



MONITORING: FUNCTIONING OF LOCAL YOUTH COUNCILS (LYC)



1. 1. Introduction and methodology

In January 2020, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies. The purpose of the law is greater involvement of young people in decision-making through a national youth assembly, through local youth councils and assemblies, but also in general, to enable more services for young people.

The law ensures the creation and implementation of youth policies at all levels, through a sectoral approach, by strengthening youth participation in policy-making processes, encouraging volunteerism, youth activism and youth work, as well as personal, professional and social development among young people. The law stipulates that the Government at the central level and the municipalities at the local level are responsible for adopting strategies for youth. Municipalities are obliged to have a youth officer, as well as to open a youth office and a youth center.

The procedure for opening youth centers and ensuring their quality is regulated in more detail by the Regulation on quality standards of youth centers, which was adopted by the Agency for Youth and Sports.

The NGO Infocenter with partner organizations Spektar from Kriva Palanka, Majka from Kumanovo, Women's Civic Initiative from Sveti Nikole, Women's Organization from Strumica, ACTIVO from Veles, CED from Tearce and ZEUKS Triton from Mavrovo and Rostushe, in the period October - December 2022 , carried out monitoring of the activities of the municipalities in order to determine whether and how many of the legal obligations they have fulfilled.

The monitoring covered seven municipalities: Kumanovo, Veles, Strumica, Kriva Palanka, Sveti Nikole, Tearce, Mavrovo and Rostushe. A detailed request for access to public information was submitted to the municipalities. The obtained data and documents were analyzed, including by monitoring and analyzing the information published on the websites of the municipalities. For the purposes of monitoring, interviews were conducted with representatives of municipalities and youth organizations.

This monitoring is carried out within the project "Active citizens and participatory democracy at the local level", financially supported by the international center "Olof Palme" from Sweden.

2. Summary of key findings

- The inclusion of young people is not a high priority for municipalities and most of them are late with the implementation of legal obligations. Or in other words, youth participation in municipalities is still in its infancy.
- Although according to the law, the municipalities were supposed to have local youth councils by January 2021, in three (Kumanovo, Strumica and Veles) out of the seven monitored municipalities, a local youth council has not yet been established, or it is still in the process of being formed. .
- The situation is similar with the establishment of youth centers, which according to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies should be established by 2024 at the latest.
- In some municipalities there is still no youth office open.
- The existing local youth councils (LYC) were formed as a committee of the municipality council, and not according to the new law on youth participation and youth policies. The only exception is Kriva Palanka.
- The activities of the existing local youth councils are timid and during the year they realize only a few activities.
- The local youth councils have so far not submitted any initiatives for greater youth participation and inclusion to the municipal councils.
- The municipalities mostly respected the obligation to appoint a youth officer, but in some of them, the officer did not hold a single meeting with the youth from the local community.
- In most of the monitored municipalities, the obligation to set aside 0.1% of the municipal budget for young people is not respected.
- Almost all municipalities are late in adopting a strategy and action plan for youth.
- Municipalities do not keep gender-disaggregated statistics in the processes of planning measures and allocating budget funds to support young people.

3. Qualitative monitoring data by municipalities

3.1 Municipality of Veles

The municipality of Veles does not have a functioning local youth council (LYC). The members of the initiative board, on November 14, 2022, held a session, at which a public call for membership in a local youth assembly was announced. On December 2, a local assembly of youth was held with a total of 16 delegates (and the same number of deputy delegates), a call was announced for a total of seven members of the LYC, which was valid until December 12 of this year. The documents for the entire process are published on the website of the Municipality of Veles.

The procedure for establishing the local youth council is carried out by the Municipality of Veles in accordance with the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies.

The municipality of Veles fulfilled the following legal obligations: a youth officer was appointed from among the employees in the municipal administration, a public call for members of an initiative board for the constitution of a local assembly for youth was published. A youth center was opened in Veles.

A total of 250,000 denars, i.e. 0.076% of the total budget, is foreseen in the budget of the Municipality of Veles for the support of young people in 2022. The municipality of Veles allocated less money for youth than the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies prescribes.

The municipality of Veles has a youth officer since May 2021. There have been no official meetings with young people so far. The youth officer prepared a report on his work in 2021 and stated in it: he actively participated in the establishment of the Youth Center in Veles, participated in the process for the establishment of LYC, regularly communicated and coordinated with the Agency for Youth and Sports, with international donors, as well as with youth organizations and youth organizations at the local and national level.

The municipality does not keep gender-disaggregated statistics in the processes of planning measures and allocating budget funds to support young people.

There are no data and statistics on the total number of participants (young people) in civil consultations for the needs of young people in 2021 and 2022

3.2 Municipality of Kriva Palanka

The local youth council (LYC) in Kriva Palanka has five members (three boys and two girls).

LYC was formed according to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and is in accordance with the Statute of the Municipality. All bodies are elected in a transparent procedure by announcing public calls for candidacy and election of members of the Initiative Board, for constituting the local youth assembly and public call for nomination and election of members of the local youth council. The Youth Council was elected on April 28, 2022, and then verified by the Council of the Municipality.

The municipality has a youth office and an authorized youth officer has been appointed.

LYC holds an average of two sessions every month. One session was held with physical presence, and the rest are online due to the territorial dispersion of the members (some of the members are studying in Skopje). From January 2023, LYC plans to promote activities and activities for young people from primary schools and secondary schools.

A work program for LSM is being developed.

The municipality has a Youth Strategy 2019-2024, with an Action Plan, in which the main strategic priority is youth employment and entrepreneurship.

LYC has so far not proposed an item on the agenda of the Council of the Municipality for issues affecting young people.

In 2022, no funds are foreseen for LYC support, and for 2023, a program for youth with a budget of 660 thousand denars has been prepared, which provides for incentive measures and activities to support young people and youth activism. Young people participated in the development of the program through participation in the budget forum organized by the municipality.

The youth program for 2023 will be gender budgeted, with gender indicators and measures to influence the beneficiaries, as well as the entire municipal budget.

Municipality of Kriva Palanka provides support to young people through various forms of inclusion and participation in local policies. The program for the support of civil associations and foundations for 2023, which is implemented through the ReLOaD 2 program, with the support of UNDP, has one thematic focus "Youth". A youth forum was also held, as well as a public debate on determining youth priorities.

Young people receive help and support from the municipality by providing scholarships for high school students and students, in the amount of 3,000 denars per month, as well as subsidized free transportation. Young people are also helped through sports, culture, LER and other programs.

The municipality includes young people in activities of their interest and in decision-making processes through various forms of public forums, debates,

workshops, forums, cultural and sports events. But young people still do not show enough interest in youth activism and volunteering, as well as youth participation at the local level. Increased migration, both internal and external, is noticeable.

The main bearer of youth initiatives and youth organization is Europe House from Kriva Palanka, which positively influences the promotion and visibility of youth activism. A large number of youth actions, debates and workshops are carried out in cooperation with schools, youth associations and other institutions.

An active promoter of youth activism and volunteerism is the Red Cross, which through the youth club carries out not only humanitarian actions, but also activities of interest to the entire local community.

The municipality does not keep statistics on the number of young people involved in civil consultations, nor gender-disaggregated statistics or according to ethnic, local and other types of affiliation. However, there is a Local Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2023, a Gender Responsive Strategy for Sustainable Development 2022-2027, and a Gender Responsive Budget for 2023 has been prepared through the implementation of a budget forum.

3.3 Municipality of Kumanovo

The municipality of Kumanovo does not have a local youth council (LYC), but its establishment is underway. In May 2022, the municipality appointed a youth officer, opened a youth office and a youth center.

The youth officer participated in supporting the initiative of a young fellow citizen to open a youth center for sexual and reproductive health "I want to know" with the support of HERA and public health. The center offers gynecological services, dermatovenerological examinations, and HIV testing and counseling.

In addition, the youth officer, who is a member of the municipal social council, participated in the organization of the celebration of 16 days of activism against violence against women organized by the municipality. He participated in seminars, debates and other events related to youth participation.

The youth center in Kumanovo is managed by the youth organization CID.

The municipality of Kumanovo allocated 900 thousand denars from the municipal budget for the youth and the functioning of the youth center and the youth office in 2022.

The municipality maintains gender-disaggregated statistics in the processes of planning measures and allocating budget funds to support young people. According to the statement of the youth officer, young people of the female gender show more interest.

Five young people who are employed in the municipality regularly participated in civil consultations for the needs of young people in 2021 and 2022.

3.4 Municipality of Strumica

The municipality of Strumica does not yet have a local youth council. Guided by the new legal regulation, the Municipality of Strumica plans to start the procedure for establishing a local youth council (LYC) in January 2023 by announcing a public call for the election of members.

According to the Municipality, the interest among young people to be involved in the creation of youth policies is at a satisfactory level. The municipality of Strumica implements consultative processes with young people to identify their needs and priorities (meetings with young people, sending invitations to stakeholders, publishing a call for participation in the development of strategic documents).

In December 2022, the mayor of the Municipality of Strumica and the youth officer met with three young people. One of the key priorities identified by young people in 2022 is the establishment of a youth center. The money for this purpose is an integral part of the Budget. The total costs for the establishment of the center amount to MKD 6 million.

Adaptation and arrangement/renovation of the space for the youth center is underway. The youth center should be managed by a civic organization. The planned expenses for managing the center are in the amount of 600 thousand denars per year.

In 2022, the Municipality of Strumica started the procedure for developing a new strategy for youth (2023 - 2027). The bearer of the activity is a civil organization, the only one that applied to the public call for the preparation of this strategic document. As of December 2022, two workshops for the preparation of the strategy were conducted and 30 to 50 young people - girls and boys (high school students, representatives of youth civic organizations and political parties) participated in them. Young people with developmental disabilities are also included, in order to identify their needs. The final version of the new strategy should be developed in January 2023.

In 2022, the municipality allocated a total of 7,100,000 denars for youth policies/measures: 6 million denars for the establishment of a youth center, 500 thousand denars for financial support for youth initiatives (start-ups) and 600 thousand denars for youth and cultural centers.

The municipality of Strumica has appointed a youth officer, but there is still no youth office.

The municipality does not keep separate statistical data of the participants (gender, age, ethnicity, disability, urban/rural environment) in the process of planning measures for youth and the allocation of budget funds.

The municipality does not have gender-disaggregated statistical data on the number of participants (young people) in the citizen consultations for the needs of young people in 2021 and 2022 and has not established gender indicators for planning and implementing policies to support young people, nor indicators for measuring the impact on users.

3.5 Municipality of Sveti Nikole

In the Municipality of Sveti Nikole, there is a youth council consisting of five members, of which three are female and two are male, and the council is headed by a woman. Three members are representatives of civil society organizations. Their mandate is two years with the right to re-election.

The Youth Council functions as an advisory body of the Municipality of Sveti Nikole. Work is underway to amend and harmonize the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, and the next composition of the local youth council will be formed in accordance with this law. The mandate of the current members of the Youth Council ends in July 2023.

According to the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, the municipality has so far fulfilled the following tasks: a local youth council has been established, there is a youth office located in the premises of the House of Culture in Sveti Nikole, a youth officer has been appointed.

The Youth Council has held a total of six sessions since its establishment as of October 2022. In a conversation with the president of the Youth Council, we received information that the last session was held in December last year.

So far, the Youth Council has implemented three activities. The first activity is from the field of ecology - cleaning the picnic area called Gjurishte. The second activity is conducting a survey for young people about what youth events they would participate in if they were organized and the third activity is an online lecture on mental health organized by Europe House - Skopje.

Since the beginning of the establishment of the Council, there have been talks with Europe House, Mladinub from Skopje, Youth Alliance from Krushevo, who had an interest in partially supporting it, but with the change of government there is resistance among the current authorities. Three times they tried to schedule a meeting with the current mayor of the municipality of Sveti Nikole, but so far such a meeting has not been held.

They do not have any support from the Municipality. Since the existence of the council until today, the Municipality has not allocated any financial resources for assistance and support of the activities. The local youth council has not prepared a strategy and action plans for their implementation.

For the year 2022, the Municipality has not foreseen funds in the budget, while for the year 2023, it is probably planning to allocate around 160 thousand denars.

In 2022, the local youth council did not submit any proposals to the Municipal Council for problems affecting young people.

The municipality has appointed a youth officer.

The municipality does not keep gender-disaggregated statistics in the processes of planning measures and in the reassignment of budget funds for the support of young people.

3.6 Municipality of Mavrovo and Rostushe

In Mavrovo and Rostushe Municipality there is a local youth council which has 11 members and all of them are male. The local youth council functions as a commission of the Municipality Council and has not yet been established under the new law on youth participation.

From the existing Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies, the municipality has so far fulfilled only one obligation - the appointment of a youth officer. He performs his duties in the offices of the municipal administration and does not have a separate office for youth.

This local youth council was established in January 2022 and so far has held only one session at which the president was elected.

In 2022, the local youth council has not proposed a single project or agenda issue to the municipal council.

At the proposal of the youth officer, a set of financial measures for students was adopted, which began to be applied in the academic year 2021/2022. Also, the Council has adopted rules for one-time financial aid, according to which students are paid a one-time financial aid in the amount of 6,000 denars.

The municipality of Mavrovo and Rostushe has not adopted a strategy for the local youth council, nor action plans. No financial resources have been allocated for this purpose in the 2022 budget, and the 2023 budget is in the process of being adopted.

In the municipality of Mavrovo and Rostushe, gender-disaggregated statistics are not kept in the processes of planning measures for budget funds to support young people

A memorandum of cooperation was signed with the association Center for Intercultural Dialogue (CID) from Kumanovo, lasting three years and so far more than 10 young people from the municipality have participated in various trainings in the field of democracy, civic participation, local youth councils.

The website and Facebook page of the municipality show that so far the municipality has not organized any events to consult young people about their needs and priorities.

3.7 Municipality of Tearce

The Municipality of Tearce established a Local Youth Council in 2022, through a public call. CED is the organization in charge of the activities for the formation of the local youth council, which initiated the formation of the LYC in 2013, created a strategy and supported the council with local initiatives.

The municipality cooperates with several civic organizations in order to involve young people and promote their active participation in decision-making and policy-making processes, through advocacy and civic activism in the areas of social cohesion, human rights, multiculturalism and democracy at the local and national level.

A strategy for youth was drawn up, which was adopted and in which local youth from the Municipality of Tearce were involved. According to the municipality, young people are interested in joining the youth council.

The Municipality of Tearce has prepared a Strategy for Gender Equality, which also includes young people. So far, the municipality has not implemented campaigns, activities to inform citizens about the local youth council, its functioning and future steps.