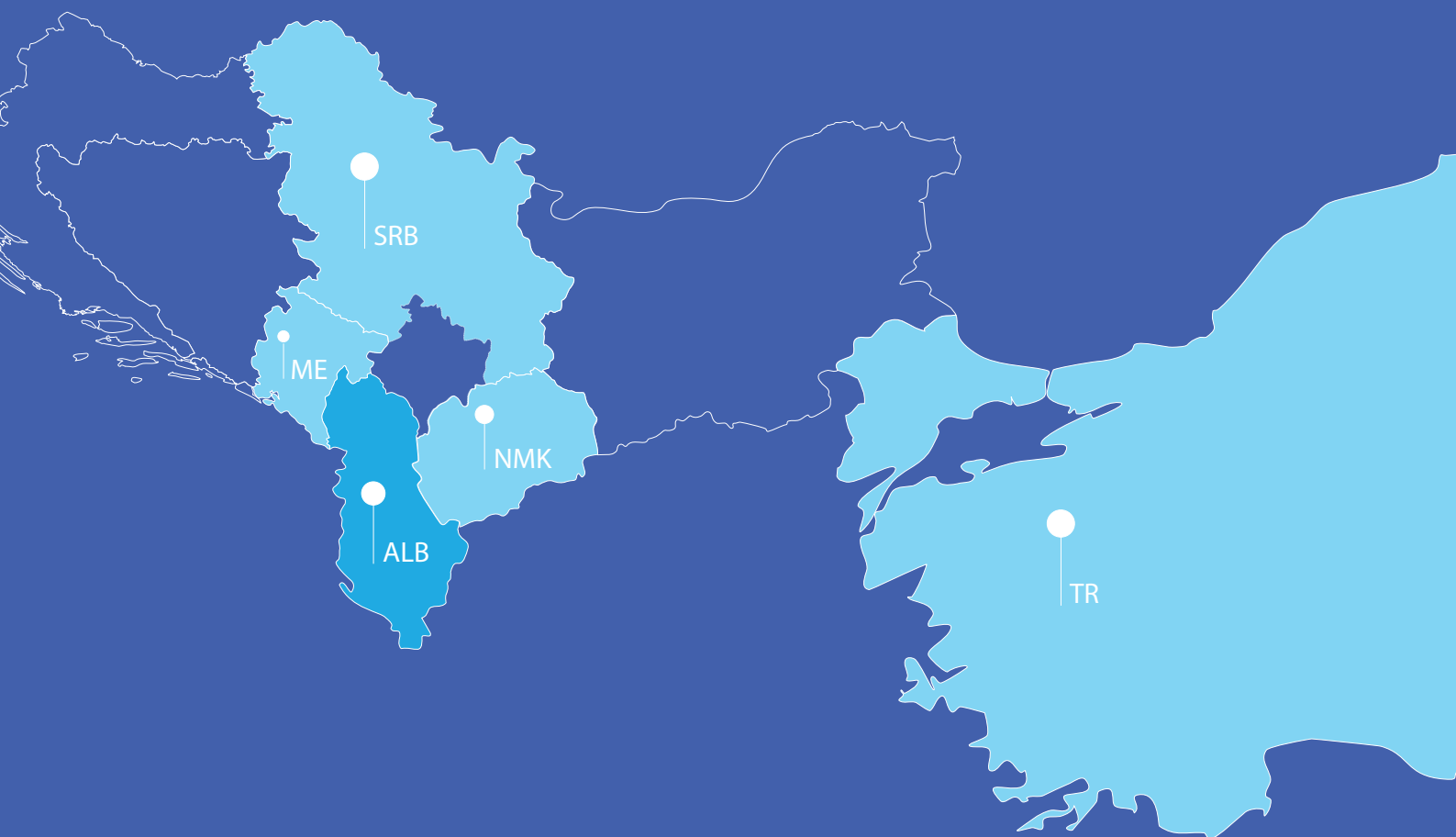


YOUTH (UN)EMPLOYMENT IN ALBANIA:

An analysis of NEET and vulnerable youth



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PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Author:

Ariola Memia, Researcher

Editor:

Ramadan Sopoti

Design and Layout:

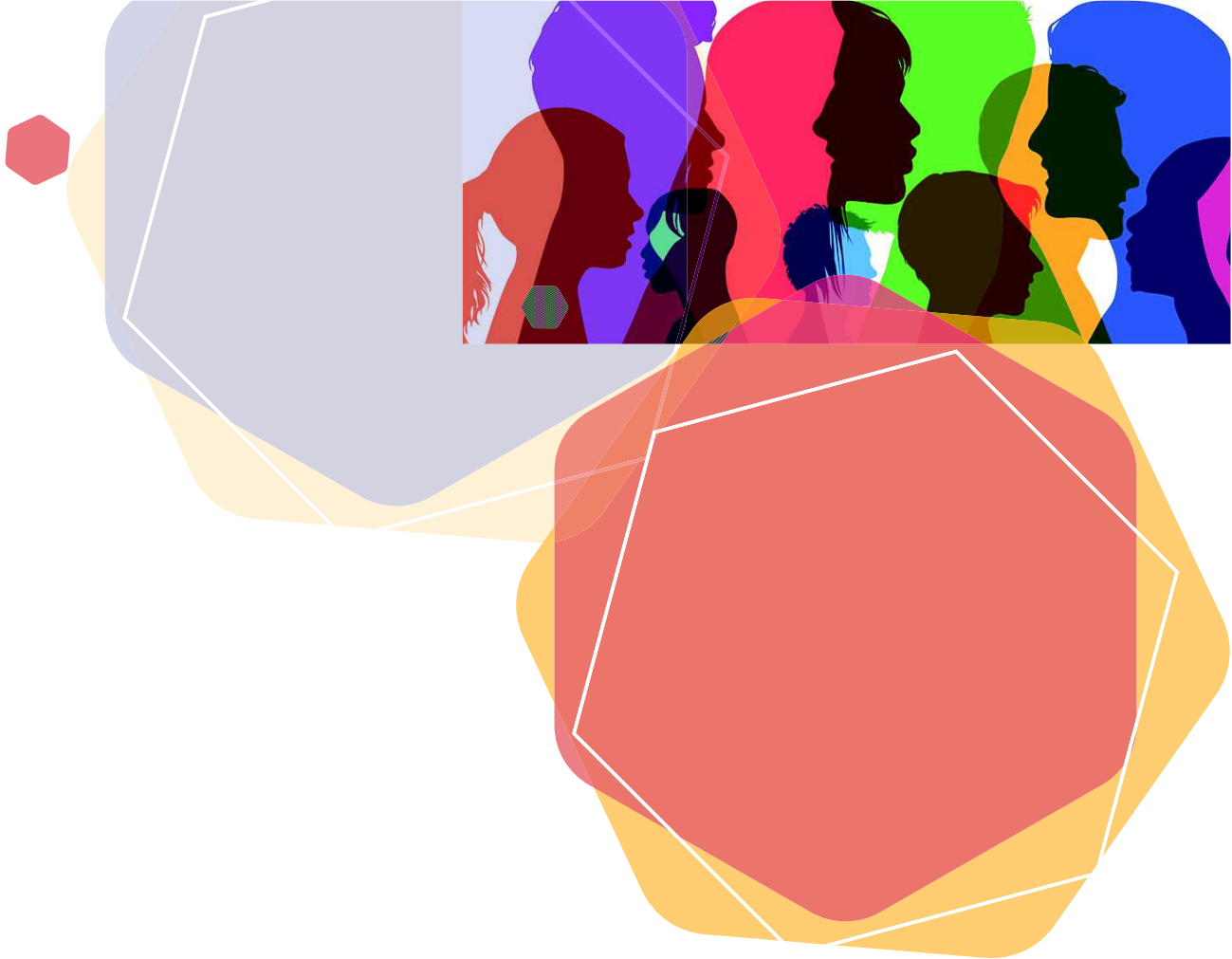
Maris Selamaj

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NEET in ALBANIA



In 2019, youth in Albania represented 23.5% of the country's population and the official youth unemployment rate was 21.5%.

Over the year 2019, youth aged 15-29 years old neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) account for 28.9 % of the same age group population. In the group of youth aged 15-29 years old neither in employment nor in education or training, 36.5 % of them are classified as unemployed. The other part is outside the labor force because they are discouraged workers (12.7 %), or fulfilling domestic and family responsibilities (18.1 %), or inactive for other reasons (32.7 %) (Instat, 2020).

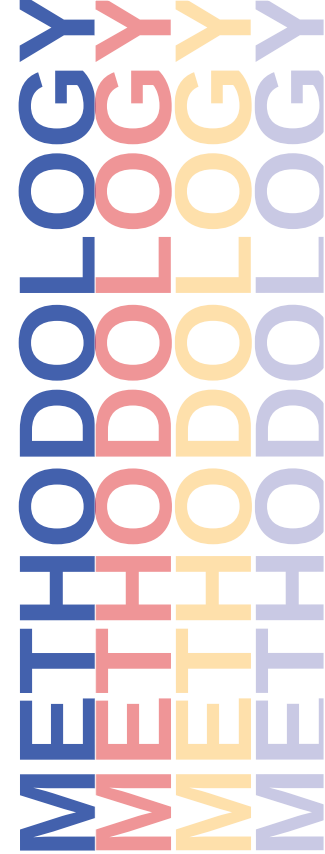
The lack of activity among young people neither in employment nor education or training (NEET) is very rarely seen as a single-factor matter. In the majority of cases it is driven by a variety of personal and socio-economic factors which are specific in different countries. In the case of Albania, government and educational institutions have more than 2 decades struggling to provide inclusion opportunities for youth all over the country.

In the same time, one of the largest policy challenges of the recent years for many European Union (EU) Member States (and non-EU OECD countries) has been the unemployment among young people, emphasizing the increasing number of youth who are not in employment, education or training (OECD/European Union, 2019).

Although the youth inactivity challenge is present and continuously requiring particular interventions, youth unemployment has returned to pre-crisis levels (i.e. 2007) in most EU Member States. Moreover, the proportion of NEET unemployment rate (15-29 years old) has declined in the EU since 2011, falling from 13.4% in 2017, to 12.9% in 2018 and 12.5% in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020). However, it must be emphasized that these trends are not similar when considering different regions and many of them continue to face high level of youth unemployment, and particularly NEET unemployment.

Also, as mentioned in “The Missing Entrepreneurs 2019”, the long-term impacts of youth unemployment include serious negative effects on earnings and employment opportunities, even after 20 years. For instance, estimates suggest that NEETs aged 15 to 29 years old cost the EU economy EUR 142 billion per year (OECD/European Union, 2019). By the other hand, according to (Carcillo, S et al., 2015) poverty rates among NEETs are in the majority of times higher than for youth category in general. This reflects a lack of earned income, but likely also the differences in living conditions. Income support is essential to help young people avoid extreme poverty during periods of hardship. However, the most disadvantaged youth need complementary specialized programs that enhance the skills necessary for educational attainment, health, and labor market integration.

- i. is not included as a specific target in the main strategic documents which are currently under implementation
- ii. is predicted to be specifically targeted in the upcoming strategic documents after the approval of the law “For Youth”
- iii. need to be unified in all upcoming national strategic documents considering that before it was identified in several cases with the youth of age group 15-24
- iv. is almost the same in all cities (municipalities)
- v. is unevenly divided between different age groups, among which the 15-24 is the bigger one



For the preparation of this NEET baseline, PA employed a set of methodological tools including desk research and acquiring primary data from institutions in charge for issues on youth and employment. The desk research is focused on legal and regulatory framework affecting youth and employment, and literature review of existing studies and publications aiming to gather relevant information with regard to youth education, training and employment.

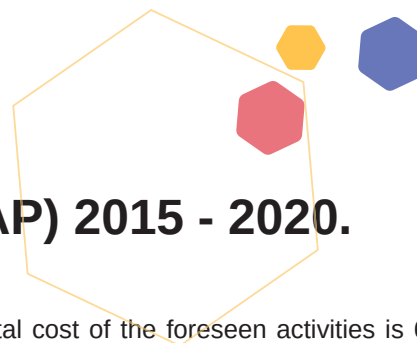
The qualitative approach of this baseline study has also been based on the delivering of 6 interviews with institutions in charge of the issue of youth and employment and with Civic Society Organizations. Following the line of communication with public institutions, interviews have been conducted with Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, National Agency for Employment and Skills, National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) and with Ministry of Finance and Economy. Meanwhile, part of the interviews has also been one social business and one youth CSO. The interviews have contributed to measure the level and quality of cooperation between different actors and to highlight the needs for a better inclusion of NEET category in national interventions.

The baseline study also offers a brief overview of the donor support programmes, projects implemented by CSOs with a focus on youth employment and good examples of collaboration between private sector and national and local government.

Youth education, training and unemployment has been a concern to policymakers since the 1980s. Meanwhile, in the next decade, a greater focus has been given on the NEET category despite the different developments and interpretations of the concept among the countries/regions.

It is important to emphasize that the current national strategies and programs in Albania are issued in the 5 last years and their targets and objectives have been predicted to be achieved within this year (2020). According to the respective institutions in charge for the delivery of the respective strategies, the following national strategic documents will have a dedicated focus on youth engagement, especially on NEET category.

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW ON NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS WITH A FOCUS IN NEET YOUTH AND THE LEGAL ENVIRONMENT



1. 1 National Youth Action Plan (NYAP) 2015 - 2020.

Young people make the largest proportion of the Albanian society. This category is also subject to the highest unemployment levels when compared to other age groups. The unemployment rate during last year, referring to INSTAT data on 15-29 age (NEET) group, was at 21.5%, out of which 21.3% males and 21.6% females. In the same time, in Albania, the under 30 age group is approximately one third of the population and despite this, youth participation in decision making processes and social life remains very low. Factors contributing to this situation are mostly related to the lack of legal framework setting legal obligations and governing policies that promote and motivate young people to be more active. However,

The National Youth Action Plan marks an important turning point in the way of emphasizing the youth needs and their inclusion difficulties.

The general purpose of this Action Plan stands at designing transversal policies for the full integration of youth in schemes of health care, education, social work, and political participation, in order for them to become active member of society in all its facets.

Moreover, the Action Plan has been conducted on the basis of 6 (six) general objectives and the second one is specifically dedicated to the youth engagement, named as "Youth employment promotion through effective labor market policy". This general objective is itself divided in six (6) specific objectives and twenty-three (23) support activities, which correspond to approximately 34 indicators.

The total cost of the foreseen activities is 6,166,247 ALL, of which 91% are covered by the State Budget and 9% are uncovered funds that could be sought from cooperation with donors or other stakeholders. Important to mention is the lack of identifying the NEET category as a specific focus/target within the general youth category in any of 6 specific objectives. There have been only some few cases in the 5th general objective (Social Inclusion), where the prediction for the involvement of youth aged to 15-29 has been mentioned as an indicator.

Regarding the evaluation and the monitoring of this strategic document, in 2018, CRCA Albania and the National Youth Network in Albania in collaboration with several youth organizations became part of the process of preparing the first monitoring report on the implementation of the Action Plan; 'Report and Evaluation Index for the period 2015-2017, of the implementation of the National Youth Action Plan (2015-2020)'

The preparation of this report remains of special importance because is the first time that the youth organizations in Albania are engaged on the monitoring and evaluation the work of public institutions at central and local level. According to CRCA Albania and the National Youth Network in Albania, the purpose of this report was to engage in a sustained dialogue, the Government, Municipalities and state institutions working for young people, the Albanian Parliament and organizations representing young people and their interests, in a process that promotes participation and appreciation for young people, the analysis of state policy, the establishment of sufficient human and financial resources for the implementation of the Plan, which together promote the empowerment of young people and their rights in Albania. Also, the report seeks to create a climate where civil society organizations come together and increase the level of accountability of public institutions towards its citizens, including young people (CRCA Shqipëri, 2018).

According to the monitoring report, the most critical findings include;

- Only 21% of the Youth Action Plan was fully implemented until the end of 2017
- By the end of 2017, 26% of young people are unemployed! Unemployment of youth is one of the main causes of illegal immigration of young people from Albania to EU countries.
- Over 70% of young people in Albania want to leave because of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and corruption.
- By the end of 2017, neither the Government nor the Municipalities had set up any structure for the implementation of the Youth Action Plan.
- By the end of 2017, both the Government and the Municipalities did not spend any money on implementing the Youth Action Plan!
- 3 years after the approval of the Plan, no Monitoring or Evaluation Report has been prepared by the Government for the implementation of the National Action Plan.

Given the findings of the Report and the Evaluation index for the period 2015-2017, more attention need to be paid toward the set of objectives and targets which have been set in the National Youth Action Plan. Government also needs to take concrete actions when it comes to the monitoring of the implementation of this strategic document and public institutions in charge for its implementation need to provide regular reports and evidences.

Beside all the findings and recommendations, the Report and the Evaluation index for the period 2015-2017 still does not highlight the needs of NEET youth as a particular category within young people in Albania.



1.2 National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015 - 2020

National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020 (NSDI) is one of the main national strategic documents which presents the medium- and long-term vision for social and economic development, as well as the process of European integration of the country for the period 2015- 2020. This strategy has been conducted on the basis of 4 main pillars and there is not significant evidence for the youth inclusion and needs in terms of NEET category. In this document, youth is lightly treated under the third (III) pillar; “*Investment in the human capital and social cohesion*” in the point 11.9; “*Youth Empowerment*”.

The document presents the current situation by referring Albania, compared to other European countries, as a country with young age population, where about 30% is dominated by 15-29 years old youngsters, constituting the greater grouping of the active force in society. The document also emphasizes that although young people have been constantly in the attention of Albanian governments, again they face various challenges, such as their involvement in decision-making processes and democratic processes, employment, education, health care and social inclusion.

The strategy does recognize the need for more youth economic empowerment through youth education, employment promotion, health and social protection. Also, under this pillar, youth high unemployment levels are treated and considered as a major challenge all over the country. Youth engagement and empowerment have been mentioned and considered when analyzing sectors such as education, employment, migration, social protection, sports etc. but due to the lack of a legal definition of youth and NEET category when the strategic document has been drafted, there have not been specific highlights and considerations regarding the engagement of this category.

1.3 National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014 - 2020

National Employment and Skills Strategy focuses main focus has been on enhancing decent work opportunities through efficient labor market policies, providing quality youth and adult education and training, fostering inclusion and social cohesion, and strengthening the labor market and the qualifications system. The Strategy has been conducted based on 4 pillars/policy objectives; A) Foster decent job opportunities through effective labor market policies, B) Offer quality vocational education and training to youth and adults, C) Promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion and D) Strengthen the governance of the labor market and qualification systems.

When considering the EU strategies and policies, NESS is aligned to the Europe 2020 and South East Europe 2020 strategies. In this context, a Sector Reform Contract (SRC) was signed between the GoA and the EU in November 2016, providing a budget of 27 million EUR for budget support, directly managed by the GoA, additional 2.5 million EUR for complementary technical assistance, and 0.5 for monitoring and evaluation. The overall objective of the intervention is to contribute to a more inclusive and effective labour market by supporting the employment and skills development policy of the Albania Government as defined in the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020.

According to the document, the targets to be achieved within this year (2020) are: the incensement of the share of female and male students attending VET programs to 25 per cent; the incensement of the employment share of vocational education graduates to 40 per cent, out of which 25 per cent are females; the incensement of the share of the adult population participating in lifelong learning to 4 per cent; the incensement of the employment rate of participants in short vocational training courses to 55 per cent, out of which 75 per cent are females; the incensement of the annual share of PWD VET students by 1 p.p. Also, according to the document, all these predictions will be attained by increasing the vocational education and training investment by 30 per cent by 2020. The strategy recognized the need for more efforts and targeted youth[1] employment and increasing of its professional skills directly as part of the development objectives. As reflected above, NEETs needs and inclusion opportunities are not specifically included in any of the targets.

Important to mention for this strategic document are the annual monitoring reports for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017 and the Mid-Term Review of the Strategy in 2018. The latter, also specifies the NEET youth in its targets as the age group of 15-24 years old (not 15-29).

According to the Mid-Term Review of the Strategy, on average, half of the actions are either scored as Highly Progressed or Completed, or Successfully Completed, with

the other half scored as either Not Started or in Progress. More specifically, progress of the actions under Pillar A is very good, with on average 78 % of the actions Highly Progressed or Completed, followed by those under Pillar D with an average of 47 percent assessed either as Highly Progressed or Completed, and under **Pillar B** (Offer quality vocational education and training to youth and adults) where 38 percent of the actions are Highly Progressed, Completed or Successfully Completed (UNDP in Albania, 2018).

The NESS 2014–2020 activities most supported are those under Strategic Objectives A and B, which also include those with the most progress recorded over last three years.

Meanwhile, according to the annual progress report of NESS in 2018, some of indicators which have achieved performance include the *youth employment rate*, which registered nine p.p. beyond the set target according the last LFS published by INSTAT in May of the last year. The percentage of *participants* in Employment Promotion Programmes compared to the number of registered unemployed jobseekers was 7.39%, exceeding the target of 5% set in the Sector Reform Contract. By the other hand, the *employment offices reformed* according to the New Service Model delivery were 18 in 2018, meeting the target of six for the reference year, and the nine postponed from 2017. Furthermore, the *gender gap* in employment did not manage to reach the target of 13.2%, but a considerable improvement is shown in comparison with the baseline and according to this report it was evaluated to be partially achieved. Regarding the support of young people from vulnerable groups, during 2018, 1,236 Roma and Egyptian were employed, 239 supported through employment promotion programs and 997 with employment mediation services in 10 public vocational training centers. Meanwhile 119 registered Roma or Egyptian jobseekers were involved in professional courses (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth , 2019).

In addition, according to the decision No 176, date 26.02.2020, on some additions and amendments to the decision no. 659, dated 10.10.2019, of the council of ministers, "On the approval of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-2022 and the plan of actions for its implementation" and under the Specific objective; *National legislation governing labor market governance in line with the goals of country for social, economic development and integration, as well as with European Union directives* have been identified three specific indicators (and the respective public institutions in charge for their accomplishment) for the age group 15-29 not in education, training or employment. Specifically, for:

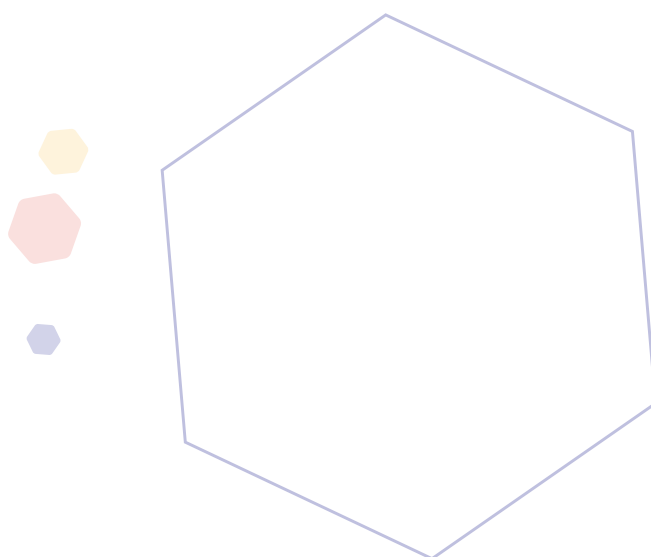
- Young people (15-29) out of job market, as and out banks of school or formation;
- The unemployment rate of young people (15-29 years old), divided by their gender;
- Number of youth out of job market (15–29 years old) who are registered in employment offices.

Different from the previous strategic documents, National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-2022 does emphasize the needs and inclusion opportunities of NEET youth as a specific category among youth in Albania.

[1] Youth are considered the age group of 15-24

1.4 The Business Investment and Development Strategy for 2014-2020

The Business Investment and Development Strategy for 2014-2020 is in line with the documents of the European Commission in the field of business and investment promotion and as such has in its focus one of the priorities of the EU for the period 2014-2020; the incensement of the competitiveness of the economy. The document is also an integral part of the *National Strategy for Development and Integration* and one of its priorities of the long-term development of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector is to foster young generation culture of entrepreneurship, education and training. This priority has been planned to be achieved through the creation the right environment for entrepreneurs in the education system by ensuring that young people are informed about entrepreneurial culture and consider it as part of their education and their future employment opportunities. The Strategy does recognize the need for fostering the culture of entrepreneurship, education and training among youth but without emphasizing the specific needs of NEET category.



1.5 National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020

The National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020 aims the reforming of the Social Protection Program through the transformation of Economic Assistance in an active social reintegration scheme; reviewing of the disability assessment system; reintegrating of children into the family and community by showing special care for orphans and by providing integrated services.

The priority of this document is to provide the necessary resources for the most vulnerable groups but *youth or NEET as a specific sub-target group have not been mentioned* on its strategic objectives.

In addition, The National Strategy for Social Protection 2019-2022, as a follow-up of the previous one, has been built on the basis of three strategic priorities:

A) *Poverty mitigation and alleviation*, enabling better coverage of poor and extremely poor families, children and individuals, improving their targeting, increasing transparency and avoiding abuse in the Economic Assistance scheme, such as and connection with employment schemes, with integrated services aimed at their social reintegration into social life;

B) *Development of Disability* through bio-psycho-social assessment based on international standards of disability classification, combining the cash payment scheme with integrated services, in order to integrate into social and economic life and

C) *Development of social care services* based on the principles of decentralization, deinstitutionalization, for the inclusion of vulnerable groups in social protection programs.

The strategy is designed towards maximizing social benefits and avoiding either minimizing social risks, especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups. It includes their people and communities, organizations, institutions, societies and governments in all poverty alleviation activities.

This strategy has been drafted before the law “For Youth” was approved in the Parliament and NEET category again has not been included or targeted as a specific category within young people in its strategic priorities and objectives.

1.6 Albanian legal environment on NEET youth

In the framework of some key definitions, the 'NEET' acronym has been extensively used to define youth category which is 'Not in Employment, Education or Training'. The notion has been first introduced in 1999 in the United Kingdom, not only as a theoretical concept but also as a specific term which represents youth marginalization with a special focus on the unemployment rate.

According to (OECD/European Union, 2019), the NEET is defined as "the share of young people NEET divided by the total number of young people in the specific age group, by gender" and it concerns persons who face the following two conditions:

- "they are not employed" (i.e. they are unemployed or inactive according to standard definitions) or
- "they have not received any formal or non-formal education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey".

Meanwhile, in Albania, young people entering the labor market for the first time and recent young graduates were identified as priority groups in the year 2018 by several public institutions and most of the Employment Promotion Programmes (EPPs) aimed to activate these categories. Moreover, Employment Promotion Programmes have been implemented in accordance with the law No. 15/2019 "For Employment Promotion" and the following DCMs:

1. DCM no. 48, dated 16.01.2008 "*The program of encouraging the employment of jobseekers in difficulty*" (the latest change as per DCM no. 175, date 28/3/2018)
2. DCM no. 27, dated 11.01.2012, "*On the program of promotion of employment of women and girls by special groups*" (the latest change: DCM no. 178, date 28/3/2018)
3. DCM no. 248, dated 30.4.2014 "*On the Program of Encouragement of Employment of Persons with Disabilities*"
4. DCM no. 64, dated 27.1.2016 "*The Youth Incorporation Program for the Orphans' Youth Initiative Program*".
5. DCM no. 873, dated 27.12.2006 "*On the amount of funding, the criteria and procedures for the implementation of vocational internship programs for unemployed who have completed higher education, internally or abroad*"
6. DCM 162, dated 21.3.2018 "*On the Payment of Participation in Professional Training Courses*"
7. DCM 199, dated 11.1.2012, "*Program for promoting employment of youth jobseekers, 16-30*" (Latest changes: DCM no. 177, date 28/3/2018)
8. DCM 47, dated 16.1.2008, "*Programme for encouragement of employment through on-the-job training*".

Later, was approved the Law No. 75/2019 "For Youth"[2] which aims to determine the activities, mechanisms, and public authorities responsible for the protection and promotion of the rights of young people in Albania and in diaspora, as well as financing youth activities. The Law[3] stipulates the creation of a National Youth Council (NYC), a consultative body aiming to propose strategies and policies with regards to youth to the responsible Ministry of youth.

The law was opposed strongly by youth organizations and in December 2019 the President did not enact and turned it back to the Parliament for further legal improvements. Nevertheless, on 27th December 2019, the Parliament approved the law without taking into consideration the recommendations from civil society actors and the President of the Republic. The NYC is expected to be composed by 14-16 members, half of them from CSOs working with or for youth. The Law undermines the independence of the CSOs since the criteria and procedures for selection of NYC members, as well as the way how the Council will be organized and function, are approved by a decision of the Council of Ministers. In addition, the members of the National Youth Council are appointed by the respective Minister of youth.

This creates the possibility of a direct political dependence of the members coming from youth organizations. The same structures with same problematic issues are foreseen to be established at the local level, Local Youth Councils, where the Mayor is the chair of the council who also has the authority to appoint its members.

The most problematic article in the law for youth, as identified by civil society organisations, and especially youth ones, is Article 13 for the establishment of the National Youth Representation Organisation. Point 3 of this article stipulates that the criteria to be fulfilled by the National Youth Representation Organisation, to be recognised as such from institution responsible for youth (a public institution under the ministry responsible for youth), are approved through a decision of the Council of Ministers. This is in full contradiction with the Constitutions, and the Law on Non for Profit Organisations, and it severely impairs the principles.

[2] Law No. 75/2019 "For Youth", Official Gazette 171/2015 180/2019 [Online] <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2019/180/7d10ef94-7c6e-4988-8c5d-362df7023217;q=Ligji%20per%20rinine>

[3] The law for youth defines youth as people of age 15-29 years

According to “Western Balkans Labor Market Trends 2020”[4], unemployment rate in 2019 was lower compared to the previous year for all Western Balkan countries. Emigration from the region has been one of the most significant factors which has played an important role in the reduction of unemployment rate. In addition, between 2018 Q2 and 2019 Q2, youth unemployment rate fell in all Western Balkan countries, to an average of 30.4%, but it was more than twice as high as the EU average[5]. More than one fifth of the youth population was not in employment, education or training (NEET), almost unchanged compared to a year earlier. Also, during 2019, informal sector employment remained persistently high in Albania (36 % of total employment), North Macedonia (17 %), and Serbia (19 %) (Vidovic, Hermine; Brodmann, Stefanie; Reyes, Gonzalo; Johansson de Silva, Sara; Marguerie, Alicia; Rigolini, Jamele; Brancatelli, Calogero; Kupets Olga; Leitner, Sandra., 2020).

In parallel with the high rates of emigration, government spending per tertiary education student (measured as share of GDP per capita) is equivalent to 15% in Albania and reaches 25% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 32% in Serbia[6]. Such data indicate that emigration must be seriously considered when designing education reforms.

Also, when considering all the statistics and the data regarding the youth unemployment and their participation in education and trainings in the last 5 years in Albania, public institutions in charge for the development of strategic documents must be very specific when drafting policies and reforms on youth inclusion and empowerment. Absolutely, there is a persistent need for more focus on NEET youth, especially for young people from vulnerable groups. Also, NEET group age must be unified in all national strategic documents considering that before NEET category was identified with the youth of age group 15-24 and now, with the consolidation of the acronym in the Law No. 75/2019 “For Youth” it represents the youth of 15-29 age group.

2. INSTITUTIONS ON CHARGE OF THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, ESPECIALLY YOUNG PEOPLE FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS (NEET YOUTH) AT ALL LEVELS.



[4] In this report, youth refers only to the age-group of 15-24 years old (not 15-29) and the data include only the first half of 2019

[5] SEE Jobs Gateway, 2020

[6] World Development Indicators, accessed November 7, 2019

2.1 Public institutions in charge of youth education, training and employment

Main institutions responsible for employment and skills in Albania, include the National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ), National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services (SLISS), Ministry of Finance and Economy and Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY).

1. Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY)

Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) is the main public institution responsible for drafting and implementation of national youth policies, strategies and programmes in Albania. The most important strategic document in this regard is Youth Action Plan (2015-2020) which currently is close to the end of its implementation period. Moreover, in Albania, based on DCM no. 377, date 11.6.2014, has been set up the National Youth Service, as the institution responsible for implementation of policies and programs approved by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. According to this decision, there has also been foreseen the establishment of Regional Youth Centers which will be direct units for organization activities and services for young people. The dedicated budget for this institution for the period 2015-2020 has been set to the amount of 390,300,000 all. Currently, the National Youth Service has under its structure three Regional Youth Centers; Tirana, Vlora and Korça Regional Youth Center.

In this line, the interview with the Head of the Youth Policy Sector at the Directorate of Conception and Feasibility of Education, Sports and Youth Projects made possible to gather more information regarding other strategic documents and interventions of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) with focus on youth (NEET youth) empowerment, especially young people from vulnerable groups.

According to the representative of MoESY:

- As the National Action Plan for Youth (2015-2020) is close to its deadline, it will be followed by another strategic document, the "Strategy for Youth". The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) will be in charge for the drafting of the document and the work on the new strategy is predicted to begin in September of this year and then to be published in the first quarter of 2021.

- After the approval of the law on Youth in parliament and after having a clear definition on youth, it is foreseen in the next document to have dedicated focus on young people aged 15-29 who are not in education, employment or training, also for venerable youth 15-29 who are not in education, employment or training. For this, in the working group is foreseen to engage CSOs that have worked with programs dedicated to the empowerment of this category as well as donors and representatives of other public institutions.

- There has been only one Monitoring of the National Action Plan for Youth which was carried out in 2017 by CSOs and not by the Ministry itself. Regarding monitoring by public institutions, there have been specific monitoring by several institutions and in December 2019 was held an inter-ministerial meeting to discuss the achievement of the objectives of the action plan. As it was not possible to discuss all the targets and objectives set during the meeting, a subsequent meeting was scheduled in the first months of 2020 which was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and there is no date if it will be realized before start working on the new strategy.

And when considering the collaboration of the ministry with other stakeholders, the representative of the ministry explained:

- The Ministry is implementing the National Work Internship Program which is specifically related to the provision of 3-month internships for young people at the national level (NEET young people are not specifically targeted but they are included in the program) and based on the relationships and agreements ministry has built with the sector private, are exactly those who initially enable the realization of these practices. It is worth mentioning for the last year that 50% of young people who have followed these practices have later benefited 1-year employment contracts. There were not specific data of how many of them were from the NEET category.

- As there has been an uncovered fund in the National Youth Action Plan, it was requested to be covered from donors such as EU Delegation, GIZ, UNDP, the Albanian-American Development Fund and others through projects and programs dedicated to youth empowerment. These are the same donors who have covered a significant part of the funds in the action plan of "Business Development and Investment Strategy 2014-2020".

- The Ministry has planned to engage in the working group for the new "Strategy for Youth" several CSOs which have worked with programs dedicated to the empowerment of youth, especially with NEET category.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) has not drafted thus far any strategic document, nor any policy or programme which specifically targets NEET young people. The latter has been involved in its interventions only as part of the general group of youth.

2. The National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES)



The National Agency for Employment and Skills is a public service, under the Minister responsible for employment and skills development. NAES is a set of administrative institutions and providers of employment, self-employment and vocational education and training services, an integral part of the ministry system responsible for employment and skills development. It operates through Regional and Local Employment Offices, Regional Directorates of Public Vocational Training as well as Public Vocational Education Schools.

NAES is established and regulates its activity, based on the provisions of Law no. 15/2019 "On the promotion of employment", as well as Law no. 15/2017 "On vocational education in the Republic of Albania", as well as with the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 554, dated 31.07.2019 "On the establishment, organization and functioning of the National Agency for Employment and Skills". The main structures and their competencies are regulated for implementation in the Prime Minister's Order no. 172, dated 24.12.2019 "On the approval of the structure and staff of the National Agency for Employment and Skills" as well as the Orders of the Minister for employment and skills issues for the Organizations of Vocational Education Schools. Herewith, the interview with the general director of National Agency for Employment and Skills highlighted the role of the NAES in their engagement on programmes and interventions dedicated to youth education, training and employment and on the nature and quality of cooperation with other public institutions, donors or CSOs.

According to the general director of NAES:

- The agency has had few programs that have focused on the education, training and employment of young people, especially those coming from vulnerable groups. Specifically, the project that targeted the NEET youth, was only one, supported by the Delegation of the European Union in Albania which aimed to reduce the level of young people who are NEET at the national level (2 years ago).
- On the other hand, an aggressive work and lobbying is being done with representatives of the EU Delegation to include the "Youth Guarantee Plan" in our country, even though Albania is not currently a member of the European Union.

- Carrying out a visibility plan for a program of this importance requires a period of at least 2-3 years and its implementation would be a big step towards addressing the needs and difficulties faced by young people and especially NEET youth.

- Following the approval of the law on youth, new packages designed specifically for the 15-29-year-old category that are NEET will be drafted by the agency and are expected to be public and implemented by the beginning of next year (2021).
- When it comes to the monitoring of its interventions, NAES, has always followed up the process in collaboration with other public institutions. In the majority of the cases with Regional Employment Directorates and Local Employment Offices.

The general director of NAES explained that being responsible for the guarantee of the level of quality of services provided for employment, self-employment, vocational education and training and also for the organization of the work for the administration of public providers of VET requires a close collaboration with several public institutions but also with the private sector, donors and civic sector. According to the general director of NAES, the latter is one of the most important actors when it comes to the recommendations and suggestions of the policies and programs dedicated to youth education, training and employment.

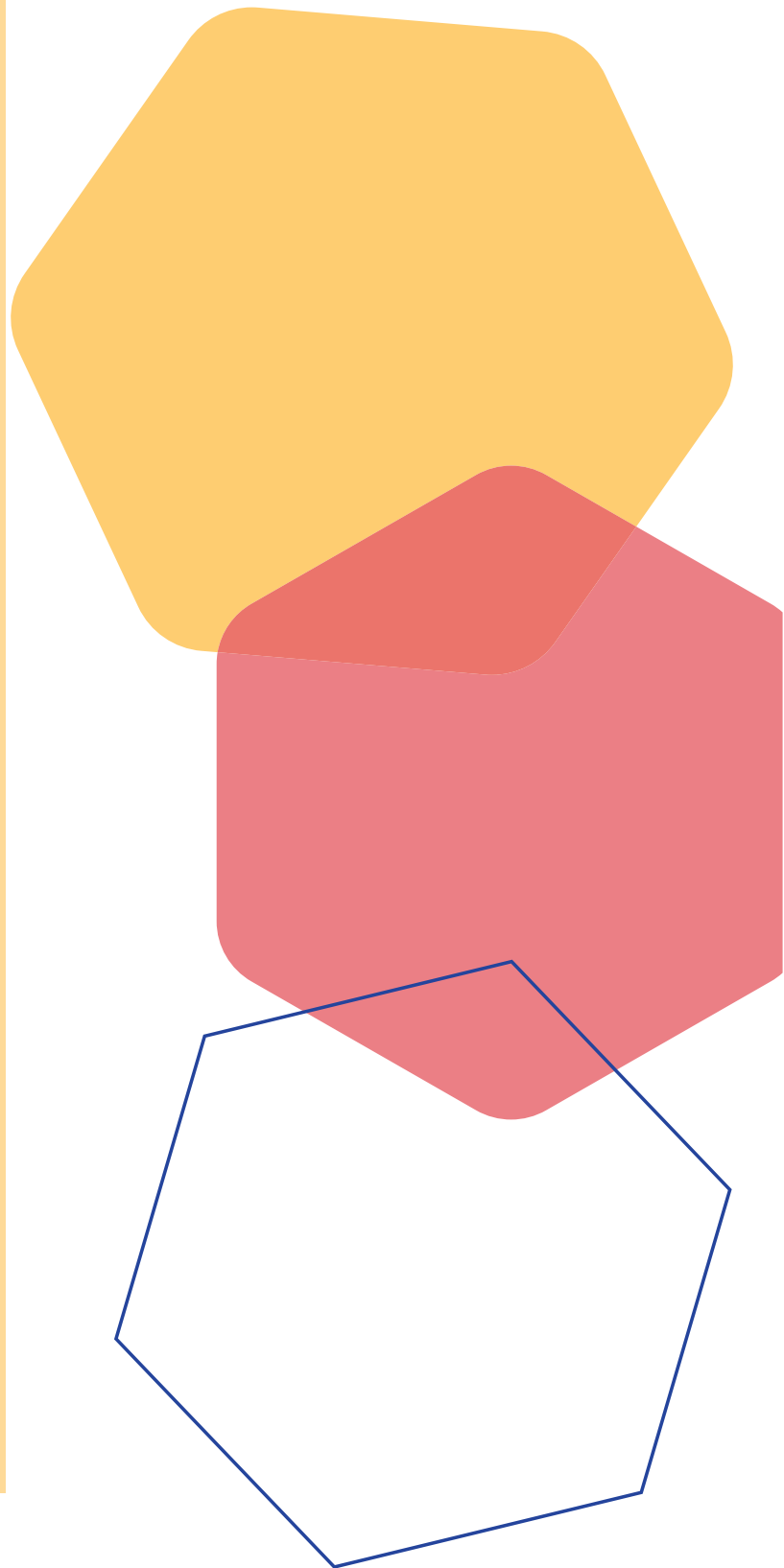
3. National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ)

The National Agency of Vocational Education Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) is one of the institutions in charge for the implementation of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2019-2022). The Agency was established by the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 273 as of 10th of May 2006, which was later replaced by the Decision of Council of Ministers (no.321 as of 21st of April, 2011) after the changes in the VET Law of Republic of Albania. Currently the agency is a subordinate institution to the Ministry of Finance and Economy. The vision of the agency is the creation of an integrated and flexible system of professional qualifications in accordance with economic and social changes, with the needs of the labor market, which enables the development of human and infrastructural resources (Agjensia Kombëtare e Arsimit, Formimit dhe Kualifikimeve Profesionale, 2011). The agency is responsible for the development of vocational qualifications and standards, for the development of frame curricula and assessment methodologies and instruments. As the responsible public institution, NAVETQ supports also the development of short term courses for adults offered by public Vocational Training centres. Since the beginning, the National Agency of Vocational Education Training and Qualifications acts as a public institution providing expertise in issues of VET development and lifelong learning.

According to the Head of the Skeleton-Curriculum Sector and Training Standards at NAVETQ:

- Staff of the institution is specialized and dedicated in VET, Vocational Qualifications, and Adult Learning with a special focus on youth inclusion in education and training schemes
- NAVETQ has been providing long standing experience by working and collaborating with projects implemented by international partners as the IIZ/DVV of Germany, Swisscontact, ILO and other projects as well.
- NAVETQ has also a very good collaboration with private sector companies when it comes to the addressing of the labour market needs in terms of vocational qualifications for the different economic sectors, as well as with experts/practitioners of the education and training field.

The National Agency of Vocational Education Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) does not have any dedicated policy or document which targets the NEET youth of age 15-29. The category is part of the interventions, but thus far it has not been considered as a specific target.



4. Ministry of Finance and Economy

Ministry of Finance and Economy does not represent one of the most important public institutions when it comes to the addressing of needs and inclusion opportunities of youth within the country. Beyond these, the ministry, along with the National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ), National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) and State Labor Inspectorate and Social Services (SLISS) is in charge of the implementation of National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2019-2022. It is worth to mention that this ministry has not been in charge for the implementation of the previous strategy (2014-2020).

In this regard, the interview with the Head of Employment Policy Sector at the Directorate of Employment and Vocational Training Policies explained the role of the Ministry of Finance and Economy in other dedicated policies or programmes with a focus on youth education, training and employment and on the nature of cooperation with other actors.

According to the representative of MoFE:

- The Ministry of Finance and Economy initially has been part of the annual monitoring report of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020) in 2018, the annual monitoring report of 2019 (which has not been published yet) and is now one of the institutions responsible for implementation of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2019-2020.

- Beyond these, the Ministry is now part of several one-year programs which aim at training and employment of young people but which do not have as a specific target the age group 15-29 who are neither in education, nor in training or employment. In general, these programs are more focused on employment and their target remains young people who are registered as unemployed in employment offices in Albania.

- Among these programs, the main ones that promote the participation of young people, based on law no. 15/2019 "On employment promotion" include; 1) Employment promotion program through employment, on-the-job training and professional internships 2) Incentive program through self-employment 3) Professional Internship Program and 4) Community Works Program.

When considering the collaboration of the Ministry of Finance and Economy with other actors, the representative of the ministry emphasized:

- Some of the results collected in the progress report of National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020) in 2018 have been previously discussed and validated with CSOs, mainly with those who have had concrete projects/programmes on youth education, training or employment. The cooperation between the ministry and civic sector has been very productive.

- This report also saw the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the National Employment Services, the Labour Inspectorate and international donors involved in the mid-term review evaluation process of the NESS.

- Such engagement and participation of different actors has been a perfect opportunity to reflect on the status of progress reached in four years of implementation, acknowledging challenges and celebrating achievements, but most importantly identifying elements in the strategy that are still relevant in the current scenario, and those that requires instead to be addressed differently. The process led to the revision of several targets and on the identifying of the upcoming collaborations between different stakeholders.

Same as the pervious ministry, the Ministry of Finance and Economy has not drafted thus far any strategic document, nor any policy or programme which specifically targets NEET young people. In general, the majority of the programs which are in charge of this institution are more focused on youth trainings and employment (less in education) and their target remains young people who are registered as unemployed in employment offices in Albania.

2.2 NGOs – youth organizations focus on youth education, training and employment

According to the annual monitoring report of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills in 2018, *support to social inclusion and territorial cohesion* remains the weakest element of the strategy, and it was suggested to urgently reshape the approach used so far to support actions under this pillar. According to the report, there are some interventions that need a particular attention of civic sector when it comes to a better addressing of the needs and difficulties of youth in Albania. Interventions might include training of dedicated specialists within the National Employment Skills Agency, or, according to efficiency criteria, outsourcing of specialized services to CSOs, which already possess the expertise and the capacity to reach out the further behind, or boosting innovative business models, such as social enterprises (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2019). The need for systematic cooperation between schools and businesses must be tackled to create better job opportunities and reduce the alarming registered skills mismatch.

Different forms of collaboration might be tested, focusing on areas showing higher potential. In this sense, moving towards an economic sectoral approach might be a wise strategy, with the aim to create clusters of different actors (business, VET providers, CSOs) active the same economic sector. To achieve this result, sector skills councils should be developed to provide inputs into the occupational standards, qualifications and curriculum, and identify where the potential is for job creation through disaggregated labor market information (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2019). Some of civic society organizations in Albania which have been continuously active in addressing youth needs and working for their inclusion include; "Social Center Murialdo", YAPS Albania, Don Bosko Social Center in Tirana, CRCA Albania, the National Youth Network in Albania (ANYN), etc.

1. "Social Center Murialdo"

"Social Center Murialdo" (QSM) for vocational training and education of young people" is an association with educational character, non-profit, which has started its activity since 1994. This association, in the framework of the free exercise of a function useful for the general interest, promotes professional training and any activity of a sports, educational, cultural, scientific, artistic, etc. character to contribute to a process of human, civil and moral self-formation, as a factor of freedom and responsibility in the social life of the Albanian national community and with a dedicated focus on providing youth inclusion opportunities.

According to the Coordinator of the Social Office and Projects at QSM:

· In the last two years, most of the projects have been dedicated to vulnerable groups and the Roma community but not with a dedicated focus on the 15-29 age group. The involvement has been wider and of course this age group has been part of the interventions. GIZ- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH and Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo have been the main donors which have supported the center in the recent interventions.

· When it comes to the collaboration with public institutions, QSM currently has cooperation agreements with Fier Regional Directorate of Pre-University Education and the Fier Probation Service which aim at engaging not only young people aged 15-29 who are not in education, training or employment but also beyond.

· The center has agreements with the private sector which mostly consist of enabling internships for young people after their completion of courses in mechanics, plumbing workers and electricians.

· There is a practice of a follow-up of all the practices that young people follow in the businesses of the area after they have finished the professional courses at the Murialdo Social Center. This is done for a period of 6 months and then contacts are rarer.

The Coordinator of the Social Office and Projects emphasizes that QSM does not have a well-structured database for the number of young people aged 15-29 not in education, training or employment who are supported by projects or interventions from the center but this is considered to be practiced in the future as the needs of this category are coming and are more in focus of donors and public institutions in the country.

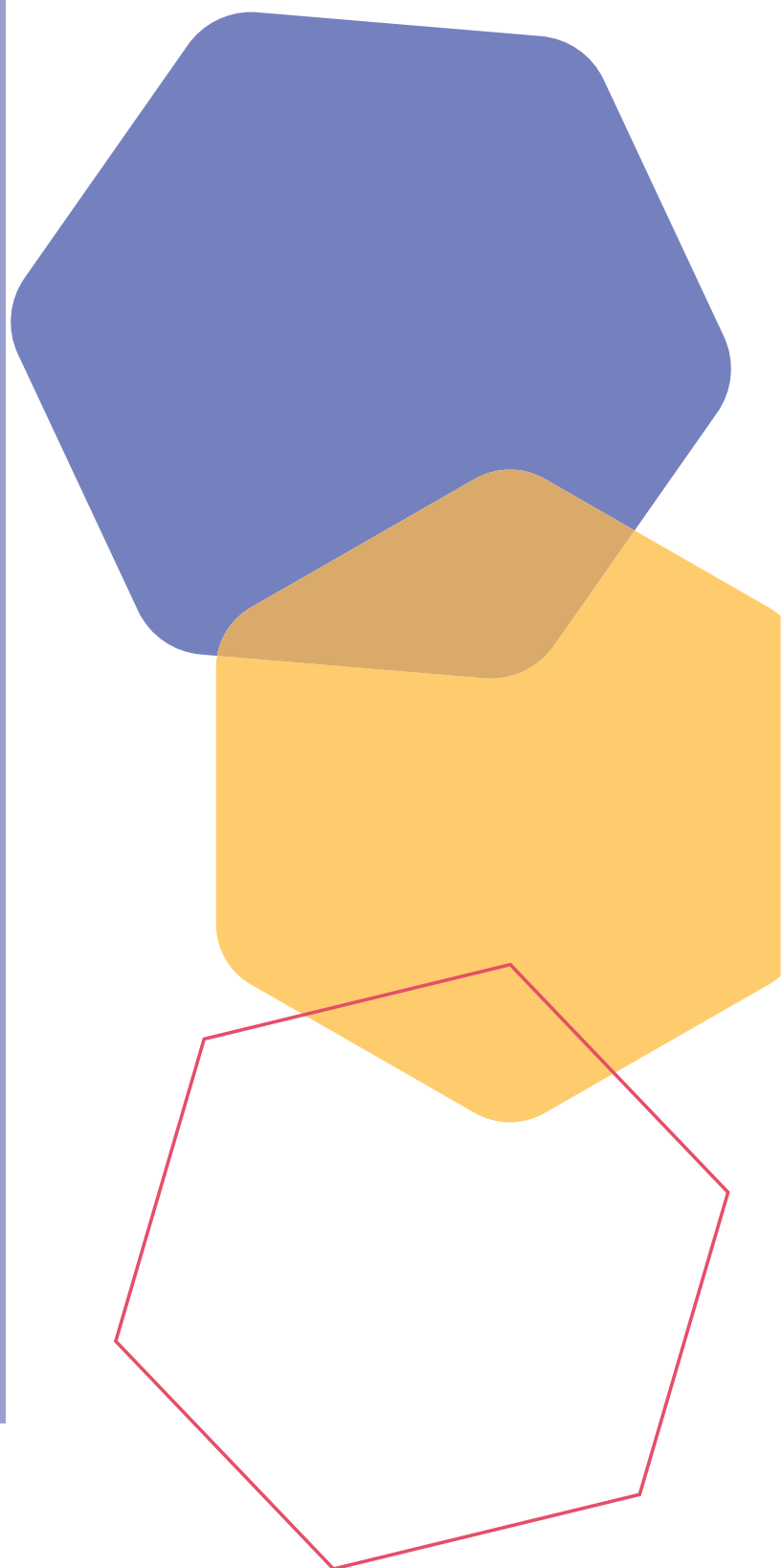
2. YAPS Albania

Youth Albania Professional Services, is the first social business in Tirana. The company works in the fields of parcel delivery, cleaning and fix-it services. It was founded in 2001 and currently employs 112 people. At the beginning YAPS started with 600 services per month and now YAPS reaches nearly 100,000 services per month. The employees are orphans, Roma, Egyptians or people coming from a difficult financial background (YAPS Albania, 2010). Couriers at YAPS Albania are trained in order to offer the best service in a professional and ethical way and 90% of them are youngsters under the age of 29.

According to the general director of YAPS Albania:

- YAPS activity is not based on projects or support that donors provide through various programs or interventions. The whole activity is supported by the income that YAPS generates as a social business.
- In terms of cooperation with public institutions, YAPS receives from the Labor Offices data for young people who are out of the labor market and in recent years the focus of YAPS has been the engagement of young people coming from rural areas of the country. YAPS for several years has had cooperation with the Probation Service in the framework of the engagement of young people who should follow this practice.
- Meanwhile, there is a continuous cooperation with the private sector as it is the businesses that receive the services provided by YAPS and thus contribute to the increase of income.
- Youth work monitoring at YAPS is done periodically as all clients are part of a Customer Survey that is distributed every 6 months and thus monitors all staff performance. In the last 3 years, there have been more than 250 young people who are employed by YAPS and the majority of them are in the age group 15-29.

According to the director of YAPS, it is important to emphasize that public institutions have not expressed their willingness to receive the services provided by YAPS. Such support would further expand the number of employed young people who are not in education, training or employment, and not only for the 15-29 age group.



2.3 Donor support programs on youth education, training and employment

According to the mid-review of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills, there has been continuous donor support to employment, VET and social inclusion policies in Albania. With regard to the donors' commitment for the period 2017–2020 some EUR 100 million (or EUR equivalent) have been planned to be invested in skills and employment area in the framework of implementation of NESS 2014–2020, equivalent to the total public funding allocated to VET over the same period. The main supporters in the sector are the EU Delegation through various funding mechanisms, followed by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

1. EU Delegation in Albania

EU Delegation in Albania has been recognized as one of the main supporters among donors in Albania, not only in the terms of the variety of supporting programs and projects they cover but also in the financial aspect. Currently, one of the major programs they are implementing is 'Albania - financial assistance under IPA II' which has a funding allocation of € 639.5 million for the period **2014-2020**.

The priorities for funding in this period include; Democracy & governance, Rule of law and fundamental rights, Environment and climate action, Transport, Competitiveness and innovation, Agriculture and rural development, Regional and territorial cooperation, **Education, employment & social policies** which aims in providing effective vocational training; better employment services and labor market policy, inclusion of vulnerable people, efficient health and social services (European Union, 2014). This priority has a dedicated fund of € 60 million and the majority of its activities are dedicated to inclusion opportunities for youth and venerable youth all over the country. Similar initiatives with the support of the EU Delegation in Albania include NEETs but there are not major interventions dedicated specifically to this category.



2. German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ)



Under the priority of 'Creating prospects for sustainable employment, economic development and growth', GIZ Albania is currently implementing **Sustainable Economic and Regional Development, Employment Promotion and Vocational Education and Training – ProSEED** programme which is commissioned by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), European Union (EU). The objective of the programme is the creation of new and better employment opportunities. Specifically, the improvement of employment situation among young people in Albania and social participation of marginalized groups, including returnees. The program provides technical assistance to several partners, including the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Finance and Economy, through an integrated strategy for promoting employment and by participating actively in the implementation of the main national strategic documents in different sectors. (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), 2018).

Pro-SEED programme is planned to be implemented for the period 2017-2021 and is based on the following pillars:

Social Inclusion: The activities under this pillar are focused on increasing employability and social inclusion of marginalized young people and returnees. These youngsters benefit from greater social acceptance through GIZ supported civil society initiatives and obtain opportunities for new career prospects.

Vocational education and training (VET): Pro-SEED support under this pillar includes policy advice, design and the implementation of new VET offers by integrating the work-based learning principles in the Multifunctional Centre Kamza (MFC), 10 Public Vocational Training Centres and about 30 private VET providers all over the country; teachers training and workshop upgrade with small scale equipment.

Support for MSMEs: this pillar has a dedicated focus on start-up training and financial support for young entrepreneurs, as well as on strengthening MSMEs to better compete in the market.

EU for Innovation: aims to strengthen the innovative ecosystem and boost start-up creation in Albania that enhances suitable environment for talents in becoming successful entrepreneurs. *Policy framework:* is the last pillar which aims to build the capacities of public institutions, enabling them to effectively support public and private investment projects with employment impact (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), 2018).

According to GIZ, the main results achieved on the frame of this programme thus far include:

- More than 2,900 job seekers have been trained in short term courses and over 500 students graduated from MFC Kamza.
- More than 5,000 young people are now part of the Start SMART job search skills and soft skills trainings.
- Around 1,400 marginalized young people have participated in projects to strengthen social cohesion.
- More than 900 young people have found employment thus far.
- More than 1,100 young entrepreneurs have been trained, of which, 250 have developed a complete business plan and around 80 of them have received a start-up grant.
- Almost 1,000 MSMEs have received Business Development Services.

3. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)



The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), among other programmes and projects has financed the 'Skills for Jobs' (S4J) project which is implemented by swisscontact Albania. It is part of the Economic Development Domain of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Albania 2018-2021, with specific focus on promotion of employment opportunities and skills development. 'Skills for Jobs' (S4J) is currently in its second phase. It started in April of the last year and will last until June 2023. During this phase, the project aims at supporting 10 000 students and 6 000 trainees (Swisscontact, 2019).

Meanwhile according to swisscontact, the results of the interventions in the first phase include:

- 9716 young people access improved VSD offers (IT-based, innovative and attractive, demand-oriented and gender-sensitive) in Tourism & Hospitality, Smart Construction, Textile and ICT branches, in the Shkodra, Lezha, Tirana, Berat and Vlora regions.
- 433 companies have signed Memorandums of Understanding with selected VSD providers, offering apprenticeships for students, co-financing VSD financially or in-kind and participating in VET network and curricula development. Out of these, 422 companies provide apprenticeships for 1422 students.
- Companies have sponsored VSD providers financially or in-kind. Estimated sponsorship value is 520 000 CHF.
- Career guidance and job-finding services are offered in 7 VET providers.
- Schools are more modernized with virtual learning, school management platforms and IT equipment.
- More girls are enrolled in VET programs with economic prospective. Among newly registered students in 2018-2019 academic year, share of female has reached to 16.6%.
- The drop-out phenomenon is addressed through coaching for VSD, individualized learning plans, improved school culture and stronger school-parent collaboration. Drop Out Rate was reduced to 9.3%.

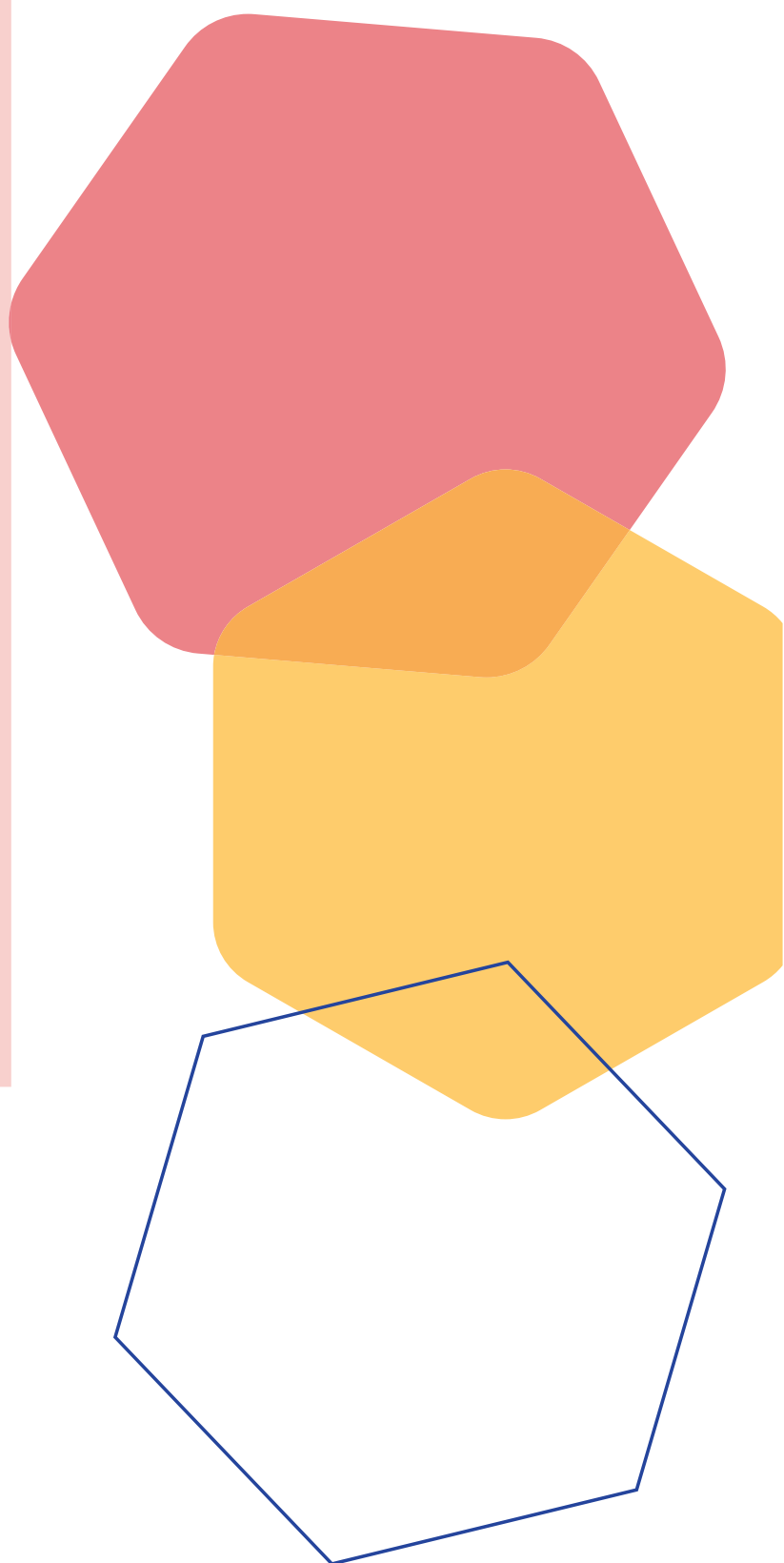
- VET as primary education and career choice has been promoted through national campaigns, such as 'Skills Fairs' event and regional fairs.
- One year after graduation, 34% of students graduating from VET schools in 2016 got a job. For students graduating in 2017, the share of employment increased to 49%.

4. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Albania

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) office in Albania and have provided continuous support to the Albanian Government's agenda on employment and skills development.

The Skills Development for Employment (SD4E) Programme has been built upon previous experiences as well as the close UNDP-SDC collaboration. During its implementation (December 2014 – December 2018) the programme has boosted (self) employment of young women and men living in urban and rural areas all over the country.

Currently, UNDP Albania is engaged with other partners in the implementing of the programme *"Supporting the Western Balkan's collective leadership on reconciliation: building capacity and momentum for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)"*. The project works to foster social cohesion, reconciliation, enhance attitudes of tolerance and reduce prejudice and discrimination among youth in the Western Balkans Six (WB6), through supporting RYCO in building its institutional capacity and partnerships with civil society, education systems and schools, grassroots, youth institutions and youth in general. And when considering what has been accomplished so far, it is worth to mention the third objective which has been implemented by UNDP Albania. A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system for RYCO has been finalized based on RYCO's strategic plan for the period 2019-2021. As of September 2019, 41 RYCO sub-grantees consisting of consortiums of NGOs and schools in the WB6, started the implementation of their projects under RYCO's second call for proposals. The cross-border projects under implementation, encourage regional youth cooperation, mobility and exchange in the WB6 and are co-funded by RYCO and UNDP Albania (UNDP Albania, 2018).



5. KulturKontakt Austria

Austrian Agency for international cooperation in education and research (OeAD/KKA) is currently implementing several projects within the country in the fields of vocational education and training, gender equality at schools and the introduction of competence-based learning. KKA in recent years has been in close cooperation with the National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ), The National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) and other Albanian education institutions.

AL-Tour: Increasing the employment market relevance, quality, and social inclusion for training in the tourism, hotel, and restaurant industries in Albania is one the projects which is dedicated to Albanian youth and aims to improve the relevance for the labour market, quality, and social inclusion of vocational education offerings for the tourism and hospitality sector. The project is financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

The final beneficiaries of the project include eight tourism schools, two boarding schools, two adult education centres, and the National Agency for Vocational Education Training and Qualifications. During the project period, AL Tour has planned to reach around 150 school administrators, vocational school teachers, trainers, internship coordinators, and boarding school staff, as well as 2,500 students, 50 trainees, and some 40 businesses. Upon conclusion of the project, those who are seeking training in this sector, along with all companies in this sector who are looking for well-trained staff will benefit from the project (Kultur Kontakt Austria, 2019).



The law No. 75/2019 “For Youth” which has been approved in December 2019 aims to determine the activities, mechanisms, and public authorities responsible for the protection and promotion of the rights of young people in Albania and in diaspora, as well as financing youth activities. It defines youth as people of age 15-29 years and now it is the reference for all national policies and strategies responsible for youth education, training and employment.

Moreover, most of previous strategic documents have not included NEET youth as a specific target and in those cases when they have done, it was defined as the category of 15-24 years old. By the other hand, there is Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) which in the last 4 years has been publishing annual data regarding NEET youth. According to the official data from INSTAT for the percentage of young people by gender and age groups:

- the % of young people **15-19 years old** to the average population in 2019 was **7%**
- the % of young people **15-24 years old** to the average population in 2019 was **15%**
- the % of young people **20-24 years old** to the average population in 2019 was **8%**
- the % of young people **25-29 years old** to the average population in 2019 was **8%**

As per the percentage of young people by gender, the figures have been almost equal to all above age groups. In addition, the highest % of young people **25-29 years old** is in Tirana, meanwhile for other age groups there is almost the same geographical coverage in 12 municipalities.

NEET rate for 2019 was 26.6%, compared to 28.6% in 2018. Meanwhile, youth unemployment rate has decreased to 21.5% in 2019 from 23.1% in 2018. In 2018, the rate of self-employed young people (among youth population) was 7.8% but there are yet no data available regarding the last year. According to the Income and Living Standards Survey 2017-2018, the rate of material deprivation was estimated at 38.3% in 2018 compared to 41.1% estimated in 2017, marking a decrease of 2.8 percentage points and the risk of being poor or in social exclusion is estimated at 49.0% in 2018 compared to 51.8% estimated in 2017 (INSTAT, 2019). According INSTAT, the data for such indicators are not generated specifically for the NEET youth.

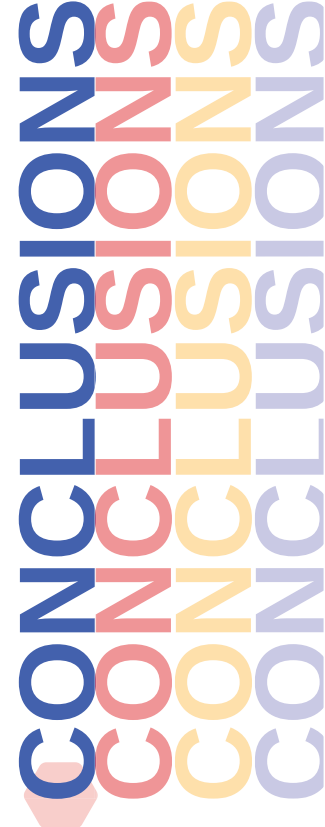
On the other hand, when considering the social participation indicators of youth, during the academic year 2018-2019 the rate of dropout from the secondary education was 2.6%, the rate of young people enrolled in tertiary education was 59.5% and the rate of young people graduated from tertiary education was 26.7%. Important to mention is that all these indicators have been improved when comparing to the previous period.

3. DEFINITION OF **YOUTH** AND POSITION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS

Regarding the position of young people from vulnerable groups it is important to emphasize that, the Institute of Statistics does not generate data on the percentage of young people from the Roma and Egyptian communities, young people with disabilities and young people from the LGTB community within the category of 15-29 years old.

In the last year there is noted a positive development in improving youth legal framework and youth strategic policy design in national level, nevertheless there is lack of implementation and non-coordination of responsible implementing structures. There is no evidence of monitoring reports in regard to youth strategic policy implementation. Lack of data is noticed also in regard to financial costs of youth activities and youth budget in national and local level. Though in the National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020 is foreseen the creation and implementation of structures and mechanisms on increasing youth political participation, at national and local level, there are still no concrete efforts made so far. Unemployment rate remains to be one of the most pressing issues for youth in Albania which despite being in a considerable high rate, it was severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Youth in Albania is subject to the highest unemployment levels when compared to other age groups. The unemployment rate during last year, referring to INSTAT data on 15-29 age group, was at 21.5%, out of which 21.3% males and 21.6% females.
- In Albania, the under 30 age group makes approximately one third of the population and despite this, youth participation in decision making processes and social life remains very low.
- In the group of youth aged 15-29 years old neither in employment nor in education or training, 36.5 % of them are classified as unemployed. The other part is outside the labor force because they are discouraged workers (12.7 %), or fulfilling domestic and family responsibilities (18.1 %), or inactive for other reasons (32.7 %).
- Main national strategies and programs with a focus in NEET youth include; The National Youth Action Plan (2015-2020), National Employment and Skills Strategy (2014-2020), National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020 (NSDI), The Business Investment and Development Strategy for 2014-2020 and The National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020.
- As per the legal environment for NEET youth, in December 2019 was approved the Law No. 75/2019 "For Youth" which aims to determine the activities, mechanisms, and public authorities responsible for the protection and promotion of the rights of young people in Albania. It defines youth as people of age 15-29 years and now it is the reference for all national policies and strategies responsible for youth education, training and employment.
- Main institutions responsible for employment and skills in Albania, include the National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ), National Employment and Skills Agency (NESA), State Labour Inspectorate and Social Services (SLISS), Ministry of Finance and Economy and Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY).
- None of the public institutions on charge for employment and skills in Albania have not drafted thus far any policy or programme which specifically targets NEET young people. There is only Ministry of Finance and Economy which has included the needs and inclusion opportunities of NEET youth as a specific category among youth in Albania in the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-2022.
- According to national strategic documents, there has been continuous donor support to employment, VET and social inclusion policies in Albania. The main supporters in the sector are the EU Delegation through various funding mechanisms, followed by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and GIZ.
- Institute of Statistics currently does not generate data on the percentage of young people from the Roma and Egyptian communities, young people with disabilities and young people from the LGTB community within the category of 15-29 years' old.



- There is seem to be a light collaboration between the public institutions and youth CSOs. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has planned to engage in the working group for the new "Strategy for Youth" some CSOs which have worked with programs dedicated to the empowerment of youth, especially with NEET category. By the other hand, Ministry of Finance and Economy has involved CSOs and donors in the annual monitoring reports of National Strategy for Employment and Skills. Anyhow, the level and the quality of collaboration of CSOs with public institutions remains one of the issues that needs to be improved.
- National Employment and Skills Agency and The National Agency of Vocational Education Training and Qualifications seem to have more frequent collaboration with private sector meanwhile the collaboration with CSOs and donors is lighter.
- NEET youth is not included as a specific target in the main strategic documents which are currently under implementation.
- NEET youth is predicted to be specifically targeted in the upcoming strategic documents after the approval of the law "For Youth".



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Partners Albania for Change and Development

Elbasani Street, Park Gate Building, 10th floor,
App. 71 / 73, PO BOX 2418/1
1010 Tirana, Albania

Telephone

00355 4 2254 881

Email

partners@partnersalbania.org

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