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PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

MONITORING REPORT OF

**POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC
PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN ALBANIA**

2024





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The report series has been previously prepared by Partners Albania for Change and Development (2016–2023), as the implementing partner of the project “Western Balkans & Turkey for EmploYouth”. In 2024, Partners Albania continued to prepare the National Report as member of the Youth Hub for WB&T and under a contractual agreement with Beyond Barriers Association.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2

**DATA ON POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH**

3

**ANALYSIS AND COMPARISONS OF DATA
DURING 9 YEARS OF MONITORING**

4

RECOMMENDATIONS

5

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Monitoring Report on Political, Social, and Economic Participation of Youth in Albania** has been prepared annually since 2016. It analyzes key data on barriers to youth participation and serves as a concrete data-driven tool for policymakers and youth organizations.

The national report contributes to the preparation of the “Youth Participation Index”, an annual regional Monitoring Report on Political, Social, and Economic Participation of Youth, which presents the overall situation of youth across the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

Policymakers, youth organizations, and other stakeholders engaged in youth-related issues can use the Youth Participation Index (YPI) to assess the current situation and identify areas for improvement. Since its establishment in 2016, the regular development and publication of the YPI have enabled continuous monitoring of progress in youth participation across the Western Balkans and Türkiye (hereinafter referred to as the WBT region).

Each country follows its own path of advancement and challenges, while the YPI provides a comparative framework to identify shared issues and inform possible solutions.

The Report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of opportunities for youth through the lens of 25 indicators measuring political, economic, and social participation.

- **Political dimension** refers to the opportunities of young people to get involved in political processes – to be informed on the work of the government, parliament, and municipalities, to participate in youth networks, and to be elected to political positions. The set of indicators selected to measure the participation of young people in the political dimension include the presence of young ministers and deputy ministers in government, young members of parliament, and young mayors. Further indicators assess the availability of online tools for information and participation in decision-making of the government, parliament and municipalities; and the existence of youth-focused structures at both national and local levels.

- **Economic dimension** refers to the degree of inclusion or, to the contrary, exclusion of young people from the labour market. It captures the degree of their activity, employment, and self-employment. Key indicators for assessing this dimension include the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate, youth unemployment rate, long-term unemployment rate, youth labor force participation rate, youth employment rate, the proportion of self-employed young people, and the government's total expenditures for employment promotion programs.

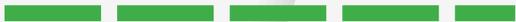
- **Social dimension** refers to the active participation of young people in social life. It is assessed based on the integration of young people in the community through formal and nonformal education, as well as through an absence of markers of potential exclusion – due to poverty, dependence on the social welfare system, and time spent in prison or correctional facilities. Relevant indicators include the proportion of young people at risk of poverty, young people in prison, and young people part of the social welfare. Education-related metrics, such as enrolment and graduation rates in tertiary education, are considered. The report also includes the government's total expenditures for social protection programs.

The Report is a concrete tool that can be used by public authorities and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to systematically identify and address the most pressing challenges of youth participation. It contributes to:

- Compare data according to key indicators of youth participation in all three dimensions: political, economic, and social;
- Monitor progress in youth participation through the years in Albania;
- Advocacy actions at the local level for the implementation of policies and programs aimed at the improvement of youth participation.

The Albania Country Report for 2024 provides an analysis of the data collected through desk research and official requests for information sent to responsible institutions as: *the Ministry of Education and Sports; Ministry of Health and Social Protection; Minister of State for Youth and Children; Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation; Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate; Ministry of Tourism and Environment; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; General Directorate of Taxation; General Directorate of Prisons; National Institute of Statistics; and Albanian municipalities.*

The data of this report are also included in the regional annual report “Youth Participation Index”, reflecting, and comparing the data from seven countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosova, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Turkey) of the Youth Hub Network for WB&Turkey.



“While youth-focused initiatives undertaken in Albania over recent years have achieved modest progress, particularly in the economic dimension, advancement in social and political participation remains limited, highlighting the need for more targeted and effective actions.”



CLARIFICATION NOTE FOR THE DATA OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Over the years, and continuing to the present, for the preparation of this report, and particularly for the economic dimension indicators as well as some of the social indicators, we rely primarily on official statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT).

During the drafting of the 2024 Report, it was observed that INSTAT had revised several official data of 2023 following their initial publication. These modifications were made in 2025, after the release of the 2023 Report, which had relied on the original values provided.

According to INSTAT, the revisions stem from a methodological update, which followed after the publication of the 2023 Population and Housing Census (CENS 2023).

In 2025, INSTAT calibrated the 2023 and 2024 figures using the resident population as of January 1, 2023, and as of January 1, 2024 according to the results of the CENS 2023. Previously, the indicators were calculated based on the population as of January 1 of the respective year.

This calibration led to changes in some of the values published in 2023, particularly those related to youth-specific economic and social indicators. As a result, certain figures for 2023 presented in the 2023 Youth Report differ from the calibrated data now available. To ensure full clarity and transparency, this report presents the following for comparison:

***Reported Data 2023:** Figures as published in the Monitoring Report of Youth Participation 2023, based on the originally provided data by INSTAT (prior to revisions, correction & calibration).

**** Calibrated Data 2023:** Data for 2023 (after the corrections when applicable) were calibrated (recalculated) by INSTAT in 2025, according to CENS 2023, using the resident population as of 1 January of the respective year. Previously, calculations were based on the population as of 1 January of the respective year.

***** Data 2024 (calibrated):** Data for 2024, as provided by INSTAT in 2025 at the time of preparing this report, which are calibrated based on the population as of January 1, 2024.

From this point forward, all data will be calculated using the Resident Population as of 1 January of the respective year, calibrated according to CENS 2023.

Data not Calibrated: No changes reported for these indicators.

This clarification is provided to preserve methodological transparency and allow readers to understand the basis of year-to-year comparisons.



“Youth representation and participation in political leadership and decision-making roles have shown minimal progress over the years, remaining critically low, near zero.”



Data on Political Participation of Youth

INDICATORS	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	YEAR
Young* Ministers in Government	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2024 ¹
Young Deputy Ministers in Government	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2024 ¹
Young MPs in the Parliament	0.70%	0.70%	0.0%	2024 ¹
Young Mayors	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2024 ²
Online Tools for Information and Participation in Decision-Making of the Government and Parliament	94%	Not Applicable		2024 ¹
Online Tools for Information and Participation in Decision-Making at Local Level	97%	Not Applicable		2024 ¹
Existence of Youth Structure (councils/parliaments/unions) at National Level	YES	Not Applicable		2024 ¹
Existence of Youth Structure (councils/parliaments/unions) at Local Level	100%	Not Applicable		2024 ¹
% of the Municipality Budget dedicated to Youth	2 - 3%	Not Applicable		2024 ³

*By "Young" we refer to the age group 15-29 years old, as defined by the Law on Youth 75/2019 in Albania.

[1] Source: Desk Research

[2] Source: Desk Research and Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the Agency for the Support of Local Self Governance

[3] Source: Information obtained through official Requests for Information to the 61 Municipalities of Albania



“The lack of consistent and disaggregated data on the social dimension, particularly regarding poverty rates and young people in the social welfare system, leaves a gap not only in numbers but in understanding, without evidence, the realities, voices, and needs of young people remain invisible and unaddressed.”



Data on Social Participation of Youth

INDICATORS	*Reported Data 2023			**Calibrated Data 2023			*** Data 2024			YEAR
	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	
Young People at Risk of Poverty	21.5%	23.4%	19.7%	Data not Calibrated			21.9%	23.2%	20.7%	2023 ⁴
Young People in Prisons	39.3%	0.4%	38.9%	Data not Calibrated			36.8%	0.4%	36.4%	2024 ⁵
Young People in Social Welfare System	19.1%	No data	No data	Data not Calibrated			17.1%	No data	No data	2024 ⁶
Dropout from the Secondary Education	No data	No data	No data	Data not Calibrated			No data	No data	No data	2024 ⁷
Young People Enrolled in Tertiary Education	21.3%	25.4%	17.2%	30.7%	36.3%	24.9%	31.4%	37.3%	25.4%	'24-'25 ⁸
Young people Graduated from Tertiary Education	23.6%	26.2%	19.7%	Data not Calibrated			23.3%	26%	19.2%	'23-'24 ⁸
Participation Rate in Non-Formal Education and Training (last 4 Weeks)	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	Data not Calibrated			0.20%	0.20%	0.30%	2024 ⁹
Young People with Advanced Education	31.6%	42.9%	20.1%	48.2%	67%	30%	46.6%	63.5%	29.5%	2024 ¹⁰
Total Government Budget and Spending in Social Protection Programs	Budget: 30,597,119,00 Albanian Lekë (ALL) Spending: 30,095,419,629 Albanian Lekë (ALL)			Data not Calibrated			Budget: 30,620,811,000 Albanian Lekë (ALL) Spending: 30,332,520,996 Albanian Lekë (ALL)			2024 ¹¹

[4] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). Data for the 2023 are available, while data for 2024 will be published in December 2025.

[5] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the Generate Directorate of Prisons

[6] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and State Social Services

[7] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to Ministry of Education and Sports

[8] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to Ministry of Education and Sports and National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

[9] Source: Information obtained through and official Request for Information to National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

[10] Source: Desk Calculation based on data from the INSTAT Database

[11] Source: Information obtained through and official Request for Information to the State Social Services



“Gender Disparities in Economic Participation of youth remain evident. Young women continue to face barriers, and have equal opportunities, to employment, entrepreneurship and financial independence.”



Data on Economic Participation of Youth

INDICATORS	*Reported Data 2023			**Calibrated Data 2023			*** Data 2024			YEAR
	T	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	
NEET Rate	24.6%	25.6%	23.5%	25.0%	27.8%	22.3%	22.2%	24.7%	19.7%	2024 ¹²
Youth Unemployment Rate	22.2%	20.6%	23.6%	21.7%	21.9%	21.6%	18.9%	19.0%	18.8%	2024 ¹²
Long-term Youth Unemployment Rate	15.0%	12.5%	17.2%	14.3%	13.3%	15.2%	12.8%	13.2%	12.4%	2024 ¹²
Youth Labor Force Participation Rate	56.9%	52.0%	61.8%	53.5%	48.1%	58.7%	54.8%	48.9%	60.6%	2024 ¹²
Youth Employment Rate	44.2%	41.3%	47.2%	41.9%	37.6%	46.0%	44.4%	39.6%	49.2%	2024 ¹²
Percentage of Young People who Started their own Businesses with the Financial Support of State	No Data	No Data	No Data	No Data	No Data	No Data	No Data	No Data	No Data	2024 ¹³
Self-Employed Young People	15.1%	12.5%	17.5%	13.9%	10.9%	16.3%	13.8%	8.5%	18.0%	2024 ¹²
Total Government Budget and Spending in Employment Programmes	Spending: 626,790,431 Albanian Lekë (ALL)			Data not Calibrated			Budget: 432,000,000 Albanian Lekë (ALL) Spending: 411,000,000 Albanian Lekë (ALL)			2024 ¹⁵

CLARIFICATION NOTES:

*Reported Data 2023: Figures published in the Monitoring Report of Youth Participation 2023, based primarily on information from the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT).

** Calibrated Data 2023: Data for 2023 and 2024 have been calibrated according to the CENS 2023 – Resident Population as of 1 January of the respective year. Previously, calculations were based on the Population as of 1 January of the respective year. From now on, all data will be calculated using the Resident Population as of 1 January of the respective year.

[12] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

[13] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate, Ministry of Tourism and Environment

[14] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the General Directorate of Taxes

[15] Source: Information obtained through an official Request for Information to the National Agency for Employment and Skills



ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF DATA DURING 9 YEARS OF MONITORING

Overall, several indicators have fluctuated positively and negatively over the years. However, compared to the data reported in the first report, nine years ago, there has been a notable improvement.

Political Participation Dimension

Youth political participation in Albania remains critically low, with no young individuals holding key political leadership roles, such as ministers, deputy ministers, or mayors. While youth structures exist at both national and local levels, and the presence of digital tools for engagement has increased, enabling young people to access information and participate in decision-making, meaningful representation of youth in political leadership continues to be lacking.

Youth representation in Albania's ministerial positions is entirely absent, with no appointments of ministers under 30 recorded between 2016 and 2024. In 2024, only two ministers are under 40, while the average age of the cabinet stands at 43.7 years, highlighting a persistent gap between government leadership and the younger generation (15–29 years). Although women account for a significant portion of ministers (52.9%), their presence has declined markedly in recent years, dropping from 81% in 2022 to 52.9% in 2024, marking a notable setback (28%) in gender balance within the government.

Similarly, in 2024, there were no young deputy ministers in Albania. Historically, youth presence at this level has been minimal, and in the past two years, it has fallen to zero. The average age of deputy ministers is 43.2 years, showing a slight 4% decrease compared to the previous year. Men currently dominate these roles (56%), while the share of women has declined by 10% over the past two years, reflecting a trend of reduced female representation in deputy ministerial leadership roles.

Youth representation in the Albanian Parliament has remained consistently low over the years, with a notable decline in the last four years. In 2024, youth representation reached its lowest point, with only one young woman serving as a Member of Parliament. The parliament continues to be male dominated, with men comprising 64% of MPs and women accounting for just 36%. The average age of parliamentarians is 51.5 years, reflecting a leadership body that is largely older and under representative of younger generations.

At the local level, Albania continues to have no young mayors, a trend that has persisted over the past six years. The leadership is characterized by a significant gender imbalance, where men constitute the vast majority and women represent a mere 13%. The average age of mayors is 47 years old, and fewer than one in five (18%) are under the age of 40, highlighting the experience-based, age-skewed composition of local leadership.

The availability of online tools for information sharing and public participation in decision-making within the government and parliament has steadily increased over the years, reaching 94% in 2024. Most institutions now have dedicated digital platforms (website, social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram) to communicate with and inform the public about their work. Only one Minister of State currently lacks any form of online communication tools.

A similar trend is observed at the municipal level, where 97% of municipalities have such tools. It is noticeable that communication is predominantly conducted through the personal accounts of mayors, rather than the municipalities' official websites or social media pages. In many cases, it is the mayors themselves, via their personal platforms, who share updates and developments in the city.

Despite the digital presence, meetings and discussions with young people reveal a significant information gap. Many remain uninformed and lack knowledge about key activities and developments, both in general and specifically concerning youth issues, at both the local and national levels. Typically, only a small group of highly active or particularly interested young people are well-informed and participate consistently in activities.

At the national level, youth-related structures, including National Youth Council, the National Youth Congress, and the National Youth Agency, have been in place for some years now, playing a critical role in supporting and engaging young people. The National Youth Agency operates in coordination with the Minister of State for Youth and Children, and is particularly active in promoting youth participation, development, and empowerment, working closely with other institutions to ensure youth inclusion in policy and decision-making.

At the local level, youth structures are established in all cities of Albania, primarily through Local Youth Councils (LYCs), which were fully set up across the country by January 2024. These councils are tasked with engaging youth, facilitating participation in decision-making, organizing activities, and disseminating information. While most LYCs are active, several remain only partially functional, failing to fully implement their mandate, thereby limiting youth representation and engagement. Their effectiveness in fulfilling their intended roles is often constrained by insufficient resources, limited capacity, or lack of prioritization by local authorities.

To fully realize their potential, a stronger and more consistent commitment is needed to equip these councils with the tools, support, and autonomy required to function as active agents of youth empowerment and civic participation. Without such efforts, these structures risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

Other local-level structures, such as youth centers, multifunctional spaces, cultural and sports centers, and community schools or centers, exist in some municipalities, but are not present in every city. This uneven distribution, results in unequal opportunities for young people across the country, as access to these services and personal development opportunities depends on the geographic location, area or city in which they live.

Social Participation Dimension

The social dimension of youth participation in Albania remains one of the most challenging, particularly due to the pronounced lack of comprehensive, disaggregated and youth specific data. Available data on the social dimension is fragmented, and often not disaggregated by gender or by the youth age group (15-29). These gaps create blind spots in understanding young people's realities and make it impossible to compare different group's needs.

Although the Law on Youth clearly defines young people as individuals aged 15-29, many institutions still do not collect, process, and report data according to this categorization. This persistent gap represents a significant challenge in Albania.

The scarcity of reliable information, particularly on vulnerable groups such as young poor people, beneficiaries of social welfare programs, or those with intersecting vulnerabilities, could be one of the barriers to developing effective policies.

Despite repeated efforts over the years, including official requests for information and advocacy to raise awareness, **institutions have made little progress in establishing systematic practices for youth-specific data collection.**

The absence of such data limits the ability to fully understand the vulnerabilities and needs of young people, hinders evidence-based policymaking, constrains effective monitoring of programs, and weakens the state's ability to design interventions that adequately address the vulnerabilities of young people, reduce youth poverty and promote their inclusion.

In 2023, 21.9% of young people in Albania were at risk of poverty. Although this represents an overall long-term decrease of 3.8 percentage points from 2017 to 2023, the progress remains fragile with fluctuations, as it is evidenced in 2023 by a slight increase of 0.4 percentage points compared to 2022.

The reduction in the percentage of young people at risk of poverty 2017-2023 has been uneven across genders. Young men have experienced a more substantial decrease (-6.2%) compared to young women (-1.1%). Gender disparities remain pronounced, with young women (23.2%) being at higher risk of poverty, compared to 20.7% of young men. This highlights systemic gendered vulnerability, reflecting broader inequalities in access to resources, employment opportunities, and social protection.

These findings highlight that while overall youth risk of poverty rates have improved, gender disparities remain entrenched, pointing to the need for tailored interventions. Addressing youth poverty effectively requires not only broad employment and social inclusion measures but also targeted, gender-responsive policies that reduce barriers for young women and ensure equal access to economic opportunities and social protection.

Over the past nine years, young people have consistently represented a high proportion of Albania's prison population.

In 2024, young people accounted for 36.8% of individuals in Penal Enforcement Institutions, with young men comprising nearly the entirety of this share (36.4%), compared to only 0.4% for young women. This stark gender imbalance underscores men's higher exposure to activities leading to incarceration.

Notably, 2024, recorded 2.5% decrease in the share of young people in prison compared to 2023, marking the first decline after four consecutive years of increases. This drop was entirely driven by a reduction in the proportion of young men imprisoned, while the rate for young women remained unchanged.

The available data show that young people make up a significant share of the beneficiaries within the social welfare system in Albania. However, we lack a complete picture because out of the three main social assistance programs, age-disaggregated information is available only for beneficiaries of economic assistance, while for the other programs data are not collected specifically for the 15-29 age group.

This gap in youth specific data, particularly disaggregated by age, gender, ethnicity and vulnerability status, for the programs of social welfare (beyond economic assistance), hinders a comprehensive understanding of how the welfare system addresses the needs of young people through different forms of support, restricts effective monitoring and evaluation, and limits the capacity for developing evidence-based policies to tackle youth poverty and foster social inclusion.

In 2024, 17.1% of beneficiaries of economic assistance were young people aged 18-30, marking a decrease of 2 % from 19.1% in 2023. While this decline could reflect modest improvements in the socioeconomic situation of some young people, it might also point to difficulties in accessing support, whether due to restrictive eligibility requirements or administrative barriers. More in-depth analysis is required to determine the underlying causes of this trend.

Overall, while existing figures underline the relevance of economic assistance for a considerable number of young people, they also emphasize the urgent need for improved and standardized data collection and reporting practices. Strengthening the evidence-based policymaking, particularly through systemic collection of age, gender, ethnicity, and vulnerability status disaggregated data, is essential for designing youth-responsive social protection policies and ensuring that no segment of the younger population is overlooked.

The data point out a positive trend in youth participation in tertiary education, coupled with a significant gender disparity that requires further attention. In 2024, 31.4% of young people aged 18-29 were enrolled in tertiary education, marking a modest 0.7 percentage points increase compared to 2023 (30.7%). This upward trend suggests a growing demand for higher education among young people, which is a positive indicator for the country's human capital development.

Gender patterns, however, reveal a widening gap: young women's enrollment rate is 11.9 percentage points higher than that of young men. And in 2024 the increase in enrollment was higher among young women (+1%) than among young men (+0.5%). This reflects a consistent pattern observed in recent years, where women demonstrate stronger engagement in education, particularly at the tertiary level.

While the high participation of young women is encouraging, the widening gender gap also raises questions about the factors that may be contributing to lower enrollment among young men. Possible explanations include earlier entry into the labor market, higher rates of emigration, or a preference for vocational pathways outside the university system. Understanding these dynamics is important to ensure balanced participation and to design policies that address barriers faced by young men, while continuing to support the strong educational engagement of young women.

In 2024, the graduation rate of among young people aged 18–29 stood at 23.3%, continuing a three-year downward trajectory. Compared to 2023, the rate fell by 0.3 percentage points, with the decrease more pronounced among young men (–0.5%). Gender disparities remain significant. The graduation rate of young men is 6.8 percentage points lower than that of young women, confirming a consistent pattern where women outperform men in higher education.

The highest graduation rate was recorded in 2019, after which a steady decline has been observed. This negative trend raises concerns about potential barriers preventing young people particularly men from completing higher education. Possible explanations include economic pressures leading to early entry into the labor market, increased emigration, or challenges within the education system such as academic progression, program quality, or lack of support services. 46.6% of young people aged 25–29 had attained advanced education (higher diploma, master’s degree, doctorate, etc.) in 2024. This represents a decline of 1.6 percentage points compared to 2023 (48.2%), indicating a slight reduction in the proportion of highly educated youth within this age group.

The gender breakdown reveals significant disparities. In 2024, 63.5% of young women had advanced education, compared to only 29.5% of young men. Although both groups experienced slight declines compared to 2023 (–3.5 percentage points for women and –0.5 percentage points for men), the gap remains wide, with women continuing to outpace men by 34 percentage points.



Economic Participation Dimension

Over the years the data indicates a steady decline in youth NEET rate in Albania between 2016 and 2024. Despite fluctuations, particularly the notable increase in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall trend reflects continuous progress in engaging young people in education and the labor market. However, significant gender disparities remain, and the overall levels are still high compared to EU average (11%).

However, the gender gap remains evident, with women facing higher levels of exclusion from education, training, and employment, **5% more** than men. Even though the gap is narrowing over time, from 8.8% in 2017 to 5% in 2024, women continue to show relatively higher NEET rates, highlighting the need for targeted gender responsive measures and support systems to address barriers and promote greater inclusion of young women in both the labor market and the education system. The NEET rate varies significantly depending on the level of education completed. The analysis of NEET rate by education level over the years shows that **from 2016 to 2022**, the NEET rate was consistently higher among young people with **secondary education**, followed by those with **higher education**, a rather unusual pattern compared to expectations. However, this trend has changed in the last two years, with the highest NEET rates now recorded among young people with **secondary education (24.6% in 2024)** and those with **only basic education (22.3% in 2024)**, while the lowest levels are observed among **higher education graduates (18.4% in 2024)**.

Women consistently face higher NEET rates across all education levels, pointing to systemic gender inequalities. Notably, women with secondary education remain the most affected group (**29.3% compared to 21% for men in 2024**). These findings suggest that having more education does not necessarily protect against inactivity, particularly for women, and highlight the need for stronger policies and support measures to facilitate a smoother transition from education to the labor market.

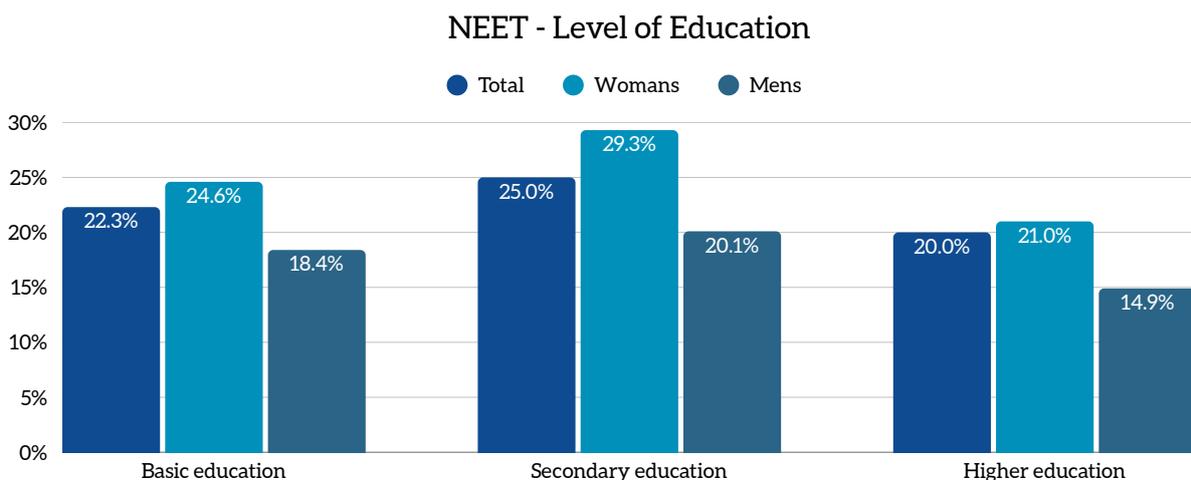


Figure 1: Neet rate according to the level of education

The reduction in the NEET rate, particularly the sharper decrease between 2022 (25.2%) and 2024 (22.2%) may reflect the positive effects of targeted policies and youth employment initiatives, including the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG) and strengthened efforts to promote vocational education and the recent dual education system.

The Youth Guarantee implementation in Albania started in 2023 and foresees that every young person registered in the scheme should be provided with a job offer, training, or vocational education opportunity within four months of registration. Until 2024, the program was in its pilot phase, implemented in three main municipalities: Tirana, Shkodër, and Vlorë. In 2025, the scheme will expand its implementation from the municipal level to the regional level.

During the pilot phase of the Youth Guarantee, from November 21, 2023, to December 31, 2024, a total of 560 NEET youth were registered in the scheme. The distribution across municipalities is as follows: 271 young people in Tirana Municipality, 210 in Shkodër Municipality and 79 in Vlorë Municipality.

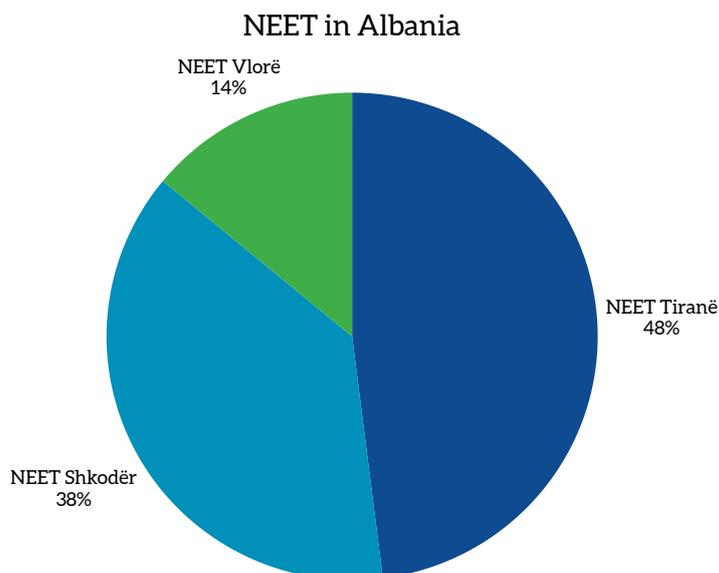


Figure 2: Geographic distribution of neet young people in 3 cities, in which it is piloted the youth guarantee

From the total number of young people registered in the scheme, 74% of them (414 NEETs) were integrated into the labor market through a positive exit from the scheme.

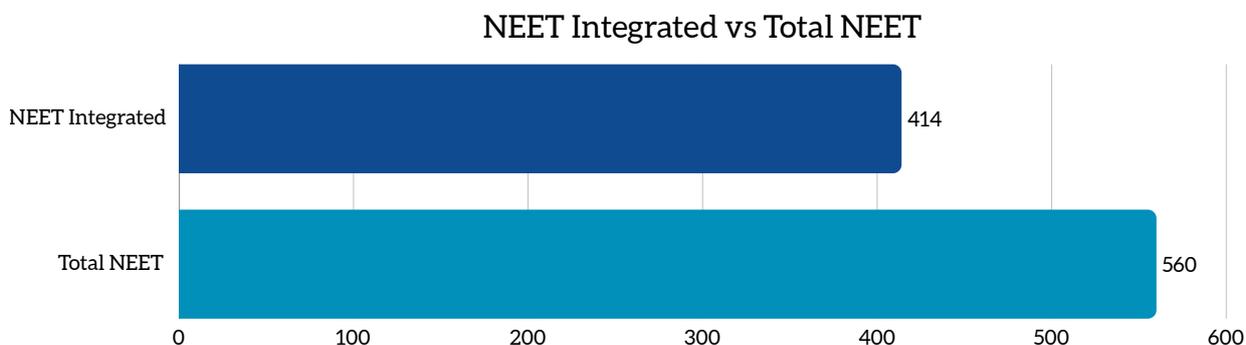


Figure 3: NEET identified as part of youth guarantee and portion of them integrated through its services

More specifically:

- **242 young people** were employed through **job intermediation services**, of which 130 were included in Employment Promotion Programs.
- **27 young people** engaged in **educational opportunities**, including integration through the Coding Program.
- **145 young people** benefited from **training offers**, including short-term courses and professional skills development programs, as well as professional internships supported by AKPA (National Employment and Skills Agency).

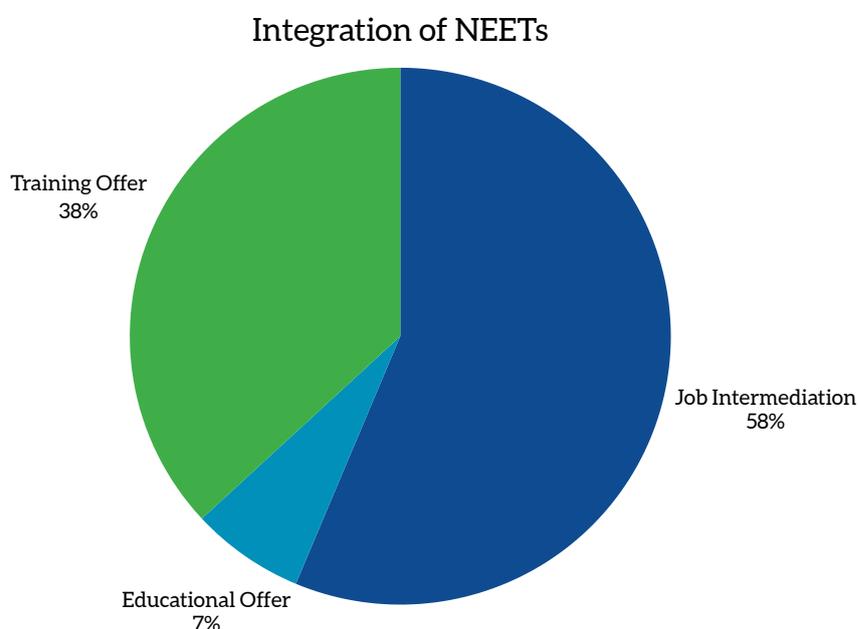


Figure 4: Services offered to the integrated NEET during the implementation of youth guarantee

Despite the increase in 2023, Albania's **youth unemployment rate resumed its downward trajectory in 2024, reaching its lowest level in nearly a decade (18.9%)**. Between 2016 and 2024, the rate declined steadily from **29.8% to 18.9%**, marking a substantial improvement of nearly 11%. **Nevertheless, despite this progress, youth unemployment in Albania remains considerably higher than the EU average of 5.9%**. Encouragingly, the gender gap has nearly closed, with women (19%) and men (18.8%) recording almost identical rates in 2024.

After the increase in the three previous years in the long-term unemployment rate, in 2024 the rate decreased by **1.6 %**, reaching **12.8%**. The decline was stronger among men, whose rate fell by **2.8 %**, while women's rate remained almost unchanged, decreasing by only **0.1** points.

Historically, men experienced higher long-term unemployment than women, but in 2024 this trend reversed: for the first time in six years, women's long-term unemployment (**13.2%**) exceeded that of men (**12.4%**). This comes after the gradual increase in the women long term unemployment over the years from 2019 (**8.9%**) to 2023 (**13.3%**).

Youth labour force participation in Albania has demonstrated a strong positive trajectory (9.1%) increase, rising from 45.7% in 2016 to 54.8% in 2024, reflecting a stronger attachment of young people to the labour market. If this trend continues, Albania could reach a youth labor force participation rate of around 60% by 2030, closing the gap with the general population's rate. However, sustaining this growth will require continued economic expansion and skills training.

This growth proved resilient, with only a minor pandemic-related dip in 2020 followed by a swift recovery to a peak of 55.5% in 2022. However, a persistent and significant gender gap remains a key challenge, with male participation consistently exceeding female participation by an average of approximately 12%. While this gap remains substantial, a promising trend is emerging over the years the female participation growth (3.3%) has recently outpaced male growth (1.4%), suggesting a potential, though gradual, narrowing of the disparity.

The data reveals a strong positive trend in the youth employment rate in Albania over the years, indicating significantly improved success for young people in finding work. The youth employment rate in Albania has generally followed an upward trend, despite a decline in 2023, the first decrease in recent years. In 2024, the employment rate rose to 44.4%, marking an increase of 2.5 % compared to 2023 (41.9%). The growth was more pronounced for young men (3.2%) than for young women (2%).

As consistently observed, young women's employment rate remains lower than that of men. In 2024, female employment stood at 39.6%, 9.6% below young men (49.2%). Although women's employment has increased steadily between 2016 and 2024, the gender gap has remained significant and shows little sign of narrowing.

One of the notable good practices in Albania is the National Internship Program, which for several years has opened calls for application, inviting interested young people to apply for internship opportunities in state institutions. The program provides participants with direct, hands-on experience in public administration, offering them both practical skills and valuable exposure to the functioning of state structures.

Only 13.8% of employed young people in Albania are self-employed. Over the years, the share of self-employed youth has been steadily declining, with a decrease of 7.9 % between 2018 (21.7%) and 2024 (13.8%). This indicates a structural shift in the labour market where employment growth is increasingly driven by salaried work rather than entrepreneurship. Very few young women (8.5%) choose self-employment as an option, compared to young men (18%), nearly twice as many.

A particularly concerning development emerged in 2024, as a **sharp decline in female self-employment, contrasted with a recovery for males, widened this gap to a record 9.5 %**

This accelerating divergence underscores the presence of substantial and growing barriers for young women entrepreneurs, signalling an urgent need for targeted policy intervention to foster inclusive economic participation.

4.3% of young people aged 15-17 are officially employed. The majority of them 2.9% are boys, while only 1.4% are girls. This suggests a trend where boys are introduced to and encouraged into economic participation from an early age more frequently than girls. Compared to 2023 (4.1%), the overall youth employment rate saw a marginal increase of 0.2% (4.3% in 2024).

Notably, this slight growth was entirely attributable to an increase in the employment of young women, indicating preliminary signs of improvement in their economic inclusion infused from an early age.

In 2024, 45.2% of young people in Albania are inactive, meaning they are neither employed nor actively seeking employment. This group includes individuals who are studying, those with disabilities, young people engaged in household duties and discouraged workers who have stopped looking for jobs. While there has been a notable overall improvement, with the total inactivity rate of young people in Albania falling from 49.9% in 2018 to 45.2% in 2024, this progress has been inconsistent and marked by significant fluctuations.

A persistent and concerning gender disparity remains the most worrying. Throughout the entire period, young women have consistently experienced inactivity rates vastly higher than young men, with the gap averaging approximately 12%. For instance, in 2024, the female inactivity rate stood at 51.1% compared to 39.4% for males, indicating that many young women were not engaged in employment.

A total of 17,215 young people, representing around 4% of the population aged 15-29 in Albania, are actively seeking work, and are currently unemployed. This number has been increasing steadily over the past two years, with an increase of about 3800 young people between 2022 and 2024, **reflecting persistent challenges in integrating young people into the labor market.**





POLICY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVOCACY

This session aims to provide policy recommendations, insights and strategies for stakeholders (youth organizations, public institutions at local and national level) to effectively address and advocate for positive policy changes in the field of youth.

Recommendations concerning youth political participation

The political dimension of youth engagement in Albania has experienced the least progress, with indicators showing minimal improvement over time. Young people continue to be significantly underrepresented in key political roles, including ministers, deputy ministers, members of parliament, and mayors. This persistent lack of representation highlights systemic barriers that limit youth access to leadership and decision-making positions. Their underrepresentation in politics not only stifles their voices in governance but also hinders the incorporation of fresh perspectives and innovative solutions into policy-making processes. Without intervention, an entire generation may age out of eligibility without ever having a voice in governance, perpetuating disillusionment in democratic processes.

To meaningfully address the near absence of young people from Albania's political life, a comprehensive approach is needed that combines structural reforms, capacity-building, and early awareness-raising. The following recommendations aim to encourage and increase youth political participation:

Introducing Youth Quotas and Incentives for Political Parties

A practical first step is the introduction of quotas that ensure a fixed number of parliamentary candidates are under the age of 30. This would guarantee the presence of young voices in legislative processes and create pathways for their inclusion. Political parties that adopt and implement youth quotas should be incentivized, for example through financial or institutional support, as recognition of their commitment to generational renewal.

Establish Political Academies and Training Platforms Across All Political Parties

Developing youth leadership programs focused on mentoring and essential skills, such as public speaking, policy analysis, and campaign management will prepare young individuals for successful careers in politics. Building on positive examples such as the "Deputeti që Duam" initiative or the "Political Academy", every political party should establish their own academies and training platforms. These would provide a structured space where young people can gain political knowledge, leadership skills, and exposure to party values, while also allowing them to make informed choices about where they feel most represented. To ensure their impact, political academies should not be limited to pre-election periods but should function continuously throughout the year.

Combine Knowledge with Practical Experience

Training efforts must go hand in hand with practical experience. Political academies should incorporate internships, apprenticeships, and job-shadowing opportunities with ministers, deputy ministers, or members of parliament. Such programs would equip young people with real-world skills, build their confidence, and break down prejudices about their lack of experience, one of the most common barriers they face in accessing leadership positions.

Undertake Recruitment Campaigns and Provide Equal Opportunities

Political parties should also run active recruitment campaigns targeting young people across Albania, particularly those outside urban centers, to ensure that opportunities are inclusive and accessible nationwide. At the local level, attention should be given to increasing the participation of young women and other underrepresented groups, reinforcing gender balance and diversity within political structures.

Foster Early Awareness and Interest in Politics

Beyond party structures, long-term efforts should start early within the education system by raising awareness about active political participation and civic engagement. Schools and universities should provide opportunities for young people to learn about democratic processes, debate, and political institutions, fostering an interest that can grow into future involvement. Starting at the local level with school councils, municipal youth councils, and local campaigns, and then scaling nationally would create a strong foundation for political engagement.

Establish Youth Centres and Multifunctional Centres in Cities Where Are Absent

To complement the work of Local Youth Councils and provide equitable opportunities for youth participation across Albania, it is essential to establish youth centers, multifunctional spaces, and digital education hubs, similar to TUMO in Tirana, in all cities where such structures are currently lacking. These centers would offer young people access to educational programs, skills development, and social activities, helping to bridge gaps in engagement and provide equal opportunities for involvement regardless of geographic location.

Support and Incentivize the Formation and Growth of Youth Organizations Nationwide

Political institutions and local authorities should actively promote and incentivize the creation of youth organizations across Albania. Evidence shows that youth residing in cities with active youth organizations are more engaged and participate more consistently in civic and political life. These organizations could operate in partnership with the ministry responsible for youth and Local Youth Councils to mobilize young people, ensure inclusive participation, and provide platforms for skill development and civic engagement.

Encouraging the formation of youth-led organizations can strengthen local networks, foster leadership skills, and enhance the overall capacity of young people to engage with public policies and community initiatives.

Ensure Coordination Across Institutions (Ministries and Local Governments) to Address Youth Needs

Central and local institutions must coordinate their initiatives, projects, and efforts related to youth issues. Such an integrated approach enables the provision of tailored, high-quality services that directly respond to the priorities and challenges faced by young people.

Effective interinstitutional coordination enhances policy coherence, avoids overlapping or duplicative programs, and ensures a more efficient use of resources.

Mainstream Youth Perspectives Across All Ministries and Local Governments

Youth issues should not be confined to a single ministry or isolated programs but must be integrated across the full spectrum of public policies. Every ministry and local government body, in the design and implementation of their work, should systematically consider the needs, aspirations, and participation of young people. This means ensuring that laws, regulations, services, and opportunities are adapted to reflect youth realities and to foster their inclusion. Such an approach would embed a youth lens into all areas of governance—education, employment, health, environment, culture, and beyond—thereby ensuring that young people are not only recipients of policies but active contributors to shaping them.

Promote Gender Parity and Leadership Opportunities for Young Women

Given the decline in gender representation at national level and low representation of women in leadership roles in local levels, targeted initiatives are necessary to promote gender parity in political participation. Policies and programs should specifically support young women in pursuing leadership roles, particularly in mayoral and municipal positions, to ensure balanced representation. By fostering young women's leadership, Albania can enhance diversity in decision-making and create more inclusive governance structures.

Recommendations concerning youth social participation

This session aims to provide policy recommendations, insights and strategies for stakeholders and institutions to effectively address and advocate for positive policy changes in the field of youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE AND INCLUSIVE YOUTH DATA COLLECTION FRAMEWORK

Enact a mandatory national standard for the collection, processing and reporting of disaggregated youth data

Introduce a legally binding framework, requiring all relevant public institutions, agencies, and programs to systematically collect, process, and publish data on young people according to the nationally defined age group (15–29 years), and other age groups as needed.

Data should be comprehensively disaggregated, including but not limited to:

- **Gender** – to identify and address inequalities between young women and men.
- **Disability status** – to capture the situation of young people with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities, ensuring their specific needs are visible.
- **Geographic location** (urban/rural, municipality/region) – to reflect territorial disparities, especially since rural youth face higher poverty and fewer opportunities.
- **Socio-economic background** (household income, parents' education, employment status) – to understand how social origin shapes youth outcomes.
- **Ethnic or minority group affiliation** – particularly for Roma, Egyptian, and other marginalized communities who face systemic exclusion.
- **Migration status** – including internal migrants (youth moving from rural areas to Tirana or other cities), returnees from abroad, and emigrant households.
- **Other vulnerability markers** – such as NEET status (not in employment, education, or training), single parenthood, or youth leaving institutional care.

This standard should establish clear and unified methodologies, indicators, and reporting timelines, ensuring that information is consistent, comparable, and accessible across sectors and institutions.

Establish a Centralized Youth Data Management System

Following the introduction of a mandatory national standard for data collection, processing and reporting, it is essential to establish the necessary infrastructure for its implementation, in close coordination with INSTAT, as the national institution responsible for statistics. A centralized and integrated data management system should consolidate youth-related information across institutions into a single, transparent, and reliable platform. This system must apply standardized methodologies, ensure confidentiality safeguards to build trust among young people, and remain user-friendly and accessible for policymakers and relevant institutions. Such a system would enable more targeted, effective, and inclusive interventions that respond to the real needs of youth.

Develop a National Youth Data Dashboard

Building on the centralized data management system, a public-facing National Youth Data Dashboard should be created. This dashboard would harmonize and visualize data from various sources (e.g., INSTAT, social insurance, penitentiary system, universities), offering a real-time overview of key youth indicators. By making information accessible not only to policymakers but also to researchers, civil society, and young people themselves, the dashboard would strengthen transparency, accountability, and evidence-based policymaking, creating a unified evidence base to inform policies targeting youth poverty, education, employment, and social protection.

Good practices can be drawn from countries such as **Sweden, Estonia, New Zealand** and **Canada**:

Estonia: X-Road (via e-Estonia platform)

X-Road is a secure data exchange layer that integrates disparate information systems, such as the population registry, across public and private sectors via the e-Estonia framework. This enables seamless, interoperable, and privacy-preserving data sharing across government agencies.

Sweden: MONA (Microdata Online Access) & LUPP Survey Tool

- **MONA** is a secure platform managed by Statistics Sweden (SCB), which provides researchers authorized access to microdata. Analysts can process data within the platform without the data ever leaving SCB's control—ensuring strong confidentiality.
- **LUPP (Local Follow-up of Youth Policy)** is a municipal-level youth survey administered by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society. Since 2003, it has captured insights into youth wellbeing, local living conditions, and civic engagement across municipalities. Its data helps inform youth policies at both local and national levels .OECD

New Zealand: Aotearoa Youth Figures & Child & Youth Wellbeing Dashboards via Community Insights

- **Aotearoa Youth Figures**, developed by Figure.NZ with support from Stats NZ, is a free, searchable platform that brings together youth data from over 175 organizations, including demographic, social, and wellbeing metrics, into one accessible interface.
- **Child & Youth Wellbeing Dashboards**, created by Community Insights in partnership with multiple government agencies (Ministry of Health, Stats NZ, Education Counts), provide interactive thematic dashboards covering youth population statistics, education, health, social wellbeing, and economic participation, all updated regularly for localized decision-making.

Canada: Youth Data Lab, Portrait of Youth Visualization Tool, and Youth Mental Health Data Hub

- **Youth Data Lab** is an open-data portal powered by Youthful Cities. It aggregates youth perspectives via surveys, interviews, and quantitative data from more than 65 Canadian cities, making these insights accessible for policymakers and organizations.
- **Portrait of Youth in Canada** is a data visualization tool produced by Statistics Canada. It offers interactive visualizations across multiple dimensions, mental and physical health, education, employment, social participation, and more to support nuanced policy design.
- **Youth Mental Health Data Hub** is a first-of-its-kind public platform providing in-depth data on youth mental health trends, accessible to policymakers, researchers, clinicians, and youth advocates.

For Albania, adopting a similar approach would significantly enhance evidence-based policymaking and strengthen monitoring of progress on youth inclusion and social participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE SOCIAL PROTECTION, EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSION PATHWAYS FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH

Promote Youth-Specific Activation Measures within Social Assistance to move from passive cash transfers to programs that combine financial support with pathways to skills and employment.

Reform the economic assistance program to include a "participation income" model. Beneficiaries aged 15-29 would receive a slightly higher stipend conditional on their participation in certified activities: vocational training, language courses, digital literacy programs, or community service. This invests in human capital while providing immediate relief.

Good Practice: Portugal: Programa Escolhas

- targets young people from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, particularly ethnic minorities, and combines formal and non-formal education, vocational training, and community involvement to promote social inclusion and prevent poverty cycles.

Map and Identify Vulnerable Youth Populations

To effectively address youth poverty and reduce gender disparities, the first priority should be the identification and mapping of vulnerable young populations, with particular attention to regions where female youth poverty is most concentrated. This targeted mapping will enable the design of localized interventions that respond to the specific socio-economic realities of each zone.

Implement Gender-Sensitive Economic Empowerment Programs - Poverty Reduction Measures

Building on the mapping of vulnerable youth, gender-sensitive economic empowerment programs should be established to directly tackle the 2.5% poverty gap between young women and men and address the structural barriers that make young women more vulnerable.

These programs should include vocational training aligned with market demand, flexible apprenticeships, and job placement services. Combined with initiatives that provide subsidies or tax incentives to businesses that hire young women.

While it is important to couple this initiative with affordable, high-quality childcare services and subsidies in urban and rural areas to enable young mothers to work or study.

Additionally, flexible work arrangements should be promoted to support young women's labor market participation, addressing their higher poverty risk.

Reform Poverty Reduction Strategies for Youth

Poverty reduction strategies must be reformed to better support young people at risk. Cash assistance programs should include youth-specific criteria, such as bonuses for continued education enrolment, transport subsidies for job seekers, and incentives for employers to hire young people.

Introduce Targeted Youth Employment Schemes

Develop programs supporting young people (especially women) in accessing decent jobs through apprenticeships, wage subsidies, and entrepreneurship grants.

Ensure Data-Driven and Tailored Support

All interventions should be data-driven and needs-based, ensuring that each identified young person receives tailored support. A coordinated approach should integrate employment opportunities, training, and educational access, alongside targeted measures for young women, to create sustainable pathways out of poverty and into active social and economic participation.

Strengthen Social Protection Coverage

Simplify application procedures and expand eligibility to ensure vulnerable youth (NEET, rural, single mothers) can access economic assistance without barriers.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN JUSTICE SYSTEM FRAMEWORKS FOR THE PREVENTION, REHABILITATION, AND REINTEGRATION OF YOUTH AFTER INCARCERATION

Collaboration with Justice and Social Sectors

Foster partnerships between penal institutions, youth agencies, NGOs, and local governments to address root causes of youth offending.

Early Identification and Intervention for Youth At-Risk of Delinquency

Institutions should partner with schools and community organizations to identify young boys and girls (12-17 years old) displaying risk factors for delinquency.

Provide targeted mentorship programs, mental health counseling, and legal literacy workshops to address underlying challenges before engagement in criminal activity.

Fund and support community-based programs that offer positive alternatives to crime, such as sports leagues, music and arts programs, vocational activities and mentorship from positive male role models. These programs provide structure, a sense of belonging, and fosters positive engagement and social skills.

Expand diversion and restorative justice programs

Legislate and fund pre-trial diversion programs for non-violent, first-time young offenders. These programs would involve mediation with victims, community service, mentorship and rehabilitative courses instead of custodial sentences. This reduces the stigma of a prison record and is proven to lower recidivism.

Good Practice: Norway's youth mediation services

Norway's approach to youth justice is famously focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment. Their facilities focus on education, therapy, and building life skills in a normalized environment. While a full-scale reform is a long-term goal, Albania can start by piloting a single, rehabilitative youth detention unit based on these principles.

Education and Vocational Partnerships

Require all juvenile detention facilities to collaborate with vocational and academic institutions, ensuring that incarcerated youth can earn transferable credits or certifications.

Expand access to literacy, technical skills, and life skills education to enhance employability upon release.

Support distance and hybrid learning models to maintain educational continuity during incarceration.

Scale-Up Post-Release Support Systems (Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs: To prevent re-offending.

Strengthen rehabilitation programs that combine education, skills training, and psychosocial support to reduce recidivism.

Establish a mandatory, cross-institutional "Reintegration Partnership" for every young person released from prison. This partnership, involving the social welfare system, the employment office, and a local NGO, would create a personalized plan for housing, continued education, and job placement, providing stability and a clear path forward.

Establish "Second Chance" employer networks to incentivize businesses to hire formerly incarcerated youth through tax benefits, mentorship, and public recognition.

Good Practice: **Germany's prison-to-employment programs**. It links inmates with companies before release.

Gender-specific Approaches

Though women represent a small proportion, develop tailored support for young women prisoners (psychosocial support, protection from stigma after release). And ensure they have equal access to rehabilitation programs and support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL WELFARE ACCESS, YOUTH INCLUSION, AND ACTIVATION MEASURES

Mandate Transparent, Disaggregated Data Collection and Reporting

Improve data collection, reporting and monitoring. Require institutions to systematically collect age- and gender-disaggregated data. *(As outlined in the overarching recommendation)*. This is the critical first step.

Good Practice: **Sweden's** model for open access statistical dashboard: **Socialstyrelsen** (National Board of Health and Welfare)

Publishes statistical databases on health, social services, child welfare etc. Aggregated data are available to public, with descriptors like gender, age, geographies. It includes statistics on social services for children and young people.

Simplify Access and Develop a Proactive Outreach Strategy: The welfare system should not wait for applications; it should seek out eligible youth.

Many youth face administrative obstacles. Train social workers to conduct outreach in schools, universities, and community centers to inform young people about available support. Use youth-friendly communication channels (social media, messaging apps) to disseminate information about eligibility and how to apply. Introduce digital applications and mobile outreach units (example: Estonia's e-Government platforms make welfare applications easier).

Conduct a "Social Welfare Access Audit": Specifically focused on young people.

An independent body, with youth organization representatives, should review the eligibility criteria, application processes, and awareness of all social assistance programs. The audit should identify unnecessary bureaucratic barriers, digital exclusion issues (e.g., requiring online applications without support), and propose simplifications to make the system more youth accessible.

Ensure Psychosocial Wellbeing and Inclusion

Guarantee access to counseling, mental health services, and peer mentoring to address trauma and stigma;

Create youth clubs and peer-to-peer networks to promote inclusion, self-confidence, and active citizenship

Train welfare staff and caregivers in trauma-informed care and empowerment-based approaches.

Support Transition and Independent Living Support

Design tailored transition programs for youth aging out of care, including housing support, financial literacy, and job placement.

Create mentorship networks linking young care leavers with community role models and professionals.

Introduce a step-by-step independence plan combining practical skills training with housing and financial support.

Promote Inclusive Employment and Entrepreneurship Pathways

Establish employment schemes with private companies, including internships and apprenticeships tailored for young care leavers.

The government should establish structured partnerships with these stakeholders (NPOs and social enterprises providing social care services) in order to ensure the provision of services that the public institutions cannot deliver alone, and bridge existing gaps, particularly in providing these services in rural areas and underserved regions.

Support social enterprises (which in Albania primarily focus on providing services to vulnerable groups and employing) through seed grants, mentorship, and targeted incentives to expand their services and promote hiring of young people from welfare backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE YOUTH ENROLLMENT & GRADUATION FROM ALBANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Support Modernize and Align Curriculum with Labor Market Needs and Independent Living Support

Update university curricula and programs to reflect the latest trends, methodologies, and industry developments, ensuring graduates are competitive in the labor market.

Establish collaboration among employers, universities and government institutions to develop programs that align tertiary education with labor market demand, by integrating practical skills, internship, apprenticeships and work study opportunities to develop the industry relevant competencies.

Universities should collaborate with the employment sector to conduct skills gap studies to identify the knowledge and abilities required for current and future jobs.

Enhance Quality and Recognition of Higher Education

Adopt both local and international quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms to ensure universities meet recognized standards.

Strengthen the credibility and mobility of Albanian graduates by providing internationally recognized diplomas.

Invest in teaching quality and offer continuous professional development for academic staff to adopt modern pedagogical methods and innovative teaching practices.

Improve University Infrastructure and Learning Conditions

Equip and modernize University facilities with adequate laboratories, digital tools, libraries, and learning resources to accommodate all students effectively.

Promote and integrate digital learning platforms and learning management systems to support flexible, blended, and remote learning opportunities.

Promote Access and Equity in Tertiary Education

Expand scholarships schemes and financial support targeted for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, low-income families, part of welfare systems, rural areas, and first-generation university students, to reduce financial barriers of accessing high education.

Introduce targeted outreach programs in secondary schools to inform underrepresented groups (e.g., girls, Roma youth, students in welfare systems) about scholarships and tertiary education opportunities. For example organize: University open days in rural areas to bring universities closer to rural youth to raise awareness of higher education options.

Develop online platforms with clear, accessible information on admissions, scholarships, and career pathways.

Support remote students by offering housing assistance, transport subsidies, and digital learning infrastructure.

Ensure inclusive policies and dedicated infrastructure for students with disabilities to access logistically the universities.

Introduce flexible study format, part-time and blended learning programs for students who need to combine work and study.

Strengthen Career Guidance and Counseling Services

Promote and increase awareness among youth about the values of career guidance and mentoring programs to help them align their skills, interests, and career aspirations with tertiary education choices and labor market needs.

Improve the skills of career guidance teachers in all secondary schools by providing training to ensure consistent and high-quality counseling.

Establish professional career guidance centers in all Albanian cities to provide all students with accessible and high-quality support.

Foster Inclusion and Retention

Strengthen mentorship and peer support programs, especially for first-year students from vulnerable groups, to improve adaptation and academic success.

Ensure schools and universities offer accessible academic and psychological services to reduce dropout rates.

Develop mentoring, counseling, and academic assistance programs to help students stay enrolled and succeed in their studies.

Create mechanisms for students who drop out due to financial/emigration pressures to re-enter studies without penalties.

Strengthen Trust and Engagement with Students

Build stronger communication and engagement channels between universities and students to increase transparency and trust in the higher education system.

Showcase graduate success and achievements to demonstrate the value of higher education and boost confidence in pursuing university studies in Albania.

Investigate and Address the Male Engagement Gap and the Reasons why young men have lower engagement rates in tertiary education compared to young women

Commission qualitative research to understand the drivers behind young men's choices (preference for skilled trades, emigration aspirations). Use the findings to:

Revamp career guidance in high schools to highlight diverse, high-value career paths that require a university degree.

Develop targeted outreach and awareness programs in secondary schools to encourage male students to pursue higher education and highlight diverse career pathways. Promote male role models in fields like engineering, business, and tech through university marketing campaigns.

Strengthen the Alternative Vocational Pathway to ensure it is a robust, respected choice, not a default for those who feel excluded from university.

Offer scholarships, mentorship programs, and tailored counseling services to support male students, particularly in fields where they are underrepresented.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE THE LABOR MARKET RELEVANCE AND INCLUSIVITY OF ADVANCED DEGREE GRADUATES

Ensure that advanced degrees lead to quality employment

Promote and fund work-integrated learning (mandatory internships, co-op programs) as part of master's and doctoral programs. This makes advanced education more attractive and relevant for all students.

Create Incentives for Advanced Skills in Key Sectors: To retain highly educated youth, particularly women

Develop "Sector-Specific PhD and Research Funds" in partnership with private companies in priority sectors like agriculture (agritech), tourism, and energy. Offer scholarships and research grants tied to working on Albanian challenges, preventing brain drain and applying advanced knowledge to national development.

Launch a Targeted Campaign for Young Men in STEM: To close the gap in advanced education

Partner with tech companies and industry leaders to create scholarship and mentorship programs specifically designed to encourage young men to pursue and complete Master's degrees in STEM fields, showcasing clear and lucrative career trajectories within Albania.

Support international study returnees

Encourage Albanians studying abroad to return to work in Albania, through recognition of diplomas, research opportunities, employment opportunities and entrepreneurship grants.

Balance gender disparities

While women's strong educational presence is positive, ensure that high education translates into equitable labor market opportunities by enforcing equal pay and combating workplace discrimination.

Recommendations concerning youth economic participation

The introduction and implementation of strategies such as the National Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2029, the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2023-2030, and the Youth Guarantee represent key steps toward creating more favourable conditions in the labour market for young people in Albania.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DECREASE THE NUMBER OF NEET YOUTH

Develop a Strategic and Flexible Outreach Approach

Create a national framework for outreach and NEET identification with flexibility for local implementation to address specific regional needs. This coordinated strategy at the national level ensures consistency in how NEET youth are defined, reached, and documented across all regions of Albania.

Ensure ongoing communication between national, regional, and local authorities to maintain consistency and coordination.

Focus on Prevention and Early Intervention

Implement early warning systems in schools to identify students at risk of dropping out.

Provide systematic career guidance and mentoring to help young people make informed decisions about their future.

Collaborate with schools to offer tailored support during key transition points in education.

Map and Track NEETs

Use mapping to understand the characteristics and locations of NEETs for targeted interventions.

Develop tracking systems to monitor young people's transitions from education to employment and ensure they do not get lost in the system.

Address legal and technical barriers to data sharing between stakeholders.

Tailor Measures and Strategies to NEET Sub-Groups - Adopt an Inclusive and Tailored Approach

Recognize the diversity of NEETs (youth with disabilities, short term unemployed, long term unemployed, young women with family responsibilities, rural youth, Roma and other minorities, youth at risk of poverty or migration) and design identification and outreach activities that are sensitive to these differences.

Use grassroots NGOs and cultural mediators to engage marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities.

Leverage Partnerships

Build partnerships among municipalities, public employment offices, schools, youth centers, social services, NGOs and community-based organizations to share data and actively reach out to young people in their areas.

Clearly define roles and responsibilities among partners to avoid duplication and ensure accountability.

Involve youth organizations and NGOs to capitalize on their expertise and trust with young people.

Use Proactive and Innovative Outreach Methods

Use both institutional tools (administrative records, surveys, employment registries) and community-based approaches (peer outreach, NPOs, local networks) to identify NEET youth who may otherwise remain invisible.

Employ street-based outreach workers, peer-to-peer support, and mobile units to engage hard-to-reach youth.

Introduce digital tools, mobile applications, and online platforms that make it easier to register and connect with NEET youth, particularly those living in remote or underserved areas.

Organize events, workshops, and job fairs to raise awareness and provide direct support.

Invest in Capacity Building of Frontline Workers

Provide targeted training for professionals and volunteers involved in identification. Key skills should include youth engagement, intercultural communication, confidentiality, and sensitivity to vulnerable groups.

Establish One-Stop-Shops

Create integrated information and service delivery centers where young people can access multiple services (e.g., employment, education, health, housing) in one location.

Ensure these centers are easily accessible and staffed with multi-skilled teams.

Involve Young People in Program Design

Engage young people in the design and evaluation of outreach programs to ensure they meet their needs.

Use feedback from NEETs to adapt and improve services.

Ensure Sustainable Funding

Move away from project-based funding to ensure long-term sustainability of identification and outreach initiatives.

Explore diverse funding sources, including public-private partnerships and European Social Fund (ESF) support.

Improve Communication and Awareness

Use clear, youth-friendly language in communication campaigns.

Share success stories and involve role models or influencers to inspire young people.

Disseminate information through multiple channels, including social media, schools, and community events.

Monitor and Evaluate Programs

Establish mechanisms to track progress, regularly update data, adapt identification methods and ensure continuous improvement of services based on evidence and feedback from both practitioners and young people themselves.

Regularly assess the effectiveness of outreach strategies and adjust them based on outcomes.

Ensure High-Quality, Youth-Centered Opportunities

Provide training, employment, and educational opportunities that meet high standards and align with the needs, preferences, and aspirations of young people.

Learn from International Best Practices

Analyze successes and challenges from other countries' Youth Guarantee implementations to identify lessons and effective approaches.

Use evidence from past experiences to enhance the efficiency, functionality, and tangible impact of programs for young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN ALBANIA

Prevent the Transition from Short-Term to Long-Term Unemployment

Prioritize measures that actively support unemployed young people before they fall into long-term unemployment. This can include early intervention programs, personalized career counseling, and targeted activation measures to keep young people connected to the labor market.

Promote Employment Opportunities in Albania

Develop awareness campaigns and outreach initiatives that showcase career opportunities available within the country, with a focus on emerging sectors, entrepreneurship, and regional development opportunities.

Facilitate the Education-to-Work Transition

Establish dedicated mentoring offices that guide students from the final stages of their education until they secure employment. Mentors should provide continuous career guidance, help young people navigate job applications, and support them in developing soft and technical skills needed by the market.

Increase Women's Participation in the Labour Force

Implement affirmative measures that give women greater opportunities in recruitment and ensure their candidacy is prioritized where gaps exist.

Supportive services, such as affordable childcare, flexible work arrangements, social protection measures and family-friendly policies, should be expanded to enable women to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

Expand Housing and Financial Incentives for Youth and Women

Extend housing loan schemes with a dedicated focus on young people and women, providing favorable financial instruments that encourage stability and long-term settlement, which in turn supports sustained employment.

Invest in Training and Upskilling

Scale up training, re-skilling, and upskilling programs to align with changing labour market demands, ensuring young people are equipped with future-oriented skills in digitalization, green economy, and other growth sectors.

Promote the Employment of Young People with Disabilities

Inclusive Workplaces: Encourage the development of accessible and inclusive workplaces, supported by training for employers and employees on both physical accommodations and behavioral inclusion.

Dedicated Focal Points: Appoint trained staff within institutions and companies to oversee disability inclusion and ensure that accommodations are applied effectively.

Employer Incentives: Introduce targeted financial incentives for employers who hire and retain young people with disabilities, encouraging sustainable integration into the workforce.

Public Awareness: Launch awareness campaigns that challenge stigma and highlight the value of employing young people with disabilities.

Individualized Pathways: Provide personalized support to identify each young person's skills, strengths, and interests, and connect them with employment opportunities that match their potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE SELF-EMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Simplify Application Processes for Grant application

Simplify bureaucratic procedures and reduce the complex requirements and steps for grant applications, as lengthy processes discourage young people and often result in withdrawals. Streamlined, user-friendly procedures would enhance accessibility and encourage wider participation.

Combining Grants with Training

Accompany funding opportunities with targeted training sessions that equip young people with the practical skills to prepare strong applications, manage finances, and design sustainable business models.

This dual approach would not only strengthen young people's capacity to apply, but also it would help to equip them with the skills to manage funding more effectively, if awarded, thereby increasing the long-term sustainability and survival rates of youth-led enterprises."

Prioritize Vulnerable Groups

Give priority in applications and incentives to young people from rural areas, disadvantaged groups, and youth in general, to create more inclusive opportunities.

Promote Entrepreneurship Culture

Highlight and promote success stories of young entrepreneurs to inspire peers, foster a culture of innovation, and encourage more youth to see self-employment as a viable career path.

Integrate Entrepreneurship in Education

Integrate Entrepreneurship in Education by embedding entrepreneurial skills, mindsets, and practices across all levels of the education system, from primary to higher education. This includes updating curricula with practical modules on creativity, problem-solving, financial literacy, and business planning; promoting project-based learning and real-life case studies; fostering partnerships between schools, universities, and businesses; and creating spaces such as innovation labs and student enterprises. Such integration will prepare young people to think critically, act innovatively, and develop the confidence to pursue self-employment or entrepreneurial ventures.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-17

Promote Equal Economic Participation Early On

Encourage programs that actively include girls in early work experiences to balance the gender disparity in youth employment.

Support Work-Readiness Programs in Schools

Implement career orientation and skills development initiatives targeting both boys and girls before they enter the labor market.

Facilitate Safe and Legal Employment for Youth Aged 15-17

Ensure strict enforcement of labor laws that protect young workers from exploitation. Promote age-appropriate and decent job opportunities that provide fair wages, safe working conditions, and opportunities for learning and professional growth. Collaboration between government institutions, employers, and civil society should be strengthened to monitor compliance, raise awareness among youth about their rights, and encourage businesses to adopt youth-friendly employment practices.

Increase Awareness in Families and Communities on Young Girls' Employment

Awareness should be raised among families and communities about the benefits of early employment for both genders, addressing cultural biases that favor boys and limit girls.

5

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Since 2016, a set of indicators were chosen based on an analytical process comprising of extensive desk research and expert consultations. Over the years new indicators have been presented to better measure the political, social and economic participation of young people. In the following Table are listed all the indicators, calculation method and data sources.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION DIMENSION	DATA CALCULATION METHOD			SOURCE OF DATA
INDICATORS	DATA	FEMALE	MALE	
Young Ministers in Government	Number of young ministers (15-29)/Total number of ministers	Number of female young ministers (15-29) / Total number of ministers	Number of male young ministers (15-29)/ Total number of ministers	Desk research
Young Deputy Ministers in Government	Number of young deputy ministers (15-29)/ Total number of deputy ministers	Number of female young deputy minister (15-29)/Total number of deputy ministers	Number of male young deputy minister (15-29)/ Total number of deputy ministers	Desk research
Young MPs in the Parliament	Number of young MPs (15-29)/ Total number of MPs	Number of female young MPs (15-29)/ Total number of MPs	Number of male young MPs (15-29)/ Total number of MPs	Desk research
Young Mayors	Number of young mayors (15-29)/ Total number of mayors	Number of female young mayors (15-29)/ Total number of mayors	Number of male young mayors (15-29)/ Total number of mayors	Desk research
On-line tools for information and participation in decision making of government and parliament	Average of (Number of public institutions at central level that have Twitter/Total number of public institutions at central level + (Number of public institutions at central level Facebook/Total number public institutions at central level) + (Number public institutions at central level that have a Webpage/Total number of public institutions at central level)	N/A	N/A	Desk research
On-line tools for information and participation in decision making of municipalities	Average of (Number of municipalities that have Twitter/Total number of municipalities) + (Number of municipalities that have Facebook/Total number of municipalities) + (Number of municipalities that have a Webpage/Total number of municipalities)	N/A	N/A	Desk research

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION DIMENSION	DATA CALCULATION METHOD			SOURCE OF DATA
INDICATORS	DATA	FEMALE	MALE	
Existence of Youth Structures(councils/parliament/unions) on National Level	Number of youth structures on national level	N/A	N/A	Information provided by the Ministry of Youth and Children and desk research
Existence of youth structures(councils/parliaments/unions) on Local Level	Number of municipalities that have youth structure (councils, parliaments, unions)/ Total number of municipalities	N/A	N/A	Information provided by the Municipalities and Ministry of Youth and Children
% of the Municipality Budget dedicated to Youth	Average % of Municipal Budgets of the municipalities that have provided this information	N/A	N/A	Data calculated by the researcher according to the information provided by the Municipalities of Albania

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION DIMENSION	DATA CALCULATION METHOD			SOURCE OF DATA
	INDICATORS	DATA	FEMALE	
NEET rate	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Youth Unemployment Rate	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Long-term Youth Unemployment Rate	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Youth Labour Force Participation Rate	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Youth Employment rate	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of state	Number of young people (15-29) who received financial support from government (Ministries)/ Total number of people who received financial support from the government (Ministries)	Number of young Female (15-29) who received financial support from government (Ministries)/Total number of females who received financial support from government (Ministries)	Number of young Male (15-29) who received financial support from government (Ministries)/Total number of Male who received financial support from government (Ministries)	Information provided by the Minister of State for Entrepreneurship Protection, Ministry of Finances, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Ministry of Tourism and Environment
Self-employed young people	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Government Spending in Employment Programmes	Total Amount in Albanian Lekë (ALL)	N/A	N/A	Information provided by the National Agency of Employment and Skills

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION DIMENSION	DATA CALCULATION METHOD			SOURCE OF DATA
INDICATORS	DATA	FEMALE	MALE	
Young People at Risk of Poverty	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
The percentage of poor people (the young people who lives under the line of poverty) (No of young poor people / no of young people)	No data	No data	No data	N/A
Young People in Prisons	Number of young people (15-29) in prison/ Total number of people in prison	Number of young female (15-29) in prison / Total number of people in prison	Number of young male young (15-29) in prison/ Total number of people in prison	Information provided by the General Directorate of Prisons
Young People part of Social Welfare System (who receive financial support in Social Protection System) divided with the young people who are in the social welfare system	Young people (15-29) beneficiaries of the economic assistance scheme/ Total People beneficiaries of the economic assistance scheme	No data	No data	Information provided by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection
Dropout from the secondary education	No data	No data	No data	N/A
Young People Enrolled in Tertiary Education	Young people (18-29) enrolled in Tertiary Education/Total young people (18-29)	Young female 18-29 Enrolled in Tertiary Education/Total young female (18-29)	Young male 18-29 Enrolled in Tertiary Education/Total young male (18-29)	Information provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports and National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Young People Graduated from Tertiary Education	Young people (18-29) graduated in 2024 / Young people (18-29) enrolled in 2024	Young female people (18-29) graduated in 2024/Young female (18-29) enrolled in 2024	Young Male people (18-29) graduated in 2024/Total young male (18-29) enrolled in 2024	Information provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports and National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Young People with Advanced Education	The number of young people (25-29) graduated with a master, doctorate or equivalent degree / Total number of young people (25-29)	The number of young women (25-29) graduated with a master, doctorate or equivalent degree /Total number of young women (25-29)	The number of young men (25-29) graduated with a master, doctorate or equivalent degree / Total number of young men (25-29)	Data calculated by the researcher according to the data provided by the Ministry of Education and Sports and information available in the INSTAT Database

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION DIMENSION	DATA CALCULATION METHOD			SOURCE OF DATA
INDICATORS	DATA	FEMALE	MALE	
Participation Rate in Non-Formal Education and Training (last 4 weeks)	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Data calculated and provided by INSTAT	Information provided by the National Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT)
Government Budget on Social Protection Programs	Total amount in Albanian Leke (ALL)	N/A	N/A	Information provided by the State Social Services

The project “Stronger voices for better choices - a Youth Hub in the WB&T” is implemented by:

