             | Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) at a local level                                                    |
| <b>Indicators of economic participation</b> | NEET rate                                                                                                                      |
|                                             | Youth unemployment rate                                                                                                        |
|                                             | Long-term youth unemployment rate                                                                                              |
|                                             | Youth labour force participation rate                                                                                          |
|                                             | Youth employment rate                                                                                                          |
|                                             | <i>Young people who started their businesses with the financial support of the state *</i>                                     |
|                                             | <i>Share of self-employed young people*</i>                                                                                    |
| <b>Indicators of social participation</b>   | Young people at risk of poverty                                                                                                |
|                                             | Young people in prisons                                                                                                        |
|                                             | <i>Young people receiving financial support from the social protection system*</i>                                             |
|                                             | <i>Dropout from secondary education*</i>                                                                                       |
|                                             | <i>Young people enrolled in tertiary education*</i>                                                                            |
|                                             | <i>Young people graduated from tertiary education*</i>                                                                         |
|                                             | <i>Participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)*</i>                                                 |
|                                             | Share of early leavers from education and training, persons aged 18–24 years                                                   |
|                                             | Population aged 30–34 with tertiary educational attainment level                                                               |
|                                             | Participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)                                              |

\* Indicator not used in calculation of the Index

More information on the indicators is available in Methodological Notes in Annexe 1.

## // Calculating the Youth Participation Index

There are several steps for calculating the Index (more information on methodology is available in Annexe 1:

- 1) First, missing values of indicators are addressed. A Cold Deck Imputation process is applied, meaning the most recent prior value for the indicator is used if data for the previous year is

unavailable. Indicators with insufficient or unavailable data, or those that use different data-collection methodologies across the region, are excluded from the index calculation.

- 2) All indicators are made comparable in scale. To compare and combine indicators into a single score, researchers use normalization. Under this process, data for each indicator are scaled to a 1–100 score, with 100 representing the target value. The formula  $y_i = 1 + 99 * (x_i - x_{min}) / (x_{max} - x_{min})$  is used, where  $y_i$  represents the normalized score,  $x_i$  represents the original score,  $x_{min}$  corresponds to zero, and  $x_{max}$  represents the target score. Before normalization, some indicators need to be inverted so that higher values indicate better performance.
- 3) Targets for all indicators have been set from the beginning of index calculation; however, they are revised periodically.
  - ⇒ Most targets for indicators of political participation are based on researchers' assessments of the indicator's value. The only exception is the indicator "percentage of young MPs", which refers to the target set by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Forum of Young Parliamentarians<sup>7</sup>, a global organization of national parliaments, to be reached by 2030.
  - ⇒ Regarding the indicators for economic participation, the values of all targets represent the highest recorded value among the European Union's countries for the given year (or the lowest, if the lower value is the more desirable outcome). The only exception is the indicator "Young people who started their own business with the financial support of the state", for which the target was set based on the researchers' consensus on the desired value.
  - ⇒ Targets for social participation represent the highest or lowest registered value among the countries of the European Union for the given year (depending on which is the more desirable outcome). Only for the indicator concerning youth in prisons, the target is based on the researchers' assessment.

More information on targets is available in Annexe 3.

- 4) In the final step, scores of each dimension of youth participation are calculated by averaging all indicators of that dimension. For instance, the Youth Political Participation Index is calculated by averaging the indicator values for youth political participation. The overall Youth Participation Index is calculated as an average of scores for each dimension of youth participation.

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<sup>7</sup> The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the global organization of national parliaments, gathering 181 Member Parliaments and 15 Associate Members. More information can be found on website <https://www.ipu.org/about-us>.

## CHAPTER 2

## Availability of youth-specific data in the region

To create, implement, and evaluate policy measures to increase and improve youth participation, quality data and evidence on youth must be widely available. Decision-makers, youth organizations, and young people themselves need access to up-to-date, reliable youth-specific data.

The YPI aims to provide insight into different aspects of youth participation through a unique combination of indicators. Although the indicators have been chosen so that data on youth aged 15–29 can be collected in each research participant using the same methodology, some data availability issues have persisted over the last 9 years. These issues will be discussed in the text that follows and put in the context of the EU integration.

### // Availability of data on youth political participation in 2024

**There are no official statistics on important indicators of political participation of young people.**

The data used to create this Index is collected through desk research conducted by researchers in each research context and is not readily available. Obtaining data on youth political participation requires significant resources, as it involves a systematic search of official websites and social media channels that are often not regularly updated.

Data on youth political participation were collected across participating units of analysis through desk research. Research on the local level was limited only to Türkiye. Given that the country has 2,951 municipalities, data collection relied on a sample rather than full coverage. A sample of 81 city municipalities was used to collect relevant data on youth political participation. Consequently, the available data represents only a partial view of the situation at the local level.

### Availability of data for indicators of political participation per country in 2024

| Indicators of political participation                | Albania | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Kosovo | Montenegro | North Macedonia | Serbia | Türkiye |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|--------|---------|
| % of ministers under thirty in government            | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| % of deputy ministers under thirty in government     | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| % of MPs under thirty                                | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| % of mayors under thirty                             | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Use of online tools by the government and parliament | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Use of online tools by municipalities                | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Existence of youth structure at the national level   | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Existence of youth structure at the local level      | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |

### // Availability of data on youth economic participation in 2024

Data on youth economic participation are largely available in official statistics, except for data on financial support for youth self-employment.

The main source of data on indicators of youth economic participation is the Labor Force Survey (LFS)<sup>8</sup>, which is conducted in each participating context by national statistical offices. The only exception is the information on young people who started their own businesses with state financial support, measured as the percentage of young people who received subsidies among all applicants. The data for this indicator are collected by the official institution responsible for providing subsidies, and this is the only indicator that is difficult to assess.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that from the year 2021 onwards the new methodology of the European Union LFS has been in force. The introduced changes concern the operational definitions of the three labor statuses (employed, unemployed and outside the labor force). The new European regulation prescribes that the EU countries apply the new redesigned concepts. This means that the data from the previous years is not completely comparable with data gathered from 2021. More information is available at the official website: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/EN/employ\\_esms.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/EN/employ_esms.htm)

### Availability of data for indicators of economic participation per research participant in 2024

| Indicators of economic participation                                                               | Albania | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Kosovo | Montenegro | North Macedonia | Serbia | Türkiye |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|--------|---------|
| NEET rate                                                                                          | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Youth unemployment rate                                                                            | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Long-term youth unemployment rate                                                                  | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Youth labour force participation rate                                                              | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Youth employment rate                                                                              | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| % of young people successful in obtaining financial support from the state for starting a business | ✗       | ✗                      | ✗      | ✗          | ✓               | ✓      | ✗       |
| % of self-employed young people                                                                    | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |

### // Availability of data on youth social participation in 2024

**Data on youth social participation is largely missing and difficult to obtain.**

Most obstacles have been encountered in collecting data for indicators of the social dimension of youth participation. The data on young people at risk of poverty come from the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), which is conducted in all research settings; however, with some participants (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), further efforts are needed to align data quality with the EU acquis. The frequency of data collection also varies across contexts, so that in some participants, it is not available at the time of writing the report. The national statistics offices usually collect indicators related to the formal education system. However, the methodology for calculating these indicators varies somewhat across research participants due to differences in educational systems and the ways relevant data are collected. Data on youth participation in non-formal education is also infrequently available.

### Availability of data for indicators of social participation per research participant in 2024

| Indicators of social participation                                              | Albania | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Kosovo | Montenegro | North Macedonia | Serbia | Türkiye |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|--------|---------|
| % of young people at risk of poverty                                            | x       | x                      | x      | ✓          | x               | ✓      | ✓       |
| % of young people who receive financial support in the Social Protection System | ✓       | x                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | x       |
| % of people in prisons under thirty                                             | ✓       | x                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | x       |
| Dropout rate from secondary education                                           | x       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | x      | ✓       |
| Number of young people enrolled in tertiary education                           | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | x       |
| Number of young people graduated from tertiary education                        | ✓       | ✓                      | ✓      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |
| Participation rate in non-formal education and training                         | ✓       | ✓                      | x      | ✓          | ✓               | ✓      | ✓       |

**There have been significant advances in collecting data on social participation over the years.**

When the Index was first developed, most research participants did not have the data on young people in prisons. The Ministries of Justice now collect data by age group in most contexts, although they still do not publish it on their official websites. Only Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye face difficulties in collecting this type of data. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, data are not consolidated at the state level, while in Türkiye, they are not disaggregated by age group 15–29.

Another important progress is the collection of data on young people receiving social welfare services. This year, all participants except Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye have received this information. In Albania, a comprehensive picture of this indicator is lacking, as age-disaggregated data are available only for beneficiaries of the three main social assistance programs. For the

remaining programs, data are not collected specifically for the 15–29 age group.

Data on youth at risk of poverty is also now available in almost all participants, except Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. In Albania and North Macedonia, data is available but refers to 2023.

Because the data on education is not fully comparable for all participants, it was decided to calculate the index using the education indicators reported in the Eurostat database, including participation in formal and non-formal education and training, percentage of early leavers from education and training<sup>9</sup>, and population aged 30–34 with a tertiary educational attainment level.

## // Availability of data in the context of EU integration

All EU-candidate participants – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye – as well as Kosovo, a potential candidate, are being evaluated for their ability to meet the obligations of EU membership. A major request from the EU to all candidates during the pre-accession phase is for reliable, transparent statistics.<sup>10</sup> Their progress on statistics is reviewed in annual reports.<sup>11</sup> According to the latest report, the level of statistical preparation varies greatly across research participants (see table).

### Chapter 18 Statistics Assessment in 2025 Reports

|                               |                    |                                  |                            |                           |               |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Albania</b>                | early stage        | some level of preparation        | <b>moderately prepared</b> | good level of preparation | well advanced |
| <b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b> | <b>early stage</b> | some level of preparation        | moderately prepared        | good level of preparation | well advanced |
| <b>Kosovo</b>                 | early stage        | <b>some level of preparation</b> | moderately prepared        | good level of preparation | well advanced |
| <b>Montenegro</b>             | early stage        | some level of preparation        | <b>moderately prepared</b> | good level of preparation | well advanced |

<sup>9</sup> While dropout rate in secondary education refers to the percentage of enrolled students in secondary education as a share of total number of graduated students from secondary education, early leavers are defined as individuals aged 18–24 who have at most completed a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the labor force survey. More information is available in Annex 1.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission – Chapters of the acquis/negotiating chapters: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/glossary/chapters-acquis-negotiating-chapters\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/glossary/chapters-acquis-negotiating-chapters_en)

<sup>11</sup> More information on website: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en). The latest report covers the period from 1 September 2024 to 1 September 2025. The report uses the following assessment scale to describe the state of play: early stage, some level of preparation, moderately prepared, good level of preparation and well advanced. To describe progress made during the reporting period, it uses the following scale: backsliding, no progress, limited progress, some progress, good progress and very good progress.

|                        |             |                           |                     |                            |               |
|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| <b>North Macedonia</b> | early stage | some level of preparation | moderately prepared | good level of preparation* | well advanced |
| <b>Serbia</b>          | early stage | some level of preparation | moderately prepared | good level of preparation* | well advanced |
| <b>Türkiye</b>         | early stage | some level of preparation | moderately prepared | good level of preparation  | well advanced |

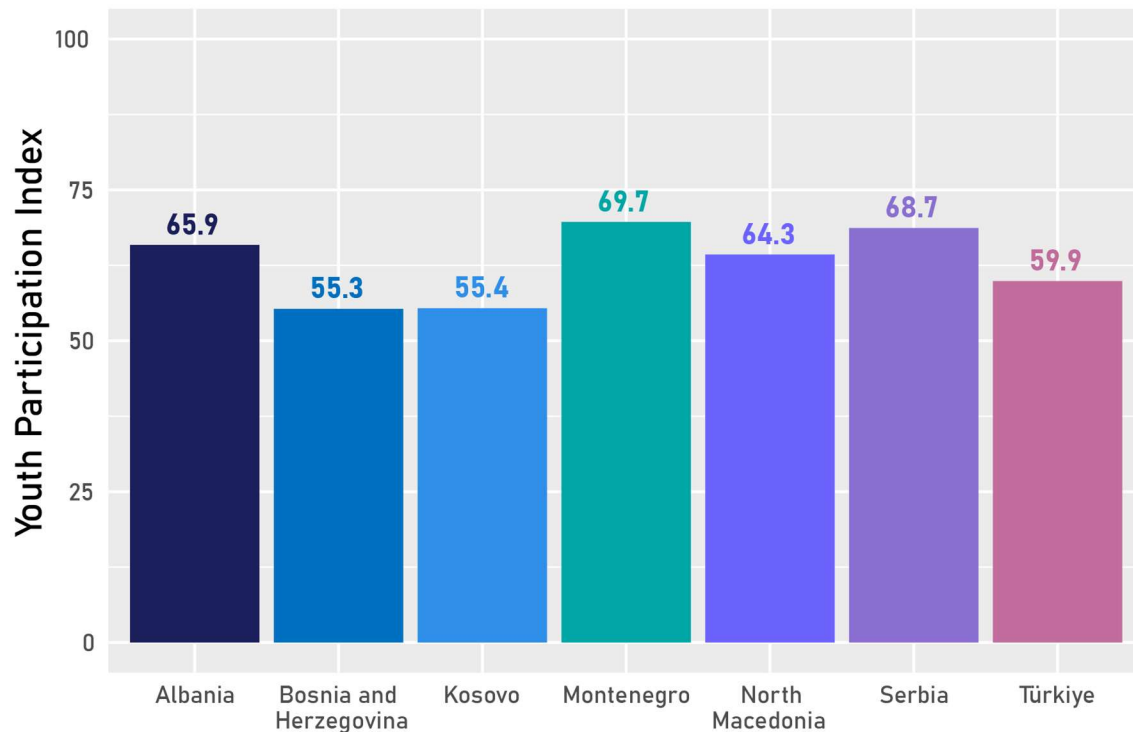
Note: The assessment the participants received in the report is marked in a different color.

\* More precisely, it was assessed that North Macedonia and Serbia have between a moderate and a good level of preparation in statistics.

It was assessed that there has been some progress on the previous year's recommendations in Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Türkiye, and limited progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Social statistics relevant to this report have been generally assessed well, with most research participants regularly conducting labor force surveys and surveys of income and living conditions. In the case of the labor force survey, it was noted that the 2021 EU-Labor Force Survey methodology needs to be implemented in Albania and that regular data transmission to Eurostat has been restored, whereas the Kosovo report states that labor force survey data has not been transmitted to Eurostat. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was recommended that statistical institutes need to improve the collection of sex-disaggregated data and statistics, including data about persons with disabilities and their labor market participation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, it was noted that while a full-scale survey of income and living conditions is conducted annually, further efforts are needed to align data quality with the EU acquis.

## CHAPTER 3

## Youth Participation Index



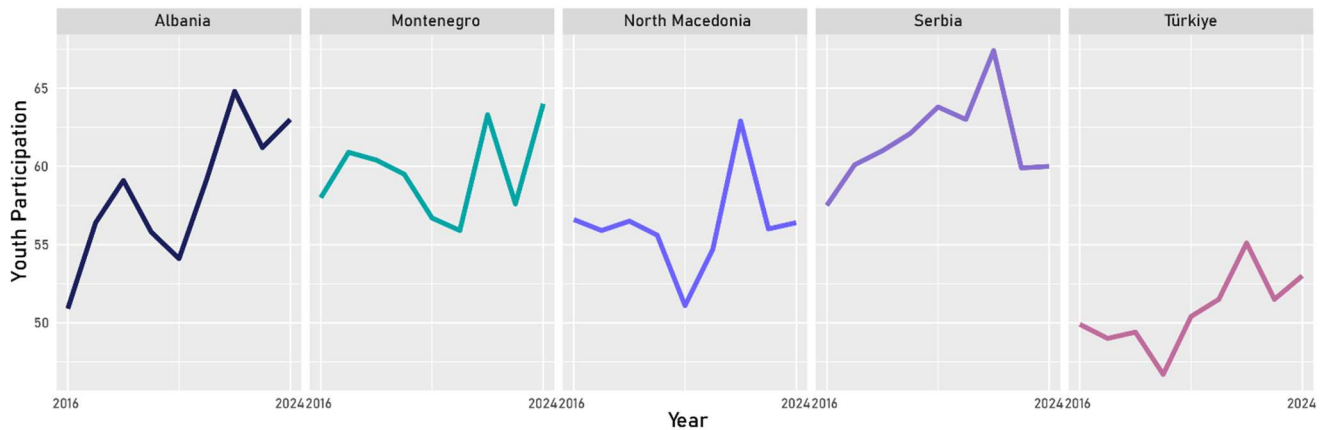
The Youth Participation Index is prepared based on indicators of youth political, economic, and social participation. To make the index comparable across the region, only indicators with data from all research participants were used in its calculation. YPI values for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have been calculated solely based on political and economic participation, due to missing data on social participation. The complete list of indicators is available in Annex 1.

The key conclusions of the 2024 edition of the Youth Participation Index are:

- ⇒ There is limited space for youth participation in the region, as indicated by a substantial difference between the current situation in the seven research participants and the targeted value of 100.
- ⇒ Western Balkan research participants and Türkiye are largely similar in terms of youth participation. These research participants face consistent challenges in engaging young people across political, economic, and social domains. However, while the evidence confirms this trend, the specific challenges experienced by the youth often

differ. The YPI values for Montenegro and Serbia indicate somewhat more favorable conditions for young people.

Data reveals various trends<sup>12</sup> in youth participation over the years in the region. While some instances show signs of improvement, YPI values have predominantly fluctuated without substantial shifts.



Compared to last year's Index, all research participants show a more favorable situation, except North Macedonia, where no significant changes were observed. For further interpretation of these trends, insight into how the values of specific indicators changed over the years is needed.

#### Index of Youth Participation per Research Participant in 2023 and 2024

|                        | 2023 | 2024 | Trend |
|------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Albania                | 64.6 | 65.9 | ↑     |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 53.0 | 55.3 | ↑     |
| Kosovo                 | 54.0 | 55.4 | ↑     |
| Montenegro             | 65.1 | 69.7 | ↑     |
| North Macedonia        | 64.2 | 64.3 | →     |
| Serbia                 | 67.3 | 68.7 | ↑     |
| Türkiye                | 57.9 | 59.9 | ↑     |

<sup>12</sup> Due to the changes in methodology and the inclusion of social participation index in 2021, comparing the values of the index of youth participation over the years is possible only if political and economic index of youth participation are considered in the process of calculating the index of youth participation.

In the next three chapters, we will examine three dimensions of youth participation: political, economic, and social. In the following three chapters, each dimension of youth participation will be covered in more detail. Following a discussion of the most recent data on each aspect of participation, recommendations to improve youth participation will be presented.

## CHAPTER 4

## A closer look at youth political participation

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Young people remain underrepresented in the formal political processes of the region.

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### // Key Facts and Figures on Youth Political Participation

# **For the past nine years, youth political participation has shown slow improvement.** The values of the political participation index in 2024 ranged from around 28 in Türkiye to 50 in Albania, far from the target of 100. There has been some progress in Albania over the years, whereas the situation in Türkiye is largely stagnant and even deteriorating in Serbia and North Macedonia.

# **The youth are still vastly underrepresented in political life in all research participants.** In 2024, young people accounted for between 0% and 4% of MPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro. There were no ministers in the Government, and almost no deputy ministers or mayors under 30 in any of the research participants.

# **Most ministries and parliaments utilize online tools to inform the public, whereas municipalities lag in this regard.** Desk research indicates that municipalities' use of online tools needs to be significantly improved in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia.

# **Only Türkiye does not have established youth structures at the national level.** Montenegro records progress compared to the previous report by establishing a youth structure.

# **When it comes to the local level, the percentage of municipalities that have active youth structures (based on their websites and social network pages) was around 60% in most research participants, but only 36% and 32% in Türkiye and North Macedonia, respectively.** This absence represents a significant barrier to youth participation. In Albania only, all municipalities have established youth structures.

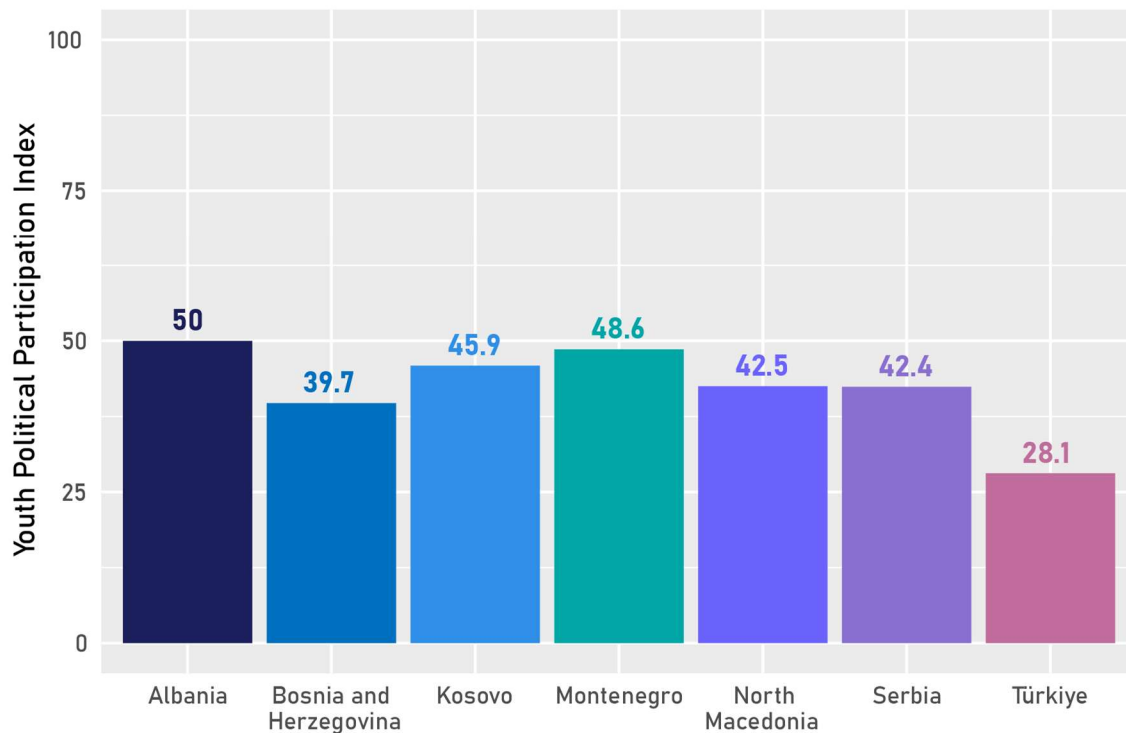
## Political Participation Index

Political Participation Index comprises indicators of political participation<sup>13</sup> that were collected in all research participants:

- representation of young people in high political positions and in parliaments,
- existence of youth structures, and
- use of youth-friendly online tools by decision-makers at national and local levels.

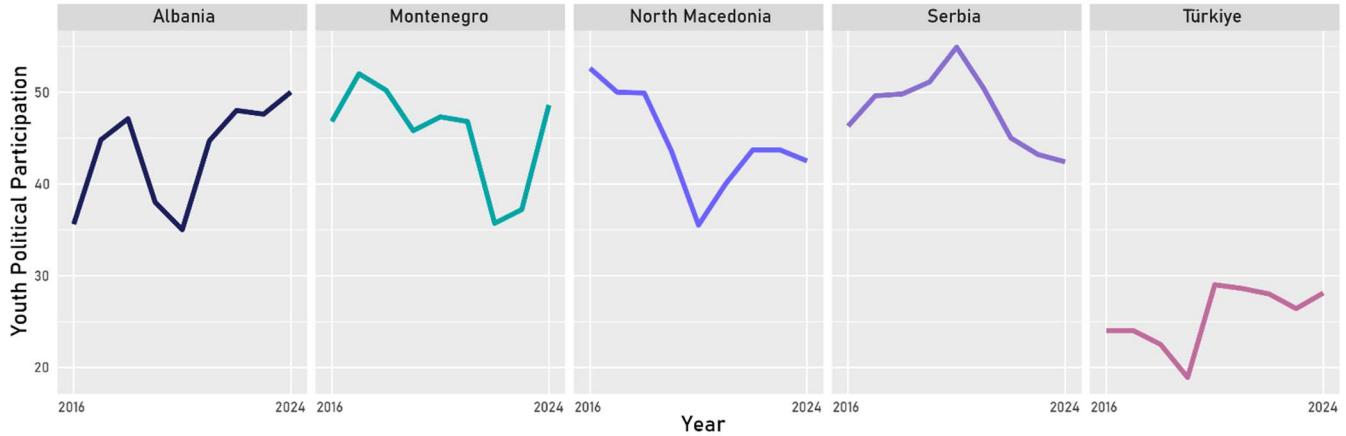
The Political Participation Index integrates multiple dimensions of political participation into a single composite measure. Analysis of the 2024 Index values indicates that:

- ⇒ Youth political involvement remains notably low across all research participants, with the highest recorded index value reaching only 50, well below the target value of 100.
- ⇒ The state of political participation in Türkiye is particularly concerning compared to other settings, due to the low number of young people in political positions, the absence of a national youth structure, and the very low percentage of municipalities with established youth structures.



<sup>13</sup> Values for 2024 were available for all research participants. However, it should be noted that the data concerning the local level in Türkiye was collected for the sample of municipalities.

What trends can we observe if we look at the value of this index over the years?<sup>14</sup>



It seems that, across research participants, opportunities for political participation varied over the years. In some research participants, there was a period of decline compared to 2016 and 2017, followed by a period of improvement (as in North Macedonia and Montenegro), whereas in others the situation is the reverse – progress was followed by stagnation or decline (for instance, in Serbia). Overall, comparing the situation in 2024 to 2016, we can conclude that there has been some progress in Albania, whereas the situation is largely stagnant in Montenegro and Türkiye and even deteriorating in Serbia and North Macedonia. In Montenegro, significant progress was registered over the previous two years in establishing a youth structure at the national level; however, compared to 2016, the situation has largely remained unchanged. Compared to last year's edition of the Index, more favorable values have been registered in all contexts except North Macedonia and Serbia, where Index values have decreased slightly.

**Index of Political Participation per Research Participant in 2023 and 2024**

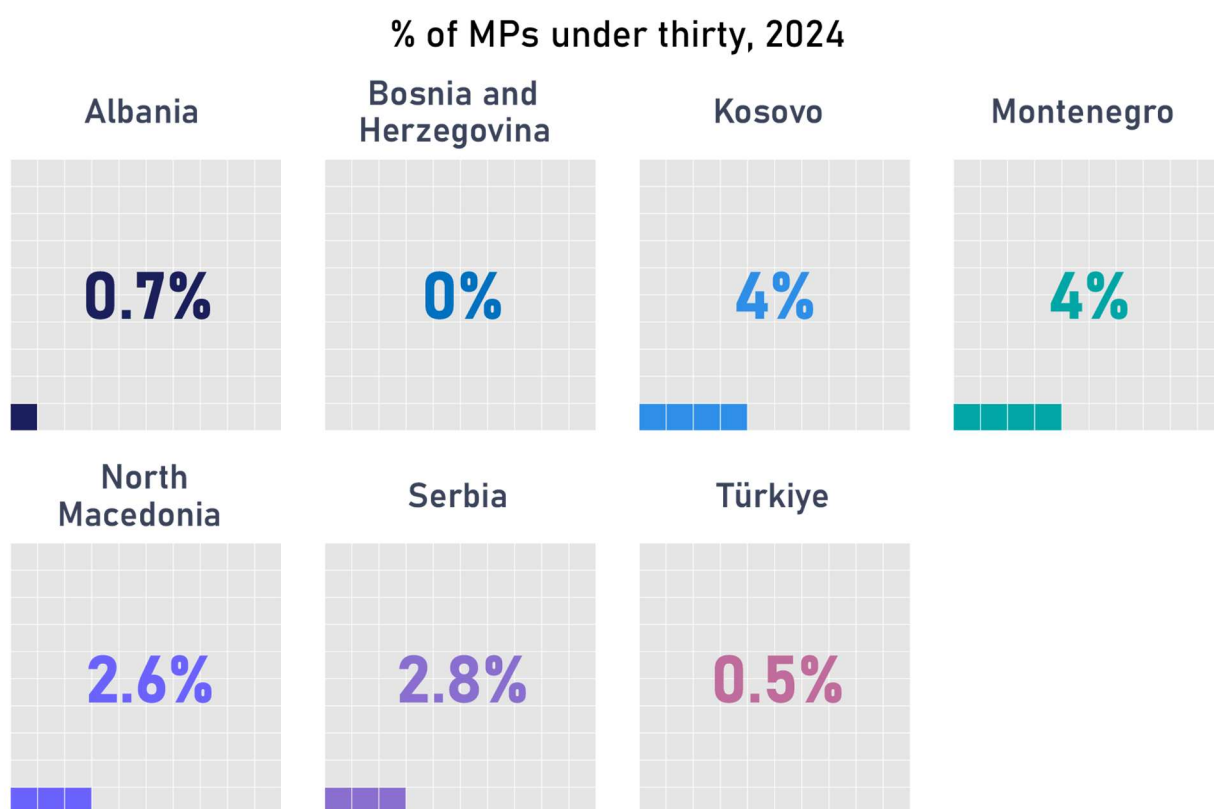
|                        | 2023 | 2024 | Trend |
|------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Albania                | 47.6 | 50.0 | ↑     |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 36.8 | 39.7 | ↑     |
| Kosovo                 | 44.9 | 45.9 | ↑     |
| Montenegro             | 37.3 | 48.6 | ↑     |
| North Macedonia        | 43.7 | 42.5 | ↓     |
| Serbia                 | 43.2 | 42.4 | ↓     |
| Türkiye                | 26.4 | 28.1 | ↑     |

<sup>14</sup> The Political Participation Index was calculated for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo for the first time in 2023; thus it is not possible to make comparison over the years.

Although the index highlights meaningful trends, additional data are needed to interpret the observed patterns fully.<sup>15</sup> The following section examines in detail all indicators related to youth political participation.

**Young people remain severely underrepresented in parliamentary bodies and other political positions.**

In 2024, young people accounted for between 0% and 4% of MPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro. That is, even though young people (15–29) account for between 16% of the total population in Serbia and 23% in Türkiye, they make up less than 5% of members of parliament in the region, making them one of the most underrepresented groups in parliaments.



Although the situation at the European level is similar – the average share of MPs under 30 is 3.2% – some research participants manage to make their parliaments more inclusive, such as Norway, with close to 15% of MPs under 30, and Germany, with close to 7%.<sup>16</sup> Taking this into account, the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Forum of Young Parliamentarians, a global

<sup>15</sup> The table with all data regarding political participation is in the Annex 2 of the document.

<sup>16</sup> Data collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed at <https://data.ipu.org/age-brackets/> on December 30<sup>th</sup> 2025.

organization of national parliaments, set a target of 15% of MPs under 30 by 2030.<sup>17</sup> This number has been chosen to correspond to the global proportion of the population aged 20–29, which is 18%. Although all the research participants for which the YPI was calculated are currently far from reaching this goal, it is by no means impossible to achieve. In fact, some of the research participants have come significantly closer to this goal in the past. Young MPs accounted for 8.3% of all MPs in North Macedonia in 2016 and 8.6% of MPs in Montenegro in 2018.

## % of ministers under thirty

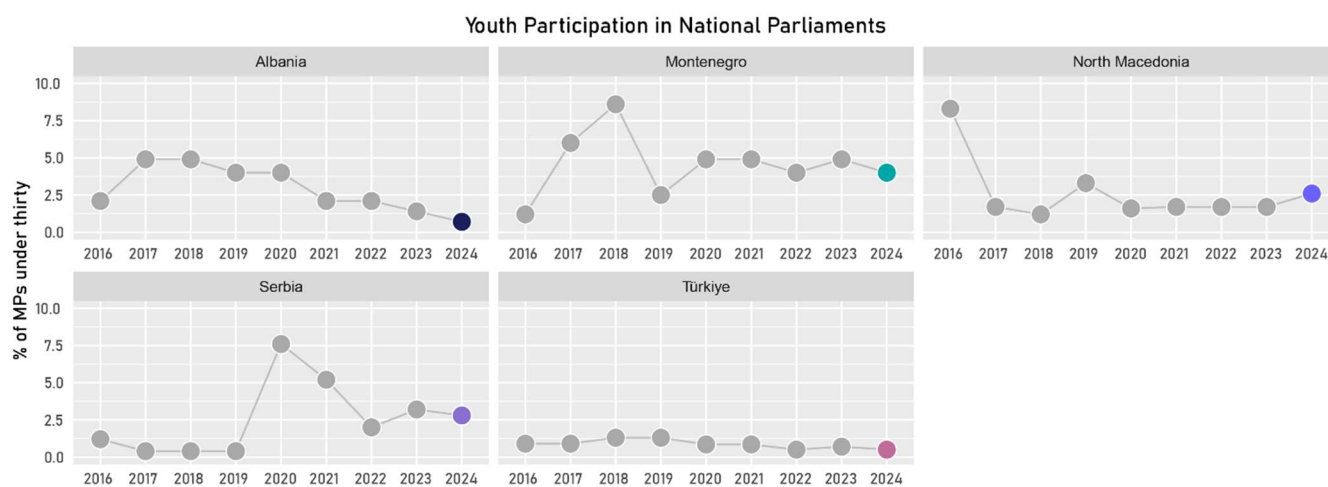
|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Albania                | 0% |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 0% |
| Kosovo                 | 0% |
| Montenegro             | 0% |
| North Macedonia        | 0% |
| Serbia                 | 0% |
| Türkiye                | 0% |



When it comes to gender balance, in most research participants, there is a higher percentage of female MPs (Albania, Türkiye, Montenegro, and Kosovo). This is the opposite of the global trend, where men typically outnumber women among young parliamentarians. However, given the very small number of MPs under 30, it is very difficult to interpret these numbers. As

<sup>17</sup> The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the global organization of national parliaments, gathering 181 Member Parliaments and 15 Associate Members. More information can be found on website <https://www.ipu.org/about-us>.

these numbers increase, research participants must maintain or adopt a balanced male-to-female ratio.



**Over the past nine years, progress in increasing the share of members of parliament under thirty has been very slow, and in some cases, the situation has markedly deteriorated.**

In North Macedonia, the percentage of MPs under 30 was around 8% in 2016, but has decreased significantly since then. However, the 2024 parliamentary elections saw the election of three MPs aged 27–28, signaling a modest yet meaningful step. In Montenegro, the percentage of MPs dropped from 6% in 2017 to 2.5% in 2019 and slowly increased in the last few years. Albania also experienced a decline compared to previous years, when this number was around 4%, to only 0.7% in 2024. In Serbia, an increase in the percentage of MPs under thirty registered in 2020 and 2021 was followed by a sharp decline, from 7.6% in 2020 to 2.8% in 2024. On the other hand, in Türkiye, this percentage was consistently low over the years, around or below 1%.

**Based on collected data, a young person is highly unlikely to become a minister or a mayor.**

High political positions – such as ministers, deputy ministers, and mayors – are seldom occupied by individuals under thirty. There were no ministers<sup>18</sup> under 30 in any of the participants. Among all the research participants, there were deputy ministers under 30 only in Kosovo, and mayors under 30 only in North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>18</sup> However, it can be noted that in the last central elections in Albania 2021, two ministers were appointed with ages close to the youth age range (15-29), respectively being 32 and 31 years old (Minister of State for Entrepreneurship Protection and Minister of State for Youth and Children).

| Percentage of Young People on Political Positions in 2024 |              |                        |              |              |                 |              |              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Indicators                                                | Albania      | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Kosovo       | Montenegro   | North Macedonia | Serbia       | Türkiye      |
| % of ministers under thirty                               | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none)           | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none)    | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none) |
| % of deputy ministers under thirty                        | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none)           | 3.7%         | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none)    | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none) |
| % of mayors under thirty                                  | 0%<br>(none) | 1%                     | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none) | 1.2%            | 0%<br>(none) | 0%<br>(none) |

The situation has remained largely unchanged over time. Between 2016 and 2024, none of the research participants appointed ministers under the age of 30, and in North Macedonia and Türkiye, no deputy ministers in this age group were recorded. At the local level, youth representation has been equally limited: during the past three years, only Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and North Macedonia appointed mayors under thirty, and only in isolated cases. The highest share of young mayors observed in the last five years was 6% in Albania between 2016 and 2018; however, this figure has since fallen to zero.

% of deputy ministers under thirty

|                        |      |                 |    |
|------------------------|------|-----------------|----|
| Albania                | 0%   | Montenegro      | 0% |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 0%   | North Macedonia | 0% |
| Kosovo                 | 3.7% | Serbia          | 0% |
|                        |      | Türkiye         | 0% |



Montenegro has made progress and established a youth structure since the last reporting period. Türkiye continues to be without an institutional mechanism for youth participation at the national level.

In Montenegro, the Council for Youth ceased to exist in 2022 due to delays in preparing and adopting a new Youth Strategy. The new strategy was adopted in October 2023, and the Council for Youth was re-established in August 2024.

Türkiye continues to be without youth structures at the national level. There have been significant efforts to establish an independent youth council; however, this has not yet been achieved. A national youth council, which was granted observer member status by the European Youth Forum in 2019, is not recognized by the government.

| Country              | Existence of youth structure<br>(councils/parliaments/unions)<br>on the national level | Existence of youth structure<br>(councils/parliaments/unions)<br>on the local level (in %) |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Albania              | Yes                                                                                    | 100%                                                                                       |
| Serbia               | Yes                                                                                    | 72%                                                                                        |
| Kosovo               | Yes                                                                                    | 65%                                                                                        |
| Montenegro           | Yes                                                                                    | 60%                                                                                        |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | Yes                                                                                    | 49%                                                                                        |
| Türkiye              | No                                                                                     | 36%                                                                                        |
| North Macedonia      | Yes                                                                                    | 32%                                                                                        |

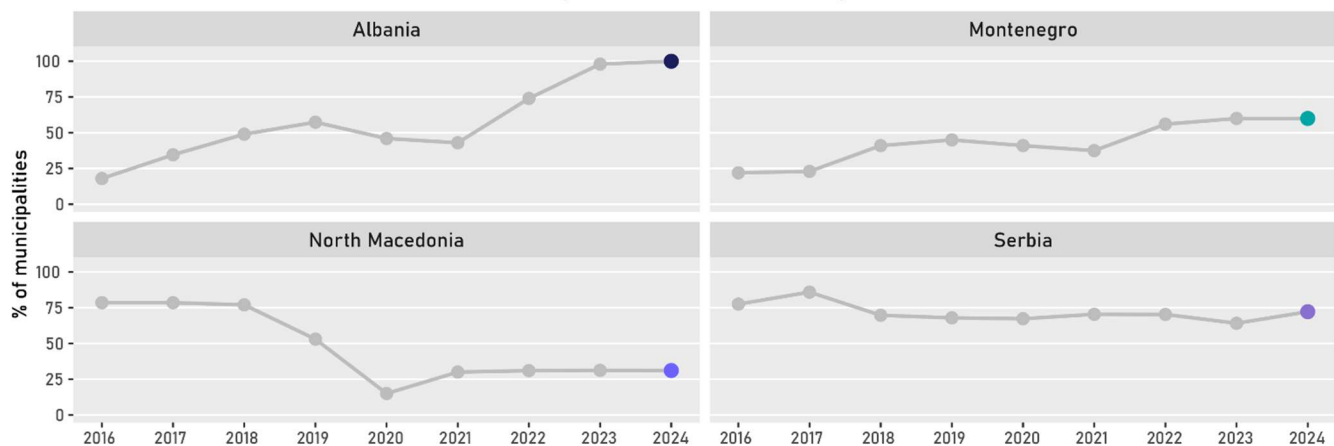
**Institutional support for youth participation is absent in many municipalities in the region.**

At the local level, the situation in Albania has improved significantly, and now all municipalities have a youth structure. This improvement may be attributed to the adoption of Law No. 75/2019 'For Youth', pursuant to which all municipalities are required to establish official local youth structures in the form of local youth councils. However, researchers note that while most youth structures are active, several remain only partially functional, with their effectiveness depending on available resources and local authorities' prioritization.

In most other research participants, around one-third of municipalities still lack a youth structure. The situation is especially concerning in North Macedonia and Türkiye, where approximately one-third of municipalities lack such a structure. In North Macedonia, the number of local youth structures significantly decreased in 2020 and has yet to recover.

The number of municipalities in Türkiye and Serbia with youth structures increased by around 15 and 8 percentage points, respectively, compared to the previous year. Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced a decrease of approximately 10 percentage points.

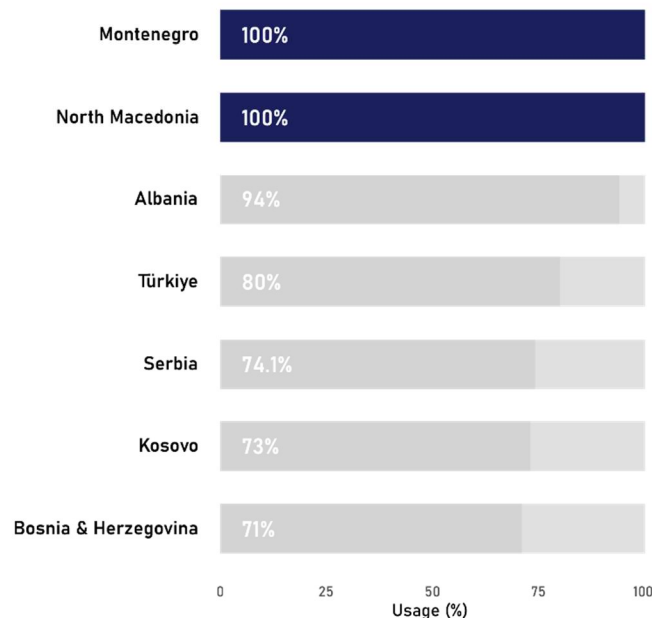
Local youth structures over the years



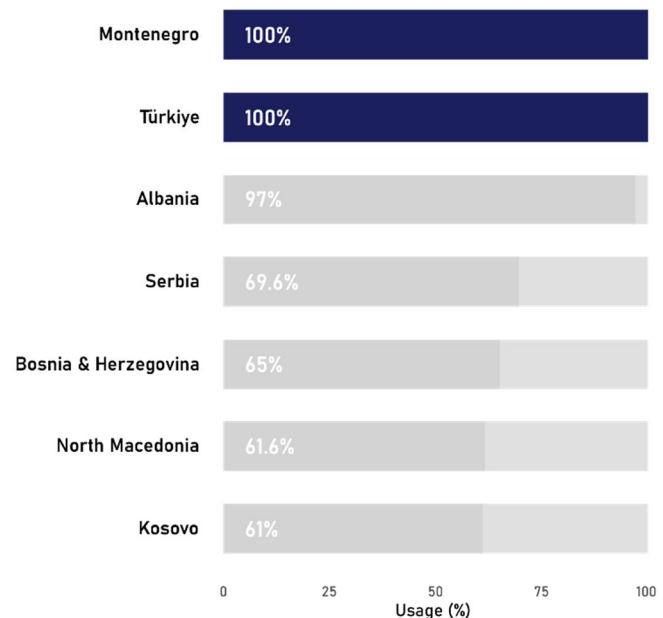
**Online tools for participation in government, parliamentary, and municipal decision-making processes are still not fully utilized.**

The results of the desk research in 2024 indicated that, in all research participants, most ministries and parliaments use online tools such as Facebook, X, Instagram, websites, and e-portals. However, the use of online tools varies between research participants. In Montenegro, this percentage was 100% each year since 2016, and municipalities maintained the use of online tools at the highest possible level. The largest prior progress was in Albania, with an increase from 75% to 97% in the use of online tools at the local level. Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia lag behind other research participants in the use of online tools at the local level.

Online Tools – Government &amp; Parliament



Online Tools – Municipalities



## CHAPTER 5

## A closer look at youth economic participation

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Youth continue to struggle with persistent employment challenges seen in previous years, with many experiencing long-term unemployment and a significant share neither working nor enrolled in education or training.

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### // Key Facts and Figures on Youth Economic Participation

# **The state of economic participation in all the research participants involved remains a cause for concern.** The highest recorded value of this index in 2024 was 79.4, significantly below the target of 100. The values of the economic participation index in 2024 ranged from around 64.8 in Kosovo to 79.4 in Montenegro. Data suggest progress across most indicators of economic participation compared to the year before.

# **With most of the participants in the research, one in four young people is neither employed nor in education or training.** In Kosovo, 35% of young people are in this situation. Young women are more often in this situation. The gender gap is particularly prominent in Türkiye, where it amounts to almost 20 percentage points.

# **The issue of youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge, although there has been some progress in the recent period.** The highest youth unemployment rate among participants was registered in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, where it ranged from 20% to 23%. A significant number of young people have been unemployed for longer than 12 months.

# **Few young individuals, particularly young women, choose self-employment.** In 2024, Albania had the highest share of self-employment among young people (13.8%) while Serbia had the lowest (6.2%). Data on young individuals who apply for state support for self-employment is still not readily accessible.

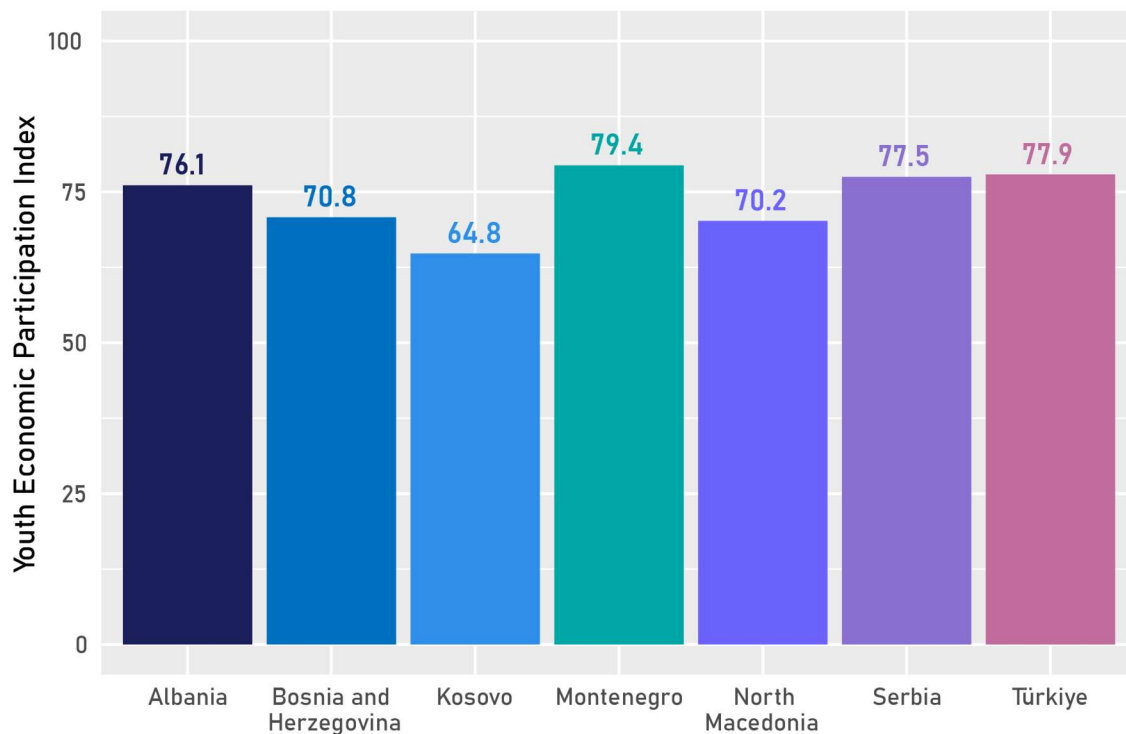
## Economic Participation Index

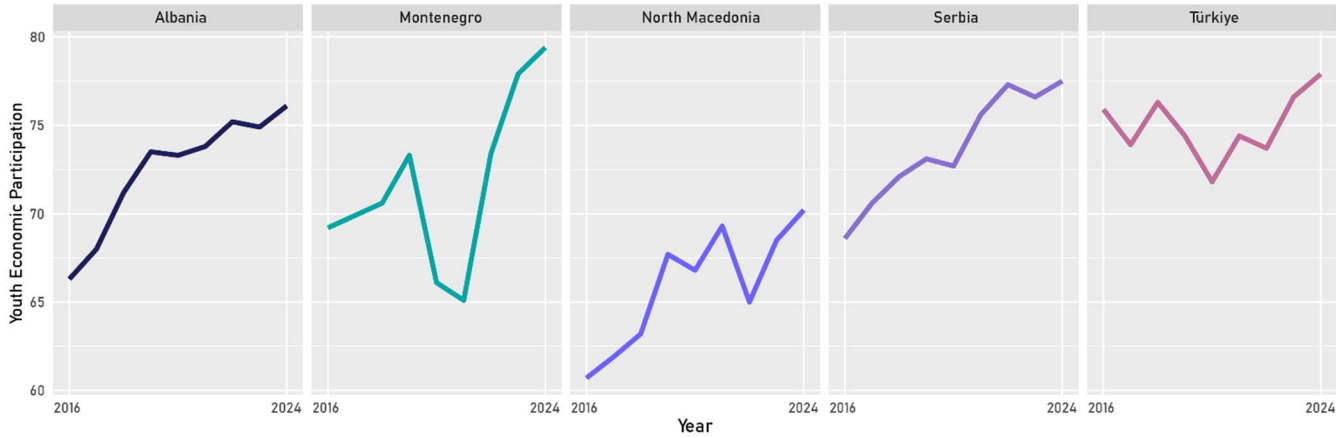
The index of economic participation summarizes information on several indicators of the inclusion of young people in the labor market:

- NEET rate,
- youth labor force participation rate and
- youth short-term and long-term unemployment.

The values of the index of economic participation in 2024 lead to two key conclusions:

- ⇒ Similarly to the situation with political participation, the economic engagement of young people in all research participants still lags behind its potential. The highest index value registered was close to 79.4, falling short of the desired target of 100.
- ⇒ The data collected indicate that young people's economic participation follows a relatively consistent pattern across Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Türkiye. The situation appears more concerning in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and North Macedonia, which have the highest NEET and youth unemployment rates among research participants.





When we look at the changes over the last 9 years<sup>19</sup>, it seems that the economic participation of young people shows clear progress. The situation has been improving consistently in Albania and Serbia, whereas in Türkiye, the progress has mostly occurred in recent years. In North Macedonia, there has been a noticeable improvement over the years; however, the situation took a downturn in 2022 and has only recovered in the last year. The economic participation of young people in Montenegro worsened significantly during the pandemic but has since improved to its highest level.

Compared to last year's Index, more favorable values have been recorded with all the participants.

#### Index of Economic Participation per research participant in 2023 and 2024

|                        | 2023 | 2024 | Trend |
|------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Albania                | 74.9 | 76.1 | ↑     |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 69.2 | 70.8 | ↑     |
| Kosovo                 | 63.2 | 64.8 | ↑     |
| Montenegro             | 77.9 | 79.4 | ↑     |
| North Macedonia        | 68.5 | 70.2 | ↑     |
| Serbia                 | 76.7 | 77.5 | ↑     |
| Türkiye                | 75.8 | 77.9 | ↑     |

<sup>19</sup> The Economic Participation Index was calculated for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo for the first time in 2023; thus, it is not possible to make comparison over the years.

For a deeper examination of these index values, a comprehensive analysis of the indicators associated with the economic dimension of youth participation will be provided in the following text.

**An overview of the economic indicators shows improvement compared to the previous years, although significant challenges persist.**

In the countries that participated in the YPI from 2016 – Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye – there is observable progress in young people’s economic participation. However, there are some areas with persisting issues, such as a high share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training, and a significant percentage of unemployed youth, many of whom have been unemployed for longer than 12 months. In research participants that joined the YPI in 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the most significant issues appear to be a high NEET rate and low labor force participation (especially in Kosovo), as well as low youth employment.

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Albania                | 18.9%        |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 21.1%        |
| Kosovo                 | 16.6%        |
| Montenegro             | 20%          |
| North Macedonia        | 23.4%        |
| Serbia                 | 16.8%        |
| Türkiye                | 14.5%        |
| <b>EU-27</b>           | <b>11.4%</b> |

## Youth unemployment



## Data on Indicators of Economic Participation per Research Participant in 2024

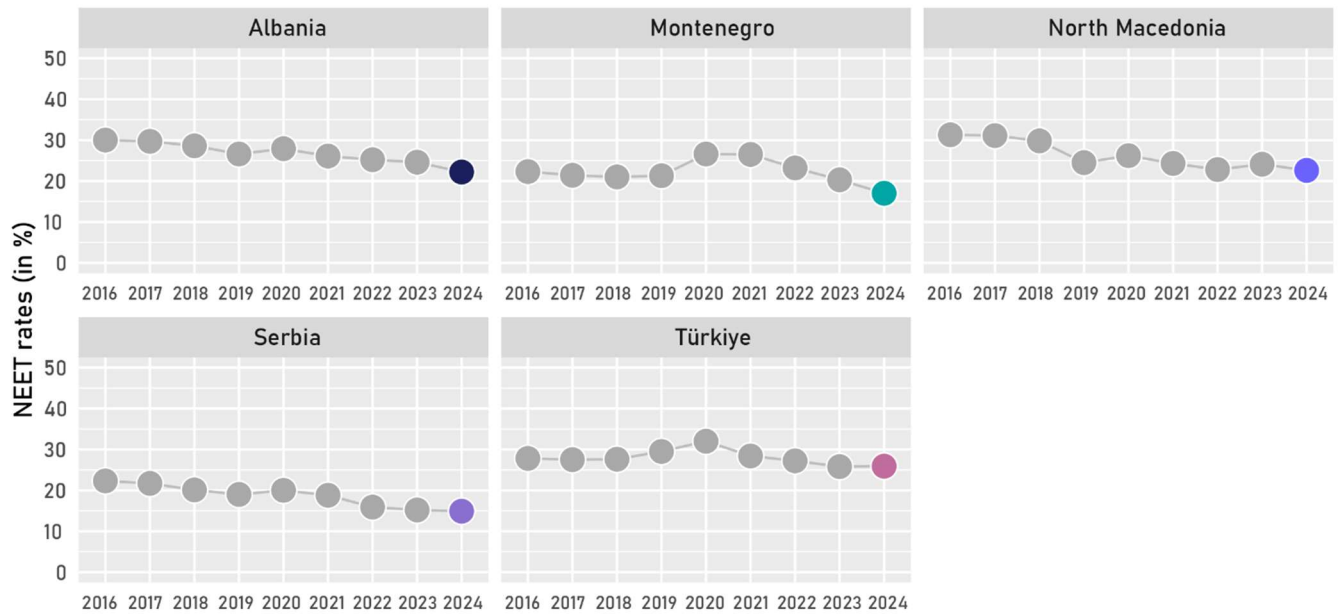
| Indicators                   | Albania | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Kosovo | Montenegro | North Macedonia | Serbia | Türkiye | EU-27 |
|------------------------------|---------|------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|--------|---------|-------|
| NEET                         | 22.2%   | 20.1%                  | 35.4%  | 17.0%      | 22.6%           | 14.9%  | 25.9%   | 11.1% |
| Youth unemployment           | 18.9%   | 21.1%                  | 16.6%  | 20.0%      | 23.4%           | 16.8%  | 14.5%   | 11.4% |
| Long-term youth unemployment | 12.8%   | 13.3%                  | 11.5%  | 9.0%       | 15.5%           | 5.4%   | 14.7%   | 2.1%  |
| Labor force participation    | 54.8%   | 43.8%                  | 33.7%  | 59.0%      | 46.3%           | 49.7%  | 56.1%   | 55.6% |
| Youth employment             | 44.4%   | 34.6%                  | 28.1%  | 47.0%      | 35.5%           | 41.3%  | 47.9%   | 49.5% |

**In most research participants, nearly one in five young people is neither employed nor enrolled in education or training.**

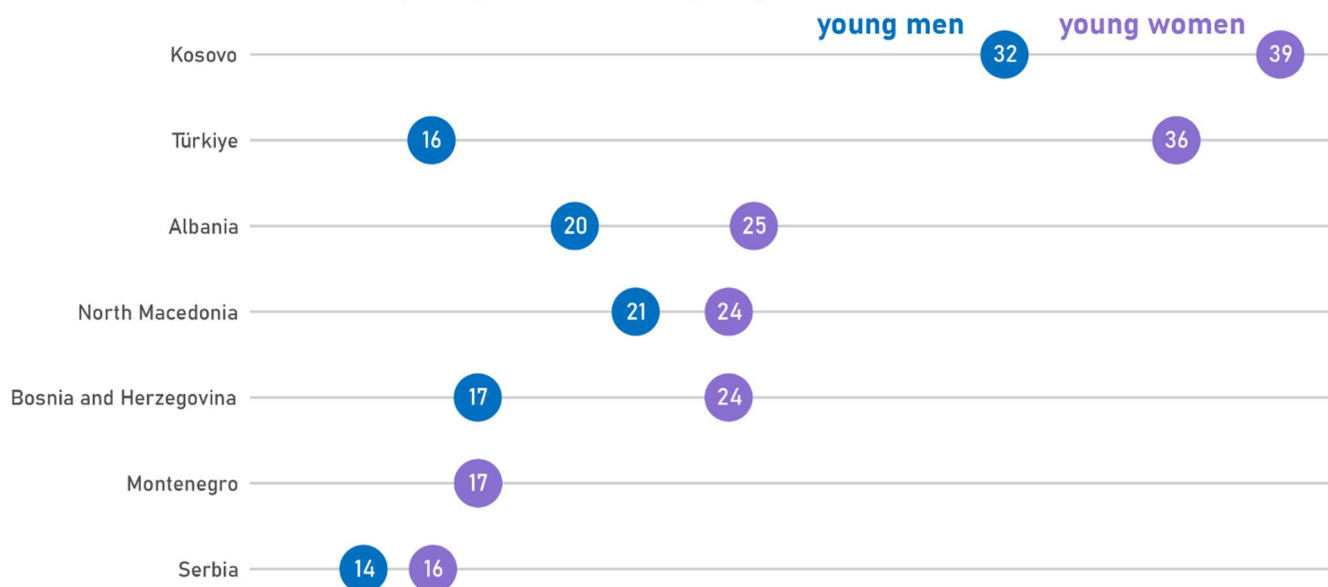
In four research participants, the NEET rate remains between 20% and 26%, suggesting persistent structural barriers to young people's integration into the labor market and education. Kosovo has the highest NEET rate at nearly 35%, while Montenegro and Serbia have the lowest ones, at around 17% and 15%, respectively, making it the closest to the EU-27 average of 11.1%. All research participants, however, are still far off meeting the EU-level target set by the European Union<sup>20</sup>, stipulating that the share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training should be less than 9% by 2030. All research participants in the YPI, except Türkiye, register improvements compared to the year before.

<sup>20</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/>, accessed on January 22, 2026.

## How have NEET rates changed in the last 9 years



## Comparing NEET rates of young men and women



Note: In Montenegro, the NEET rate for both men and women was 17.0.

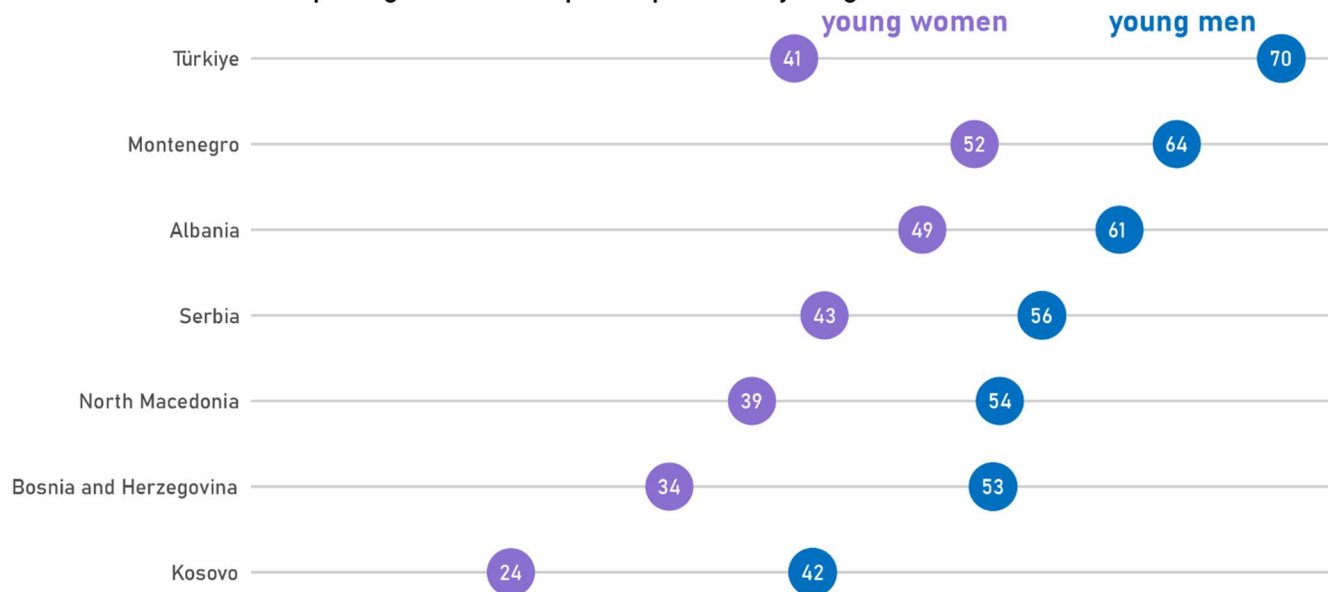
**There is a pronounced gender gap in NEET**

When analyzed by gender, most research participants show a consistent pattern: the NEET rate is lower for young men than for young women. The difference does not exist only in Montenegro. In

rates between young men and women.

some research participants, like North Macedonia and Serbia, the difference is small. However, in Türkiye, the gap is particularly striking, reaching a staggering 20 percentage points.

Comparing labor force participation of young men and women



Youth unemployment rates have decreased among most research participants over the past 9 years; however, it remains a severe problem.

The highest youth unemployment rates were registered in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. All research participants registered a decrease in youth unemployment rates in 2024 compared to the year before. In Montenegro, the unemployment rate increased sharply during the pandemic, but recovered in 2022 and continued to improve in 2023 (from 32.5% in 2021 to 20% in 2024). It should be noted, however, that even when there is progress in reducing youth unemployment, that does not necessarily mean that youth are employed in quality jobs.

In 2024, youth employment rates ranged from 28% in Kosovo to nearly 48% in Türkiye. All research participants except Albania recorded an increase compared to the previous year, with the largest improvement observed in Kosovo (2.1 percentage points).

Some participants experience a gender gap in unemployment rates.

The unemployment rate was higher among young women than among young men for most participants, with the largest difference observed in Türkiye (8.7 percentage points). A different trend was observed in North Macedonia and Serbia, where these rates were similar.

Many young people in the region remain unemployed for more than 12 months, which may leave them at risk of becoming marginalized in the labor market.

Long-term unemployment remains high across most research participants, surpassing 10% in most cases. North Macedonia saw a significant drop from 37.9% in 2022 to 15.5% in 2024, while all research participants registered some improvement.

Gender differences in long-term unemployment rates vary across research participants:

- Higher rates among young women in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Türkiye, with Türkiye showing the largest gap (8.5 percentage points).
- Similar rates for young men and women in North Macedonia and Serbia.

Young women unemployment

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| Albania                | 19%   |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 25.6% |
| Kosovo                 | 22%   |
| Montenegro             | 21%   |
| North Macedonia        | 22.7% |
| Serbia                 | 16.9% |
| Türkiye                | 20.1% |



**Striking differences in activity levels between young men and women persist over time.**

Labor force participation rates ranged from around 34% in Kosovo to around 59% in Montenegro, which is higher than the EU-27 average. Most research participants report similar participation rates compared to the previous year, with Kosovo showing the largest increase (2.3 percentage points). North Macedonia and Türkiye show a slight increase, while Albania experiences a slight decline.

As in previous years, significant gender gaps persist across all research participants – it is much more likely for young men than young women to be active in the labor market. The largest gender gap was in Türkiye (where the activity rate for young men was 29 percentage points above that for women), followed by North Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Kosovo, where the gap was around 20 percentage points.

**Self-employment is still not the most frequent choice, especially for young women.**

In 2024, Albania had the highest share of young people in the self-employed population (13.8%), while Serbia had the lowest (6.2%). In Kosovo and North Macedonia, self-employment rates improved compared to the year before, whereas rates in other research participants stagnated or declined slightly.

The gender gap is also prominent among self-employed youth. Young men in most research participants were significantly more likely to be self-employed than young women. The most prominent gender gap<sup>21</sup> has been observed in Albania, where the self-employment rate for young men was about 10 percentage points higher than that for women.

<sup>21</sup> For Kosovo, self-employment data for women and men should be interpreted with caution. The indicators reflect the share of young self-employed women and men (aged 15–29) within the total self-employed female and male populations (aged 15+), rather than self-employment rates among the total youth population by gender. The figures therefore capture the age composition of the self-employed population, and, given the relatively small overall number of self-employed women, the indicator may appear higher for young women than for young men.

|                        |    |    |
|------------------------|----|----|
| Albania                | 8  | 18 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | 8  | 6  |
| Kosovo                 | 18 | 11 |
| Montenegro             | 9  | 11 |
| North Macedonia        | 7  | 8  |
| Serbia                 | 7  | 6  |
| Türkiye                | 6  | 10 |



### Comparing differences in self-employment of young women and men

Data on success rates for young people applying for state subsidies is largely unavailable.

When it comes to the percentage of young people who received subsidies to start their own businesses among all applicants from state institutions, data were not available in most research participants. In Serbia and North Macedonia, approximately 1 in 3 applicants were successful in obtaining state support (30.6% and 20.97%, respectively). The situation in North Macedonia has improved compared to the year before.

## In-Depth Overview of Youth Economic Participation Trends

In the 2024 report, researchers have provided additional insights into youth economic participation, complementing the indicator-based analysis with country-specific contextual information. These inputs aim to explain recent trends better, identify key drivers of progress and constraints, and highlight policy measures that influence youth employment outcomes. The analysis supports a more comprehensive understanding of developments in youth economic participation across research participants over time.

### Significant Improvements in Youth Economic Participation Over the Years

Across all research participants, youth economic participation improved, as reflected in declining NEET and youth unemployment rates and rising youth employment. These improvements appear to have been driven by both the broader labor market recovery in the post-pandemic period and targeted policy interventions, including active labor market measures, Youth Guarantee-type schemes, and donor-funded programs. Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia reported benefits from the structured implementation of the Youth Guarantee. Serbia reported a continued increase in the IT market and in job offers in this industry.

Progress was assessed using official labor market indicators derived primarily from the Labor Force Survey, including NEET, unemployment, employment, and youth labor force participation rates. Across all research participants, government ministries and public employment services played a central role in designing and implementing measures, with international organizations and civil society actors supporting financing, technical assistance, outreach, and implementation.

### Lingering Barriers to Youth Economic Participation

Despite significant progress over time, youth economic participation across research participants remains constrained by high levels of unemployment or inactivity, low labor force participation, and persistent gender disparities. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo report particularly high NEET and inactivity rates, while North Macedonia continues to record youth labor force participation below pre-pandemic levels. In Montenegro, the primary challenge is

the stagnation of youth employment despite increased labor market activity, suggesting structural constraints. Albania stands out for the continued decline in youth self-employment and persistent gender gaps, despite overall improvements in youth employment indicators. Serbia reported that all indicators have improved over the years, with one important remark. The number of young people in Serbia has decreased significantly, creating a future workforce shortage, even though the figures seem better.

Participant reports identify several factors contributing to these challenges, including mismatches between education and labor-market needs, limited creation of stable, high-quality employment, and lingering post-pandemic effects. Structural weaknesses in job creation are emphasized in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro, while North Macedonia and Albania additionally highlight outmigration of skilled youth and bureaucratic or financial barriers to youth entrepreneurship. Across all research participants, gender norms, care responsibilities, and insufficient access to childcare services continue to limit young women's economic participation disproportionately.

A common challenge across research participants is the fragmented or uneven implementation of youth employment policies, often dispersed across multiple institutions with limited coordination. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo underline the absence of systemic, long-term reforms, with youth employment support relying largely on short-term or project-based interventions. North Macedonia and Montenegro report institutional fragmentation and weak monitoring systems in earlier periods. In Albania, the discontinuation of the Ministry of Youth and Children, combined with the lack of systematic and disaggregated data – particularly on beneficiaries of youth employment and entrepreneurship schemes – has constrained monitoring capacity and inter-institutional coordination, thereby reducing policy continuity and the precision of targeting youth employment measures.

### **Economic Participation of Youth: A Way Forward**

All research participants report ongoing efforts to strengthen youth economic participation, primarily through Youth Guarantee-related initiatives, the expansion of active labor market measures, and donor-supported programs. Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro emphasize reforms to improve institutional coordination, align skills provision with labor market needs, and increase young women's participation. Kosovo places particular emphasis on digital job-matching tools and targeted active labor market measures, while Bosnia and Herzegovina remains in a planning and preparatory phase, with Youth Guarantee action plans still under development. The effectiveness of these efforts – particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo – will depend on consistent implementation, strengthened data and monitoring systems, and sufficient labour market absorption capacity. Serbia's Youth Strategy places increased emphasis on youth work, education, capacity development, youth participation in decision-making, youth services, and environmental issues, while efforts are underway to strengthen monitoring through a Youth Wellbeing Index to support more effective youth policies in the future.

## CHAPTER 6

## A closer look at youth social participation

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Young people's social participation in the region is a concern, evidenced by many young people being at risk of poverty, lack of participation in non-formal education, and a considerable number of young men in prisons.

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### // Key Facts and Figures on Youth Social Participation

# **The highest index registered is 86, still beneath the desired target of 100.** Based on the collected data, the state of youth social participation is similar in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, whereas it is somewhat more worrying in Türkiye and Albania. It should be noted that there are still significant challenges in collecting data on young people's social participation.

# **Many young people are at risk of poverty.** The percentage of young people at risk of poverty ranged from 17.3% in Serbia to 24.2 in Montenegro. In 2024, most research participants managed to gather data on the number of young people receiving financial support through the Social Protection System, a challenge in previous years. Among the total number of people receiving such financial support, young people accounted for between 11% in Montenegro and almost 30% in North Macedonia.

# **Approximately one quarter of people in prisons are young people in most of the research participants.** There is a significant gender disparity, with the vast majority of young people in prisons being young men.

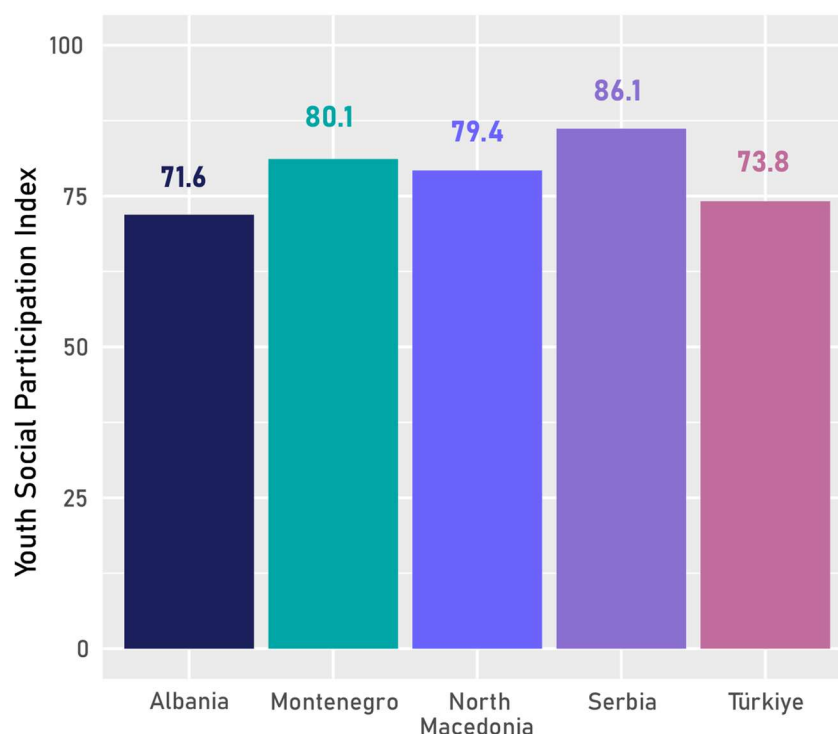
# **Early school leaving remains a significant issue in Albania and Türkiye.** In 2024, similar to previous years, **the rates of completing tertiary education were below 25% in all research participants, except in Kosovo.** Among people aged 30–34 years, around 33% (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and 38–42% (all other research participants) had completed at least one level of tertiary education, indicating large differences among research participants in this respect.

## Youth Social Participation Index

Indicators that have been included in the calculation of the Social Participation Index are:

- ⇒ at-risk-of-poverty rate (share of young people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold);
- ⇒ percentage of youth in prison,
- ⇒ share of early dropouts from education and training for persons aged 18–24 years,
- ⇒ percentage of the population aged 30–34 with a tertiary educational level and
- ⇒ participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)

The index could not be calculated for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo this year due to missing values.



Based on the findings from the Social Participation Index, three key conclusions become evident:

- ⇒ As with political and economic participation, the social involvement of young people across all research participants has yet to reach its full potential. The highest registered index value was 86, which falls short of the target of 100.

- ⇒ The status of youth social participation displays a comparable pattern in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. However, the situation appears relatively more concerning in Albania and Türkiye. This is mostly due to the higher share of early school leavers and a higher share of prisoners under thirty than in other research participants.
- ⇒ In most research participants, the Social Participation Index values are similar to those of the previous year or show only a small improvement, largely due to the lack of up-to-date data in this area. The largest improvement was registered in Serbia, mostly due to a significantly smaller percentage of imprisoned young people.

**Index of Social Participation per Research Participant in 2023 and 2024**

|                 | 2023 | 2024 | Trend |
|-----------------|------|------|-------|
| Albania         | 71.4 | 71.6 | →     |
| Montenegro      | 77.9 | 79.4 | ↑     |
| North Macedonia | 80.5 | 80.1 | →     |
| Serbia          | 81.9 | 86.1 | ↑     |
| Türkiye         | 71.5 | 73.8 | ↑     |

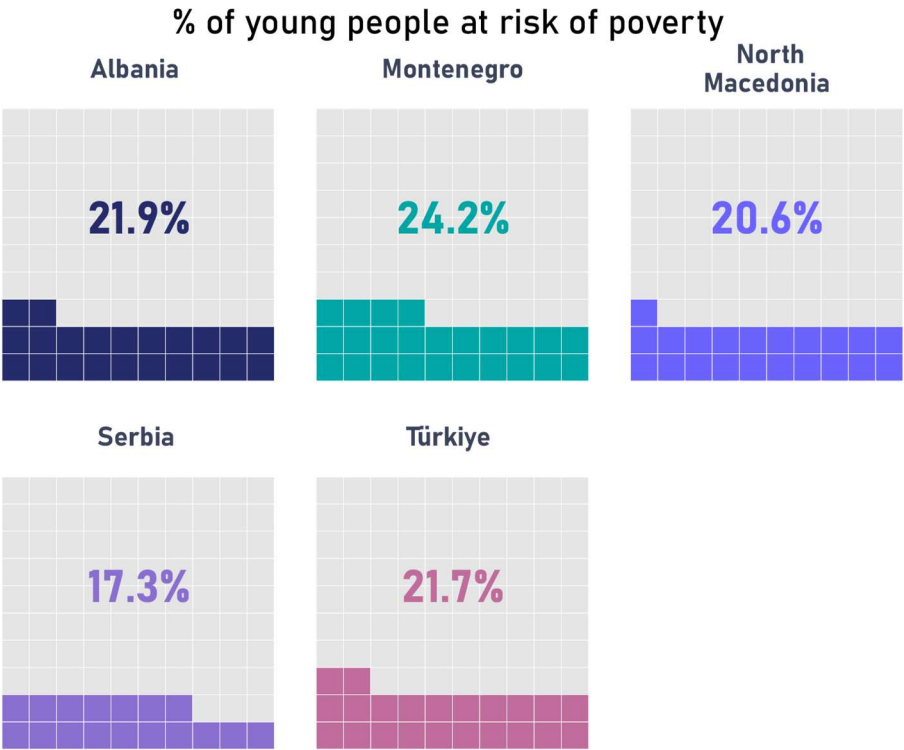


**One in five young people  
is at risk of poverty  
in Western Balkans and Türkiye**

To understand the values of this index, we need to look at the indicators of the social dimension of youth participation and their values in more detail.<sup>22</sup>

In most research participants, approximately one in five young people is at risk of poverty.

In Serbia in 2024, the percentage of young people at risk of poverty was 17.3%, down from the year before. Türkiye and Montenegro also register slight improvements compared to the previous year (0.8 and 1.2 percentage points, respectively).



In most research participants, approximately one in five young people is at risk of poverty.

In 2024, most research participants managed to gather data on the number of young people receiving financial support through the Social Protection System, a challenge in previous years. Of the total number of people receiving such financial support, 11% were young people in Montenegro, 13.7% in Serbia, 17.1% in Albania, 18.4% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and almost 30% in North Macedonia.

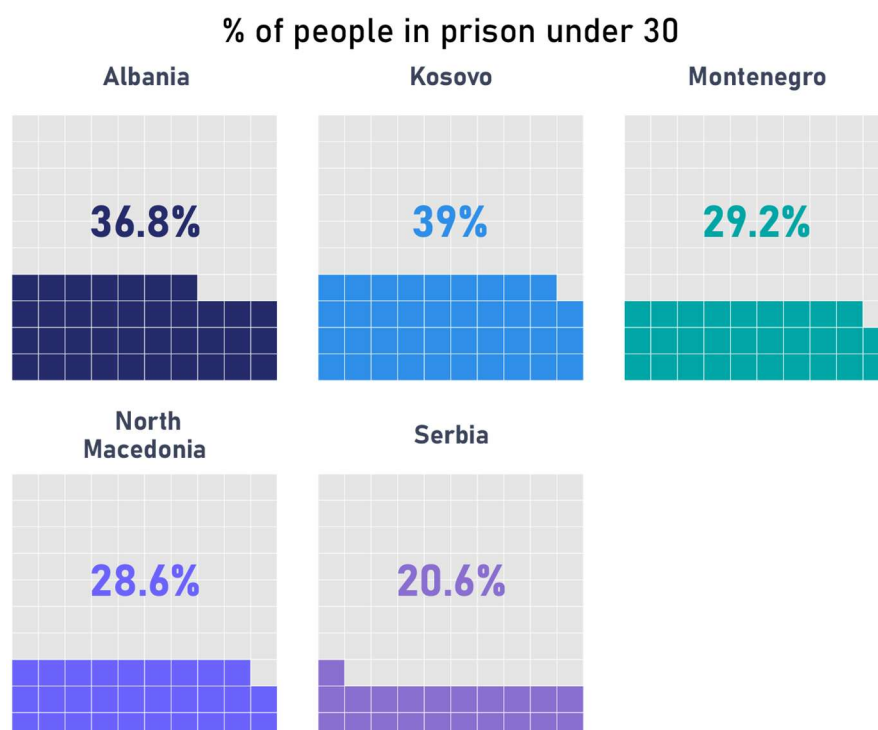
<sup>22</sup> The table with all data regarding social participation is in the Annex 1 of the document.

The lower share of young recipients in Montenegro and Serbia does not necessarily indicate lower vulnerability among young people, given that poverty rates are high in these research participants. Although data on this are not available, it may indicate that youth face barriers to accessing such support. A higher share of recipients in Albania and North Macedonia confirms that young people are in vulnerable situations and need support. It should also be noted that even when support exists, it may not be equally accessible to all young people. For example, in Albania, many young people, particularly in rural regions, lack access to critical support.

### More than a quarter of people in prisons are young people.

This was the case in four research participants, except in Serbia, where this percentage is somewhat lower. Considering that young people account for 16% to 23% of the total population in these research participants, it seems they are overrepresented in the prison population.

There are stark differences in the percentage of imprisoned young men compared to young women, with this number being less than 2% in all research participants with available data.



**The participation of young people in formal and especially, non-formal education needs to be improved.**

The majority of participants do not have a significant problem with young people dropping out of secondary education, as indicated by dropout rates below 3% in all research participants for which data were available. Looking at the indicator concerning early school dropouts (i.e. people aged 18–24 who had completed, at best, lower secondary education and who were not involved in further education or training),<sup>23</sup> it can be concluded that Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia have already met the EU-level target which stipulates that the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9%, by 2030. In Albania and Türkiye, however, the proportion of early leavers from education and training among persons aged 18–24 was between 17% and 19%, respectively, signaling that more efforts are needed to reduce it.

| Indicators                                   | Albania | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Montenegro | North Macedonia | Serbia | Türkiye | EU-27 |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|------------------------|------------|-----------------|--------|---------|-------|
| Early school leaving (%)                     | 17.5    | 4.2                    | 3.6        | 8.0             | 6.2    | 18.7    | 9.4   |
| Population 30–34 with tertiary education (%) | 32.1    | 28.2                   | 38.4       | 39.3            | 40.0   | 41.7    | 44.7  |

*Note: The data for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Türkiye refers to 2023; for other countries, data refers to 2020 or 2021. Data from Kosovo was not available in the Eurostat database. Data for Albania for 2021 was reported on the official website of the Institute of Statistics, and data for other countries was registered in Eurostat.*

**More young women are enrolling in and completing tertiary education.**

In tertiary education, the enrollment rate ranged from 17.7% in North Macedonia to 61.3% in Serbia. Although most research participants register high rates of young people enrolling in tertiary education, the percentage of young people graduating from tertiary education was relatively low, at 11% in North Macedonia and below 20% in most other research participants. More young women enrolled in and completed tertiary education than young men. The largest gender gap in enrollment rates was registered in Serbia,

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that data for 2024 was available only for North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye at the time of writing this report, thus for other research participants data for 2020 was reported and used in calculation of the index.

where the enrollment rate for young women was around 25 percentage points above that for men, while the largest gender gap in completion rates was registered in Albania (6.8 points higher for young women).

As noted in the methodological note on data availability, when interpreting the rate of youth participation in education, it is important to acknowledge that there are methodological differences across indicators. Therefore, we also examine the population aged 30–34 with tertiary educational attainment.<sup>24</sup> Among people aged 30–34, between around 30% (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and around 38–42% (all other research participants) of the population had

## Young women in tertiary education

|                           | enrolled | graduated |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Albania                   | 37.3%    | 26%       |
| Bosnia and<br>Herzegovina | 46.6%    | 18.1%     |
| Kosovo                    | 16.3%    | 64.2%     |
| Montenegro                | 38.8%    | 14.8%     |
| North Macedonia           | 21.7%    | 11.4%     |
| Serbia                    | 74.1%    | 15.8%     |
| Türkiye                   | no data  | 14.6%     |

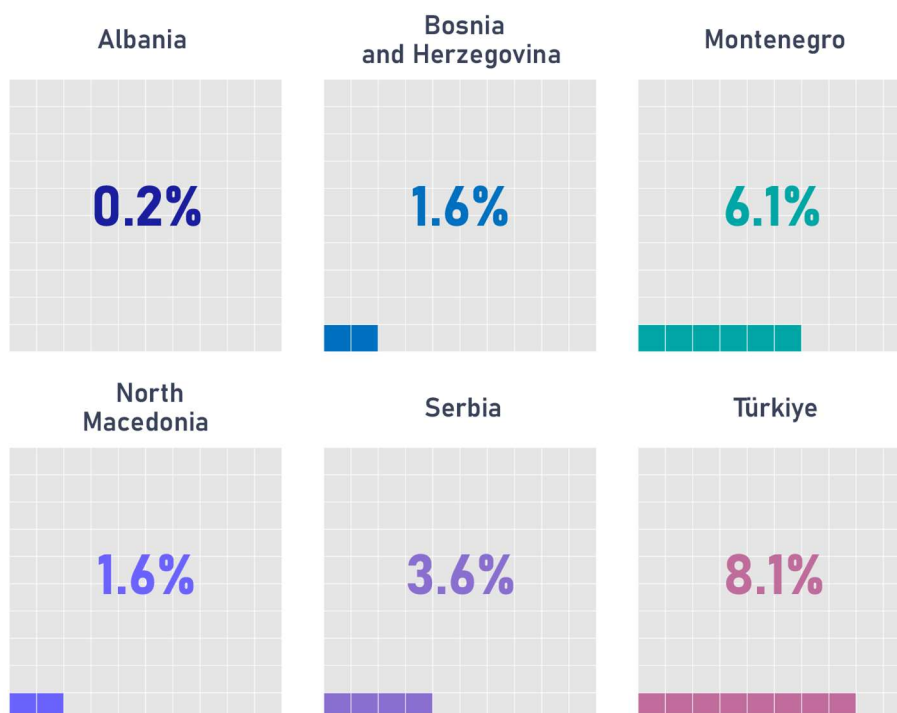
<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that data for 2024 was available only for North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye at the time of writing this report, thus for other research participants data for 2020 was reported and used in calculation of the index.

completed at least one level of tertiary education. This is slightly lower than the EU average: just over two-fifths (44.7%) of the EU population have a tertiary education level.

**The participation of young people in non-formal education is very low.**

Only around 0.2% of young people in Albania, and 1.6% in North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, reported participating in non-formal education and training in the previous 4 weeks. Türkiye registered the highest share of young people reporting participation in this type of education (8.1%), although this remains below the EU-27 average of 13.1%. When compared with countries such as Slovenia, where participation reaches 25.3%, it becomes evident that young people are largely excluded from non-formal education.

### % of young people who participate in non-formal education



## CHAPTER 7

## Creating more space for youth participation – set of recommendations

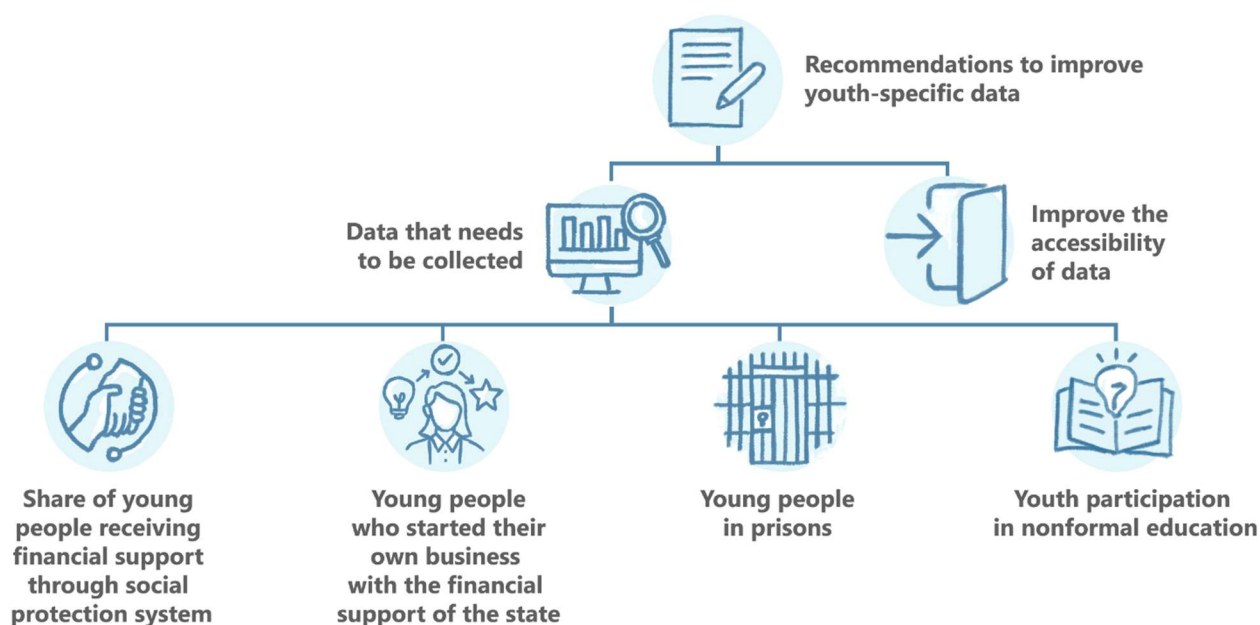
The ninth edition of the Youth Participation Index presents a mixed picture of youth involvement. In many areas, substantial barriers continue to limit young people's opportunities for meaningful participation in society. At the same time, several indicators point to progress compared to previous years, particularly in economic participation. These improvements appear to reflect a combination of factors, including enhancements to legal frameworks, targeted policy measures, and increased efforts to raise awareness. In the text that follows, we outline two sets of recommendations to address the lack of youth-sensitive data and opportunities for youth participation in the region. YHWBT Network hopes that YPI recommendations will provide guidelines for civil society organizations' advocacy efforts and for evidence-informed youth policy.

The 'Council of Europe Recommendation on the Participation of Children and Young People under the Age of 18 (2012)' states that: "Participation is about individuals and groups of individuals having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity". The recommendations that follow aim to outline ways to create more space and opportunities for youth participation.

### I Recommendations concerning the absence of youth-sensitive data

Youth-specific data is vital for planning effective measures to improve youth participation. However, many research participants lack data on relevant indicators of youth participation for 2024, even though this report is prepared in the last quarter of 2025. In some research participants, for indicators of youth social participation, it was necessary to rely on data from 2020 or 2021 due to a lack of updated data. The following recommendations address these challenges related to the scarcity of youth-specific data, incorporating both previously

unimplemented suggestions and new recommendations based on recent changes in data accessibility observed during the latest monitoring period.



### ⇒ **The institutions need to ensure the collection of youth-sensitive data in the field of economic, social, and political participation**

While notable progress has been made over the years, it remains evident that national statistical agencies and other pertinent authorities must intensify their efforts to gather more data specifically focused on the youth. Having reliable, transparent statistics is also a major request from the EU to all countries during the pre-accession phase and a precondition for a successful negotiation. It is needed to ensure the following:

⇒ Data related to the **share of young people receiving financial support through the social protection system** compared to the total number of people receiving this type of support should be monitored and regularly reported:

- 1) Ministries or other national institutions in charge of data on beneficiaries within the social protection system in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye should disaggregate data by age and start analyzing the number of young people receiving financial support.
- 2) In Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, data for this indicator should be regularly produced and published.

- ⇒ **Data on young people at risk of poverty** should be regularly collected, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and aligned with Eurostat methodology.
- ⇒ **Data on people who started their own business with state financial support, compared with all young people who applied for this support, should be regularly reported**, disaggregated by age. As authorities enact policies to stimulate self-employment, this indicator would be a valuable resource for understanding the success rates of young individuals in applying for subsidies. It is instrumental in devising plans to enhance the support system for young entrepreneurs. It is recommended that:
  - 1) Institutions in charge of providing this type of financial support in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Türkiye start collecting the data on young people who apply for the subsidies.
  - 2) In North Macedonia and Serbia, data for this indicator should be regularly produced and published.
- ⇒ **Data on young people in prisons**, compared to the total prison population, should become available in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye, and continue to be readily available in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.
- ⇒ **Data on youth participation in non-formal education and training** needs to be regularly collected by the national statistical office in Kosovo.
- ⇒ **Data on early leavers from education and training and on tertiary educational attainment should be regularly collected in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro, in line with Eurostat regulations.**

Young people do not constitute a homogeneous group, and disaggregated data are crucial for effectively targeting support. Institutions that collect this data should ensure that the data is also disaggregated by sex, geographic characteristics (such as degree of urbanisation or region), socio-economic background (including household income, parental education, and employment status), and migration status. Where possible, additional relevant characteristics should also be considered, such as age subgroups, health-related limitations, family situation (e.g., single parenthood), or experience of leaving institutional or alternative care, to capture differences within the youth population better.

Another important consideration is that data on youth participation at the local level should be made readily available. For example, national-level institutions responsible for youth need to collect data on youth structures at the local level. All indicators of youth participation could be collected at this level to create more targeted support in municipalities.

## ⇒ **Data concerning the youth should be easily accessible**

In preparation for the Youth Participation Index, the lack of publicly available youth-sensitive data meant that data had to be collected through official requests to institutions. In many instances, additional desk research and researcher efforts are needed to collect the necessary data. Data on youth is often difficult to find on official websites (especially for the 15–29 age group) and is not presented in a youth-friendly manner. This means that young people and other stakeholders face significant difficulties in obtaining the statistics they need to make informed decisions. Thus, the next set of recommendations is proposed to make data concerning youth easily accessible:

- ⇒ **All public statistical offices should dedicate a section on their websites to statistics on young people.** This would make it easier for anyone interested in youth-sensitive data, from policymakers to youth organizations and young people themselves, to obtain it and contribute to transparency and accountability. This also sends a clear message that statistics on youth are important. One specific measure could be to develop a National Youth Data Dashboard that harmonizes and visualizes data from various sources (e.g., the National Statistical Office, municipalities, universities, institutions responsible for social support measures, and the penitentiary system), offering a real-time overview of key youth indicators.

An example of a section collecting statistics from a range of other domains for which data are available, segregated by age, can be found on the Eurostat website: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/children-youth>.

This process can also be linked to the monitoring of the targets set by the Agenda 2030 for youth. The data visualization platform, “Youth SDG Dashboard,” which tracks youth indicators across different targets, can be found at <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-sdg-dashboard/>.

One promising practice example is a database available at the Statistical Office of the public of Serbia (<https://data.stat.gov.rs/>). In the database, indicators related to the market are available for different youth age groups.

- ⇒ **National institutions should strongly encourage the release of datasets from publicly supported research studies involving youth in open formats.** This is

important as it allows researchers to explore available data and conduct secondary analyses. Young people themselves could be encouraged to conduct youth research using these datasets and to participate in the creation of data-informed youth policies.

One example of using data to understand the situation better and inform policy decisions is the publication of youth justice annual statistics for England and Wales: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2023-to-2024>. Data is presented in a clear, informative way across multiple formats, including infographics. Open data is made available.

Another example is the Youth Data Lab open-data portal (<https://youthdatalab.youthfulcities.com/en>), which aggregates youth perspectives from surveys, interviews, and quantitative data from more than 65 Canadian cities – making these insights accessible to policymakers and organizations.

Aotearoa Youth Figures (<https://youth.figure.nz>) developed by Figure.NZ, with support from Stats NZ, is a free, searchable platform that brings together youth data from over 175 organizations, including demographic, social, and well-being metrics, into a single accessible interface.

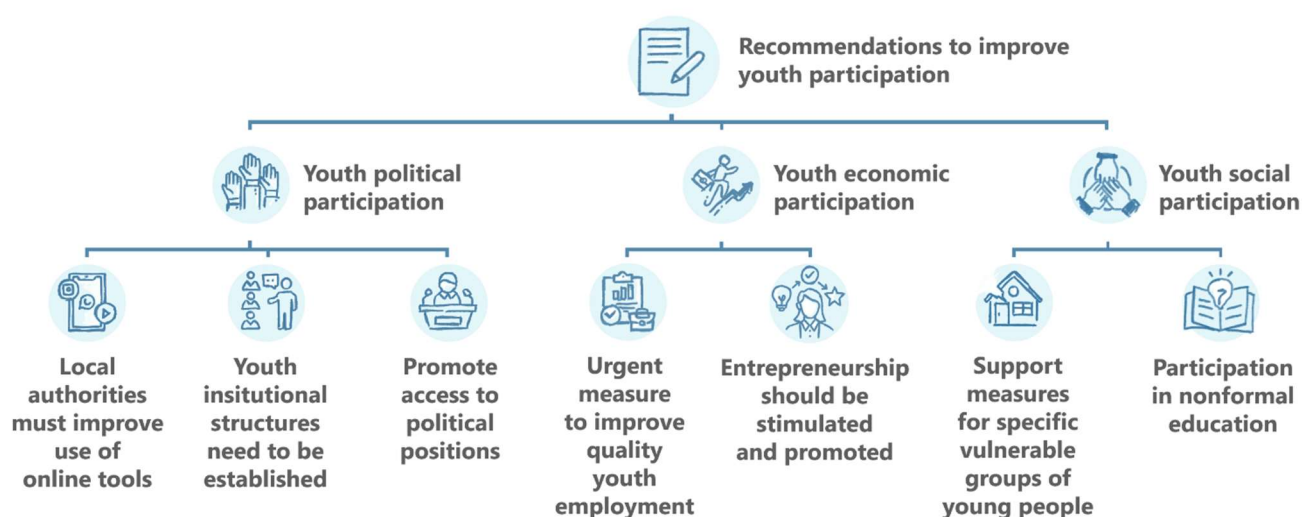
⇒ **The age of all Members of Parliament should be available on the parties' websites, and the number of MPs under 30** should be clearly communicated. The websites need to be regularly updated.

One positive example of presenting data on young MPs, disaggregated by gender and different parties, can be found at the following address:  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7483/>

Another example is presenting facts and figures about members of the European Parliament: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20190705STO56305/facts-and-figures-the-european-parliament-s-2024-2029-term>

## II Recommendations to address the low level of youth participation

Youth participation matters, and the issue of restricted space for youth participation remains a major problem not only in the Western Balkans and Türkiye but also in modern democracies in the EU.<sup>25</sup> Based on the YPI results, opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making in the Western Balkan and Türkiye need to be improved.



### ⇒ Recommendations concerning youth political participation

Governments, parliaments, political parties and youth organisations in the region should apply strategies to improve youth access to political positions.

Young people remain vastly underrepresented in national parliaments and in other political positions, such as mayors, deputy ministers, and ministers. The situation regarding their representation in political life has remained unchanged over the years, necessitating urgent action. According to the report on global youth participation in parliaments,<sup>26</sup> improving youth representation can (in democratic contexts) strengthen the legitimacy of parliament, achieve

<sup>25</sup> Kitanova, M. (2019). Youth political participation in the EU: evidence from a cross-national analysis, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2019.1636951>.

<sup>26</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2019). Youth participation in national parliaments, <https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/youth-empowerment>.

greater fairness in access to political decision-making, contribute to better policymaking, and potentially help young people uninterested in politics regain trust in political institutions.

Governments, parliaments, political parties, and youth organizations should adopt strategies to raise the number of young people in political positions, especially the number of MPs, which can include the following:

- ⇒ raise awareness about the importance of youth participation in politics,
- ⇒ provide accessible, youth-friendly information on the key issues at stake in elections and organize high-profile debates and activities that place young people and their priorities at the center of electoral campaigns,
- ⇒ design election campaigns to include debates that focus on young people and the issues they care about, and provide dedicated platforms that enable young people to engage directly with and challenge electoral candidates on these topics,
- ⇒ introduce youth quotas, i.e., reserving seats in parliaments to ensure youth presence
- ⇒ establish youth caucuses in national parliaments to promote youth issues in public policy.

It should be noted, however, that a significant challenge in youth political participation may be a persistent lack of trust by young people in political institutions, perceptions of corruption, limited transparency, inefficiency, and a perceived lack of responsiveness to youth-specific concerns. In political contexts characterized by limited or absent democratic practices, young people may be less likely to pursue formal political positions and instead turn to alternative forms of political engagement. Thus, creating a supportive and transparent political context is crucial for improving youth access to political positions.

Youth institutional structures (councils/parliaments/unions) that ensure young people's participation in decision-making must be established at the national level and in a greater number of municipalities across all research participants.

Despite significant efforts, Türkiye has yet to establish mechanisms for involving young people in national-level decision-making through formal youth structures. In Montenegro, this process was significantly delayed but has since been completed. The experience of other participants that have already introduced such mechanisms demonstrates that this objective is achievable, underscoring the need for youth organizations to continue their advocacy efforts in this direction.

At the same time, many municipalities lack active youth structures, as indicated by information available on their official websites and social media channels. Even in research participants where youth structures have been formally established, it remains necessary to ensure that they function effectively. Continued advocacy is therefore needed to create opportunities for the establishment of youth councils, parliaments, and unions that can meaningfully involve young people in decision-making processes. Moreover, it may be useful for youth organizations to:

- ⇒ advocate for changes in the legal framework, making it obligatory for municipalities to establish youth structures
- ⇒ advocate that local youth structures adopt clear strategies to carry out their work
- ⇒ enhance the cooperation of municipalities for the creation of these structures
- ⇒ prepare relevant resources and tools, including a review of best practices, to facilitate and unify the way these structures are organized and how they function in all municipalities
- ⇒ allocate a specific and substantial budget line for youth-related programs and initiatives
- ⇒ ensure the representation of youth from vulnerable groups in such structures
- ⇒ advocate for regular assessments and monitoring mechanisms to track the performance and impact of these youth structures.

### ⇒ **Recommendations concerning youth economic participation**

High youth unemployment and NEET rates suggest that additional measures are needed in all research participants. These measures should be designed and assessed with existing gender gaps in mind.

While there are signs of improvement in some research participants, the overall situation in the region remains challenging and less favorable than in many EU Member States.

- ⇒ Public institutions should initiate or continue implementing evidence-based measures to strengthen active labor market policies, including training and retraining programs. The Youth Guarantee, which is being implemented in many contexts in the region, may help reduce the high share of young people outside education, employment, or training if it is properly designed and implemented. It is essential to ensure that the program effectively reaches those young people most in need, and that its implementation and outcomes are systematically monitored and evaluated.

- ⇒ Beyond access to employment, policy efforts should also focus on access to quality jobs. This includes monitoring job stability, working conditions, income security, and opportunities for skills development. Relevant indicators should be collected and regularly assessed to capture not only employment levels but also job quality among young people.
- ⇒ Persistent gender disparities in labor market outcomes, particularly in activity and employment rates, require targeted policy responses. Addressing these gaps may involve measures such as targeted activation policies, flexible work arrangements, and initiatives to reduce gender segregation in education and occupations.

The recommendation to all the participants could be to:

- ⇒ use the benefits of cooperation between public institutions and youth organizations, which can contribute to reaching young people in vulnerable situations, and share the information on existing measures
- ⇒ include young people and youth organizations in the process of creating and evaluating these measures.

Public authorities should provide support for young people who choose self-employment, including administrative, legal, technical, mentoring, and financial assistance. In line with observed gender differences, particular attention should be paid to young women, who are consistently less likely than young men to opt for self-employment. Improving the collection and coverage of data on youth entrepreneurship is essential for informing evidence-based policy design and evaluation in this area.

Data on youth entrepreneurship suggest not only that a relatively small number of young people choose self-employment but also that those who do may lack adequate support. This was the case with some of the research participants in this year's report, but it is also worrying that data on the percentage of young people who received subsidies to start their own businesses among all applicants were available for only two research participants. As for all other issues, it is necessary to have quality data to plan adequate measures. In preparing policy responses to youth entrepreneurship, special attention must be given to young women, as they opt for self-employment at a much lower rate than young men.

## ⇒ Recommendations concerning youth social participation

Participation of young people in non-formal education and training should be encouraged; early school leaving in Albania, Kosovo, and Türkiye should be addressed.

The engagement of young people in non-formal education and training remains notably low, underscoring the need for greater attention in national youth policy frameworks. Civil society organizations are already actively involved in providing this form of education and are well-positioned to offer valuable insights that could inform the development of more effective policy measures.

Although the situation regarding early school leaving is not difficult in the majority of research participants, it is in Albania and Türkiye, where the issue requires targeted attention within youth policy frameworks. Even in research participants where dropout rates from secondary education and the proportion of early school leavers are relatively low, the issue should not be overlooked, as young people from vulnerable groups remain at a substantially higher risk of not completing primary and secondary education.

Access to tertiary education should be further improved, with particular emphasis on supporting young men to continue their education at this level. A clearer understanding of the gender gap is important to ensure balanced participation and to inform policies that address the barriers faced by young men, while continuing to support the strong engagement of young women in tertiary education.

Public institutions should commission research to develop new support measures for specific vulnerable groups.

The alarmingly high number of young people at risk of poverty indicates an urgent need to improve the situation of those in vulnerable positions. Across all research participants, a significant share of young people face an elevated risk of poverty. In addition, the high number of incarcerated young men raises important questions about whether alternative measures could have been pursued.

Public authorities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye should commission dedicated research to improve the situation of this vulnerable group of young people, identify the factors contributing to their

marginalization, and determine the policy measures that may be most effective. It is recommended that young researchers conduct such research selected through public calls.

Based on the findings of this research, necessary measures may include housing assistance, improved access to financial support through social protection systems, expanded counselling services, affordable healthcare, and targeted education and employment programs. In parallel, public awareness campaigns and policy dialogues could contribute to discussions around youth poverty and the situation of young people in prisons and draw greater attention to the challenges they face in achieving social integration.

## ANNEX 1

## Methodological notes

In 2016, the year the YPI was launched, a set of indicators for inclusion in the first Youth Participation Index was selected through an analytical process comprising extensive desk research and expert consultations. Over the years, they have been slightly revised, and there are currently 25 indicators in total across three domains of youth participation in the Index, with the indicators and sources listed in the Table below.

| Aspect of youth participation  | Index indicator                                                                                    | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Source                                                                   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>POLITICAL PARTICIPATION</b> | Young ministers in the Government M/F                                                              | The percentage of young ministers in the Government is calculated as the number of young ministers aged under 29 divided by the total number of ministers.                                                                                                                                 | The official website of the Government                                   |
|                                | Young deputy ministers in the Government M/F                                                       | The percentage of young deputy ministers in government is calculated as the number of deputy ministers under the age of 29 divided by the total number of deputy ministers.                                                                                                                | The official website of the Government                                   |
|                                | Young MPs in the parliament M/F                                                                    | The percentage of young MPs in Parliament is calculated as the number of MPs under 29 divided by the total number of MPs.                                                                                                                                                                  | The official website of the National Parliament                          |
|                                | Young mayors M/F                                                                                   | The percentage of young mayors is calculated as the number of mayors under 29 years old divided by the total number of mayors.                                                                                                                                                             | State Commission of Elections or the official websites of Municipalities |
|                                | Online tools for information and participation in the decision-making of government and parliament | Percentage of ministries and parliaments that have online tools for information and participation in decision making (website, Facebook page, or Twitter) / total number of ministries and parliaments.                                                                                    | Social network sites of Ministries/Parliament                            |
|                                | Online tools for information and participation in the decision-making of municipalities            | Percentage of municipalities that have online tools for information and participation in decision-making. According to the 2023 report, online tools include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, websites, and e-portals. Until then, only websites, Facebook page, and Twitter were calculated. | Social network sites of municipalities                                   |
|                                | Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions/offices) on the national level           | Yes/No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Ministry or other national institution in charge of Youth                |

|                               |                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                             |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                               | The existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions/offices) on the local level | Yes /No If yes – also the percentage of municipalities that have youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions/offices)                                                                                                                 | Municipalities                                                              |
| <b>ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION</b> | NEET rate                                                                                 | NEET rate is the percentage of the population aged 15–29 who is not employed and not involved in further education or training.                                                                                                        | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey)                           |
|                               | Youth unemployment rate                                                                   | The youth unemployment rate is the unemployment rate of people aged 15–29 as a percentage of the economically active population of the same age (the total number of people employed and unemployed).                                  | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey)                           |
|                               | Long-term youth unemployment rate                                                         | The long-term youth unemployment rate is the share of unemployed persons aged 15–29 for one year or more in the active population in the labour market of the same age.                                                                | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey)                           |
|                               | Youth Labour force participation rate                                                     | The participation rates the number of persons aged 15–29 in the labour force as a percentage of the total population of the same age.                                                                                                  | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey)                           |
|                               | Youth Employment rate                                                                     | The number of employed persons aged 15–29 as a percentage of the total population 15–29.                                                                                                                                               | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey)                           |
|                               | Young people who started their businesses with the financial support of the state         | The percentage of persons aged 15–29 who received subsidies among those who have applied.                                                                                                                                              | National institution in charge of giving subsidies.                         |
|                               | Self-employed young people                                                                | The share of self-employed persons aged 15–29 as a percentage of the total self-employed population 15+                                                                                                                                | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey)                           |
| <b>SOCIAL PARTICIPATION</b>   | Young people at risk of poverty (at-risk-of-poverty rate)                                 | The share of people aged 15–29 with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers. | National Statistical Office (Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC)) |
|                               | Young people in prisons                                                                   | The number of persons aged 15–29 in prisons as a percentage of the total number of people in prisons.                                                                                                                                  | National institution in charge                                              |
|                               | Young people are part of the social welfare system                                        | The number of persons aged 15–29 who receive financial support in the Social Protection System as a percentage of the total number of people receiving this support.                                                                   | Ministry in charge of Social Welfare                                        |
|                               | Dropout from secondary education                                                          | The percentage of enrolled students in secondary education as a share of the total number of graduated students from secondary education                                                                                               | National Statistical Office                                                 |

|  |                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
|  | Young people enrolled in tertiary education                                       | The percentage of young people enrolled in tertiary education as a share of the total number of young people                                                                                             | National Statistical Office                       |
|  | Young people graduated from tertiary education                                    | The percentage of young people who graduated from tertiary education as a share of the total number of enrolled young people                                                                             | National Statistical Office                       |
|  | Participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)            | The share of people aged 15 to 29 who had participated in non-formal education or training in the previous 4 weeks.                                                                                      | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey) |
|  | Share of early leavers from education and training, persons aged 18–24 years      | Early leavers are individuals aged 18–24 who have completed, at most, a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the labour force survey. | Eurostat                                          |
|  | Population aged 30–34 with tertiary educational attainment level                  | The share of the population aged 30–34 years who have completed university or university-like (tertiary-level) education.                                                                                | Eurostat                                          |
|  | Participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks) | The share of people aged 15 to 29 who participated in formal or non-formal education or training in the last 4 weeks.                                                                                    | National Statistical Office (Labour Force Survey) |

When interpreting data, the following methodological guidelines should be noted:

- 1) This report follows the methodology established in the 2021 edition of YPI, so the results are not comparable with reports on YPI 2016–2020.
- 2) Data on the use of online tools for information and for participation in decision-making by municipalities, and on the existence of youth structures (councils/ parliaments/ unions/ offices) at the local level in Türkiye, were collected from a sample of municipalities, unlike in other research participants, where they were gathered for all municipalities.
- 3) For the following indicators, data were not available for 2024. Thus, values registered in 2021 or 2020 were used in the index calculation: the share of early leavers from education and training, the population aged 30–34 with a tertiary education attainment level, and the participation rate in formal and informal education and training for Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro. The data for North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye refer to 2024; for other research participants, it refers to 2020 or 2021. Data from Kosovo was not available in the Eurostat database. Data for Albania in 2021 were reported on the Institute of Statistics' official website, while data for other research participants were registered in Eurostat.

- 4) Data on youth at risk of poverty were available for Albania and North Macedonia in 2023, and these values were used to calculate the Index.
- 5) Indicators on young people who started their own businesses with state financial support and on self-employed young people were not used in the calculation of the Index due to substantial missing data and differing data-collection methodologies.
- 6) Indicators on young people within a social protection system, dropout from secondary education, young people enrolled in tertiary education, young people who graduated from tertiary education, and participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks) were not used in the calculation of the Index due to a large amount of missing data and differing methodologies in collecting data.
- 7) In calculating the economic participation index for the period 2016–2020, the same target values were used as for 2021–2024. The target values are based on Eurostat data collected in 2021. It should be noted that, from 2021 onwards, the new European Union LFS methodology has been in force, meaning that data from previous years is not fully comparable with data gathered from 2021 onwards.
- 8) The Social Participation Index could not be calculated for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo this year due to missing indicator values. Because the Social Participation Index was missing, the Youth Participation Index was calculated for these two research participants using only the Political and Economic Participation Index.
- 9) In 2025, INSTAT in Albania recalibrated the 2023 and 2024 figures using the resident population as of January 1, 2023, and January 1, 2024, respectively, based on the results of the CENS 2023. Previously, the indicators had been calculated using the total population as of the same date. This calibration led to changes in some of the values published in 2023, particularly those related to youth-specific economic and social indicators. As a result, certain figures in the 2023 Youth Report differ from the calibrated data now available.

## ANNEX 2

## Data collected in the process of preparing this report 2016–2024 for each of the participating countries<sup>27</sup>

| POLITICAL PARTICIPATION                  |      |       |      |      |       |       |      |      |                          |
|------------------------------------------|------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|------|------|--------------------------|
| Research participant                     | 2016 | 2017  | 2018 | 2019 | 2020  | 2021  | 2022 | 2023 | 2024                     |
| Young ministers in the government        |      |       |      |      |       |       |      |      |                          |
| Albania                                  | 0%   | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                   |      |       |      |      |       |       |      | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Kosovo                                   |      |       |      |      |       |       |      | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Montenegro                               | 0%   | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| North Macedonia                          | 0%   | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Serbia                                   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Türkiye                                  | 0%   | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Young deputy ministers in the government |      |       |      |      |       |       |      |      |                          |
| Albania                                  | 0.0% | 0%    | 3.0% | 7.0% | 3.0%  | 3.0%  | 3.0% | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                   |      |       |      |      |       |       |      | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Kosovo                                   |      |       |      |      |       |       |      | 3.7% | 3.7%<br>(3.7%M, 0% F)    |
| Montenegro                               | 4.4% | 5.0%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| North Macedonia                          | 0%   | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Serbia                                   | 1.0% | 1.0%  | 5.0% | 5.0% | 1.0%  | 1.6%  | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Türkiye                                  | 0%   | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%    | 0%    | 0%   | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Young MPs in the parliament              |      |       |      |      |       |       |      |      |                          |
| Albania                                  | 2.1% | 4.91% | 4.9% | 4.0% | 4.0%  | 2.1%  | 1.5% | 1.4% | 0.7%<br>(0.7% F, 0% M)   |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                   |      |       |      |      |       |       |      | 0%   | 0%                       |
| Kosovo                                   |      |       |      |      |       |       |      | 4.0% | 4.0% (3.2%F, 0.8%M)      |
| Montenegro                               | 1.2% | 6.0%  | 4%   | 2.5% | 4.9%  | 4.9%  | 3.7% | 4.9% | 4%<br>(2%F, 1%M)         |
| North Macedonia                          | 8.3% | 1.7%  | 1.2% | 3.3% | 1.6%  | 1.7%  | 1.7% | 1.7% | 2.6%<br>(66.7%F, 33.3%M) |
| Serbia                                   | 1.2% | 0.4%  | 0.4% | 0.4% | 7.6%  | 5.2%  | 2%   | 3.2% | 2.8%                     |
| Türkiye                                  | 0.9% | 0.9%  | 1.3% | 1.3% | 0.85% | 0.85% | 0.5% | 0.7% | 0.5%<br>(0.5% F, 0% M)   |

<sup>27</sup> Data collection in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo started in 2023, which is why the data was not reported for previous years. In the table, M stands for males, F for females.

| Young mayors                                                                                                            |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Albania                                                                                                                 | 6.0%  | 6.0%  | 6.0%  | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%                 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 0%    | 1%<br>(1% M, 0% F) |
| Kosovo                                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 0%    | 0%                 |
| Montenegro                                                                                                              | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%                 |
| North Macedonia                                                                                                         | 1.3%  | 1.3%  | 0.8%  | 0%    | 0%    | 1.3%  | 1%    | 1.2%  | 1.2%<br>(100%M)    |
| Serbia                                                                                                                  | 2.5%  | 2.43% | 0.6%  | 0.6%  | 1.8%  | 0.62% | 1.2%  | 0.6%  | 0%                 |
| Türkiye                                                                                                                 | 0.29% | 0.29% | /     | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%                 |
| Online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process of government and parliament institutions |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                    |
| Albania                                                                                                                 | 95.0% | 91%   | 93.3% | 79.3% | 98.0% | 94.0% | 90.0% | 94.0% | 94.0%              |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 67.3% | 71.0%              |
| Kosovo                                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 73.0% | 73.0%              |
| Montenegro                                                                                                              | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%               |
| North Macedonia                                                                                                         | 72.5% | 94.1% | 100%  | 100%  | 81.2% | 87.0% | 100%  | 100%  | 100%               |
| Serbia                                                                                                                  | 68.0% | 78.5% | 77.5% | 91.3% | 92.1% | 86.9% | 74.1% | 74.1% | 74.1%              |
| Türkiye                                                                                                                 | 61.8% | 61.8% | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 80.0% | 80.0%              |
| Online tools for information and participation in the decision-making process within municipalities                     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                    |
| Albania                                                                                                                 | 52.0% | 66.0% | 67.2% | 66.0% | 74.0% | 72.1% | 76.0% | 75.0% | 97.0%              |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 62.0% | 65.0%              |
| Kosovo                                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 53.0% | 61.0%              |
| Montenegro                                                                                                              | 96.0% | 99.0% | 99.0% | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%               |
| North Macedonia                                                                                                         | 90.0% | 90.0% | 96.8% | 69.5% | 71.6% | 66.2% | 77.0% | 78.0% | 61.6%              |
| Serbia                                                                                                                  | 61.0% | 75.0% | 84.8% | 83.2% | 85.2% | 81.2% | 73.5% | 69.6% | 69.6%              |
| Türkiye                                                                                                                 | 90.0% | 90.0% |       |       | 99.6% | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%               |
| Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a national level                                          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                    |
| Albania                                                                                                                 | 0%    | 0%    | 100%  | 100%  | 0%    | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%               |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 100%  | 100%               |
| Kosovo                                                                                                                  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 100%  | 100%               |
| Montenegro                                                                                                              | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 0%    | 0%    | 100%               |
| North Macedonia                                                                                                         | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%               |
| Serbia                                                                                                                  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%  | 100%               |
| Türkiye                                                                                                                 | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%                 |
| Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a local level                                             |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                    |
| Albania                                                                                                                 | 18.0% | 34.6% | 49.0% | 57.4% | 46.0% | 43.0% | 74.0% | 98.0% | 100%               |

|                        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Bosnia and Herzegovina |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 59.7% | 49.0% |
| Kosovo                 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | 65.0% | 65.0% |
| Montenegro             | 22.0% | 23.0% | 41.0% | 45.0% | 41.0% | 37.5% | 56.0% | 60.0% | 60.0% |
| North Macedonia        | 78.5% | 78.5% | 77.0% | 53.0% | 15.0% | 30.0% | 31.0% | 31.2% | 32.1% |
| Serbia                 | 77.5% | 85.9% | 69.7% | 67.9% | 67.3% | 70.4% | 70.3% | 64.1% | 72.2% |
| Türkiye                |       |       |       |       | 21.0% | 17.3% | 14.8% | 21.0% | 36.0% |

## ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

| Research participant    | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019   | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023               | 2024                      |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| NEET rate               |       |       |       |        |       |       |       |                    |                           |
| Albania                 | 30.0% | 29.7% | 28.6% | 26.6%  | 27.9% | 26.1% | 25.2% | 24.6%/25.0%*<br>28 | 22.2%<br>(24.7%F, 19.7%M) |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina  |       |       |       |        |       |       |       | 22.2%              | 20.1%<br>(23.8%F, 16.6%M) |
| Kosovo                  |       |       |       |        |       |       |       | 37.6%              | 35.4%<br>(39.4%F, 31.7%M) |
| Montenegro              | 22.3% | 21.4% | 21.0% | 21.3%  | 26.6% | 26.5% | 23.2% | 20.3%              | 17.0%<br>(17%F, 17%M)     |
| North Macedonia         | 31.3% | 31.1% | 29.8% | 24.5%  | 26.2% | 24.3% | 22.8% | 24.1%              | 22.6%<br>(24%F, 21.4%M)   |
| Serbia                  | 22.3% | 21.7% | 20.1% | 19%    | 20%   | 18.8% | 15.9% | 15.2%              | 14.9%<br>(16.0%F, 13.8%M) |
| Türkiye                 | 27.8% | 27.5% | 27.6% | 29.5%  | 32%   | 28.4% | 27.2% | 25.8%              | 25.9%<br>(36.5%F, 15.7%M) |
| Youth unemployment rate |       |       |       |        |       |       |       |                    |                           |
| Albania                 | 28.9% | 25.9% | 23.1% | 21.5%  | 20.9% | 20.9% | 20.7% | 22.2%/21.7%*       | 18.9%<br>(19.0%F, 18.8%M) |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina  |       |       |       |        |       |       |       | 23.1%              | 21.1%<br>(25.6%F, 18.4%M) |
| Kosovo                  |       |       |       |        |       |       |       | 17.2%              | 16.6%<br>(22.0%F, 14.8%M) |
| Montenegro              | 28.8% | 26.5% | 26.0% | 22.3%  | 30.7% | 32.5% | 25.4% | 21.2%              | 20.0%<br>(21.0%F, 19.0%M) |
| North Macedonia         | 40.6% | 39.2% | 37.0% | 30.5%  | 29.6% | 28.3% | 25.2% | 24.9%              | 23.4%<br>(22.7%F, 23.9%M) |
| Serbia                  | 29.8% | 26.7% | 24.5% | 21.50% | 20.5% | 20%   | 17.1% | 18.5%              | 16.8%<br>(16.9%F, 16.8%M) |
| Türkiye                 | 17.2% | 17.7% | 17.8% | 22%    | 21.7% | 20%   | 17.4% | 15.5%              | 14.5%<br>(20.1%F, 11.4%M) |

<sup>28</sup> In 2025, INSTAT calibrated the 2023 and 2024 figures using the resident population as of January 1, 2023, and as of January 1, 2024 according to the results of the CENS 2023. Previously, the indicators had been calculated using the total population as of the same date. Data marked with \* are calibrated data.

| Long-term youth unemployment rate    |       |       |       |        |       |              |        |             |                            |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------------|--------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Albania                              | 16.7% | 13.8% | 13.1% | 11.5%  | 11,4% | 11.6%        | 12.5%  | 15.0%/14.3% | 12.8%<br>(13.2%F, 12.4%M)  |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina               |       |       |       |        |       |              |        | 14.4%       | 13.3%<br>(16.4%F, 11.4%M)  |
| Kosovo                               |       |       |       |        |       |              |        | 11.3%       | 11.5%<br>(12.0%F, 11.2%M)  |
| Montenegro                           | 18.7% | 18.5% | 15.7% | 13.8%  | 17,4% | 18.3%        | 14.1%  | 12.0%       | 9.0%<br>(10.0%F, 8.0%M)    |
| North Macedonia                      | 29.5% | 28.9% | 26.3% | 21.1%  | 21.1% | 20%          | 37.9%  | 16.9%       | 15.5%<br>(15.5%F, 15.6%M)  |
| Serbia                               | 15%   | 11.4% | 10.1% | 8.7%   | 7.6%  | 6.3%         | 5.9%   | 5.7%        | 5.4%<br>(5.5%F, 5.4%M)     |
| Türkiye                              | 3.2%  | 3.4%  | 3.4%  | 4.6%   | 4.9%  | 27.2%*<br>29 | 19.0%* | 16.7%*      | 14.7%*<br>(18.9%F, 10.4%M) |
| Youth labor force participation rate |       |       |       |        |       |              |        |             |                            |
| Albania                              | 45.7% | 45.8% | 50.1% | 52.5%  | 52,1% | 52.5%        | 55.5%  | 56.9%/53.5% | 54.8%<br>(48.9%M, 60.6%F)  |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina               |       |       |       |        |       |              |        | 43.0%       | 43.8%<br>(33.9%F, 53.1%M)  |
| Kosovo                               |       |       |       |        |       |              |        | 31.4%       | 33.7%<br>(42.4%F, 24.5%M)  |
| Montenegro                           | 49.5% | 48.7% | 48.5% | 51.1%  | 45.1% | 44,4%        | 54.9%  | 59.4%       | 59.0%<br>(52.0%F, 64.0%M)  |
| North Macedonia                      | 48.1% | 49.7% | 49.1% | 49.4%  | 47.6% | 54.6%        | 46.0%  | 44.8%       | 46.3%<br>(38.8%F, 53.5%M)  |
| Serbia                               | 47%   | 47.2% | 47.7% | 46.5%  | 44.8% | 50.0%        | 50.0%  | 49.3%       | 49.7%<br>(56.0%F, 43.1%M)  |
| Türkiye                              | 51.3% | 52.3  | 52.7% | 53.2%  | 48.5% | 51.3%        | 53.4%  | 55.0%       | 56.1%<br>(41.3%F, 70.2%M)  |
| Youth employment rate                |       |       |       |        |       |              |        |             |                            |
| Albania                              | 32.4% | 33.8% | 38.5% | 41.2%  | 41,2% | 41.5%        | 44.0%  | 44.2%/41.9% | 44.4%<br>(39.6%F, 49.2%M)  |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina               |       |       |       |        |       |              |        | 33.1%       | 34.6%<br>(25.3%F, 43.4%M)  |
| Kosovo                               |       |       |       |        |       |              |        | 26.0%       | 28.1%<br>(19.6%F, 36.1%M)  |
| Montenegro                           | 35.2% | 35.8% | 35.9% | 39.7%  | 31.3% | 30%          | 41.0%  | 46.8%       | 47.0%<br>(41.0%M, 52.0%F)  |
| North Macedonia                      | 28.6% | 30.2% | 30.9% | 34.4%  | 33.5% | 33.1%        | 34.4%  | 33.6%       | 35.5%<br>(30.0%F, 40.7%M)  |
| Serbia                               | 33.2% | 34.9% | 36.4% | 36.90% | 36%   | 40.0%        | 41.5%  | 40.2%       | 41.3%<br>(35.8%F, 46.6%M)  |
| Türkiye                              | 42.5% | 43%   | 43.3% | 41.50% | 37.9% | 41.1%        | 44.1%  | 46.4%       | 47.9%<br>(33.8%F, 62.2%M)  |

<sup>29</sup> This data is received by official institution however, it differs from values registered by Eurostat in previous years.

| Young people who started their own business with the financial support of the state |        |       |       |        |       |             |       |                |                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------------|-------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Albania                                                                             | 54.50% | 0.0%  | 0.0%  | 26.0%  | 3.0%  | 2.6%        | 4.5%  |                |                           |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                              |        |       |       |        |       |             |       |                |                           |
| Kosovo                                                                              |        |       |       |        |       |             |       |                |                           |
| Montenegro                                                                          |        |       |       |        |       |             |       |                |                           |
| North Macedonia                                                                     | 47.7%  | 0.0%  | 13.7% | 22.3%  | 23%   | 18.9%       | 24.5% | 24.4%          | 30.6%                     |
| Serbia                                                                              | 23.3%  | 19.5% | 20.5% | 24.35% | 26.0% | 28.8%       | 28.0% | 32.1%          | 29.7%<br>(25.1%F, 34.5%M) |
| Türkiye                                                                             | 22.62% |       |       |        |       |             |       |                |                           |
| Self-employed young people                                                          |        |       |       |        |       |             |       |                |                           |
| Albania                                                                             | 29.00% | 18.3% | 0.9%  | 7.8%   | 18.5% | 17.9%       | 16.6% | 15.1/<br>13.9% | 13.8%<br>(8.5%F, 18.0%M)  |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                              |        |       |       |        |       |             |       | 7.0%           | 7.7%<br>(7.8%F, 7.7%M)    |
| Kosovo                                                                              |        |       |       |        |       |             |       | 4.8%           | 11.8%<br>(17.9%F, 11.1%M) |
| Montenegro                                                                          | 9.0%   | 8.4%  | 5.8%  | 4.0%   | 8.6%  | 6.8%*<br>30 | 8.1%* | 10.1%*         | 10.0%*<br>(11%F, 9%M)     |
| North Macedonia                                                                     | 6.0%   | 7.3%  |       | 1.6%   | 0.4%  | 2.7%        | 6.3%  | 6.4%           | 7.4%<br>(6.7%F, 7.6%M)    |
| Serbia                                                                              | 0.6%   | 2.76% | 6.8%  | 6.87%  | 6.0%  | 6.6%        | 6.6%  | 6.2%           | 6.2%<br>(6.7%F, 6.1%M)    |
| Türkiye                                                                             |        |       |       | 2.8%   | 6.65% | 3.1%        | 7.8%  | 8.4%           | 8.5%<br>(5.5%F, 10.0%M)   |

| SOCIAL PARTICIPATION                          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                           |                           |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Research participant                          | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023                      | 2024                      |
| Young people at risk of poverty <sup>31</sup> |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                           |                           |
| Albania                                       | 27.9% | 25.7% | 26.0% | 26.2% | 24.4% | 24.2% | 21.5% | 21.9%<br>(23.2%F, 20.7%M) |                           |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina                          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                           |                           |
| Kosovo                                        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |                           |                           |
| Montenegro                                    | 27.9% | 26.2% | 25.6% | 28.0% | 24.8% | 23.1% | 23.0% | 23.0%                     | 20.6%<br>(21.7%F, 19.3%M) |

<sup>30</sup> This data is collected using different methodology, comparing self-employed young people with total number of employed young people.

<sup>31</sup> Data was collected using Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/171739f6-a4d1-41eb-bd76-8bff8ddb9a93?lang=en> for the period 2016–2021, and from national statistical offices for 2022 and 2023.

|                                                |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        |                           |                               |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------------|----------------------------|--------|--------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| North Macedonia                                | 24.8%  | 25.5%  | 25.9% | 24.9%       | 25.1%                      |        |        | 24.2%<br>(24.4%F, 24.4%M) |                               |
| Serbia                                         | 30.0%  | 27.5%  | 26.6% | 24.8%       | 23.9%                      | 25.2%  | 19.8%  | 19.2%                     | 17.3%<br>(18.1%F, 16.6%M)     |
| Türkiye                                        | 23.8%  | 22.8%  | 22.7% | 23.0%       | 24.0%                      | 24.0%  | 23.3%  | 20.9%                     | 21.7%<br>(23.8%F, 19.6%M)     |
| Young people in prisons                        |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        |                           |                               |
| Albania                                        | 36.54% | 46.0%  | 47.7% | 34.8%       | 30.0%                      | 36.9%  | 36.9%  | 39.3%                     | 36.8%<br>(0.4%F, 36.4%M)      |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina                           |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        |                           |                               |
| Kosovo                                         |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        | 37.4%                     | 39.0%                         |
| Montenegro                                     | 31.1%  | 33.2%  | 52.2% |             | 23.2%                      | 24.7%  | 29.0%  | 28.0%                     | 29.2%<br>(99-1 ratio M and F) |
| North Macedonia                                | 0.20%  |        | 31.4% | 25.3%       | 27.8%                      | 27.2%  | 27.4%  | 26.4%                     | 28.6%                         |
| Serbia                                         | 32.70% | 27.7   | 26.5% | 24.9%       | 25.9%                      | 23.3%  | 35.8%  | 34.8%                     | 20.6%                         |
| Türkiye                                        | 63.00% |        |       |             | 65.14%                     | 48.0%  | 65.0%  | 50.4%                     |                               |
| Young people part of the social welfare system |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        |                           |                               |
| Albania                                        |        |        |       |             |                            | 24.3%  |        | 19.1%                     | 17.1%                         |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                         |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        |                           |                               |
| Kosovo                                         |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        | 19.1%                     | 18.4%<br>(52.1%F, 40.8%M)     |
| Montenegro                                     |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        | 11.0%                     | 11.0%                         |
| North Macedonia                                |        |        |       |             | 29.7%                      | 28.63% | 29.2%  | 27.5%                     | 29.7%<br>(29.6%F, 29.7%M)     |
| Serbia                                         | 18.97% | 18.16% | 18.1% |             | 24.0%                      | 22.3%  | 21%    | 15.3%                     | 13.7%<br>(15.0%F, 11.0%M)     |
| Türkiye                                        |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        |                           |                               |
| Dropout from secondary education               |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        |                           |                               |
| Albania                                        | 3.70%  | 3.35%  | 3.2%  | 2.6%        | 1.8%                       | 1.5%   |        |                           |                               |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                         |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        | 1.0%                      | 1.0%<br>(1%M, 0%F)            |
| Kosovo                                         |        |        |       |             |                            |        |        | 1.8%                      | 1.7%<br>(2.7%M, 0.7%F)        |
| Montenegro                                     | 5.50%  | 5.4%   | 4.6%  | 5.0%        | 2.3%                       |        | 2.6%   | 2.0%                      | 2.7%<br>(38.0%F, 25.1%M)      |
| North Macedonia                                |        | 2.30%  | 1.40% | 0.5%        | 0.6%                       |        | 0.85%  | 0.5%                      | 0.3%<br>(0.3%F, 0.4%M)        |
| Serbia                                         | 1.10%  | 1.30%  | 1.40% | 1.10%       | 0.80%                      | 0.81%  | 1.2%   |                           |                               |
| Türkiye                                        |        |        |       | 28.70%<br>* | 26.70%<br>%* <sup>32</sup> |        | 22.1%* | 19.7%*                    | 18.8%*<br>(17.0%F, 20.6%M)    |

<sup>32</sup> This data refers to early school leavers.

| Young people enrolled in tertiary education                                          |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       |              |                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------------|-------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Albania                                                                              | 22.4%  | 21.4%  | 22.5%  | 21.6%  | 20,9%  | 21.5% <sup>33</sup> | 22.0% | 21.3%/30.7%* | 31.4%<br>(37.3%F, 25.4%M) |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                               |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       | 38.7%        | 37.6%<br>(46.6%F, 29.0%M) |
| Kosovo                                                                               |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       | /            | 12.78%<br>(16.3%F, 9.4%M) |
| Montenegro                                                                           | 33.90% | 34.5%  | 33%    | 54.2%  | 32,3%  | 43.0%               | 31.9% | 31.7%        | 31.8%<br>(38.8%F, 25.1%M) |
| North Macedonia                                                                      |        | 28.90% | 14.50% | 38.8%  | 13.4%  | 13.4%               | 17.5% | 17.1%        | 17.7%<br>(21.7%F, 14.0%M) |
| Serbia                                                                               | 50.70% | 54.20% | 54.70% | 54.70% | 54.70% | 56.2%               | 57.4% | 61.0%        | 61.3%<br>(74.1%F, 49.1%M) |
| Türkiye                                                                              | 40.53% | 42.43% | 45.60% | 44.10% | 43.40% | 44.4%               | 44.7% | 46.0%        |                           |
| Young people graduated from tertiary education                                       |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       |              |                           |
| Albania                                                                              | 21.48% | 25.19% | 26%    | 26.7%  | 25,0%  | 26%                 | 24.9% | 23.6%        | 23.3%<br>(26.0%, 19.2%M)  |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                               |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       | 17.1%        | 17.0%<br>(18.1%F, 15.4%M) |
| Kosovo                                                                               |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       | 57.0%        | 57.6%<br>(64.2%F, 46.9%M) |
| Montenegro                                                                           | 12.86% | 14.51% | 14.59% |        | 45.43% | 16.5%               | 13.8% | 18.9%        | 13.8%<br>(14.8%F, 12.5%M) |
| North Macedonia                                                                      |        | 11.50% | 16.50% | 15.2%  | 11.9%  | 13.4%               | 15.2% | 12.2%        | 11.0%<br>(11.4%F, 10.4%M) |
| Serbia                                                                               | 20.00% | 19.70% | 18.10% | 18.13% | 17.60% | 17.10%              | 16.6% | 14.9%)       | 15.3%<br>(15.8%F, 14.5%M) |
| Türkiye                                                                              |        |        | 9.57%  |        | 10.56% | 12%                 | 10.9% | 13.0%        | 13.0%<br>(14.6%F, 11.2%M) |
| Participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks) <sup>34</sup> |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       |              |                           |
| Albania                                                                              |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       | 0.3%         | 0.2%<br>(0.2%F, 0.3%M)    |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                                                               |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       | 2.3%         | 1.6%<br>(1.6%F, 1.5%M)    |
| Kosovo                                                                               |        |        |        |        |        |                     |       |              |                           |
| Montenegro                                                                           |        |        | 2.8%   | 1.3%   |        |                     |       |              | 6,1%<br>(5.9%F, 6.4%M)    |
| North Macedonia                                                                      | 2.3%   | 1.9%   | 2.0%   | 2.8%   | 1.9%   |                     |       |              | 1.6%<br>(2.2%F, 0.9%M)    |
| Serbia                                                                               | 3.0%   | 2.8%   | 2.3%   | 2.4%   | 1.3%   | 4.5%                | 4.1%  | 5.2%         | 3.6%<br>(3.9%F, 3.4%M)    |
| Türkiye                                                                              | 5.3%   | 5.5%   | 6.9%   | 6.5%   | 4.4%   | 5.4%                | 6.9%  | 7.2%         | 8.1%<br>(9.1%F, 7.1%M)    |

<sup>33</sup> This data refers to people aged 18–29 enrolled in tertiary education compared to total number of young people aged 18–29.

<sup>34</sup> Data was collected using Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/c9b945f5-89e8-4953-a5ea-ac92417edd46?lang=en>.

## ANNEX 3

## Overview of targets

| Indicators of political participation                                                          | Target percentage                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Young government ministers                                                                     | 5% (Source: researchers' assessment)                                                                              |
| Young MPs                                                                                      | 15% (Source: Target set by Inter-Parliamentary Union Forum of Young Parliamentarians)                             |
| Young mayors                                                                                   | 6% (Source: researchers' assessment – based on highest percentage registered in the process of index calculation) |
| Young government deputy ministers                                                              | 10% (Source: researchers' assessment)                                                                             |
| Online tools for information and participation in decision-making of government and parliament | 100% (Source: researchers' assessment)                                                                            |
| Online tools for information and participation in decision-making of municipalities            | 100% (Source: researchers' assessment)                                                                            |
| Existence of youth structures at local levels                                                  | 100% (Source: researchers' assessment)                                                                            |
| Existence of youth structure at the national level                                             | 100% (Source: researchers' assessment)                                                                            |
| Indicators of economic participation                                                           | Target percentage                                                                                                 |
| NEET rate                                                                                      | 5.5% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                             |
| Youth unemployment rate                                                                        | 5.2% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                             |
| Long-term youth unemployment rate                                                              | 0.5% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                             |
| Youth Labour force participation rate                                                          | 83.0% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                            |
| Youth employment rate                                                                          | 77.0% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                            |
| Young people who started their businesses with the financial support of the state              | 60% (Researchers' assessment)                                                                                     |
| Self-employed young people                                                                     | 14.9% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                            |
| Indicators of social participation                                                             | Target percentage                                                                                                 |
| At-risk-of-poverty rate                                                                        | 8.60% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                            |
| Percentage of youth in prison                                                                  | 21.0% (Researchers' assessment)                                                                                   |
| Share of early leavers from education and training, persons aged 18–24 years                   | 2.40% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                            |
| Population aged 30–34 with tertiary educational attainment level                               | 62.5% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                            |
| Participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks)              | 66.0% (Eurostat, 2021)                                                                                            |

# YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX

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