

# YOUTH DECISION MAKING PARTICIPATION: HOW FAR HAVE WE COME?

The right of young people to participate in decision making emphasizes their role and importance in society, and in the case of North Macedonia, in the processes of harmonization with European standards. The infosheet gives an overview of existing youth policy in regards to youth participation and engagement in decision making in the European Union, as well as in North Macedonia.

## EUROPEAN UNION YOUTH POLICY

### 1. EUROPEAN YOUTH STRATEGY 2019 -2027<sup>1</sup>

Focuses on three core areas of action in the youth sector:

Engage, Connect, Empower.

**Engage:** engaging young people has to be a cornerstone of the future of EU youth policy cooperation. Young people must have a say in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies that concern them.

**Member states should:** Actively engage young people, youth organisations and other organisers of youth work in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies affecting the lives of young people on local, regional, national and European level.

Support and develop opportunities for 'learning to participate', raising interest in participatory actions and helping young people to prepare for participation.

**Empower:** In order to address challenges and therefore allow for the true empowerment of youth, it is necessary to work collaboratively on policies that tackle the specific situation of young people. Youth work in all its forms can serve as a catalyst for empowerment. Youth work is known for equipping youth with key personal, professional and entrepreneurial competences and skills.

**Member states should:** Support quality youth work development on local, regional, national and European level, including policy development in the field, training for youth workers, the establishment of legal frameworks and sufficient allocation of resources.

Create and further develop, when and where possible, easily accessible youth contact points that deliver a wide range of services and/or provide information, including financial guidance, guidance and support on career.

### 2. EUROPEAN YOUTH GOALS<sup>2</sup>

Identified cross-sectoral areas that affect young people's lives and point out which challenges need to be tackled.

#### Youth Goal #9 Space and Participation for all

**Goal:** Strengthen young people's democratic participation and autonomy as well as provide dedicated youth spaces in all areas of society.

#### Target:

- Ensure young people can adequately influence all areas of society and all parts of the decision-making processes;
- Ensure equal access to everyday decision making for all young people from different background;
- Increase youth participation and thus equal representation in the electoral process as well as in elected bodies and other decision-making organs at all levels of society.

#### Youth Goal #4 Information and Constructive Dialogue

**Goal:** Ensure young people have better access to reliable information, support their ability to evaluate information critically and engage in participatory and constructive dialogue.

#### Target:

- Ensure easy access to understandable youth-friendly information that follows codes of ethics and quality standards.

1 Source: 'Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting within the Council on a Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01); Official Journal of the European Union 61 (18 December 2018), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>.

2 Source: 'Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting within the Council on a Framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01)'.  
2018/C 456/01

## Recommendation given at the Poznan Summit of the Berlin Process:<sup>3</sup>

To reform legal frameworks (...) and enable inclusion of youth (through their representative bodies) to be consulted in law drafting and strategies.

3. Source: Vejsell, A., 'Civil Society and Youth Engagement in the Western Balkans' (Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans, May 2019), <https://epi.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CSF-PB-05-19-full-6.pdf>.

## NORTH MACEDONIA

### Law on youth participation and youth policies<sup>4</sup>

The new Law on youth participation and youth policies aims at strengthening youth participation in decision making for youth; promotion and protection of youth interests; inciting volunteerism, youth activism, as well as raises awareness of the importance of youth in society. The law was adopted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, 2020.

The creation process was in line with EU policy and the recommendation given in the Poznan Summit, as the law was drafted in cooperation with representatives of youth organisations and youth representatives from political parties.

4 Source: Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 'Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies (Закон За Младинско Учество и Младински Политики)', Службен Весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 10/2020 § (2020), <http://www.slvesnik.com.mk/issues/862649465cf4432aadcb4119f52bfd81.pdf>.

The law foresees the creation of several bodies that are to contribute to further alignment with the European Youth Policy in the areas of Engagement and Empowerment. The Local Youth Councils and Youth offices are to be created latest within 1 year from the date of entry into force of this law.

However there is still no evident effort seen to establish the National Advisory Body for Youth Policies and National Youth Assembly.

### 1. NATIONAL ADVISORY BODY FOR YOUTH POLICIES

Is a cooperation body between youth representatives and representatives of the bodies of state administration. It has an advisory and oversight role in the implementation of youth policies and youth activities.

One of its main activities is to follow the recommendations of the European Union and to advocate for the improvement of youth policies.

### 2. NATIONAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY

The National Youth Assembly is a body of the forms of youth organising that conducts election of youth representatives in the National Advisory Body, creates priorities and policies for advocacy by youth representatives and coordinates and monitors their work.

### 3. LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS

Is a cooperation body between youth representatives and representatives of the bodies of state administration. It has an advisory and oversight role in the implementation of youth policies and youth activities.

One of its main activities is to follow the recommendations of the European Union and to advocate for the improvement of youth policies.

### 4. YOUTH OFFICES

The National Youth Assembly is a body of the forms of youth organising that conducts election of youth representatives in the National Advisory Body, creates priorities and policies for advocacy by youth representatives and coordinates and monitors their work.