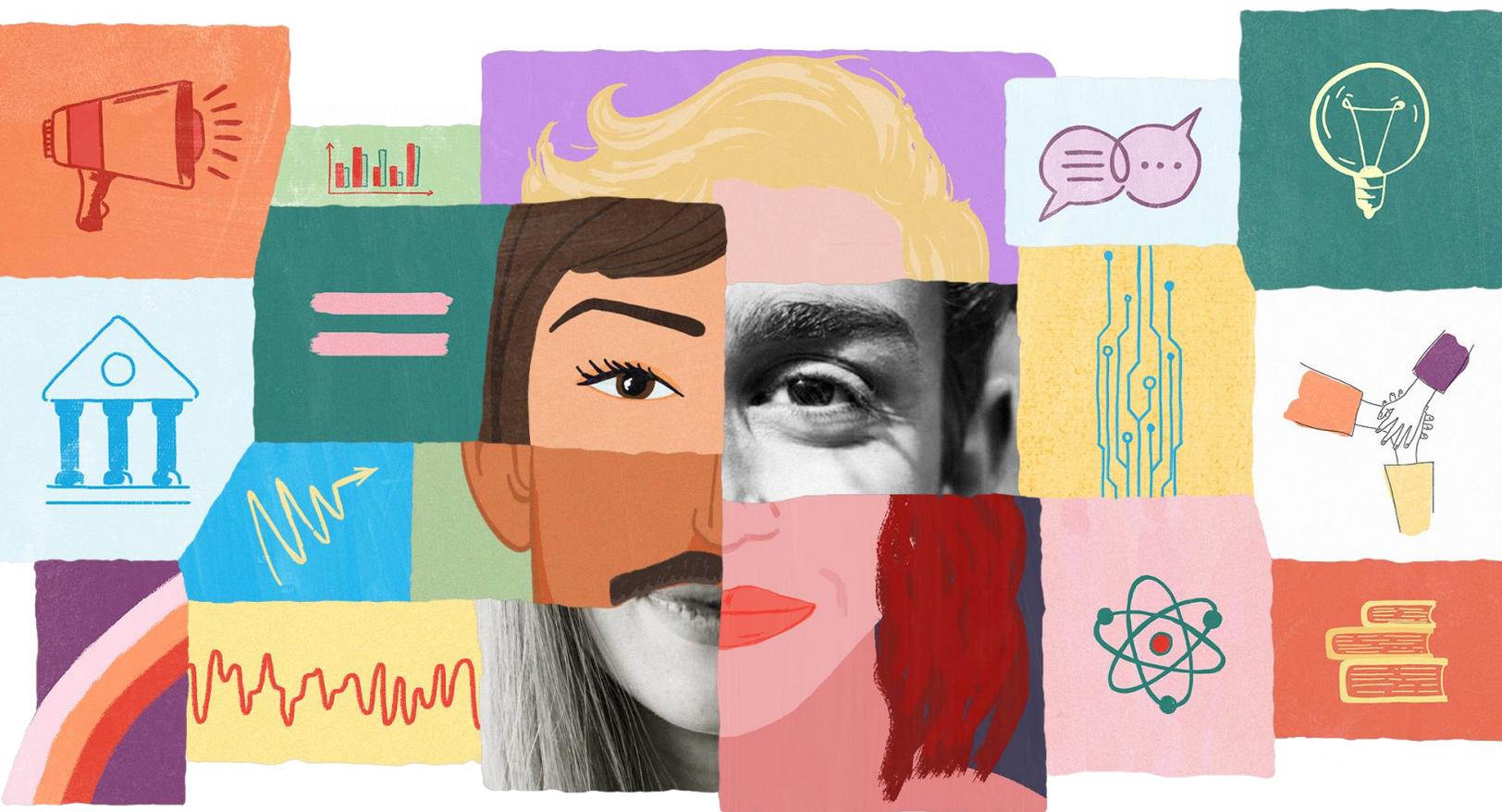


YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX

MONITORING REPORT OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH 2023



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Introduction

Creating space for youth participation is immensely important and recognised in many public policies, research studies, and official statements. And yet, states and municipalities often fail to establish such spaces. This is evident when many young people are out of education and quality jobs, and they remain absent in places of formal political decision-making. Still, they are present in statistics on poverty and social support. Sometimes, the lack of youth participation may be perceived as a result of their disengagement, lack of motivation, or interest. Thus, when young people do participate, sometimes through methods of participation such as protests and demonstrations, this may seem surprising. Their engagement implies that their scarce involvement cannot be attributed to their lack of motivation but to the shortcomings of adequate institutional support.

Eight years ago, the Youth Hub for Western Balkans and Türkiye Network (YHWBT Network) developed the Youth Participation Index (YPI) to summarise data on barriers to youth participation and provide a concrete data-driven tool for policymakers and youth organisations to improve it. This Index aims to provide a comprehensive overview of opportunities for youth through the lens of 25 political, economic, and social participation indicators. 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 eighth edition of this Index includes, for the first time, data from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, thus providing comprehensive information on youth participation in the region.

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.

Policymakers, youth organisations, and other advocates for youth issues can use YPI to gauge the current state and areas for improvement. Looking back from 2016, when the Youth Participation Index was first created, regular development and publishing of the Index has enabled monitoring progress in youth participation over the years in Western Balkan region and Türkiye (in further text: WBT region). Each participant has its own pattern of progress and setbacks, and YPI enables comparison between them to identify common challenges and possible solutions.

Insights from YPI indicate that although there are indications of progress over the years, substantial challenges persist, and space for youth participation remains primarily restricted. Persevering underrepresentation in political life, exclusion from employment and education, and high risk of poverty are some of the barriers young people in the region frequently face. However, YPI has also enabled tracking progress, including improved access to previously unavailable data on youth participation (e.g., youth in prisons and those receiving financial support within the social protection system) and essential policy changes enabling better youth participation in the region. Such progress indicates that change is possible; it requires significant commitment and efforts from public institutions, youth organisations, and other advocates. We hope that the Youth Participation Index can support this change process and provide young people with support and space for meaningful social engagement and participation.

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**”.² Many different reasons and arguments for promoting youth participation have been put forward, from the argument that young people have the right to be treated with respect and, when appropriate, be involved and consulted³ to referencing a plethora of research results on the positive effects of participation on both personal and broader social level.



Diagram 1 Potential benefits of youth participation

There is also a **continuous policy commitment to youth participation**. The recommendation of the Council of Europe member states to award high priority to youth participation in their public youth policies was included in the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on citizenship and 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**⁴ places youth participation at the forefront of youth

² 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

³ Ibid.

⁴ 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>

policy. Member States are invited to encourage and promote inclusive democratic participation of all young people in democratic processes and society, actively engage them, support youth representations at local, regional and national levels and explore and promote innovative and alternative forms of democratic participation. **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**⁵ also recognises the active role of young people as “critical agents of change”. The first priority of the UN 2030 Youth Strategy⁶ is “Engagement, Participation and Advocacy – Amplify youth voices for the promotion of a peaceful, just and sustainable world”.

“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

// The rationale for using an index to represent youth participation

Using an index as a measure has advantages and some potential caveats.

Advantages of using an index:

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

Disadvantages of using an index:

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

The main advantage of using an index is that it is simple and easy to understand, but the potential risk is that it can be misinterpreted. Thus, ensuring that the index does not oversimplify complex issues is crucial. To achieve this, the YHWBT Network has decided to prepare annual reports with detailed interpretations of the index and its implications, considering methodological limitations. In addition, the research team from WBT region has been committed to continuously revising and updating the methodology.

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

⁶ Youth 2030 – United Nations Youth Strategy – https://5d962978-9e17-4b96-91be-93983605fae8.filesusr.com/ugd/b1d674_9f63445fc59a41b6bb50cbd4f800922b.pdf

// Three key dimensions of youth participation

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

- ⇒ **Political dimension** refers to young peoples' opportunity to get involved in political processes – to be informed on the work of the government, parliament and municipalities, to be represented by youth structures and to be elected to political positions.
- ⇒ **Economic dimension** refers to young peoples' opportunity to be included in the labour market, to be employed or self-employed.
- ⇒ **Social dimension** refers to the young people's opportunity to participate actively in social life and integrate 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
Indicators of economic participation	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>	

Indicators of social participation	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 about 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) Firstly, missing indicator values are addressed. A process of Cold Deck Imputation is applied, meaning that the most recent prior value for the indicator is used if data is unavailable for the previous year. Indicators with insufficient or unavailable data, or those using different data collection methodologies across WBT region, are excluded from the index calculation.
- 2) All indicators are made comparable in scale. Some indicators need to be inverted so that higher values show better performance. Researchers conduct a normalisation process for indicators to be compared and combined into a single score. Under this process, data for each indicator is scaled between a score of 1 to 100, where 100 represents the target value. The formula: $y_i = 1 + 99 * (x_i - x_{min}) / (x_{max} - x_{min})$ is used, where y_i represents the normalised score, x_i is the original score, x_{min} corresponds to zero, and x_{max} represents the target score.
- 3) Targets for all indicators have been set from the beginning of the index calculation; however, they are revised periodically.
 - ⇒ Most of the targets for indicators of political participation are based on researchers' opinions of the indicator's desired 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 Parliamentarians⁷, a global organisation of national parliaments, to be reached by 2030.

- ⇒ Concerning the indicators for economic participation, values of all targets represent the highest registered value among European Union's countries for a specific year (or the lowest if the lower value is a more desirable outcome). The only exception is the indicator "Young people that started their own business with the financial support of the state", for which the target was set based on the researchers' consensus of the indicator's desired value.
- ⇒ Targets for social participation represent the highest or lowest registered value among the European Union's countries for a specific year (depending on the more desirable outcome). The target is based on the researchers' assessment only in the case of the indicator concerning youth in prisons.

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 values of indicators of youth political participation. Lastly, the overall Youth Participation Index is calculated as an average of scores for each dimension of youth participation.

⁷ The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the global organisation 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

Quality data and evidence on youth must be widely available to create, implement and evaluate policy measures to increase and improve youth participation. Decision-makers, youth organisations and young people must have access to up-to-date and 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 the data on youth between 15 and 29 years of age can be collected in each participant using the same methodology, some of the issues in data availability have persisted over the last eight years. These issues will be discussed in the following text and put in the context of the EU integration.

// Availability of data on youth political participation in 2023

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

The data used in creating this Index is collected through desk research conducted by researchers in each of the WBT region and is not readily available. Obtaining data on youth political participation requires significant resources, as it involves a systematic web search of official websites and social network channels, which are not always regularly updated or complete.

Data on youth political participation was successfully gathered in the whole WBT region through desk research. Limited data on the local level was available for Türkiye – given that there are 2951 municipalities, the data had to be gathered using a sample of municipalities. To gather relevant information for analysing youth political participation at the local level in Türkiye, data was collected from 81 city municipalities over the past four years. As a result, this data is only partially available.

Availability of data for indicators of political participation per participant in 2023

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 2023

Data on youth economic participation is mainly available through official statistics, except on youth self-employment.

The primary source for data on indicators of youth economic participation is the Labour Force Survey (LFS)⁸, which is conducted in each participant by national statistical offices. The only exception is the information on young people who started their own businesses with financial support from the state, measured as the percentage of young people who received subsidies among all applicants. The official institution providing subsidies collects the data regarding this indicator, which is the only indicator challenging to assess.

Availability of data for indicators of social participation per participant in 2023

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	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

⁸ It should be noted that from 2021 onwards, the new methodology of the European Union LFS has been in force. The introduced changes concern the operational definitions of the three labour statuses (employed, unemployed and outside the labour force). The new European regulation prescribes that the EU countries apply the new redesigned concepts regarding the LFS. This means that the data from the previous years is not entirely 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

The reasons behind difficulties in getting data about the young people who started their own businesses with financial support from the state are different. For example, in Albania, each institution providing subsidies has this information. When requested, these institutions can offer data. However, they cannot disaggregate it by age group (15–29), stating that such data is unavailable. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the national level of government is not competent in allocating funds to support businesses. Competencies for these types of support are at the entity level (FBiH and RS) and Brčko District. In addition to the entity level, in the FBiH, funds for business support are also allocated by the competent cantonal ministries. In addition, local communities in both entities allocate funds to support businesses. Data on the allocation of funds exist only at the level at which they are allocated, and no instance collects this data at the national level.

// Availability of data on youth social participation in 2023

Data on youth social participation is mainly 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 comes from a Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), which is being conducted in the whole WBT region. However, the frequency of data collection varies among WBT region. The national statistics offices usually collect indicators related to the formal education system. However, the methodology for calculating these indicators somewhat varies between the WBT region due to the differences in educational systems and how relevant data is being collected. Data on youth participation in non-formal education is also infrequently available.

Availability of data for indicators of social participation per participant in 2023

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

There have been some important advancements in collecting data on social participation over the years.

When the Index was first developed, most participants from WBT region did not have data on young people in prisons. Over the past eight years, the system of recording and providing data has improved. The Ministries of Justice in most of the WBT region now collect the data by age group, although they still do not publish it on their official websites. Only Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye have difficulties when it comes to collecting this type of data. In Türkiye, it is possible to obtain the percentage of prisoners in the age group 18–34, which is noteworthy progress.

Another vital progress is collecting data on young people receiving social welfare services. Most WBT region have received this information this year. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, no single instance at the national level collects or processes data concerning social assistance beneficiaries due to lack of jurisdiction.⁹

⁹ According to the Constitution of BiH, the national level of government in BiH does not have social policy (or politics) under its jurisdiction. Jurisdiction in the domain of social policies rests with entities and cantons (in FBiH). At the same time, local communities provide certain types of assistance (independent of the regulations of higher levels of government). In addition, the data held by the entity, cantonal or local levels of government are not consolidated; they are not submitted to a single database, nor are these databases organised, at least at the entity level.

Because the data on education is not fully comparable for all participants from WBT region, it was decided to calculate the index using the education indicators reported in the Eurostat database, including the percentage of early leavers from education and training¹⁰ and the population aged 30–34 with tertiary educational attainment levels.

// Availability of data in the context of EU integration

All candidates from WBT region – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye – along with Kosovo as a potential candidate, are being evaluated for their ability to meet the obligations of EU membership. A major request from the EU to the whole WBT region during the pre-accession phase is to have reliable and transparent statistics.¹¹ Their progress in statistics is reviewed in annual reports.¹² According to the last report, the preparation level of statistics varies significantly among the WBT region (see table below).

Chapter 18 Statistics Assessment in the European Commission’s Annual Reports 2024

Albania	early stage	some level of preparation	moderately prepared	good level of preparation	well advanced
Bosnia and Herzegovina	early stage	some level of preparation	moderately prepared	good level of preparation	well advanced
Kosovo	early stage	some level of preparation	moderately prepared	good level of preparation	well advanced
Montenegro	early stage	some level of preparation	moderately prepared	good level of preparation	well advanced
North Macedonia	early stage	some level of preparation	moderately prepared	good level of preparation*	well advanced
Serbia	early stage	some level of preparation	moderately prepared	good level of preparation*	well advanced
Türkiye	early stage	some level of preparation	moderately prepared	good level of preparation	well advanced

Note: The European Commission’s Annual Reports 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. The assessment that the WBT region received in the 2024 reports are marked in a different colour.

Also, the databases are not organised according to the age of the beneficiaries, and it is challenging to obtain data on young beneficiaries of social assistance.

¹⁰ While the dropout rate in secondary education refers to the percentage of enrolled students in secondary education as a share of the 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 labour force survey. More information is available in Annexe 1.

¹¹ European Commission – Chapters of the acquis/negotiating chapters: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/glossary/chapters-acquis-negotiating-chapters_en

¹² More information is available on the website: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en. The latest report covers the period from 15 June 2023 to 1 September 2024.

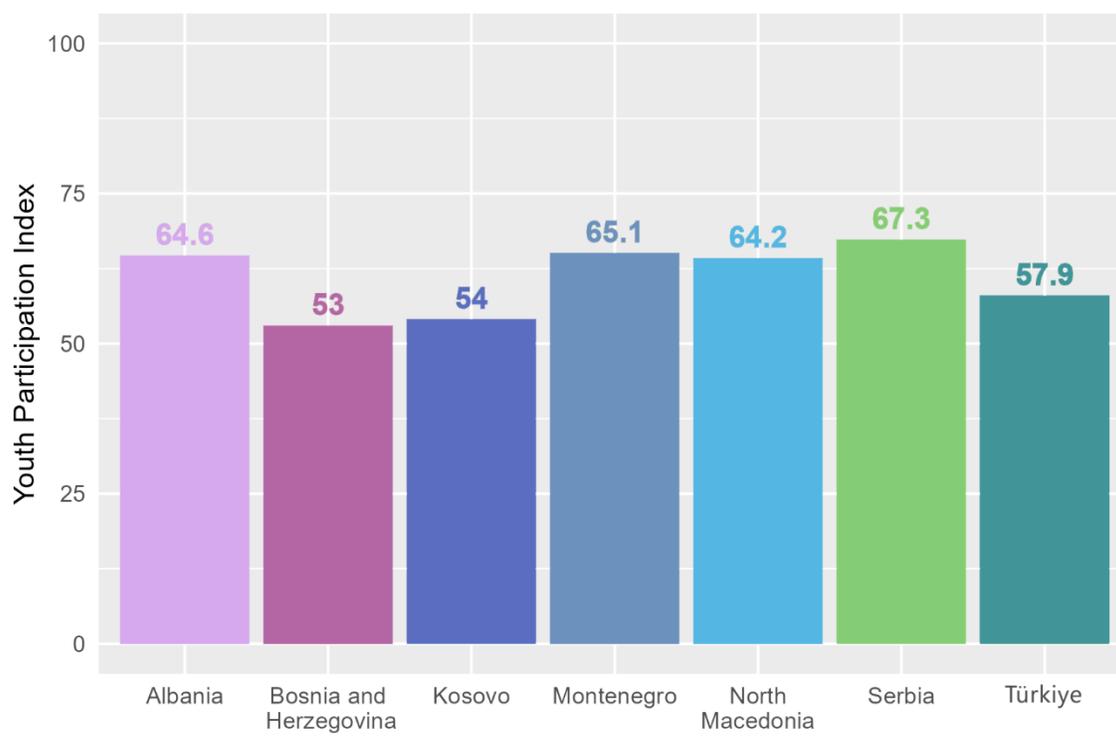
* More precisely, it was assessed that North Macedonia and Serbia have between a moderate and a good level of preparation.

Serbia made good progress on the previous year's recommendations; there has been some progress in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Türkiye, and there has been limited progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Social statistics, which are relevant to this report, have been generally assessed well. Most of the WBT region regularly conduct income and living conditions surveys and labour force surveys.

CHAPTER 3

Youth Participation Index

The Youth Participation Index is prepared based on economic, social and political participation indicators. To make the index comparable between WBT region, only those indicators with available data from all participants from WBT region were used to calculate the index. The complete list of indicators is available in Annexe 1.

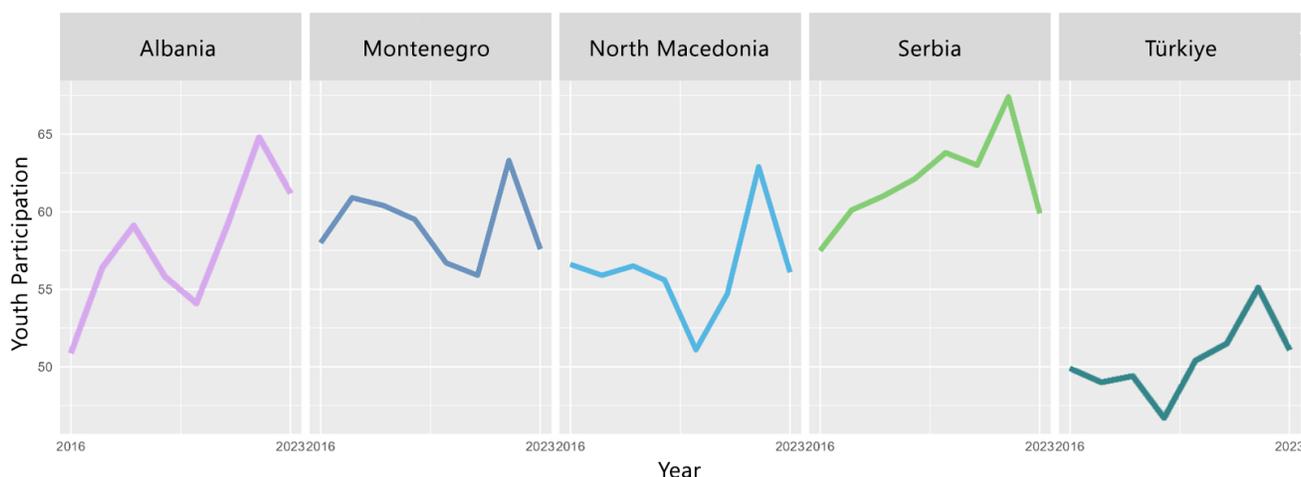


This year's index is calculated for the first time for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Kosovo, in addition to five regular participants from WBT region. However, due to missing data on social participation, an important methodological note is that YPI values for these two participants have been calculated only based on economic and political involvement, whereas for the rest of WBT region, the index of social participation was part of the calculation as well.

What are the key conclusions of the new edition of the Youth Participation Index:

- ⇒ There is a substantial difference between the current situations in the seven participants from WBT region and the targeted value of 100.
- ⇒ WBT region and Türkiye are primarily similar in terms of youth participation. These participants face consistent challenges in engaging young people across political, economic, and social domains. Yet, while the evidence confirms this trend, the specific

challenges experienced by the youth often differ. The value of YPI for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Türkiye indicates that young people in these participants face some additional challenges.



Due to the changes in methodology and the inclusion of the social participation index in 2021, it is impossible to compare the values of the index of youth participation over the years. This can be done only if the political and economic index of youth participation is considered when calculating the index of youth participation since they can be calculated for the period 2016–2021. However, these two indicators do not provide a complete picture when interpreting the data.

Analyses of this data reveal various trends in youth participation in the region over the years. While some instances show signs of improvement, the values of YPI have predominantly fluctuated without substantial shifts. For further interpretation of these trends, insight into how the values of specific indicators have changed over the years is needed.

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

CHAPTER 4

A closer look at youth political participation

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

// Key Facts and Figures on Youth Political Participation

Youth political participation has shown little improvement over the past eight years.

Values of the political participation index in 2023 ranged from around 26 in Türkiye to 48 in Albania, which is far from the target of 100. There has been some evidence of progress over the years in Albania, whereas the situation is mainly stagnating in Türkiye and even deteriorating in Montenegro and North Macedonia.

The youth are still vastly underrepresented in political life in the whole WBT region.

In 2023, young people accounted for between 0% of MPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and just below 5% in Montenegro. There were no ministers in Government and almost no deputy ministers and mayors under thirty in any of the participants from WBT region.

Most ministries and parliaments utilise online tools to inform the public, whereas municipalities lag.

Desk research indicates that the use of online tools by municipalities at the local level needs to be significantly improved in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia.

Youth structures were established nationally in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia, but this was not the case in Türkiye and Montenegro.

Regarding the local level, the **percentage of municipalities with active youth structures (based on their websites and social network pages) was around 60%** in most of the WBT region and only 31% and 21% in North Macedonia and Kosovo, respectively. This absence represents a significant barrier to youth participation. Only in Albania have almost all municipalities established youth structures.

Political Participation Index

Political Participation Index comprises indicators of political participation¹³ which were collected in the whole WBT region:

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

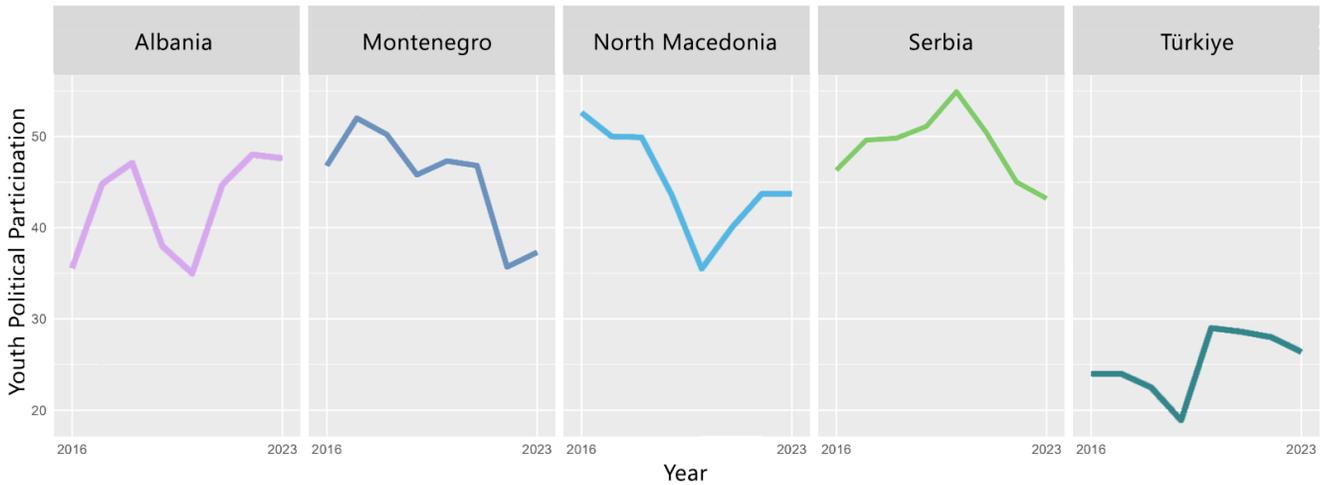
The Political Participation Index combines data on these various aspects into one number. Analyses of 2023 Index values indicate that:

- ⇒ Youth political involvement across all participating nations remains notably low, with the highest recorded index value reaching only 48 – far from the target of 100.
- ⇒ The state of political participation in Türkiye is particularly concerning compared to other participants from WBT region due to the low number of young people in political positions, the absence of youth structure at the national level and the very low percentage of municipalities with established youth structures.



¹³ Figures for 2023 were available for the whole WBT region. However, it should be noted that the data concerning the local level in Türkiye was collected for a sample of municipalities.

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



It seems that in the whole WBT region, opportunities for political participation have varied throughout the years. To some participants from WBT region, there was a period of decline compared to 2016, followed by a period of improvement (such is the case in North Macedonia), whereas, to others, the situation is reverse – progress was followed by stagnation or decline (for instance in Montenegro or Türkiye). Overall, when comparing the situation in 2023 to 2016, we can conclude that there has been some evidence of progress over the years in Albania, whereas the situation is mainly stagnating in Serbia and Türkiye and even deteriorating in Montenegro and North Macedonia (although judging from the collected data the situation has started improving in the last three years).

The index values suggest that no participants from WBT region are approaching the targeted goal. Observing the index values uncovers significant trends that require additional data to comprehend these patterns.¹⁵ In the following text, we will detail all the indicators relating to youth political participation.

Young people continue to be severely under-represented in parliaments and other political positions.

In 2023, young people accounted for between 0% of MPs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and around 4.9% in 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, which makes them one of the most underrepresented groups in parliaments.

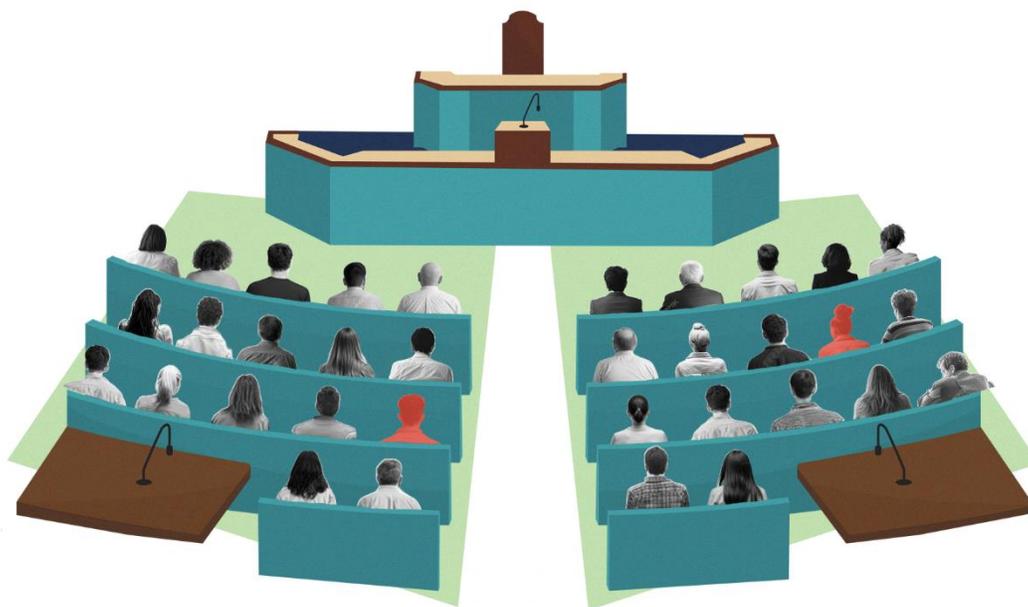
¹⁴ The Political Participation Index was calculated for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo for the first time in 2023, thus, it is not possible to make a comparison over the years.

¹⁵ The table with all data regarding political participation is in Annexe 2 of the document.

Although the situation on the global level is similar – the average share of MPs under age 30 is 2.8% – some countries manage to make their parliaments more inclusive, such as Norway, with close to 14% of MPs under 30 and Germany, with close to 9% of young MPs.¹⁶ Considering this, the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Forum of Young Parliamentarians, a global organisation of national parliaments, set a target of 15% of MPs under 30 to be reached by 2030.¹⁷ This number has been chosen to correspond to the global proportion of the population aged between 20 and 29, which is 18%. The whole WBT region for which YPI was calculated are far from reaching this goal. However, achieving it is far from impossible. Some participants from WBT region have already been much closer to achieving 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 MPs under thirty, 2023

Albania	1,4%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0%
Kosovo	4%
Montenegro	4,9%
North Macedonia	1,66%
Serbia	3,2%
Türkiye	0,7%



¹⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union - Youth participation in national parliaments: 2023.

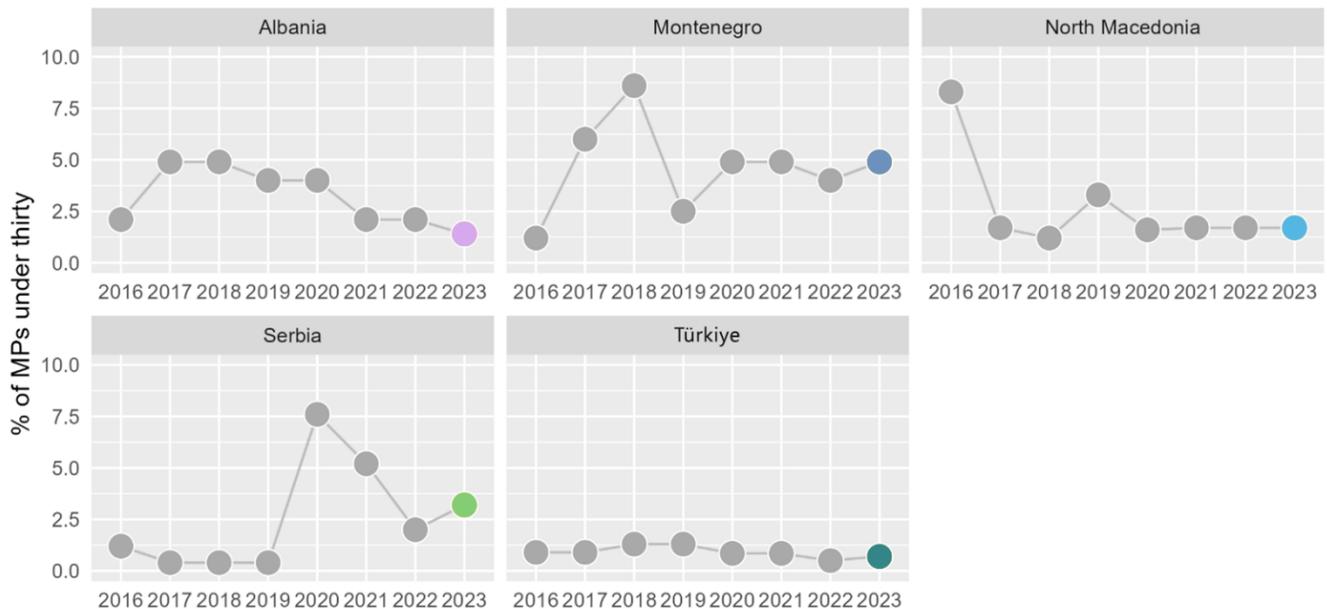
¹⁷ The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the global organisation of national parliaments, gathering 181 Member Parliaments and 15 Associate Members. More information can be found on website <https://www.ipu.org/about-us>.

When it comes to a question of gender balance, in most of the WBT region, there is a higher percentage of female MPs (Albania, Türkiye, and Kosovo) or the male/female ratio is 50:50 (Montenegro and North Macedonia), and in one participant male MPs outnumber their female counterparts (Serbia). This is the opposite of the trend observed on the global level, where men typically outnumber women among young parliamentarians. However, it is challenging to interpret these numbers because there is a minimal number of MPs under thirty. As these numbers increase, WBT region must maintain or adopt a balanced male-to-female ratio.

Over the past eight years, progress in increasing the share of MPs under thirty has been very slow, and in some cases, the situation has significantly deteriorated.

In North Macedonia, the percentage of MPs under thirty was around 8% in 2016 but decreased significantly since. In Montenegro, the rate of MPs dropped to 2.5% in 2019 but almost doubled from 2020 to the last calculation. Albania also experienced a decline compared to previous years, when this number was around 4%, to only 1.5%. from 2022. 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 3.2% in 2023. On the other hand, in Türkiye, this percentage was consistently low over the years, around 1%.

Youth Participation in National Parliaments



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 ministers¹⁸ in Government under thirty in any of the WBT region at the national level. Out of all the participants from WBT region, there were deputy ministers under thirty only in Kosovo and mayors under thirty only in North Macedonia and Serbia.

Percentage of Young People in Political Positions in 2023

Indicators	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Türkiye
% of ministers under thirty	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)
% of deputy ministers under thirty	0% (none)	0% (none)	3.7%	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)
% of mayors under thirty	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)	0% (none)	1.2%	0.6%	0% (none)



¹⁸ 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).

No ministers were under thirty in all participants from WBT region between 2016 and 2023. In North Macedonia and Türkiye, there were no deputy ministers under thirty in this period. Moreover, in the last three years, only young people were appointed as mayors in Serbia and North Macedonia, although in rare cases. The highest registered percentage of young mayors in any of the WBT region in the last five years was 6% in Albania from 2016 to 2018, although in the last five years, this percentage dropped to zero.

Montenegro and Türkiye continue to be without youth structures at the national level.

Montenegro and Türkiye continue to be without youth structures at the national level. The Montenegro Council for Youth ceased to exist in 2022 due to a delay in preparing and adopting a new Youth Strategy in Montenegro. The new strategy was adopted in October 2023, leaving a gap without a functioning youth structure for almost two years. Without the Council for Youth, and with a small number of local youth councils in municipalities, there have been significant challenges in coordinating and aligning various efforts related to youth participation across different sectors and organisations. In Türkiye, significant efforts have been made to establish an independent youth council; however, this has not yet been achieved. The government does not recognise a national youth council that was granted observer member status by the European Youth Forum in 2019.

Country	Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on the national level	Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on the local level (in %)
Albania	✓	98%
Kosovo	✓	65%
Serbia	✓	64%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	*	60%
Montenegro	✗	60%
North Macedonia	✓	31%
Türkiye	✗	21%

* Note: According to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, operational competencies in youth are at the entity levels (FBiH and RS) and the Brčko district of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is why there is no legal regulation regulating the issue of youth structures at the state level (BiH). At the levels that are competent in this area, the regulation is clear and implemented in the domain of community structures. Three laws on youth were adopted in BiH for two entities (FBiH and RS) and the Brčko District of BiH. Although there is no youth structure at the state level, all three laws were implemented in the part that three umbrella bodies for youth were formed, which is following the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the competencies over youth. Therefore, it is indicated that BiH has established youth structures recognised by the authorities, but this is not explicit at the state level due to jurisdiction.

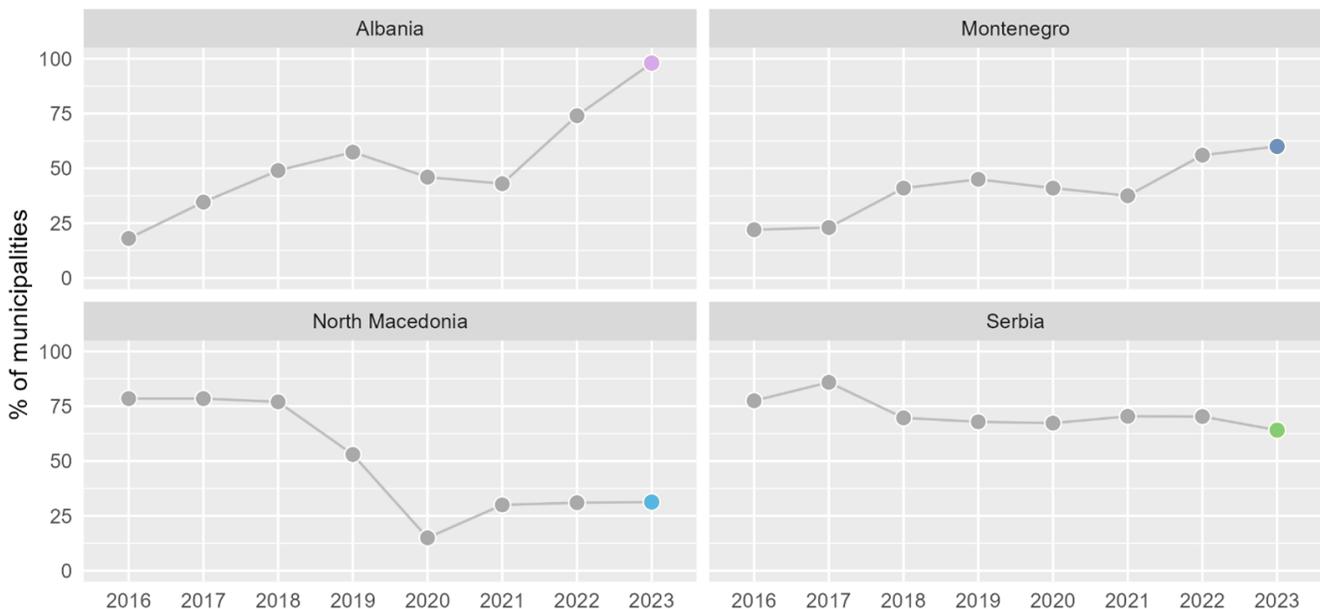
Youth structures are absent in many municipalities in the region.

Regarding the local level, the situation in Albania has improved significantly, so now, almost all municipalities have a youth structure. This improvement may be attributed to the adoption of Law No. 75/2019 'For Youth', according to which all the municipalities have to establish official local youth structures in the form of local youth councils. However, researchers note their effectiveness in fulfilling their intended roles varies widely, often constrained by insufficient resources, limited capacity, or lack of prioritisation by local authorities.

In most of WBT region, around one third of municipalities are still without a youth structure. The situation is especially concerning in North Macedonia and Türkiye, where one in three and one in four municipalities, respectively, have such structures. In North Macedonia local youth structures significantly decreased in 2020. The situation began improving in 2021, but in 2022 and 2023, there was no further progress.

The number of city municipalities with youth structures increased Türkiye and Montenegro by around 6 and 4 percentage points respectively, compared to the previous year. Serbia experienced modest decrease of approximately 6 percentage points.

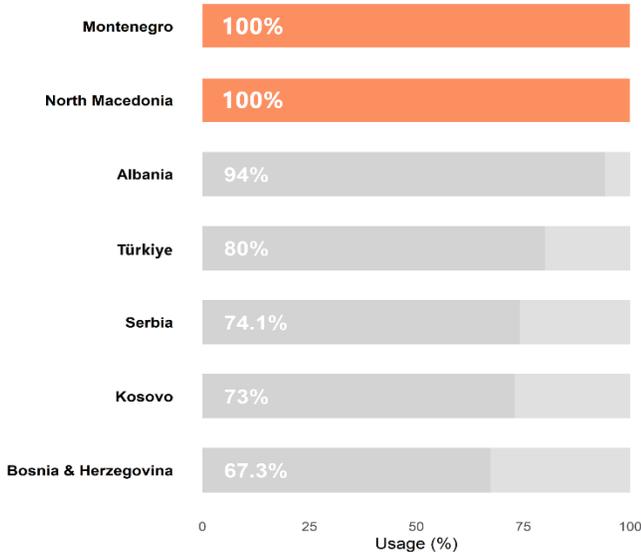
Local youth structures over the years



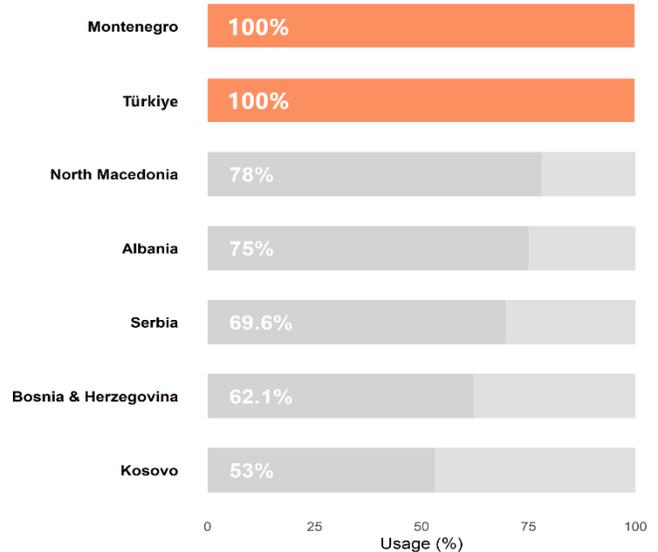
Online tools for participation in the decision-making processes of governments, parliaments and municipalities are still not thoroughly utilised.

The desk research results in 2023 indicated that in whole WBT region, most ministries and parliaments use online tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, websites, and e-portals. However, the use of online tools varies between participants. In Montenegro, this percentage has been 100% each year since 2016 and maintained the use of online tools by municipalities at the highest possible level. While North Macedonia maintained its full use of online tools nationally, Türkiye saw a 20-percentage-point decrease. Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Serbia lag behind other participants in the local use of online tools.

Use of online tools – Government and Parliament



Use of online tools – Municipalities



CHAPTER 5

A closer look at youth economic participation

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.

// Key Facts and Figures on Youth Economic Participation

The state of economic participation in the whole WBT region involved remains a cause for concern. The highest registered value of this index in 2023 was 78, significantly lower than the target value of 100. Values of the economic participation index in 2023 ranged from around 63 in Kosovo to 78 in Montenegro. Based on the collected data, it seems that after a period of stagnation or decline in values of indicators of youth position in the labour market with the start of the pandemic in 2020, there has been no further significant deterioration.

In most participants from WBT region, one in four young people is neither employed nor educated nor trained. In Kosovo, almost 38% of young people are in this situation. Young women more often find themselves in this situation. The difference is particularly prominent in Türkiye, which amounts to almost 20 percentage points.

The issue of youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge, although there has been some progress recently. The highest youth unemployment rate registered in the WBT region were in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and North Macedonia, where this rate was around 23%. Many young people have been unemployed for longer than 12 months.

Few young individuals, particularly young women, choose self-employment. In 2023, Albania had the highest share of self-employment among young people (15.1%), while Kosovo had the lowest (4.8%). Data on young individuals who apply for state support for self-employment is still not readily accessible.

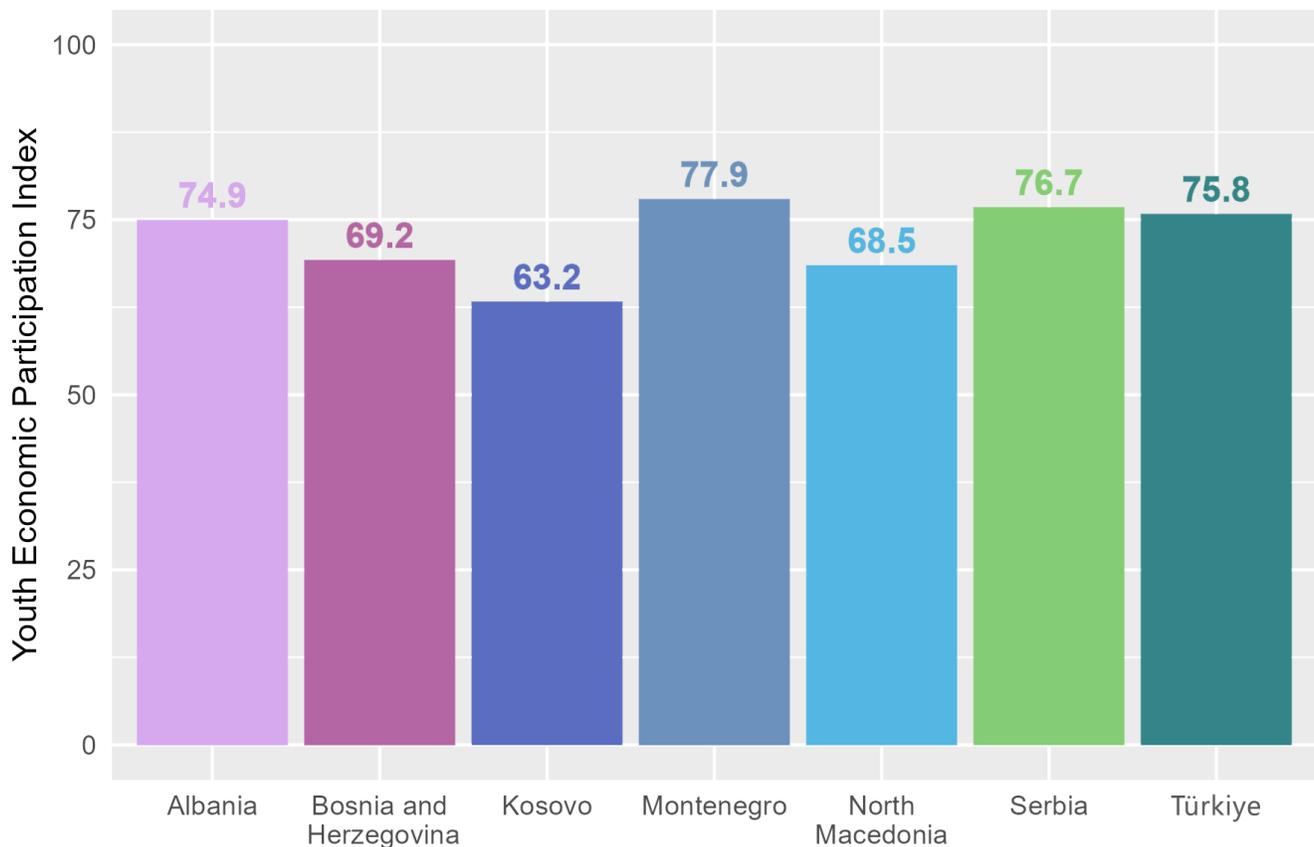
Economic Participation Index

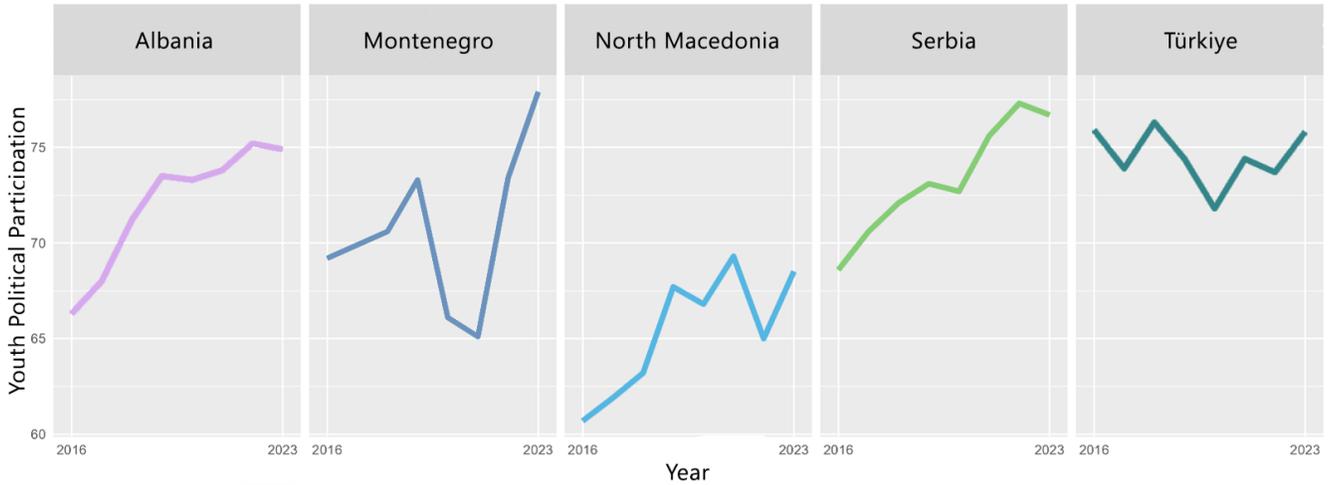
The index of economic participation summarises information on several indicators of the inclusion of young people in the labour market:

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

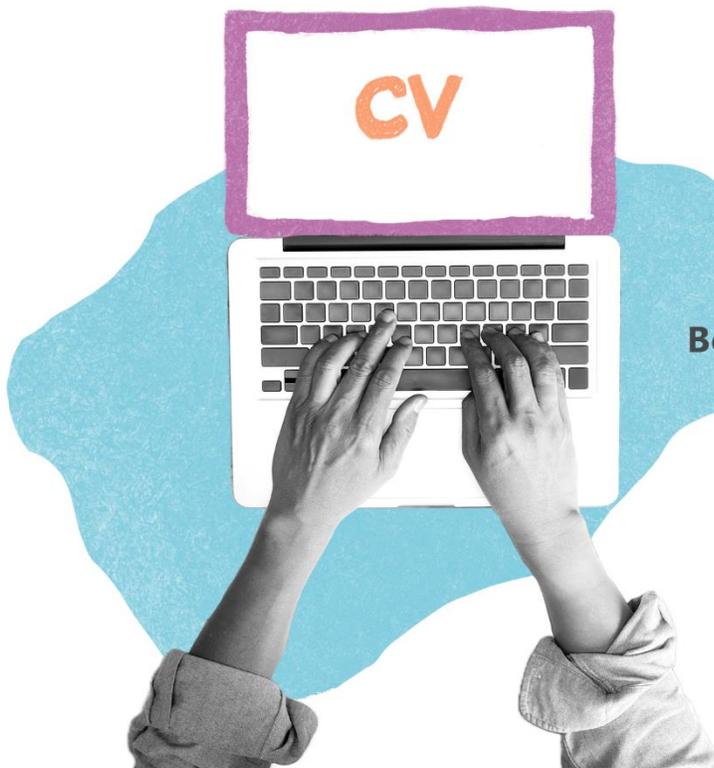
Values of the index of economic participation in 2023 lead to two key conclusions:

- ⇒ Similarly to political participation, the economic engagement of young people in the whole WBT region still lags behind its potential. The highest index value registered was close to 78, falling short of the desired target of 100.
- ⇒ From the data collected, it appears that the economic participation of young people shows a relatively consistent pattern across Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Türkiye. The situation seems to be a bit more concerning in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and North Macedonia, displaying the highest NEET and youth unemployment rates among all participants from WBT region.





When we look at the changes in the last eight years¹⁹, the situation has been relatively consistently improving in Albania and Serbia, but it has remained unchanged in Türkiye. North Macedonia has seen a noticeable improvement over the years; however, the situation took a downturn in 2022 and has yet to recover. Young people’s economic participation has significantly worsened during the pandemic in Montenegro but has since improved dramatically.



Youth unemployment

Albania	22,2%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	23,1%
Kosovo	17,2%
Montenegro	21,2%
North Macedonia	24,9%
Serbia	18,5%
Türkiye	15,5%
EU-27	11,2%

¹⁹ 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 more in-depth look at these index values, the following text will provide a detailed analysis of the indicators related to the economic aspect of youth participation.

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

In the part of WBT region that participated in the YPI in 2016 – Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye – there has been some progress in the economic participation of young people. However, some areas have 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 WBT region participants that joined the YPI in 2023, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the most significant issues seem to be the high NEET rate and low labour force participation (especially for Kosovo), high youth unemployment and low youth employment.

Data on Indicators of Economic Participation per participant in 2023

Indicators	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Türkiye	EU-27
NEET	24.6%	22.2%	37.6%	20.3%	24.1%	15.2%	25.8%	11.2%
Youth unemployment	22.2%	23.1%	17.2%	21.2%	24.9%	18.5%	15.5%	11.2%
Long-term youth unemployment	15.0%	14.4%	11.3%	12.0%	16.9%	5.7%	16.7%	2.4%
Labour force participation	56.9%	43%	31.4%	59.4%	44.8%	49.3%	55%	56%
Youth employment	44.2%	33.1%	26%	46.8%	33.6%	40.2%	46.4%	49.7%

In most of the WBT region, nearly one in four young people is neither employed nor enrolled in education or training.

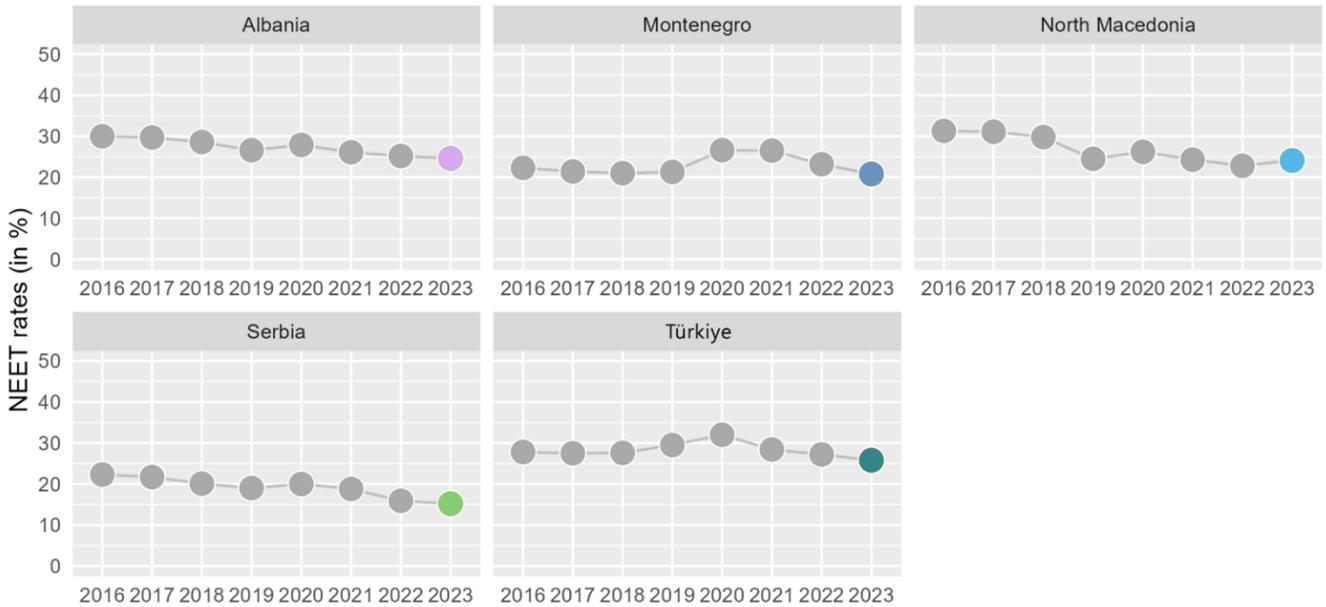
In five participants, the NEET rate is between 20% and 25%, with Kosovo and Serbia being the only exceptions. Kosovo has the highest NEET rate at nearly 38%, while Serbia has the lowest at around 15%, making it the closest to the EU-27 average of 11.2%. However, the whole WBT region are still far off meeting the EU-level target set by the European Union, stipulating that the share of young people in employment, education, or training should be less than 9% by 2030. WBT region participating in the YPI register values similar to the previous year.

% of youth in NEET category

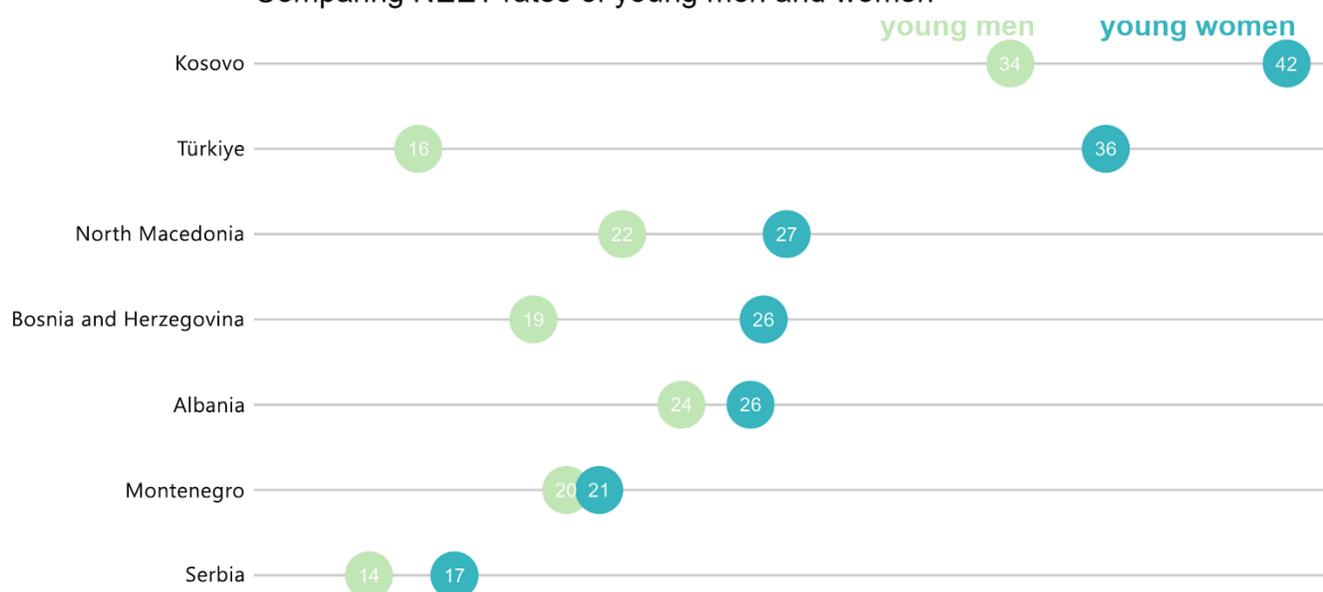
Albania	24,6%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	22,2%
Kosovo	37,6%
Montenegro	20,3%
North Macedonia	24,1%
Serbia	15,2%
Türkiye	25,8%
EU-27	11,2%



How have NEET rates changed in the last 8 years



Comparing NEET rates of young men and women



There is a pronounced gender gap between young men and women in NEET rates.

When analysed by gender, most of the WBT region show a consistent pattern: the NEET rate is lower for young men than for young women. In 2023, this was true for the whole region. The difference is slight in some, like Montenegro, Albania, and Serbia. However, the gap is particularly striking in Türkiye, reaching a staggering 20 percentage points.

Although youth unemployment rates have decreased in most of the WBT region in the last seven years, it continues to be a severe problem.

The highest youth unemployment rate registered in the participants from WBT region were in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and North Macedonia, where this rate was around 23%. While the previous reports registered a decrease in youth unemployment rates in 2023, this was only true for some of the participants (Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Türkiye). In Montenegro, the unemployment rate has sharply increased during the pandemic but recovered in 2022 and continued improving in 2023 (from 32.5% in 2021 to 25.4% in 2022 and 21.2% in 2023). However, in some of the WBT region, there was an increase in youth unemployment, such as Serbia (1.4 percentage points) and Albania (1.5 percentage points). 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. For

example, researchers have noted that precarious and short-term working practices in Türkiye are common among young people.

In 2023, youth employment rates varied from only 26% in Kosovo to close to 47% in Montenegro. In Montenegro, the youth employment rate has increased to the year before (41% in 2022); in all other parts of WBT region, it has remained broadly similar.

Some participants experience pronounced differences in unemployment rates between young men and women.

The unemployment rates were higher for young women than for young men in most of the WBT region, with the highest difference observed in Kosovo (8.6 percentage points). The opposite trend was registered in Albania and North Macedonia, where the unemployment rate of young men was higher than that of young women, with the most significant difference observed in Albania (3 percentage points).

Many young people in the region remain unemployed for longer than 12 months, which may put them in danger of becoming marginalised in the labour market.

Long-term unemployment remains high across most of the WBT region, ranging from 11.3% in Kosovo to 16.9% in North Macedonia, except for Serbia with 6%. North Macedonia saw a significant drop from 37.9% in 2022 to 16.9% in 2023, while Albania experienced a 2.5% increase.

Gender differences in long-term unemployment rates vary across WBT region:

- Higher rates among young men in Albania and North Macedonia.
- Higher rates among young women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Türkiye, with Türkiye showing the most significant gap (11 percentage points).
- Montenegro and Serbia reported similar rates for young men and women.

Striking differences in activity rates among young men and women persist over the years.

Labour force participation rates ranged from around 31% in Kosovo to 59% in Montenegro, higher than the EU-27 average. Most of the participants report similar participation rates compared to the previous year, with Albania and Türkiye showing a slight increase, while Serbia and North Macedonia experience a slight decline. Similarly to previous years, significant gender gaps persist in the whole WBT region. Young men are much more likely to be active in the labour market than young women. The most important 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, which had a difference of around 20 percentage points.

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Kosovo

Montenegro

North Macedonia

Serbia

Türkiye



Comparing labor force participation of young women and men

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

In 2023, Albania had the highest share of self-employment among young people (15.1%), while Kosovo had the lowest (4.8%). In parts of WBT region, there was an improvement in self-employment rates compared to the year before, Montenegro and Türkiye, whereas others experienced stagnation or slight decline. The gender gap is also prominent among self-employed youth. Young men in WBT region except Serbia were significantly more likely to be self-employed than young women. The most prominent gender gap has been observed in Albania and Kosovo, where the self-employment rate for young men was 6 percentage points above that for women.

Comparing differences in self-employment of young men and women



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 business among all applicants from state institutions, in Serbia, approximately 1 in 3 applicants (32.1%) and in North Macedonia, 1 in 4 applicants (24.4%) were successful in applying for the state support. The situation has been essentially unchanged compared to the year before. In most of the WBT region, obtaining data for this indicator was also impossible.

CHAPTER 6

A closer look at youth social participation

Young people's social participation in the region is a concern, evidenced by one in four young people being at risk of poverty and a considerable number of young men in prisons.

// Key Facts and Figures on Youth Social Participation

The highest index registered is 82, still beneath the desired target of 100. Based on the collected data, youth social participation is similar in Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, whereas the situation is somewhat more worrying in Türkiye and Albania. It should be noted that there are still significant challenges in obtaining data related to young people's social participation.

Many young people are at risk of poverty. In Serbia in 2023, this rate was 19.2%, while in Türkiye and Montenegro, this rate was at 20.9% and 23%, respectively. Similar percentages were registered in Albania and North Macedonia in previous years. Out of total number of people receiving financial support in the Social Protection System, 11% were young people in Montenegro, 15% in Serbia, 19% in Albania and almost 28% in North Macedonia. In Türkiye, data regarding this aspect of social participation needs to become available.

Approximately one-third of people in prisons are young people in most of the WBT region. There is a significant gender disparity, with the vast majority of young people in prisons being young men.

The dropout rates from secondary education do not reveal notable concerns that require attention, possibly due to the methodology used to calculate this indicator. **Early school leaving remains a significant issue in Albania and Türkiye.** In 2023, similar to previous years, **most of the WBT region' completion rates of tertiary education were below 20%.** Among people aged 30–34, between around 30% (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and around 39% (all other WBT region) of the population had completed at least one level of tertiary education.

Youth Social Participation Index

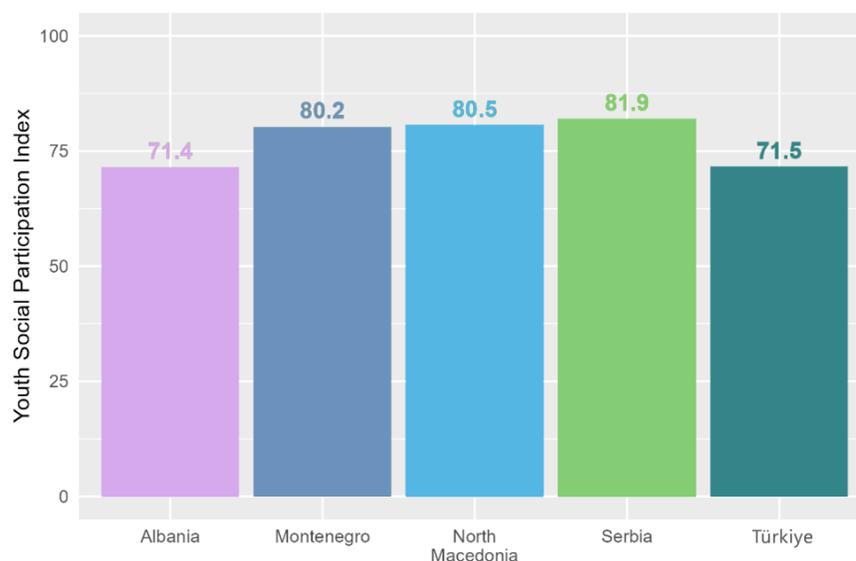
Indicators which have been included in the calculation of the Social Participation Index are:

- ⇒ 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 tertiary educational level and
- ⇒ participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks).

This year, the Index could not be calculated for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Kosovo due to missing values for 2 and 4 out of 5 indicators, respectively.

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

- ⇒ Similar to political and economic participation, the social involvement of young people in the whole WBT region has yet to reach its full potential. The highest registered index value was 82, which falls below the aimed 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 Türkiye and Albania. This is due mainly to the higher share of early school leavers, higher share of prisoners under thirty than in other parts of WBT region and lower participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training.
- ⇒ The Social Participation Index values are similar to the previous year, primarily attributed to the lack of up-to-date data in this area.

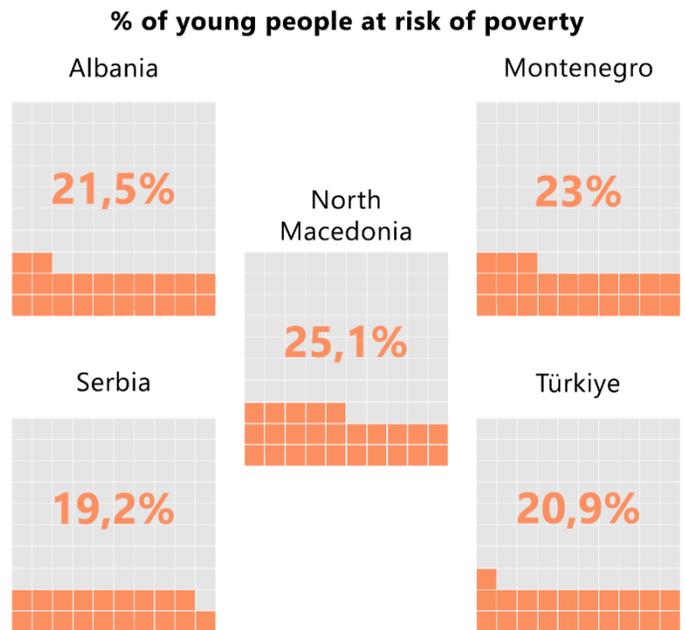


To understand the values of this index, we need to look at the indicators of the social dimension of youth participation and their values in more detail.²⁰

In most of the WBT region, approximately one in five young people are at risk of poverty.

In Serbia, the percentage of young people at risk of poverty in 2023 was 19.2%, similar to the previous year. This rate was 20.9% and 23% in Türkiye and Montenegro, respectively, similar to the previous year.²¹

In 2023, majority managed to gather data about the number of young people who receive financial support in the Social Protection System,²² which has been a challenge in previous years. Of the total number of people receiving such financial support, 11% were young people in Montenegro, 15% in Serbia, 19% in Albania and almost 28% in North Macedonia.



Young people who are part of the social welfare system

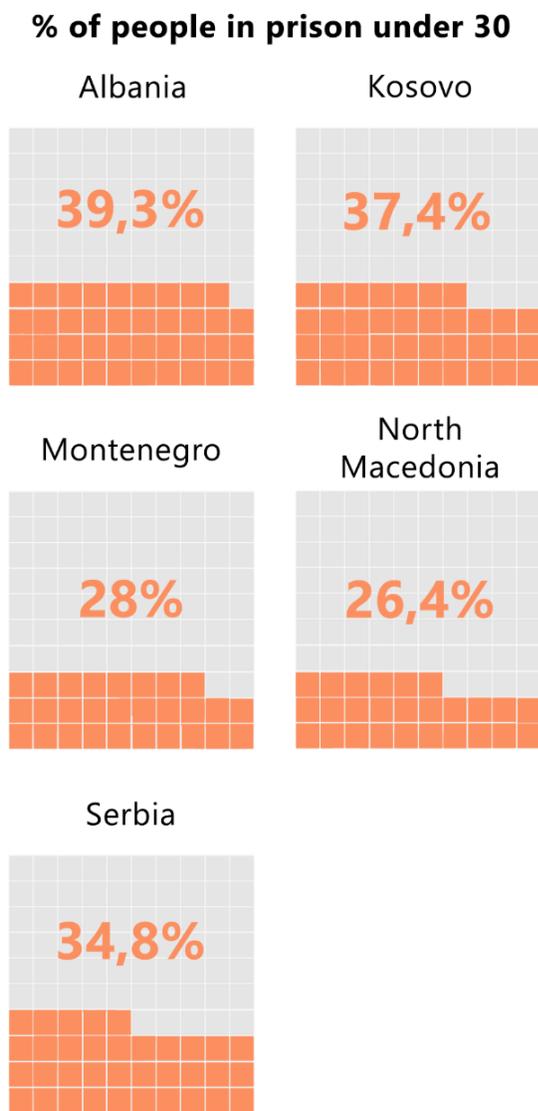
²⁰ The table with all data regarding social participation is in the Annexe 1 of the document.

²¹ Data for North Macedonia will be registered in 2020, and data from Albania will be collected in 2022.

²² According to the Constitution of BiH, the national level of government in BiH does not have social policy (or politics) under its jurisdiction. Jurisdiction in the domain of social policies rests with entities and cantons (in FBiH), while there are certain types of assistance that local communities provide (independently of the regulations of higher levels of government). Due to lack of jurisdiction, no single instance at the national level collects or processes data concerning social assistance beneficiaries. In addition, the data held by the entity, cantonal or local levels of government are not consolidated; they are not submitted to a single database, nor are these databases organised at least at the entity level (perhaps only in the Republika Srpska). Also, the databases are not organised according to the age of the beneficiaries, and it is challenging to obtain data on young beneficiaries of social assistance.

The lower share of young recipients in Montenegro and Serbia most likely does not suggest the lower vulnerability of young people, given that the risk of poverty rates is high in these parts of the region. Although data on this is 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 vulnerable 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, many young people in Albania, particularly in rural regions, lack access to critical support.

More than a third of people in prisons are young people.



This was the case in three participants, except North Macedonia and Montenegro, where this percentage is somewhat lower.

Considering that the share of young people in the total population is between 16% and 23% for these participants, it seems that young people make up a larger share of the prison population than the total population.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, data on this indicator is not in the jurisdiction of the national level but of the entity level of government, and it was not possible to obtain it on any entity level.

In Türkiye, data for the age group 18–40 could provide an approximate picture of the situation, although it is not comparable with other participants. The percentage of prisoners in this age group was around 50%. Compared to the year before, most WBT region registered similar values.

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

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

Most of the participants do not have a significant problem with the dropout rate of young people from secondary education, as indicated by a dropout rate of below 2% in the parts of the region for which data was 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),²³ 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 20%, signalling 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	5.7	5.8	19.5	9.5
Population 30–34 with tertiary education (%)	32.1	28.2	38.4	39.7%	38.2	39.9	43.9

Note: The data for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Türkiye refers to 2023; for other participants 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 participants was registered in Eurostat.

More young women enrol and complete tertiary education.

Regarding the statistics concerning tertiary education, the enrolment rate varied from only 17.1% in North Macedonia to 61% in Serbia. Although most WBT region register high rates of young people enrolling in tertiary education, the percentage of young people graduating from tertiary education was relatively low, amounting to 12.2% in North Macedonia and below 20% in most of the WBT region — more young women enrolled and completed tertiary education than young men. The most significant gender gap in enrolment rates was registered in Serbia, where the enrolment rate for young women was around 23 percentage points above that for men, while the most significant gender gap in completion rates was registered in Kosovo (21 points higher for young women).

²³ It should be noted that data for 2023 was available only for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Türkiye at the time of writing this report; thus, for other participants, data for 2020 was reported and used to calculate the index.

Young people graduated from tertiary education

Albania	23,6%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17,1%
Kosovo	5,7%
Montenegro	18,9%
North Macedonia	12,2%
Serbia	14,9%
Türkiye	13%



As mentioned in the methodological note on data availability, it is important to highlight some methodological differences regarding the indicators when interpreting the youth participation rate in education. Therefore, we also look at the population aged 30–34 with tertiary educational attainment level.²⁴ Among people aged 30–34, around 30% (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and around 39% (other participants) of the population completed at least one tertiary education level. This is slightly lower than the EU average: just over two-fifths (43.9%) of the EU population have a tertiary level of education.

Data on youth participation in non-formal education is largely lacking. The existing data point to a very low participation.

Only Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Türkiye data were available when this report was drafted. Around 0.3% of young people in Albania, 4.6% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 5.2% in Serbia reported participating in non-formal education and training in the last 4 weeks. Türkiye registered the highest share of young people reporting involvement in this type of education – 7.2%. We can see much room for improvement if we compare these rates to the EU-27 average of 12.3 or the value registered in Slovenia – 21.4.

²⁴ It should be noted that data for 2023 was available only for Serbia and Türkiye at the time of writing this report; thus, data for 2020 or 2021 for other participants was reported and used in the index calculation.

When we look at the participation rates in formal and non-formal education in the last four weeks, we can see that in 2023, they varied from between 39.9% in Türkiye and 53% in Serbia. For comparison, this rate amounts to 63% in Slovenia.

CHAPTER 7

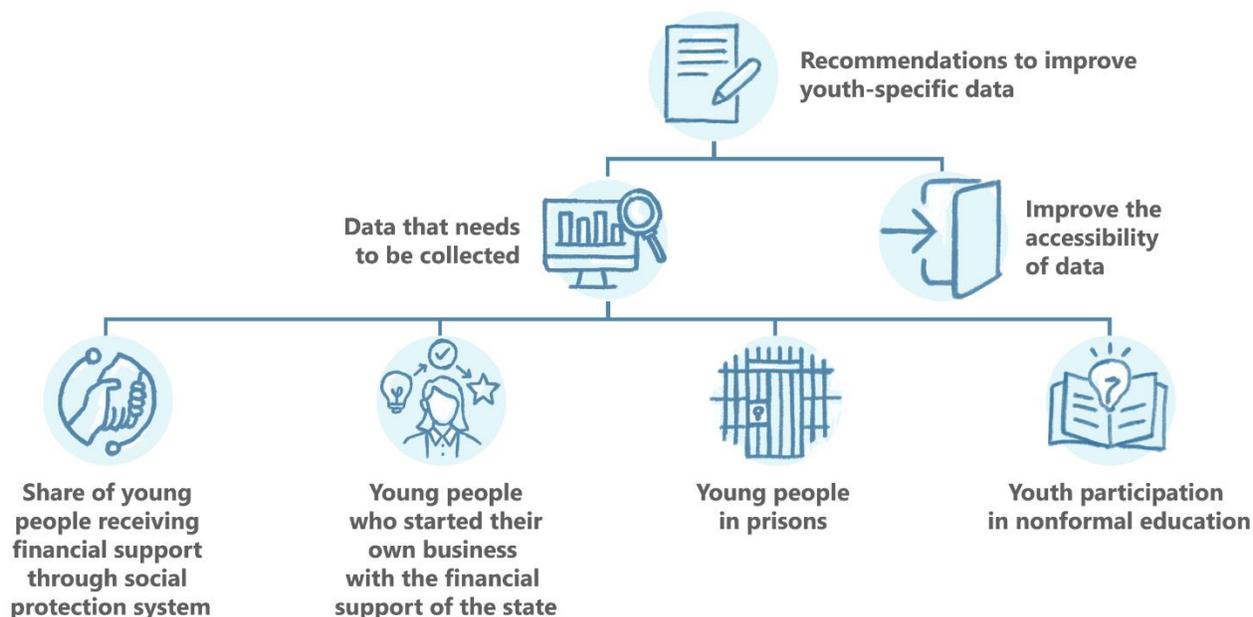
Creating more space for youth participation – a set of recommendations

The eighth edition of the Youth Participation Index clearly shows that many barriers to youth participation remain. However, it is also evident that there have been some significant advancements over the years, which can be attributed to various measures, from improving legal frameworks and policy measures to raising awareness campaigns. In the following text, we will outline two recommendations addressing the lack of youth-sensitive data and opportunities for youth participation in the region. YHWBT Network hopes that YPI recommendations will provide guidelines for advocacy efforts of civil society organisations and 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 following their age and maturity". The following recommendations attempt to formulate how to create more space and opportunities for youth participation.

I Recommendations concerning the absence of youth-sensitive data

Access to youth-specific data is vital for planning effective measures to improve youth participation. At the moment, many participants are missing data on relevant indicators of youth participation for 2023, even though the timing of writing this report is over a year after its end. In some parts of WBT region, it was necessary to rely on data from 2020 or 2021 for indicators of youth social participation because of a lack of updated data. The following recommendations address these challenges related to the scarcity of youth-specific data, incorporating previously unimplemented suggestions and new recommendations based on recent changes in data accessibility observed during the latest monitoring period.



⇒ Institutions need to start collecting 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 and transparent statistics is also a major request from the EU to all participants from the WBT region during the pre-accession phase and the preconditions for a successful negotiation. In particular, it is highly recommended 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) The ministry or other national institution in charge of data on beneficiaries within the social protection system in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Türkiye should disaggregate data by age and start analysing 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, Kosovo, and North Macedonia.
- ⇒ Data on **young people who started their own businesses with the state's financial support compared to all young people who** applied for this support should be

regularly reported. As WBT region enacts policy measures to stimulate self-employment, this indicator would serve as a valuable resource for understanding the success rates of young individuals when they apply 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 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 population of prisoners should become available in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Türkiye for the age group 15–29 and remain readily available in Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.
- ⇒ **National statistical offices in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia must regularly collect data on youth participation in non-formal education and training.**

Institutions that collect this data should also ensure that it is disaggregated by gender, age groups, and other relevant variables. Young people do not represent a homogenous group, and disaggregated data is crucial in adequately targeting support. 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 affairs need to gather data on youth structures at the local level. Collecting all indicators of youth participation at this level would enable more targeted support for 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 research and research efforts are needed to collect the necessary data. Data on youth is often challenging to find on official websites (especially for the age group 15–29) and not presented in a youth-friendly manner. This means that young people and other stakeholders face significant difficulties 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 concerning young people.** This would make it easier for anyone interested in youth-sensitive data, from policymakers to youth organisations and

young people, to obtain it. This also sends a clear message that statistics on youth are important.

An example of a section collecting statistics from a range of other domains on which data is available segregated by age can be found on the Eurostat website:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/children-youth>.

This process can also be connected with monitoring the achievement of targets set by the Agenda 2030 concerning youth. The example of the data visualisation platform “Youth SDG Dashboard” used to track youth indicators across different targets can be found on the website: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/youth-sdg-dashboard/>.

In Albania, the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) establishes the requirement to report robust indicators on youth (age 15–29 years), and to achieve this, a dashboard to provide real-time data on socio-demographic indicators has been designed:

www.instat.gov.al/en/children-and-youth-official-statistics/.

Another good practice example is a database available at the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (<https://data.stat.gov.rs/>). The database shows data for indicators related to the market for different youth age groups.

- ⇒ **The release of datasets obtained via publicly supported research studies involving youth in an open format, as open data, should be strongly encouraged by national institutions.** This is important as it allows researchers to explore available data and conduct secondary analyses. Young people themselves could be encouraged to carry out youth research using these datasets and to participate in creating data-informed youth policies.

One example of using the data to understand the situation better and inform policy decisions is publishing youth justice annual statistics for England and Wales:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2021-to-2022>.

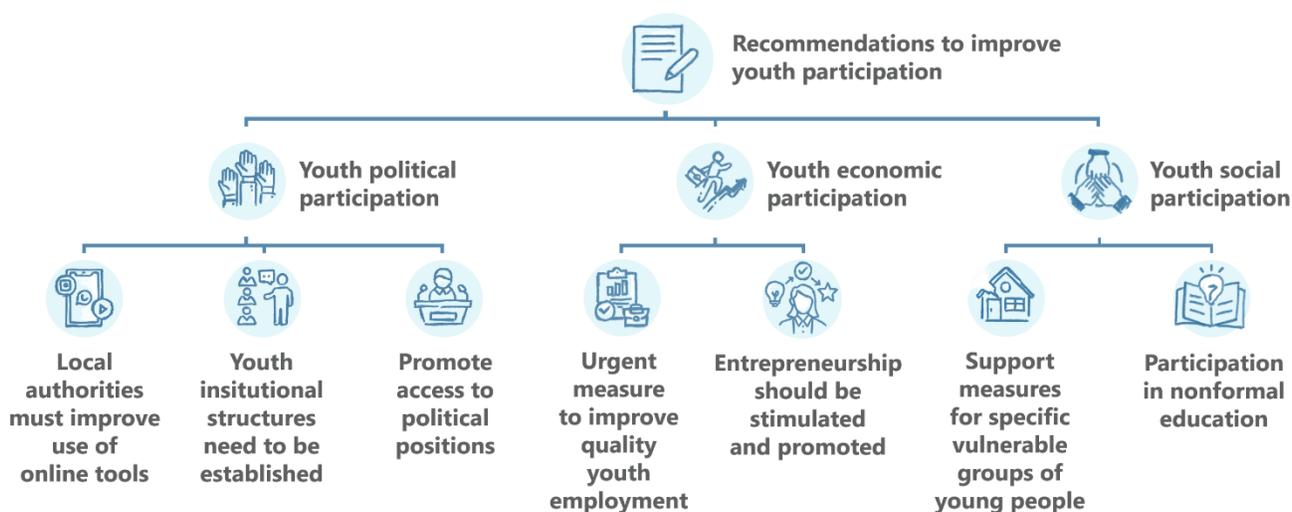
Data is presented clearly and informally in multiple formats, including infographics. Open data is made available.

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

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 continues to be a major problem faced not only by the Western Balkans region and Türkiye but also by modern democracies in the EU.²⁵ Based on the results of the YPI, the opportunities for young people to participate in the decision-making process in the Western Balkans and Türkiye region 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.

²⁵ 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>.

Young people remain vastly underrepresented in national parliaments and other political positions such as mayors, deputy ministers or ministers. The situation regarding their representation in political life has stayed the same over the years, creating a necessity for urgent action. According to the report on global youth participation in parliaments,²⁶ improving youth representation can (in democratic contexts) strengthen the legitimacy of parliament, achieve greater fairness in access to political decision-making, contribute to better policymaking and potentially help young people uninterested in politics to trust political institutions again.

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

- ⇒ raising awareness about the importance of youth participation in politics;
- ⇒ introducing youth quotas, i.e. reserving seats in parliaments to ensure youth presence;
- ⇒ establishing 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 also 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 characterised by the absence of democracy, young people may not choose political positions but rather alternative forms of political engagement. Thus, a supporting and transparent political context is crucial for improving youth access to political positions. Since some participants are facing elections in the upcoming period, this is an opportunity to advocate for the more significant presence of young people in political positions.

Youth institutional structures (councils/parliaments/unions) ensuring young people's participation in decision-making must be established in Türkiye and Montenegro at the national level and in a more significant number of municipalities in the whole region.

Despite significant efforts, Türkiye has still not developed mechanisms for involving young people in the decision-making process at the national level in the form of youth structures, and this process has been significantly delayed in Montenegro. Examples of other participants that have established this mechanism show that this can be achieved, so youth organisations must continue their advocacy efforts.

At the same time, many municipalities do not have active youth structures (based on their websites and social network pages). Even in those with established youth structures, it is necessary to ensure they function adequately. It is essential to advocate for the opportunity to build youth councils, parliaments and unions to ensure the participation of young people in the

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

decision-making process at the national and local levels. Moreover, it might be helpful for youth organisations 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 organised 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

Urgent measures for reducing youth unemployment and the number of young people without a job or outside of education must be implemented in the whole WBT region. Gender differences in this area need to be addressed.

The situation concerning indicators of the position of young people in the labour market has not significantly changed; even though there is some evidence of progress in certain WBT parts, the situation in the region is still worrying and lagging behind many other EU countries:

- ⇒ Although in most WBT region, after a period of stagnation or decline in the value of indicators of the position of young people in the labour market with the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, there was no further significant deterioration, public institutions should implement measures such as improving active labour market policies and training and retraining programs. Youth Guarantee, which many participants in the region are piloting, if adequately conducted, may provide some answer to high rates of youth outside of education and employment. It is important to ensure that this program effectively reaches young people who need it and that its implementation and impact are carefully monitored and evaluated. It should also be ensured that young people have access to jobs and quality jobs.
- ⇒ Significant gender differences in the labour market persist, especially concerning activity rates, which needs to be addressed, especially in Türkiye, where differences are most prominent, and in the rest of WBT region.

In the whole WBT region, it can be recommended to:

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

Entrepreneurship of young people who choose this career option, especially young women, should be stimulated and promoted by providing adequate and continuing (administrative, legal, technical, mentorship) assistance and (financial) support.

Data on youth entrepreneurship suggest that a relatively small number of young people choose self-employment as an option and that those who prefer it may lack adequate support. This was the case with some participants in this year's report. Still, it is also worrying that data on the percentage of young people who received subsidies to start their own business among all applicants could have been obtained only in two participants. As for all other issues, it is necessary to have quality data to plan adequate measures. In preparing policy responses concerning youth entrepreneurship, special attention must be given to young women since they opt for self-employment much less than young men.

⇒ **Recommendations concerning youth social participation**

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

The engagement of young individuals in non-formal education and training is notably inadequate, necessitating attention from the respective youth policies in each participant. Many civil society organisations actively offer this form of education, which could provide valuable insights for potentially effective policy measures.

Although the situation concerning early school leaving is not severe in most of the WBT region, this is not the case with Albania, Kosovo and Türkiye, which needs to be recognised through youth policies. Even though dropouts from secondary education and the percentage of early school leavers are not high in the rest of WBT region, this still needs to be addressed. Young people from vulnerable groups are usually at much greater risk of not completing primary and

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

secondary education. Access to tertiary education should also be improved, and young men, in particular, should be supported in opting to continue their education at this level.

The alarming number of young people at risk of poverty leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to improve the situation of young people in vulnerable positions as soon as possible. In the whole region, a significant number of young people are at risk of poverty. At the same time, information on young people regarding social welfare is lacking in most of the WBT region, making it difficult to understand the situation completely. Many young men are incarcerated, which should lead to questioning whether other alternative measures could have been implemented. Public authorities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye should conduct research studies to understand better the situation of this vulnerable group of young people, factors contributing to this situation and policy measures that can be effective. It can be recommended that young researchers conduct this research engaged via public call.

Depending on the research results, necessary measures may include housing assistance, improving access to financial support from social protection systems, counselling services, affordable healthcare, education and employment programs. Public awareness campaigns and policy dialogues should help normalise discussions on youth poverty and youth in prisons, shedding light on the challenges young people face in integrating into society.

ANNEXE 1

Methodological notes

When the YPI was launched in 2016, a set of indicators for inclusion in the first Youth Participation Index was chosen based on an analytical process comprising extensive desk research and expert consultations. Over the years, they have slightly changed. There are currently 25 indicators 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
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	Young ministers in Government M/F	The percentage of young ministers in government is calculated as the percentage of young ministers under 29/total number of ministers.	The official website of the Government
	Young deputy ministers in government M/F	The percentage of young deputy ministers in government is calculated as a percentage of deputy ministers under 29/total number of deputy ministries.	The official website of the Government
	Young MPs in the parliament M/F	The percentage of young MPs in Parliament is calculated as the percentage of MPs under 29 /total number of MPs.	The official website of the National Parliament
	Young mayors M/F	The percentage of young mayors is calculated as a percentage of majors under 29 /total number of majors.	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 with online tools for information and participation in decision making (website, Facebook page or Twitter) / total number of ministries and parliament.	Social network sites of Ministries/Parliament
	Online tools for information and participation in 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 are defined as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, websites, and e-portals. Until then, only websites, Facebook pages, and Twitter were calculated.	Social network sites of municipalities
	The existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions/offices)	Yes/No	Ministry or other national institution in charge of Youth

) on the national level		
	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
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION	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)
SOCIAL PARTICIPATION	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 previous editions.
- 2) Data on the use of online tools for information and participation in municipal decision-making and the existence of youth structures (councils/parliaments/unions/offices) on the local level in Türkiye is collected on a sample of municipalities, unlike in rest of WBT region, where it was gathered for all municipalities.
- 3) Data for the following indicators were not available for 2023. Thus, values registered in 2021 or 2020 were used in index calculation: share of early leavers from education and training, population aged 30–34 with tertiary education attainment level and participation rate in formal and informal education and training for Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia; data on at-risk poverty rate for Albania and North Macedonia.

- 4) Indicators on young people who started their businesses with the state's financial support and self-employed young people were not used in calculating the Index due to a large amount of missing data and differing methodologies in collecting data.
- 5) 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 Index due to a large amount of missing data and differing methodologies in collecting data.
- 6) The Economic Participation Index for 2016–2020 used the same target values as the index's value in 2021–2023. The target values are based on the data collected by Eurostat in 2021. It should be noted that from 2021 onwards, the new methodology of the European Union LFS has been in force, which means that the data from previous years is not entirely comparable with data gathered from 2021.
- 7) This year, the Social Participation Index could not be calculated for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo due to missing values for 2 and 4 out of 5 indicators, respectively. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, data was missing for indicators of at-risk-of-poverty rates and the percentage of youth in prison. In Kosovo, data was missing for indicators: at-risk-of-poverty rate, the share of early dropouts from education and training for persons aged 18–24 years, percentage of the population aged 30–34 with tertiary educational level and participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks). Because of the missing Social Participation Index, the Youth Participation Index was calculated using only the Political and Economic Participation Index for these two participants.

ANNEXE 2

Data collected in the process of preparing this report 2016–2023 for each of the participants from WBT region²⁷

Political participation	Participant	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Young ministers in Government	Albania	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								0%
	Kosovo								0%
	Montenegro	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	North Macedonia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Serbia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Türkiye	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Young deputy ministers in Government	Albania	0.0%	0%	3.0%	7.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	0%
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								0%
	Kosovo								3.7% (3.7%M, 0% F)
	Montenegro	4.4%	5.0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	North Macedonia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Serbia	1.0%	1.0%	5.0%	5.0%	1.0%	1.6%	0%	0%
	Türkiye	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% (2% F, 1.1% M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								0%
	Kosovo								4.0% (3.2%F, 0.8%M)
	Montenegro	1.2%	6.0%	8.6%	2.5%	4.9%	4.9%	3.7%	4.9% (50-50 M-F ratio)
	North Macedonia	8.3%	1.7%	1.2%	3.3%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7% (50-50 M-F ratio)
	Serbia	1.2%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	7.6%	5.2%	2%	3.2% (0.8 F, 1.6% M)

²⁷ 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.

	Serbia	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Türkiye	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
The existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on a local level	Albania	18.3%	34.6%	49.0%	57.4%	46.0%	43.0%	74.0%	98.0%
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								59.7%
	Kosovo								65.0%
	Montenegro	22.0%	23.0%	41.0%	45.0%	41.0%	37.5%	56.0%	60.0%
	North Macedonia	78.5%	78.5%	77.0%	53.0%	15.0%	30.0%	31.0%	31.2%
	Serbia	77.5%	85.9%	69.7%	67.9%	67.3%	70.4%	70.3%	64.1%
	Türkiye					20.99%	17.3%	14.8%	21.0%

Economic participation	Participant	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
NEET rate	Albania	30.0%	29.70%	28.6%	26.6%	27.9%	26.1%	25.2%	24.6% (25.6%F, 23.5%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								22.2% (26%F, 19%M)
	Kosovo								37.6% (41.9%F, 33.5%M)
	Montenegro	22.3%	21.4%	21.0%	21.3%	26.6%	26.5%	23.2%	20.3% (21%F, 20%M)
	North Macedonia	31.3%	31.1%	29.8%	24.5%	26.2%	24.3%	22.8%	24.1% (26.7%F, 21.7%M)
	Serbia	22.3%	21.70%	20.10%	19%	20%	18.8%	15.9%	15.2% (16.6%F, 14.0%M)
	Türkiye	27.8%	27.5%	27.6%	29.5%	32%	28.4%	27.2%	25.8% (36.4%F, 15.5%M)
Youth unemployment rate	Albania	28.9%	25.9%	23.1%	21.5%	20.9%	20.9%	20.7%	22.2% (20.6%F, 23.6%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								23.1% (27.0%F, 21.0%M)
	Kosovo								17.2% (22.9%F, 14.3%M)
	Montenegro	28.8%	26.5%	26.0%	22.3%	30.7%	32.5%	25.4%	21.2% (24.0%F, 19.0%M)
	North Macedonia	40.6%	39.2%	37.0%	30.5%	29.6%	28.3%	25.2%	24.9% (23.6%F, 26.8%M)
	Serbia	29.8%	26.70%	24.50%	21.50%	20.5%	20%	17.1%	18.5% (18.8%F, 18.3%M)
	Türkiye	17.2%	17.7%	17.8%	22%	21.7%	20%	17.4%	15.5% (20.6%F, 12.7%M)
Long-term youth unemployment rate	Albania	16.7%	13.8%	13.1%	11.5%	11,4%	11.6%	12.5%	15.0% (12.5%F, 17.2%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								14.4% (17.0%F, 13.0%M)
	Kosovo								11.3% (13.5%F, 10.2%M)

	Montenegro	18.7%	18.5%	15.7%	13.8%	17,4%	18.3%	14.1%	12.0% (13.0%F, 12.0%M)
	North Macedonia	29.5%	28.9%	26.3%	21.1%	21.1%	20%	37.9%	16.9% (15.8%F, 17.7%M)
	Serbia	15%	11.4%	10.1%	8.7%	7.6%	6.3%	5.9%	5.7% (6.0%F, 5.5%M)
	Türkiye	3.2%	3.4%	3.4%	4.6%	4.9%	27.2%* 28	19.0% *	16.7%* (22.6%F, 11.3%M)
Youth labour force participation rate	Albania	45.7%	45.8%	50.1%	52.5%	52,1%	52.5%	55.5%	56.9% (52.0%M, 61.8%F)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								43.0% (33.0%F, 52.0%M)
	Kosovo								31.4% (21.8%F, 40.5%M)
	Montenegro	49.5%	48.7%	48.5%	51.1%	45.1%	44,4%	54.9%	59.4% (55.6%F, 63.1%M)
	North Macedonia	48.1%	49.7%	49.1%	49.4%	47.6%	54.6%	46.0%	44.8% (36.1%F, 53.0%M)
	Serbia	47%	47.2%	47.7%	46.5%	44.8%	50.0%	50.0%	49.3% (42.5%F, 55.8%M)
	Türkiye	51.3%	52.3	52.7%	53.2%	48.50%	51.3%	53.4%	55.0% (40.5%F, 68.9%M)
Youth employment rate	Albania	32.4%	33.8%	38.5%	41.2%	41,2%	41.5%	44.0%	44.2% (41.3%F, 47.2%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								33.1% (24%F, 42%M)
	Kosovo								26.0% (16.8%F, 34.7%M)
	Montenegro	35.2%	35.8%	35.9%	39.7%	31.3%	30%	41.0%	46.8% (42.0%M, 51.0%F)
	North Macedonia	28.6%	30.2%	30.9%	34.4%	33.5%	33.1%	34.4%	33.6% (27.6%F, 39.3%M)
	Serbia	33.2%	34.9%	36.4%	36.90%	36%	40.0%	41.5%	40.2% (34.5%F, 45.6%M)

²⁸ This data was received by official institutions; however, it differs from values registered by Eurostat in previous years.

	Türkiye	42.5%	43%	43.3%	41.50%	37.9%	41.1%	44.1%	46.4% (31.1%F, 60.2%M)
Young people who started their businesses 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%
	Serbia	23.3%	19.50%	20.5%	24.35%	26.0%	28.8%	28.0%	32.1%
	Türkiye	22.62%							
Self-employed young people	Albania	29.00%	18.3%	0.9%	7.8%	18.5%	17.9%	16.6%	15.1% (12.5%F, 17.5%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								7.0% (1%F, 6%M)
	Kosovo								4.8% (1.6%F, 7.8%M)
	Montenegro	9.0%	8.4%	5.8%	4.0%	8.6%	6.8%* ²⁹	8.1%*	10.1%* (9%F, 11%M)
	North Macedonia	6.0%	7.3%		1.6%	0.4%	2.7%	6.3%	6.4% (26-76 F- M ratio)
	Serbia	0.6%	2.76%	6.8%	6.87%	6.0%	6.6%	6.6%	6.2% (7.0%F, 6.0%M)
	Türkiye				2.8%	6.65%	3.1%	7.8%	8.4% (5.6%F, 9.9%M)

²⁹ This data is collected using different methodologies, comparing self-employed young people with the total number of employed young people.

Social participation	Participant	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Young people at risk of poverty ³⁰	Albania	27.9%	25.7%	26%	26.2%	24.4%	24.2%	21.5%		
	Bosnia and Herzegovina									
	Kosovo			30.3%						
	Montenegro	27.9%	26.2%	25.6%	28.0%	24.8%	23.1%	23.0%	23.0% (23.0%F, 23.0%M)	
	North Macedonia	24.8%	25.5%	25.9%	24.9%	25.1%				
	Serbia	30.0%	27.5%	26.6%	24.8%	23.9%	25.2%	19.8%	19.2% (18.5%F, 19.7%M)	
	Türkiye	23.8%	22.8%	22.7%	23.0%	24.0%	24.0%	23.3%	20.9% (23.1%F, 18.8%M)	
Young people in prisons	Albania	36.54%	46.0%	47.7%	34.8%	30,0%	36.9%	36.9%	39.3% (0.4%F, 38.9%M)	
	Bosnia and Herzegovina									
	Kosovo								37.4%	
	Montenegro	31.1%	33.2%	52.2%		23,2%	24.7%	29.0%	28.0% (99-1 ratio M and F)	
	North Macedonia	0.20%		31.4%	25.3%	27.8%	27.2%	27.4%	26.4%	
	Serbia	32.70%	27.7	26.5%	24.9%	25.9%	23.3%	35.8%	34.8% (33.5%F, 1.3%M)	
	Türkiye	63.00%					65.14%	48.0%	65.0%	50.40 (2.01%F, 48.4%M)
Young people who are part of the social welfare system	Albania						24.3%		19.1%	
	Bosnia and Herzegovina									
	Kosovo								19.1% (10.0%F, 9.0%M)	
	Montenegro								11.0%	
	North Macedonia						29.7%	28.63%	29.2%	27.5% (26.4%F, 28.5%M)
	Serbia	18.97%	18.16%	18.1%			24.0%	22.3%	21%	15.3%

³⁰ 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.

	Türkiye								
Dropout from secondary education	Albania	3.70%	3.35%	3.2%	2.6%	1,8%	1.5%		
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								1.0% (0%F, 1.0%M)
	Kosovo								1.8% (0.4%F, 1.4%M)
	Montenegro	5.50%	5.4%	4.6%	5.0%	2.3%		2.6%	2.0%
	North Macedonia		2.30%	1.40%	0.5%	0.6%		0.85%	0.5% (0.3%F, 0.7%M)
	Serbia	1.10%	1.30%	1.40%	1.10%	0.80%	0.81%	1.2%	
	Türkiye				28.70% *	26.70% * ³¹		22.1%*	19.7%* (18.2%F, 21.2%M)
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	Albania	22.4%	21.4%	22.5%	21.6%	20,9%	21.5% ³²	22.0%	21.3% (25.4%F, 17.2%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								38.7% (48.0%F, 30.0%M)
	Kosovo								
	Montenegro	33.90%	34.5%	33%	54.2%	32,3%	43.0%	31.9%	31.7% (39%F, 25%M)
	North Macedonia		28.90%	14.50%	38.8%	13.4%	13.4%	17.5%	17.1% (20.7%F, 13.8%M)
	Serbia	50.70%	54.20%	54.70%	54.70%	54.70%	56.2%	57.4%	61.0% (73.1%F, 49.5%M)
	Türkiye	40.53%	42.43%	45.60%	44.10%	43.40%	44.4%	44.7%	46.0% (51.0%F, 41.1%M)
Young people graduated from tertiary education	Albania	21.48%	25.19%	26%	26.7%	25,0%	26%	24.9%	23.6% (26.2%, 19.7%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								17.1% (11.0%F, 6.0%M)
	Kosovo								57.0% (39.1%F, 17.9%M)
	Montenegro	12.86%	14.51%	14.59%		45.43%	16.5%	13.8%	18.9% (20%F, 18%M)
	North Macedonia		11.50%	16.50%	15.2%	11.9%	13.4%	15.2%	12.2% (13.6%F, 10.4%M)

³¹ This data refers to early school leavers.

³² This data refers to people aged 18–29 enrolled in tertiary education compared to the total number of young people aged 18–29.

	Serbia	20.00%	19.70%	18.10%	18.13%	17.60%	17.10%	16.6%	14.9% (15.4%F, 14.1%M)
	Türkiye			9.57%		10.56%	12%	10.9%	13.0% (14.3%F, 12.0%M)
Participation rate in non-formal education and training (last 4 weeks) ³³	Albania								0.3% (0.3%F, 0.3%M)
	Bosnia and Herzegovina								4.6% ³⁴ (5%F, 4%M)
	Kosovo								
	Montenegro			2.8%	1.3%				
	North Macedonia	2.3%	1.9%	2.0%	2.8%	1.9%			
	Serbia	3.0%	2.8%	2.3%	2.4%	1.3%	4.5%	4.1%	5.2% (5.0%F, 5.4%M)
	Türkiye	5.3%	5.5%	6.9%	6.5%	4.4%	5.4%	6.9%	7.2% (8.2%F, 6.2%M)

³³ Data was collected using Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/bookmark/c9b945f5-89e8-4953-a5ea-ac92417edd46?lang=en>.

³⁴ Data reported from Eurostat differs slightly: 2.3% (2.5%F, 2.1%M)

ANNEXE 3

Targets overview

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)

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION INDEX

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