



Агенција за млади и спорт



**NATIONAL
YOUTH
STRATEGY
2016-2025**





FOREWORD

In the light of developments in society, as well as the expiry of the National Youth Strategy 2005–2015, the Youth and Sports Agency at the beginning of 2015 initiated the process of developing a new National Youth Strategy that will reflect the current challenges, opinions and needs of young people for the period 2016–2025.

The process of development of a National Youth Strategy began in February 2015 and evolved in three stages:

- ▲ Public call for participation in the working groups;
- ▲ Meetings of working groups within the priority areas identified in the Strategy;
- ▲ Public discussions to present the draft text of the Strategy.

The basis for initiating this process was the youth trends survey conducted by the Institute of Sociological, Political and Juridical Research in the period from September to December 2014.

This National Youth Strategy, as a strategic document, was developed with the active participation of young people and representatives of relevant institutions who, in a transparent and inclusive process, expressed their opinions and needs regarding the nine priority areas identified in the Strategy.

The content of the National Youth Strategy comprises strategic priorities, the key challenges that young people encounter, and long-term objectives, divided into thematic areas. As a supplement to the Strategy, a General Plan was drafted proposing results and measures over the next ten years. The adoption of this strategic document will be followed by a process of consultation for the development of two-year action plans that will specify next

steps, timeframes, responsibilities and the necessary finances for the delivery of the objectives as part of the proposed solutions that have already been defined. The operationalization of the strategy set up in this way will serve later on as a foundation for the development of a plan for monitoring its implementation that will ensure better efficiency and coordination of the efforts of different institutions responsible for the implementation of measures foreseen in this Strategy.

We would like to express our special gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme for supporting this process from the beginning and for attaching great value to it with the support they have provided.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the young people who believed in this process and who in mutual commitment and partnership laid the foundations of the second National Youth Strategy. The development of the National Youth Strategy is one of the most inclusive and open processes in the Republic of Macedonia, a process that involved the participation of young people and representatives of relevant institutions and all stakeholders who over a period of 10 months discussed the problems and challenges of young people in our country. More important still, they discussed ways, mechanisms and possibilities for resolving these problems over the next 10 years. Young people were given an opportunity to talk about how they imagine their future and they responded by showing great interest and commitment in contributing towards bringing about positive changes in society.

This Strategy belongs to all young people in the Republic of Macedonia.



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Skopje,
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

YSA	Youth and Sports Agency
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
IT	Information technologies
LYW	Local youth work
SME	Small and medium enterprises
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
NYS	National Youth Strategy
NFE	Non-formal education
PASs	Psychoactive substances
RM	The Republic of Macedonia
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health



INTRODUCTION

Young people are leaders of positive change in the Republic of Macedonia and in the world beyond. They are a resource of innovation and the future drivers of social and economic development. Young people challenge established norms and values and build the foundations for the future of the country. The Republic of Macedonia acknowledges this significant role of youth. It is of the greatest importance, therefore, to ensure continuous and systematic investment not only in their development but also in the establishment of mechanisms for their active participation in the social processes. Only by building true partnership between institutions and youth can we ensure that the policies are inclusive and that they reflect and address the real needs of youth and stimulate social integration.

The National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2016–2025 sets out the basic principles and action guidelines for all actors in society. These actions will lead to improvement in the social and economic situation of young people and the creation of an environment that will enable youth to fulfil their rights, needs and interests.

For the purposes of this Strategy, and in compliance with established historical, social, political and ethical practice, **the term ‘young people’ (youth) shall refer to any person(s) between the age of 15 and 29. This is a category that holds huge potential as a key resource for social progress, but also a category that is highly vulnerable to social and economic changes in society.**

This Strategy is based on a determination to work for youth and together with youth and to provide conditions in which young people can fulfil their potential as active citizens who contribute not only towards their personal and professional development but also towards the development of the entire society.

In order to adopt a structured approach to the different issues related to youth rights, the interventions proposed in this Strategy are divided into 9 key areas, as follows:

- ▲ youth participation
- ▲ youth information
- ▲ local youth work
- ▲ education
- ▲ employment and pre-employment support
- ▲ culture
- ▲ sports
- ▲ health
- ▲ quality of life

The National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2016–2025 is based on the international documents ratified by the Republic of Macedonia that promote youth-related issues. It is also in compliance with other strategic documents of interest adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia.



USED APPROACH FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

Based on the principle of participation, and acting in accordance with the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and the Code of Good Practices for Civil Participation in the Decision Making Process, the process of development of the National Youth Strategy 2016–2025 was initiated by organising a national conference at which over a hundred representatives of youth organisations and institutions marked the beginning of development of this Strategy.

The basis for initiating this process was the youth trends survey conducted by the Institute of Sociological, Political and Juridical Research in the period from September to December 2014.

The whole process of development of the National Youth Strategy began in February 2015 and evolved in several stages. The process included a public call for participation in thematic working groups. Civil society organisations, informal groups and individuals had the opportunity to choose in which thematic area they would like to be actively

involved. The working group meetings within the priority areas identified in the Strategy began in the middle of April, and by the end of September four to five workshops had already been held for each of the priority areas in order to define the key challenges for young people as well as the long-term objectives to tackle these challenges. The third stage of the process took place during October and November, when 12 public debates were organised across the country, including a final public debate in Skopje that was attended by more than 130 representatives of state institutions, civil society organisations, local youth councils, informal groups and individuals. The development of the Strategy allowed for the involvement of a wide variety of youth representatives. The most active participants were the members of youth organisations and representatives of local youth councils, as well as representatives delegated by state institutions. In view of the consultation meetings held at national and local level, the participatory methodology employed to prepare this Strategy, as well as the social media tools specifically designed to enable a considerable number of young people to their opinions and proposals, we consider this document to be one of the few in South-Eastern Europe to show such a high level of inclusion.



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YOUTH IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TODAY

The Youth Strategy 2005–2015 systematically raised youth related issues in a manner in which it had never been raised before in the Republic of Macedonia, in terms of addressing young people's rights and needs and in proclaiming a number of European values and approaches. Thus the 2005–2015 Strategy institutionalised the concepts of participation, empowerment and awareness, but above all respect for individual rights.

The 2005–2015 Strategy for the first time communicated and unified the efforts of institutions and of the civil sector, thus making room for the creation of a critical group of young people and youth organisations who are today the key drivers in the fight for youth rights. In recent years we have witnessed the first initiatives for the implementation of non-formal education, youth work, the encouragement and regulation of volunteer work, the development of local youth strategies and the provision of access to European programmes and support for education and job mobility, and many other tools and European processes designed to improve the position of young people in society. The challenge that lies ahead of this new Strategy is to ensure that all these processes will be systemically integrated and institutionalised in order to contribute effectively towards the different challenges currently faced by young people in the Republic of Macedonia.

One of the key problems faced by young people in the Republic of Macedonia at present is the high rate of youth unemployment, which in 2015 amounted to 48.2% among people between the age of 15 and 24.¹ Youth unemployment is an issue closely associated with financial position and social well-being, and has an impact on many other issues related to quality of life. In respect of education, the period from 2010 to 2014 saw a reduction in the school dropout rate and an increased number of young people completing secondary education, as well as a higher number of

people up to the of 34 with completed higher education.² However, these numbers for higher education still fall short of what is desired and are lower than the EU average. Another present concern is the high proportion of young people who are not participating either in employment, education or training (NEETs), amounting to almost 30% in 2013.³

All these issues have an impact not only on the habits of young people and the opportunities they make use of, but also on important aspects of their attitudes towards health, culture and sports.

Finally, we would like to highlight the issues related to youth participation and information that were singled out as important elements by all the participants who worked on this Strategy as being essential for the development of every young person into an active citizen and equal participant in all social processes. These are precisely the issues focussed on by the Youth Strategy for 2016–2025, aiming at designing and facilitating interventions for overcoming these problems, above all by making use of approaches and tools that have already proven to be efficient at national and European level.

In this context, it is particularly important that the interventions envisaged in this Strategy should be equally available to all young people in the Republic of Macedonia, and especially to young people from vulnerable categories. We expect and encourage the key actors in the implementation of this Strategy to pay particular attention to this category of young people.

Youth unemployment is an issue closely associated with financial position and social well-being, and has an impact on many other issues related to quality of life



² Ibid.

³ Labour Market Transitions of Young Women and Men in the Republic of Macedonia – International Labour Organization – July 2013

¹ State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia (no. 02,1,15,32) dated 11/12.2015



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VISION 2025

Young people are independent, active, equal, informed and progressive participants in all areas of society and they fully develop their potential as responsible citizens who enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms.

Young people have equal opportunities irrespective of their differences and they are largely involved in the decision-making process, thus developing their potentials and making active contribution towards the general development and wellbeing of the Republic of Macedonia.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Providing a better standard of living and equal opportunities for a decent life.
2. Creating conditions for effective observance and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, and systematic integration and interaction of different categories of young people.
3. Creating opportunities for the involvement of young people in the monitoring and implementation of policies and decisions that affect them.
4. Equal access to quality education and other forms of personal and professional development.

- ▲ **AUTHENTIC PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** – Young people are unique individuals who are undergoing an intensive learning and development process. It is our duty to provide young people with educational and life opportunities and experiences that will contribute towards complete fulfilment of their potential by nurturing the individual particularities and differences of every young person.
- ▲ **SOCIAL INCLUSION** - Social integration and inclusion implies a necessary minimum and a requirement without which the integral development of any young person cannot be provided. Social inclusion is a fundamental right that should be enjoyed by all young people.
- ▲ **MULTICULTURALISM** – Multiculturalism is a key feature of our society and will be recognised as a resource and a potential added value to development in all areas of social activity.

VALUES OF THE STRATEGY

In view of the complexity of living in today's dynamic society, as well as in view of the specific challenges that young people face as part of their own development and maturity, the National Youth Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia recognises the following values as a general tendency and fundamental determination of this document:

- ▲ **PARTICIPATION** – Young people will be active participants and key partners in all processes of developing and building a democratic and progressive society. Participation means creating opportunities for real and significant involvement of different groups of young women and men in the decision-making and implementation processes at all levels and in all aspects of social life that affect them.
- ▲ **EMPOWERMENT** – Every involvement and cooperation with young people will be recognised as a unique opportunity for building their capacity and developing their empowerment, with the aim of their assuming important roles both in their own lives and in society in general.





▲ **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YOUTH STRATEGY WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:**

Equality and inclusiveness – Acknowledging that different groups of young people need different approach and forms of support in order to ensure equal access for making use of the opportunities that exist.

Responsibility and accountability – This Strategy is a document that will come to life only if those who adopt it observe and act in accordance with the principles of transparency, responsibility and accountability. These actors include, above all, the institutions responsible for its implementation, but also everyone working for the wellbeing of young people, especially civil society organisations, youth associations, the international community, parents, and the various professionals who work with young people.

Cooperation and partnership – The challenges that lie ahead of young people are complex, involving many sectors of society and economy. This is why the only model that can enable us to overcome these challenges is through inter-sectoral cooperation with a complementarity of efforts in implementing the proposed solutions. It is necessary to build partnerships between institutions and youth civil society organisations and organisations that work with young people in order to ensure the active participation of young people and adequate representation of their opinions in resolving problems.

Professionalism – The implementation of the Youth Strategy will entail the delivery of individual tasks and responsibilities with a high level of competence, consistency and personal and professional integrity. Professionalism means a high quality of work, strong work ethics, and dedication to continuous promotion of results and processes.



THEMATIC AREAS

Thematic area: YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The effective participation of young people is both a right and an opportunity for young women and men to become involved in the design, adoption and implementation of policies that are of interest to them. Additionally, youth participation is a process of creating opportunities for young people to play a significant part in the process and to influence the creation and implementation of policies that contribute towards the development of strategies and programmes. These opportunities are created by developing a wide range of formal and informal mechanisms for youth participation, from local youth councils to focus groups, from ongoing consultation on youth policies to projects run by young people.

The existing practices, the absence of representative bodies and the low level of awareness and education among young people about their right to participate highlight the extent of youth exclusion from these processes and indicate some of the causes of youth apathy. Youth representation in the country's institutions is not at a satisfactory level, and even where young people are present in institutions they are rarely or only to a small extent involved in decision-making processes. Certain forms of youth organisation can be identified at local level, as well as strategic documents on youth in some municipalities; however, there is no uniform approach that applies everywhere. In addition, local self-governments and government institutions do not allocate sufficient funds for the needs of youth and for the implementation of their ideas. Nor do these institutions contribute adequately to encouraging volunteer work among young people, despite the fact that the majority of the young population support this type of engagement as an opportunity for training that will make them better prepared for future job positions.

The key challenges in the area of youth participation are related to the opinion of young people that

they are only partially involved in policy creation and that they are more involved in helping their peers and friends with school assignments than in volunteer work for non-governmental organisations. Those young people who are members of civil society organisations consider that only a small percentage of young people are members of any organisation and that a significant percentage are not interested in politics at all.

In the long term, these key challenges can cause apathy among the young population, negatively influencing the quality of education, creating passive citizens and lowering the quality of life of youth in general. In view of the key challenges that have been identified, this Strategy provides appropriate long-term objectives and specific measures to address these problems.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: An increased number of youth generated youth initiatives and youth associations

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Promoting youth activism and benefits in the school system and the out-of-school system and for youths with fewer opportunities.
2. Organising presentations for the promotion of youth activism, supported by relevant institutions.
3. Support and education programme at national and local level.
4. Providing support for educating young people about opportunities for informal initiatives and the benefits of such initiatives.
5. Ensuring a broad process of consultation at national and local level in the creation of public policies that affect young people.



OBJECTIVE 2: Institutions, organisations and youth will have regular, continuous and joint activities in accordance with the interests of young people.

Measures under Objective 2:

1. Analysing the current situation and identifying positive practices in the functioning of co-management bodies at European level. This analysis will be prepared in cooperation with competent institutions and civil society organisations.
2. Extensive process of consultation for setting up a co-management body, as well as for the creation of policies on the functioning of the co-management body (competences and strategic plans).
3. Establishing a co-management mechanism for decision-making and coordination in the implementation of activities with a proportionate membership of competent institutions, civil society organisations and other forms of youth association.

OBJECTIVE 3: Local and national authorities provide financial support for the promotion of youth participation

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Analysing budget implications from the Strategy at national and local level, in cooperation with competent institutions and civil society organisations.
2. Allocating special financial means for the implementation of the national Strategy.
3. Undertaking an extensive process of consultation for setting up a co-management body, as well as for the creation of policies on the operation of the co-management body (competences and strategic plans).
4. Establishing a co-management mechanism for decision-making and coordination in the imple-

mentation of activities with proportionate membership of competent institutions, civil society organisations and other forms of youth association.

5. Programme on cooperation between civil society organisations and competent institutions for working on EU projects.
6. Allocating a separate budget line for setting up a new programme fund for direct support of youth and forms of youth association.

OBJECTIVE 4: More significant institutional focus on youth, ensured through the Youth and Sports Agency

Measures under Objective 4:

1. A programme for building the capacities of competent institutions for the comprehensive implementation of youth policies.
2. Guaranteed participation of competent institutions in processes that evolve at European and global level.
3. An extensive process of consultation in the creation of policies and the implementation of youth policies at national and local level.
4. Establishing a co-management mechanism for decision-making and coordination in the implementation of activities, with a proportionate membership of competent institutions, civil society organisations and other forms of youth associations.
5. Institutions providing spatial and technical resources for implementing youth policies.



OBJECTIVE 5: Adequate resources provided for the implementation of youth policies and youth participation mechanisms

Measures under Objective 5:

1. Research (comparison with relevant situations in neighbouring countries and beyond (Serbia, etc.).
2. Study visits to corresponding ministries in Europe (understanding the work of these institutions and their competences).
3. Mapping existing resources (which resources, above all financial resources, are available for establishing such a ministry).
4. Conducting an open process of mapping the competences of this ministry, including focus groups for defining the competences of this ministry, a process that will include not only competent institutions but also non-governmental organisations that work with youth.
5. Developing a co-management decision-making system.

The following institutions responsible for the measures in the area of youth participation: the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the Youth and Sports Agency, the Ministry of Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Thematic area:
YOUTH INFORMATION

Youth information is usually envisaged as a system of activities for conveying information to young people. This system of activities should provide access to youth-related information obtained from institutions at central and local level. Youth information is usually considered to be a service system for providing specialised service information of interest to young people. It is especially important that this process results in quality information that young people will have free access to and that will be widely available. Consequently, the opinion of young people is that youth information is a civic process of information sharing, or a process of communication between institutions and young people, between young people themselves, and also between youth and institutions.

Key challenges in this area are associated with the limited information accessible to young people, the manner of presenting information in a language that unfamiliar to young people, and the sometimes inappropriate use of social media and manner of presenting information in a language that is not youth-friendly. Young people also believe there is no structure for youth information that gathers in one place all the information of interest to young people, and that there is no practice or awareness of information sharing among young people. These key challenges can lead to decreased interest among young people for following traditional media and increased distrust in the institutions that work on issues of interest to young people. Inadequate and inappropriate content in the media can have a negative impact on young people's development, and in the absence of timely and accurate information, young people can develop apathy towards society.

In view of the identified key challenges, this Strategy provides for appropriate long-term objectives and specific measures.



LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: Availability and transparency of information of interest to young people for fulfilment of their needs

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Analysis and establishment of the situation and practices for YSA.
2. Mapping target groups and introducing functional methods for communication with target groups.
3. Developing an implementation programme and action plan within the unit for youth information.
4. Implementing an efficient and effective system for monitoring and controlling the unit's programme.
5. Analysing and researching existing documents and practices from EU member states and the region.
6. Developing draft-policy documents.
7. Adopting a document on transparent youth information.
8. Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the policy document.
9. Preparing a project for youth information and visibility activities for the project.
10. Providing information and support to media staff.
11. Surveying the opinion of the general public on radio and television programmes on topics and content intended for young people.

OBJECTIVE 2: Communication strategy on inter-institutional coordination for youth information developed

Measures under Objective 2:

1. Analysing the functionality and weaknesses in the existing communication channels between the institutions and/with young people.
2. Setting up working groups with the participation of youth organisations for the development of a communication strategy.
3. Defining functional communication channels between institutions – youth organisations – youths (functionality).
4. Mapping the existing channels in the electronic information system.
5. Introducing a separate visible section (separate category) for youth information on the websites of institutions and organisations.
6. Networking and online platform of organisations and institutions for presenting information targeting young people.
7. Developing an online application for youth information.
8. Identifying a coordination body.
9. Selecting the members of the body.
10. Developing programmes and procedures.
11. Monitoring and evaluation of work.



OBJECTIVE 3: Youth information system on local and national level established with mechanisms for sustainable development (strengthened capacities, quality and quantity increase).

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Launching an initiative for communication (or for network building) with institutions and youth organisations.
2. Organising regular coordination and communication meetings on a quarterly basis.
3. Preparing specific guidelines on joint cooperation and action in the area of youth information.
4. Appointing persons in charge of youth information within the organisations and institutions.
5. Professional training on youth information for the appointed persons.
6. Knowledge transfer from the trained persons to their co-workers.
7. Organising training for youth information workers.
8. Analysing the financial capacities of organisations and the financial possibilities of institutions.
9. Allocating funds from the national and local budget for youth information projects.

The following bodies are responsible for the measures in the area of youth information: the Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services, the Youth and Sports Agency, and local self-government units.

Thematic area:
LOCAL YOUTH WORK

Local youth work is an organised and systematic process of education and support of authentic development of young people with the aim of fulfilling their overall personal, social and civic potential. It is directly associated with the development of the local community, whereby young people not only become active participants in the process of their own development but also active participants in the life of the community.

In the Republic of Macedonia, the system of local youth work (LYW) is still in the early stages of development. Unfortunately, it is still not defined as one of the key components in the process of upbringing and youth protection and development, and, as such, its application in the education system and the type of youth activities available to young people (sports, trainings, workshops, camps, exchanges, out-of-school activities, volunteering activities, etc.), rely to a great extent upon what is provided by civil society organisations. This raises a number of questions in terms of the untapped potential of youth work for the support and promotion of personal, social and professional development of young people, as well as in terms of the lack of quality control and assurance in its current application.

Key challenges for young people in this area are associated with the fact that youth work is not recognised as a key tool for assisting the positive personal and social development of young people. Youth work is not formally regulated, standardised or integrated as part of the system of youth upbringing, education and protection, and it is not equally available to all young people in different parts of the country.

In view of the key challenges identified in this area, this Strategy provides appropriate long-term objectives and specific measures for addressing the respective problems.



OBJECTIVE 1: Recognition of youth work as a key tool for assisting the positive personal and social development of young people

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Promoting the concept and use of youth work through campaigns, public events, broad variety of youth work activities and positive examples from other countries.
2. Educating the teaching staff and other professionals who work with young people (school counsellors, psychologists, social workers, etc.) and introducing them to the concept and potential use of youth work.
3. Integrating basic principles of youth work in the study programmes for professions that are involved in youth development (teachers, psychologists, school counsellors, social workers, etc.).
4. Promoting successful stories about the potential use and benefits of implementing youth work in support of the personal development of young people.
5. Promoting youth work and its use for supporting vulnerable categories of young people and young people in different life situations.
6. Promoting EU experiences and use of youth work.
7. Promoting and supporting civil society organisations that implement youth work.
8. Monitoring, documenting and promoting positive results and achievements from the implementation of youth work.

OBJECTIVE 2: Formal recognition and regulation of the use and availability of youth work as an integral part of the education system of the country

Measures under Objective 2:

1. Supporting the process of defining youth work, its forms, shapes and use in the education system at national level.
2. Regulating and integrating youth work within the existing legal regulations as part of the system of youth upbringing, education and protection.
3. Recognizing the profession of youth workers in the national classification of occupations.
4. Introducing a minimum number of mandatory vacancies for young people as part of activities within the municipalities.
5. Supporting participative and consultative processes for establishing a National Framework on Quality Youth Work.
6. Defining a National Portfolio for Youth Workers with minimum competence and training of the staff who implement youth work.
7. Developing and applying a code of ethics in professional and volunteer youth work.



OBJECTIVE 3: Ensuring the quality and availability of youth work in the territory of each municipality

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Supporting the process for recognizing and building the capacity of youth workers for conducting quality work with youths.
2. Providing opportunities for professional education and additional education of current and future youth workers within the system of formal and non-formal education.
3. Ensuring adequate human capacity for implementation of youth work in the territory of each municipality.
4. Supporting local authorities in providing space and conditions for implementing youth work in the territory of each municipality.
5. Promoting cooperation between civil society organisations and local institutions for offering youth work in the territory of each municipality.
6. Securing youth job opportunities in accordance with the needs of young people at local level.
7. Integrating youth job opportunities as part of local youth strategies.
8. Involving young people as active partners in the process of implementing youth work.

The institutions responsible for implementing the measures envisaged in this area are the Youth and Sports Agency, the Ministry of Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and local self-government units.

**Thematic area:
EDUCATION**

Education is a fundamental human right. It gives children, young people and adults the power to make substantiated judgements, to make choices and to improve their lives. It breaks the vicious circle of poverty and it is a key element of economic and social development. Education should be observed as a multidimensional field that covers several target groups and encompasses several levels and approaches. In terms of the future National Youth Strategy, when further examining situations and setting priorities and actions, it is particularly important to assign equal importance to: secondary and higher education, non-formal education, quality, approach, and integration in the education process.

The education system in the Republic of Macedonia has been subject to continuous reforms. Recent years have seen many activities undertaken in the field of education policies, both in secondary and higher education, in an effort to achieve international standards in education. However, this continuous process of reforms, often overlapping, does not leave sufficient time for assessing the impact of the use of certain models and educational approaches. At the same time, it restricts the scope for the fundamental involvement of all stakeholders, and especially of the direct beneficiaries of such reforms, i.e. the young people who are part of the education process.

The needs of young people, identified in relevant surveys and analyses of the situation⁴ both in secondary and higher education, and the situation of young people in general as a separate target group, call for additional investment in efforts to improve the education provided to young people. Such needs refer, above all, to improvements in the quality of teaching staff, in the coverage and quality of teaching content, the need to develop and introduce innovative learning methods and tech-

⁴ For more information about the research papers consulted in the development of this Strategy, please see the reference list in the Annex to this Strategy



niques, to ensure equal access for young people to the education process, as well as greater integration by age, sex and ethnic affiliation. At the same time it is important to note that in the context of this Strategy, which has young people as its target group, it is especially important to involve young people in the processes of developing quality education and to integrate their opinions and needs both in policies and in practice.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

Section: Use of teaching methods and techniques, educational approach and quality of teaching staff.

OBJECTIVE 1: To improve the curricula and teaching techniques in primary, secondary and higher education, including practical teaching in secondary and higher education.

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Analysing the use of practical teaching in secondary and higher education.
2. Offering new or different applicable models for internship, analysing opportunities for extending practice in other fields of study and subjects, and allocating more time for practical teaching outside educational institutions in secondary and higher education.
3. Developing an approach and criteria for improving the evaluation of practical work in vocational schools.
4. Improving cooperation between educational institutions and the business community for conducting practical teaching and introducing curricula based on labour market demands.
5. Extending the mentorship system in companies for monitoring and training of students during practical teaching.
6. Promoting and intensifying information sharing about possibilities for students to choose optional subjects from a faculty other than the faculty of their main subject, within the same university, in order to broaden their knowledge and skills and thus become more competitive in the labour market.
7. Preparing an electronic newsletter for all secondary and primary schools to inform students, parents and teachers about all new measures introduced in schools and in education in general.
8. Greater involvement of experts in primary and secondary schools in order to provide better care for learners, especially persons with special needs, as well as better communications, counselling meetings, better prevention of violent tendencies, psychological assistance for children whose parents are getting divorced/ are divorced (provided by school counsellors, psychologists, special education teachers, social workers/sociologists).
9. Introducing a programme of social activities for students.
10. Designing the content and activities in the study programmes for higher education in accordance with the learning outcomes specified in the National Framework of Higher Education Qualifications, which will be established with students as equal partners in the higher education process.
11. Building a culture of active youth participation in the delivery of data about career progress to the databases of higher education institutions in order to achieve more efficient evaluation and improvement of the quality of study programmes.



OBJECTIVE 2: To improve the quality, training and support of teaching staff in the education process in secondary education and to provide opportunities for the development of staff in higher education institutions.

Measures under Objective 2:

Continuous training to produce adequate and sensitive staff who can meet the needs of every student regardless of his/her background.

Continuous thematic training to produce teaching staff who are prepared and equipped to adapt to the rapid changes and reforms introduced in society and in the education system.

Section: Scope and quality of study programmes and quality control in education

OBJECTIVE 3: To promote and duly apply external examinations of students' achievements as one of the mechanisms for monitoring and quality control of education

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Detailed analysis of the existing method of externally examining students' achievements.
2. Consultations with students and establishment of cooperation with psychologists and school counsellors regarding the impact of examination.
3. Defining the manner for upgrading and improving external examination.
4. Defining and applying recommendations for improving the external examination process.
5. Drafting and adopting laws and bylaws.
6. Improving students' skills for evaluation of the study programmes of all cycles of higher education in accordance with the European standards and guidelines for higher education quality (ESG).

7. Active participation of students in preparing the methodology and questionnaires for assessing the teaching staff in higher education.

OBJECTIVE 4: Appropriate coverage and treatment of sexual education content in the process of formal and non-formal education.

Measures under Objective 4:

1. Developing a wide platform (including educational institutions, the civil sector and relevant state and international institutions) for analysing the current situation and the opportunities for creating a model of sex education.
2. Analysing the teaching content on sexual education.
3. Analysing the possibilities for expanding knowledge about sexual education according to the age of students.
4. Based on the findings of analysis, supplementing teaching content, in accordance with the age of the students, with topics based on recent scientific discoveries.
5. Delivering lessons on certain sexual education topics—for example, from the subjects of biology, sociology and life skills—by appropriate teaching staff for the given subjects or by specialised experts in the field of sexual education as co-teachers on certain topics.
6. Intensifying cooperation between primary and secondary schools and between the civil sector and relevant faculties.
7. Analysing and assessing the level and manner of providing sexual education in primary and secondary education as an integral part of the curricula for life skills and biology.
8. Organising training for teaching staff on comprehensive sexual education.



OBJECTIVE 5: To provide all educational institutions with access to reference databases of modern and progressive literature.

Measures under Objective 5:

1. Researching and analysing the availability of world encyclopaedias, research and techniques.
2. Making recommendations for expanding the availability of databases.
3. Updating their own databases in which institutions will publish literary and scientific papers and books.
4. Evaluating the efficiency and use of upgraded databases.
5. Analysing the coverage of relevant literature from national and international authors.
6. Recommending supplementary databases with relevant literature.

Section: Education policies, youth access and participation in the processes of developing educational policies

OBJECTIVE 6: To establish a systematic approach in the adoption of educational policies that will be based on analysis and research and will be in accordance with international standards and best practices involving young people at all stages.

Measures under Objective 6:

1. Analysis prepared by an independent body that will examine the need for making changes in the adoption and implementation of public policies in education.
2. Designing a set of recommendations for improvement based on the findings of analysis and the adoption of these recommendations by the competent institutions in consultation with stakeholders.

3. Establishing a process for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations.
4. Conducting a scheduled and planned impact assessment of changes in the decision-making system in education.
5. Identifying and enforcing international standards and policies.
6. Reviewing the adequacy of the enforcement of international standards and policies that Macedonia already implements (for example, the implementation of the Bologna system).
7. Establishing international standards and policies by incorporating them in the new education development programme, or if lacking, in an individual strategic document.
8. Providing conditions for the creation of independent and autonomous forms of organisations of pupils and students.
9. Enabling and ensuring the formal statutory participation of students in decision-making processes in schools.
10. Improving the process of adopting and implementing public education policies, or establishing phases and forms for more active participation of pupils and students in consultations with competent authorities.
11. Building a culture of active participation by pupils and students in the development of public policies.
12. Establishing and applying a methodology for monitoring the responsiveness of the Ministry of Education and other state institutions in the field of education on requests submitted by young people (pupils and students).



OBJECTIVE 7: Regular and consistent implementation of education policies

Measures under Objective 7:

1. Preparing an analysis aimed at identifying conflicting competences and any lack of precisely specified competences within a vertical and horizontal institutional setup.
2. Organising meetings and conferences aimed at stimulating inter-ministerial and institutional cooperation.
3. Setting up mixed working and expert groups for policy analysis and making recommendations.
4. Conducting an assessment of the efficiency of administrative procedures. This will also include an assessment of the level of satisfaction amongst the teaching, academic and administrative staff of educational institutions with administrative procedures.
5. Setting up a system for evaluating educational policies and administrative practices.
6. Analysing the effectiveness of sanctions, including comparing alternative methods for improving the personal satisfaction of educators as a precondition for improving their performance.

OBJECTIVE 8: To adjust the legal framework of non-formal education in accordance with the nature of the youth sector and through the widespread application of EU standards.

Measures under Objective 8:

1. Extending the criteria for state-accredited providers of non-formal education by implementing the European recommendations and guidelines on the identification and accreditation of non-formal education, taking into consideration the particularities of the youth sector.
2. Accreditation of youth organisations and other civil society organisations that provide non-formal education.
3. Recognition, comparability and transfer of skills and knowledge by employing mechanisms similar to Europass.
4. Regular research into the social and economic influence of non-formal education.
5. Support for improving quality in the delivery of non-formal education.
6. Further promoting the concept of non-formal education amongst other social partners, particularly economic operators, in terms of recognising acquired skills and competences.

Section: Social integration of disadvantaged groups through education and by developing working and learning conditions.



OBJECTIVE 9: To achieve significant inclusion and integration in the education system of children and youth with special needs.

Measures under Objective 9:

1. Training existing teaching staff and professional departments and hiring additional staff where necessary.
2. Inter-institutional cooperation and coordination and cooperation with CSOs.
3. Analysing the current situation concerning the availability and application of assistive technologies.
4. Needs analysis.
5. Cooperation between institutions and CSOs in the implementation of projects.
6. Staff training in the use of assistive technologies.

OBJECTIVE 10: To improve the support of children and youth who are neglected in terms of education and upbringing.

Measures under Objective 10:

1. Analysing the current situation.
2. Developing and implementing a programme for socially excluded children and youth.
3. Monitoring and evaluating the programme for socially excluded children and youth.
4. Analysing the current situation of children and youth whose age does not correspond with the patterns of the existing education system.
5. Establishing inter-institutional cooperation.
6. Developing and implementing a programme for so-called 'phantom' children.

7. Monitoring and evaluating the programme for 'phantom' children.

OBJECTIVE 11: Adequate inclusion in the education process of children with special needs and interests, including talented children, children with above-average IQ, hyperactive children, and children with dyslexia.

Measures under Objective 11:

1. Needs analysis.
2. Analysis and establishment of an approach and cooperation of the institutions with CSOs.
3. Analysing existing curricula for children with special needs and interests and, if necessary, adjusting and possibly developing new curricula.
4. Implementing and monitoring programmes.
5. Training currently employed staff.
6. Hiring additional staff.
7. Training staff in expert services in schools.

OBJECTIVE 12: To improve the availability of non-formal education for specific groups of children and youth.

Measures under Objective 12:

1. Establishing cooperation between CSOs and institutions.
2. Needs analysis.
3. Developing and implementing programmes.
4. Opening education centres.
5. Hiring appropriate staff.



OBJECTIVE 13: To develop a personal data protection system for children and youth in the education system.

Measures under Objective 13:

1. Analysing the current curricula for the subjects of computer work, computer science and computer science projects, with the purpose of introducing recommendations in terms of personal data protection.
2. Analysing the current curricula for the subject 'life skills' in order to introduce recommendations for personal data protection.
3. Implementing an awareness-raising campaign about personal data protection.

The following institutions are responsible for the measures in the area of education: the Ministry of Education and Science, the Bureau for Development of Education, the State Education Inspectorate, the National Examination Centre, the Vocational and Educational Training Centre, the Adult Education Centre, public and private higher education institutions, primary and secondary schools, local self-government units, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Directorate for Personal Data Protection.

Thematic area:
EMPLOYMENT AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Employment is an important stage in the independence of every young person. It is a key step in the process of self-realisation and transformation into an equal and active participant in society. Employment is usually the first step in gaining financial and social independence and as such it is one of the main determining factors for successful transition into the adult world. It is not only closely associated with young people's quality of life, their self-confidence and mobility opportunities, but also with practical decisions concerning housing, building a family and paving the way for future professional and career development.

Taking into consideration the impact of this issue on the general quality of life of young people, youth employment remains one of the key priorities for the country, and one that also indicates the level of development of a society. At the same time, overcoming high youth unemployment rate requires a systematic, complementary and coordinated approach in different fields and policies (education, labour and social protection) due to the complexity of the factors that contribute to high rates of unemployment.

The main aspects of youth employment are as follows: the time necessary for transition from education into work, the extent to which the potential of young people as a workforce is fulfilled – not only in terms of their inclusion in the active population but also in terms of assigning them to job positions that match their qualifications (to make full use of their potential), as well as the characteristics of the employment relationship (temporary or permanent contracts, self-employed, full time/part-time, etc.).

One of the key challenges in overcoming youth unemployment is the generally poor economic situation of the country, which results in an inadequate supply of job positions, both in terms of the number and the quality of jobs available. Employers often claim that young people do not have the competences in demand on the labour market,



while some young people believe it is necessary to undertake long-term and systematic interventions that will help in addressing youth unemployment. It is necessary to make efforts to change the high level of resignation and discouragement among young people in the process of employment, as well as to increase support for youth entrepreneurship.

In view of the key challenges identified in the area of employment and pre-employment support, this Strategy provides appropriate long-term objectives and specific measures to address the problems.

OBJECTIVE 1: Creation of accessible opportunities for all young people to acquire competences (knowledge, opinions, skills) that are in demand on the labour market.

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Strategic matching of what is offered by the education system and what is in demand on the part of the business sector, i.e., the professions and competences in demand on the labour market at local and national level.
2. Continuous analysis of the employability of graduates, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of education.
3. Stimulating the award of scholarships, (paid/unpaid) internships and employment by the business community (including SMEs), in direct cooperation with educational institutions.
4. Promoting key competences⁵ as an integral part of basic education and training.
5. Raising awareness of the need for lifelong learning and one's own responsibility for involvement in continuous education and training.

⁵ Eight key competences for living and working in European society, set by the Council of Europe.

6. Supporting non-formal education providers to offer a minimum of basic training in soft skills in every municipality.
7. Promoting the practice of retraining and additional training for staff as part of the programmes of higher education institutions.
8. Providing vocational education and training in accordance with the needs of the local labour market in every municipality.
9. Recognizing competences acquired through the non-formal education system.
10. Encouraging internship culture among young people during or immediately after completing education.
11. Stimulating the business community to make better use of internship benefits.
12. Promoting practices of flexible working hours (part-time, hourly rate, home-based work...).

OBJECTIVE 2: Promotion of a long-term inter-sectoral approach in policies for assisting youth employment.

Measures under Objective 2:

1. Promoting local and national policies that target the issue of youth unemployment in a way that is sustainable over the long term.
2. Tailor-made policies for various categories of unemployed young people (vulnerable groups, NEETs, the structurally unemployed, self-employed, and unemployment benefit users).
3. Available and effective career guidance system.
4. Supporting municipalities/higher education institutions in opening new career centres and providing entrepreneurial support to every young person.



5. Implementing a specific multi-sector policy for proactively reducing youth unemployment (for example, the EU's Youth Guarantee policy).

OBJECTIVE 3: Young people to become proactive and creative partners in the process of overcoming unemployment

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Supporting initiatives that will create and promote an image of young people as responsible, capable and innovative leaders in many areas of the professional world.
2. Developing youth work as an integral part of the employment support system.
3. Promoting employment and merit-based rewards within the administration.
4. Increasing employment transparency.
5. Promoting the benefits of having a quality workforce and merit-based promotion in the business community.
6. Raising awareness among the business community about the importance of investing in human resources.
7. Promoting proactive and constructive compatibility as values in education and training.
8. Raising awareness of people's personal responsibility for their future.

OBJECTIVE 4: Providing systematic and coordinated support in the development of youth entrepreneurship.

Measures under Objective 4:

1. Promoting young people as successful entrepreneurs.
2. Promoting entrepreneurship as a valid and desired model of professional development.
3. Introducing financial education as part of basic education and training.
4. Integrating entrepreneurial education and values in primary, secondary and higher education.
5. Stimulating the development of accessible and quality entrepreneurship programmes within non-formal education programmes throughout the entire territory of the country.
6. Introducing specific policies and assistance for self-employed young people and for businesses run by young people (reduced taxes, reduced administrative responsibilities, etc.).
7. Providing systematic support (training, counselling) during the first three months for all businesses run by young people.
8. Stimulating the opening of business-incubators and centres for the support of new businesses and SMEs run by young people.
9. Providing favourable credit lines for financing young entrepreneurs.
10. Supporting young entrepreneurs in the internationalisation and globalisation of their businesses.

The bodies responsible for the measures envisaged in this area are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Youth and Sports Agency, the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the social partners.



Thematic area:
CULTURE

Culture stimulates the development of civilisation, increases social cohesion and creates the image of the country in international contexts (according to the definition given in the National Strategy on Culture Development). It includes a series of measures and activities for improving cultural and recreational life and cultural events for young people in Macedonia, including music, theatre, film, literature, publication, art, sculpture, modern dance, etc. In the area of culture there is little data available referring to young people at national level. In general, the strategies and policies implemented by the Ministry of Culture refer to culture as an individual field, but there is no specific liaison of culture with young people.

The key challenges identified in this area have been identified as follows: a lack of regular cultural events for young people (concerts, multimedia events) in venues outside Skopje; a lack of interest among young people in attending cultural events and cultural institutions; a lack of interest amongst youth in creative artistic work in organised forms; and a new media culture that is becoming ever more popular among young people at the expense of literature, but about which there is a lack of media literacy, with many young people unable to recognise the influence of media culture, including the manipulations that engender negative attitudes to foreign cultures.

These key challenges further increase the gap in mutual understanding and knowledge of culture amongst young people in Skopje and their peers from outside the capital, decreasing the creative potential of young people, particularly those who live outside Skopje, decreasing the number of young people who read books with a corresponding increase in the number of young people who obtain information from media. Additionally inadequate cultural content in the media may negatively impact young people when building their cultural identity and understanding other cultures.

In view of the key challenges identified in the area of culture, this Strategy provides appropriate long-term objectives and specific measures for addressing the respective problems.

OBJECTIVE 1: An improved and sustainable system of creative and cultural practices among young people

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Researching/mapping the existing curricula in secondary schools in order to upgrade them and ensure better coverage of cultural content.
2. Establishing a control mechanism for checking the coverage and type of cultural content in the curricula.
3. Introducing tools for following trends in education in Europe.
4. Analysing the quality and quantity of current practices related to the cultural and creative work of students.
5. Developing effective programmes that will ensure access and practical role for young people and students in their creative work.
6. Strengthening institutional capacities to provide adequate practice to students.
7. Introducing new effective and innovative programmes for developing the capacities of young people for creative work (training and courses) and for upgrading their existing capacities.
8. Setting up a new fund by the Ministry of Culture for innovative projects and industries designed and implemented by young people.



OBJECTIVE 2: Improved quality of cultural life and entertainment of young people

Measures under Objective 2:

1. Analysing existing cultural activity programmes at national and local level.
2. Developing annual local action plans for youth culture.
3. Encouraging cooperation with amateur cultural associations.
4. Encouraging educational institutions to provide conditions for music, drama and art activities of young people.
5. Decentralising cultural events (festivals, concerts, etc.).
6. Mapping active cultural spots.
7. Organizing regular structured meetings between key actors in the field of culture for stimulating cooperation.
8. Linking the functional cultural institutions together and linking them with the local self-government and with relevant actors (NGOs, cultural associations, artists).
9. International networking of cultural institutions.
10. Opening new cultural facilities in municipalities without such facilities.
11. Designing a map of cultural facilities and institutions for young people.
12. Promoting the use of new technologies (including an IT application that will provide information about cultural events at local level).
13. Analysing the quality and quantity of existing media content related to culture.
14. Introducing targets for the mandatory broadcasting of cultural and entertainment programmes for young people.
15. Introducing programme content initiated by young people for the public service broadcaster.
16. Cooperation between the Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services and cultural associations in monitoring and analysing the media programmes in the area of youth culture.
17. Supporting the setting up of a youth media channel within the public service broadcaster.

OBJECTIVE 3: Equal access for young people to quality cultural events and opportunities for cultural cooperation

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Analysing cultural events on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia available to young people in order to ensure their equal distribution.
2. Drafting a national programme for various cultural activities throughout the territory of the Republic of Macedonia in order to make them available and to satisfy the needs of young people.
3. Establishing inter-institutional cooperation at local level and finding ways for greater cooperation with the business sector.
4. Establishing a regular system for information, approximation and introduction to EU programmes/opportunities (through events, campaigns, workshops, training) for youth initiatives and their reproduction through European programmes.
5. Strengthening the capacities of key actors within the field of culture for developing projects within the EU programmes for culture.
6. Supporting the processes for establishing partnerships in and out of the country, and for study visits.



OBJECTIVE 4: Young people are involved in drafting and implementing cultural policies

Measures under Objective 4:

1. Identifying opportunities for involving young people in the processes of policy-making in the field of culture.
2. Informing young people about opportunities for participation in the drafting and implementation of culture policies.
3. Encouraging inter-municipal cooperation.
4. Promoting traditional cultural values (craftsmanship, ethno-culture) in order to conserve them.
5. Extending the scope of work and the financing of local youth councils in order to introduce cultural activities.

The bodies responsible for the measures in the area of culture are as follows: the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, educational institutions, cultural institutions on local level, local self-government units, media, the Macedonian Radio Television, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, and the business sector.

Thematic area:
SPORTS

Sports are any form of physical activity undertaken, either occasionally or in organised participatory manner, with the aim of expressing and improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, and of establishing social links or achieving results in competitions at all levels. Sports contribute towards personal and social development through creative activities, recreational engagement and the building of a healthy life-style, and this activity particularly helps in establishing the physical and mental wellbeing of young people. Sports are integrated in the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, where Article 47 paragraph 5 reads thus: “The Republic shall stimulate and assist technical education and sport”. Accordingly, sports should be a permanent feature in the development of every generation.

The key challenge in this area has been identified as the lack of substantial support from the state, local self-government and federations which should regularly and fully monitor the situation of sports development. It is necessary to evaluate the funds invested in terms of the results and the number of young people engaged. In particular, the funds of local self-government should be used more for team sports that involve all young people and less for individual sports (or on the awarding of scholarships to individuals). The outflow of the limited financial resources for sports, for the so-called top sports, should be controlled. Funds should be obtained funds predominantly through sales of broadcasting rights, sponsorships, ticket sales, etc.

There is a programme entitled “Sports for Everyone”, but this programme is not fully functional to enable every individual to participate in sports and at the same time to ensure that all young people have the possibility of having physical education and opportunities for acquiring basic sports skills, such as motorics, sports health, etc. Sports development among young people requires the cooperation of all stakeholders, including the adoption of decentralised approach and cooperation at local level, as well as the active involvement of the civil sector.



Sport education has not yet been accompanied by direct education in sports health and safety, sports hygiene, teamwork, responsibility, ethical and moral values, non-violence, tolerance, sports ethics, etc. In the Law on Sports, young people are mentioned only in the part referring to “care and support of school and faculty sport”, which has led to neglect of the entire area. In view of the key challenges identified in the area of sports, this Strategy provides for appropriate long-term objectives and specific measures for addressing the respective problems.

OBJECTIVE 1: Creating a sustainable system for motivating young people to be regularly involved and active in sport

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Researching the existing conditions in which young people can do sport and evaluating their level of access to sporting facilities.
2. Creating independent programmes for involving young people in sporting activities, with a special focus on three age categories: ages 13–18; ages 19–23; and ages 24–29.

OBJECTIVE 2: Equal access for all young people to sports facilities and activities for mental and physical health

Measures under Objective 2:

1. Analysing the accessibility of all sporting facilities.
2. Deciding on regular schedules.
3. Developing a plan for monitoring the percentage of youth involvement.
4. Mapping locations according to needs.
5. Organizing citizens’ meetings, cooperation and encouragement of young people to participate actively.

6. Providing new sites for practising sports.
7. Preparing membership cards for pupils, students, unemployed young people and young parents.

OBJECTIVE 3: Comprehensive cooperation of all institutions that contribute to sports and promotion of ‘Sport for Everyone’.

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Ensuring inter-institutional cooperation at all levels, particularly at local level.
2. Drafting a development and monitoring programme.
3. Submitting recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and relevant institutions.

OBJECTIVE 4: An increased percentage of young people are involved in the creation and implementation of sport development policies.

Measures under Objective 4:

1. Developing a programme for involving young people who do not practice the so-called ‘top sports’.
2. Preparing a programme for encouraging active cooperation between schools and local sports clubs, civil society organisations and national sports federations.
3. Promoting the importance of sports.
4. Establishing non-formal body/bodies throughout Macedonia for providing education and promoting active involvement in sports and sports policy.



5. Ensuring the active participation of young people through relevant programmes.
6. Creating opportunities for independent youth sports bodies to deal with sports and create independent sports policies in correlation with the relevant legal obligations.
7. Providing education and support in the development of a programme for young people who have delayed development.

OBJECTIVE 5: Creative annual activities for young people between the age of 15 and 22 for regular encouragement of participation in sports.

Measures under Objective 5:

1. Dedicating each month to a different sport.
2. Creating a reward and motivation system for the most active young people.
3. Analysing the possibility for recording the incidence of obesity and bulimia amongst young people.
4. Setting up clubs for parents and children.
5. Introducing sports leagues.
6. Cooperation of the Ministry of Education and the YSA with the Faculty of Physical Education, Sport and Health for creating a new contemporary programme with a creative approach to young people.
7. Identifying possibilities for interventions in higher education.
8. Developing a draft programme for sports development among young people who continue with their education.
9. Creating conditions for the development of a strategy for young people who do not continue with their education.

The following bodies are responsible for the measures envisaged in this area: the Youth and Sports Agency, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the local self-government units, sports federations, the Faculty of Physical Education, Sport and Health, educational institutions, civil society organisations and the business sector.

Thematic area:
HEALTH

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.⁶ Accordingly, this area in the Strategy covers several important components whose objective is not only to maintain and promote youth health but also to contribute towards the overall wellbeing of the population. The aim is to protect youth health through integrated health policies focused on prevention programmes, combined with an approach of information sharing and the promotion of healthy life-styles. In this way, by investing directly in prevention, we reduce chronic and contagious disease and improve the quality of life.

The key challenges in the area of health are related to the growing trend of risk behaviour among youths in Macedonia, associated with sexual and reproductive health, increased use of alcohol, tobacco and psychoactive substances, increased incidences of violence (peer-to-peer violence and gender-based violence), bullying, injuries among young people, youth on the street and youth neglect, more pronounced consequences of irregular diet, overweight, anorexia and bulimia, as well as increased rates of injury and death among young people as a result of traffic accidents. These challenges are also accompanied by challenges associated with the lack of centres for support, treatment, rehabilitation and re-socialisation of people

⁶ Definition given by the World Health Organization



living with HIV or hepatitis, people who abuse psychotropic substances and people with other types of addiction, the insufficient availability of quality health services for vulnerable groups of young people, low awareness among young people of the programmes and activities implemented by different institutions and organisations, lack of activities for identification and treatment of mental health disorders among young people, counselling for self-awareness and interventions and insufficient involvement around focused vulnerable groups and insufficient scanning of their general health condition and necessary support.

In view of the established key challenges in the area of health, this Strategy provides for appropriate long-term objectives and specific measures for addressing the respective problems.

OBJECTIVE 1: To reduce risk behaviour (associated with SRH, use of tobacco, alcohol and PASs) and violence among Macedonian youth aged between 15 and 25 by 2025

Measures under Objective 1:

1. Increasing availability of programmes for preventing addiction among young people.
2. Increasing availability of specific programmes for the promotion of SRH among youths.
3. Comprehensive sexual education within the education process.
4. Reducing the price of contraceptives.
5. Strengthening the capacities of the Emergency Ambulance services for recognizing and treating overdoses of psychoactive substances.
6. Setting up an information centre within the YSA with the task of developing programmes/activities and approaches for better information of young people and a list of responsible institutions and the services they provide.

7. Developing 'healthcare advisor' mobile phone application.
8. Promotion of a package of free-of-charge services for young girls and women.

OBJECTIVE 2: To improve the conditions for improving the mental health and behaviour of young people in Macedonia

Measures under Objective 2:

1. Developing programmes for the promotion of mental health.
2. Revitalising mental healthcare centres.
3. Intensifying cooperation among professionals in schools for recognizing violent behaviour and victims of violence (gender-based and other types of violence).
4. Promoting and increasing the capacities of the centres for social affairs.
5. Peer education.
6. Sensitising professionals in working with young offenders.

OBJECTIVE 3: To establish healthy eating habits among young people aged between 15 and 19

Measures under Objective 3:

1. Regular general medical examinations for monitoring child development.
2. Developing personal programmes for every child in secondary school.
3. Promoting healthy life-styles.



4. Introducing continuous medical education on topics in this area.
5. Involving health workers in training for the prevention of obesity, anorexia and bulimia.

OBJECTIVE 4: To increase awareness amongst young people of their responsibilities in traffic

Measures under Objective 4:

1. Raising awareness and traffic culture among young people.
2. Introducing additional lessons on traffic safety.
3. Setting up a psychological counselling system within and outside of the education system for reducing youth aggression.
4. Establishing an adequate infrastructure to ensure the safety of all traffic participants (cycle lanes, pedestrian crossings, appropriate road signalisation, etc.).

OBJECTIVE 5: To ensure equal access to healthcare for all young people

Measures under Objective 5:

1. Opening offices for obtaining appropriate documents for exercising the right to healthcare near the place of residence.
2. Increasing the capacities of healthcare staff for working with vulnerable groups of young people.
3. Upgrading and improving the existing infrastructure to ensure better access to institutions for young people with special needs.
4. Promoting voluntary testing for Hepatitis C and HIV.

5. Developing standardised programmes for the promotion of health and healthy life-styles, including comprehensive sex education.

OBJECTIVE 6: To set up conditions for the continuous rehabilitation and re-socialisation of vulnerable categories of young people

Measures under Objective 6:

1. Setting up rehabilitation and re-socialisation centres.
2. Engaging and working with drug abusers.
3. Developing the counselling centres for family health and improving psychological support services inside and outside of healthcare institutions.
4. Adopting a protocol for the treatment of underage persons using PASs.
5. Strengthening the capacity of the centres for treatment of addictions among underage persons.

The following bodies are responsible for implementing the measures envisaged in this area: the Youth and Sports Agency, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, the Institute of Public Health, the Bureau for Development of Education, the Ministry of Interior, the Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices, the social work centres, the Republic Council for Road Traffic Safety, the local self-government units, the Faculty of Medicine, civil society organisations and the business sector.



Thematic area:
QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life refers to the general wellbeing of individuals and the society. Quality of life encompasses a wide range of areas, including international development, health, policy and employment. The standard quality of life indicators include not only economic elements (employment and income), but also the environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation, leisure and affiliation of social groups. Additional factors that have an impact on quality of life include freedom, human rights and happiness. Quality of life should not be equated with standard of living, which mainly focuses on economic stability and income.

The thematic area of quality of life covers elements from all previous thematic areas, at the same time focussing on new areas that do not fall directly within the existing areas.

The biggest problems faced by young people in the Republic of Macedonia, which are the pre-determining factors for the quality of life of young people, include the lack of opportunities for young people to gain independence through employment, low youth living standard, inadequate rural development that additionally complicates the situation of young people in rural areas, decreased air quality and destruction of the environment, which directly reduce quality of life not only among young people but the entire population.

The issue of high youth unemployment is mainly covered in the areas of education and employment; therefore, it will not be covered in more detail in this section. However, it must be emphasised that the implementation of the priorities indicated in these two areas remains of key importance to ensure that the quality of life of young people can be significantly improved over the next 10 years.

The low youth living standard covers a variety of problems, of which especially significant is the standard of secondary school and university students, as well as the poor opportunities and inadequate conditions provided in dormitories for these students. There is an urgent need to refurbish all the facilities of the dormitories, to maintain them properly and to open new dormitories with modern facilities across the country in accordance with the needs. Young people are drivers of the future of the country and they must have an opportunity to educate themselves and live in adequate conditions as equal citizens of a country with a European perspective and standards.

It is also necessary to set up authentic representative associations for secondary school and university students which will advocate for their interests and fight for the continuous development of student life by providing quality living and learning conditions, various cultural events for young people, a greater number of mobility and learning programmes, organised participation in international scientific competitions, conferences and specific opportunities for the advancement of young secondary school and university students.

Quality of life also encompasses equal opportunities for all young people, including young people living in rural areas. Additional efforts are necessary for providing equal conditions and opportunities for young people in rural areas who are often left on the margins in a situation of unbalanced local development, meaning they are left on their own to cope with the same problems as all other young people but with far worse road infrastructure, less access to cultural, development and social programmes, and with more difficult access to developed technologies and conditions for social innovation. Young people in rural areas have specific needs that must be investigated in detail and must be addressed by developing a specific strategy for rural development aimed at youth.



Although environmental protection is not among the individual areas defined in this Strategy, it is still very important for quality of life and closely associated with the health of young people. In a situation when the air quality is at worrying levels and the readiness for handling accidents and natural disasters is at a low level, these factors are also of significant interest to young people and are important for ensuring adequate living conditions for future generations. Youth in the Republic of Macedonia should have opportunities to learn much more about how to address climate change and to work on building their capacity for addressing crises and other natural disasters.

Although the thematic area quality of life is the most complex and it is difficult to measure overall progress in this area through simple indicators, it encompasses all these efforts and needs of young people necessary to provide conditions for the further development of young individuals into active and progressive citizens who work to improve the entire individual and social development.





KEY ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful implementation of the National Youth Strategy entails the broad involvement of all stakeholders and key actors who are involved, directly or indirectly, in youth development in the country. All stakeholders must assume responsibility for contributing to the implementation of the Strategy, especially in light of the limited institutional capacities available. The entire process must ensure horizontal and vertical linkage between local and national institutions, the private sector and young people as the final beneficiaries of this Strategy. The roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder are clearly set out in this Strategy.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia

The Government as an institution with executive power in the development of the Republic of Macedonia has a primary role in providing opportunities for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy (NYS) by adopting and implementing cohesive and coordinated programmes associated with the measures envisaged in the NYS. The Government shall plan and carry out reforms that affect young people in proper coordination with the NYS. The Youth and Sports Agency, as a body within the Government, in charge of implementing and coordinating youth policies on national level, will monitor and report on the implementation of the NYS on a regular basis. In the implementation of the NYS, the YSA and the Government will adhere to the principles and values of the NYS and will act with transparency and accountability aimed at timely reporting and planning of programmes and projects.

Local authorities

In planning and implementing local youth development programmes, local institutions will be fully coordinated by the Youth and Sports Agency, acting entirely in accordance with the objectives and measures envisaged in the NYS. Local authorities shall maintain productive and constructive communication and cooperation with young people and youth associations at local level in order to ensure proper implementation of the NYS as part of an inclusive and consultative process.

The civil sector

The civil sector, which implements youth programmes and projects, has great responsibility in the development of young people's lives. A positive approach to the treatment of youth problems should be implemented in parallel with the fine-tuning of plans and programmes to the objectives and measures envisaged in the NYS. The civil sector should focus its capacities on strengthening young people to become independent and proactive and to be active participants in the social and political development of the Republic of Macedonia. The civil sector should promote youth workers as professionals who provide strong support to young people. The civil sector must cooperate with local authorities and the business community in order to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing the most urgent problems faced by young people.

The business community

The business community should contribute by sharing its resources with institutions and civil society organisations in treating youth problems at national and local level. The business community should be an active participant in strengthening the economic prosperity of young people in the long term.



Educational institutions

Educational institutions are key actors involved in youth development. Teaching staff in education institutions are in everyday interaction with young people and are the main stakeholders in the development of young people into educated citizens who will contribute towards the social, economic and political development of the country. Educational institutions should ensure adequate and structured cooperation with institutions, the business community, the civil sector and youth.

Media

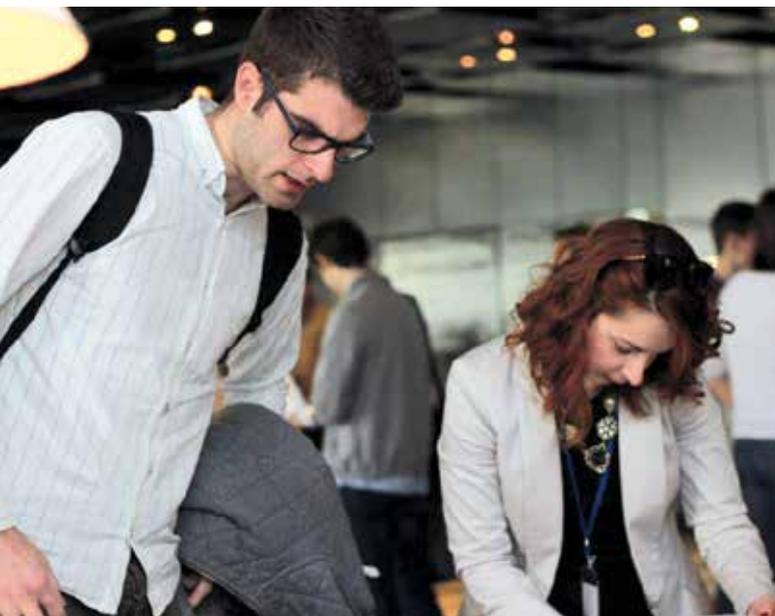
Media should duly present young people and their problems to the public by establishing strong cooperation with institutions and civil sector organizations that deal with youth issues. Media should connect young people with adults and raise awareness of the need for a proactive approach in promoting and implementing the NYS. In their everyday content, media should take into consideration the impact that the content might have on the image of young people.

Parents/adults

Parents play the primary role in the development of young people into proactive citizens. Parents should be informed about youth programmes and strategies for continuous learning and the application of positive practices of youth education. Parents should continuously cooperate and communicate with educational institutions in order to exchange information and provide support. Parents should strive to be positive role models for young people.

Young people

Young women and men are the main beneficiaries of the National Youth Strategy. However, young people should take responsibility for fulfilling the obligations arising from the NYS. They should be actively involved and express their opinions freely. If it is in their interest, young people should become as actively involved as possible in the monitoring and implementation of the Strategy.



Successful implementation of the National Youth Strategy entails the broad involvement of all stakeholders and key actors who are involved, directly or indirectly, in youth development in the country



MONITORING PLAN

The process of monitoring the implementation and success of the Strategy, i.e. the effects of implementing the Strategy, will be focused on several levels, as follows:

- ▲ Monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the planned activities and the initial outputs to which they contribute.
- ▲ Monitoring and assessing the effects of achieving the sets of results within the thematic areas.
- ▲ Assessment of the overall impact of the Strategy according to the established strategic priorities.

In order to set up and implement data collection and performance measurement activities effectively in these three levels, it is necessary to develop a separate Plan on Strategy Implementation and Performance Monitoring immediately after the adoption of the Strategy. In addition to information about the indicators, measuring instruments, data-collection instruments, instruments for assigning obligations for monitoring and measuring the impact of the Strategy, the Plan will also provide appropriate methods for setting the baseline for each of the established indicators against which performance will be measured (planned vs. implemented) within the given time period. Setting the baseline is a process that will be methodologically developed and further implemented under the coordination of the Youth and Sports Agency and in cooperation with all competent institutions at national and local level who will implement the activities from the Strategy.

The process of strategy implementation and performance monitoring will be coordinated by the Youth and Sports Agency, though data collection and reporting will be carried out by all institutions that will implement activities from the Strategy within their programmes. The necessary data will be collected by the institutions on a quarterly basis, while the reporting activity will be carried out biannually or annually. The data will be used in cer-

tain planning processes that take place at national level (for example, in preparing the budget for the next year the institutions will have to report on the implementation of Strategy activities up to that moment). In order to standardise and facilitate the coordination process, as part of the Plan on Strategy Implementation and Performance Monitoring, the Youth and Sports Agency will prepare a set of tools/forms with which the institutions will present the collected data, as well as special reporting formats for reporting the achievement of planned results and objectives on a biannual or annual basis.

It is planned for there to be a review at the end of the first three years of the implementation of the Strategy in order to identify any changes necessary for the next period. In addition, after the first five years of implementation it is planned to conduct an impact assessment of the implementation up to that moment. The preparations for the impact assessment will begin immediately after the expiry of the five-year period of implementation and the report on the Strategy implementation and impact should be completed and presented to the general public within 6 months of the expiry of the ten year-period of this Strategy. This will serve as a basis for development of the next strategy.



The process of strategy implementation and performance monitoring will be coordinated by the Youth and Sports Agency, though data collection and reporting will be carried out by all institutions that will implement activities from the Strategy within their programmes



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