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PARTNERSALBANIA
FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Monitoring report of Political, Social, Economic Participation of Youth

Albania 2020



YouthHUB

WESTERN BALKAN AND TURKEY

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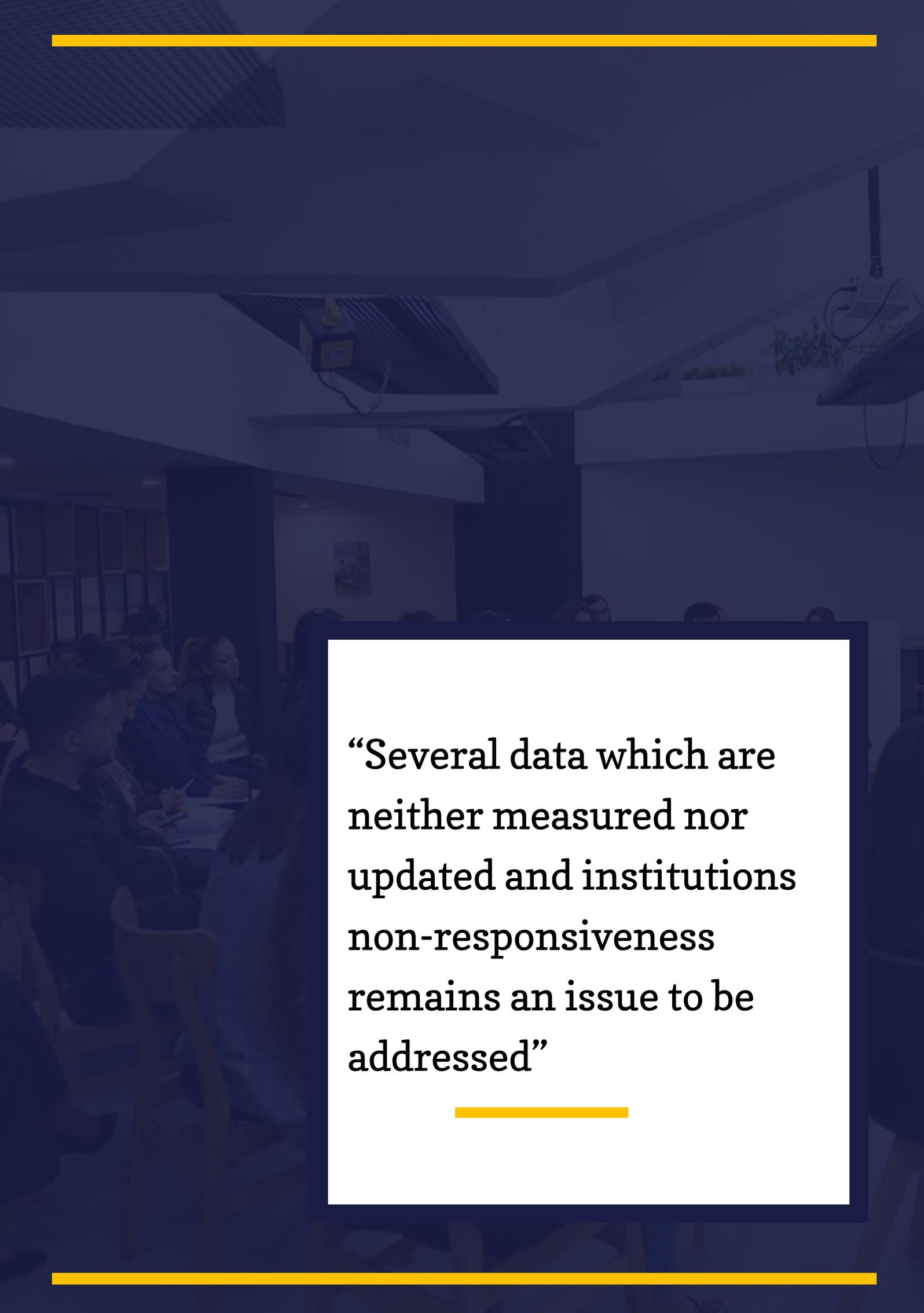
Partners Albania in the framework of the project WB&T for EmploYouth implemented in partnership with “Ana I Vlade Divac” Foundation in Serbia, Youth Alliance in Macedonia, “Prima” organization in Montenegro, and “Community Volunteers Foundation” in Turkey, prepares an annual monitoring report aiming to analyze and give an overview of the state of affairs regarding youth’s political, social and economic participation in these 5 countries.

The monitoring report was first published in 2016 as part of Youth Bank Hub for WB&T initiative. This report provides a brief description of the current data on political, social, and economic participation of youth in Albania based on a set of predefined indicators. Taking into consideration that this is the fifth annual report, some significant data comparison is provided for the time period 2016-2020.

The report data are collected through desk research and official request for information sent to responsible institutions such as the Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, General Directorate of Taxation, General Directorate of Prisons, National Institution of Statistics and Albanian municipalities.

The monitoring report is the guide for evidence-based policy recommendations and advocacy initiatives of the network for future actions regarding youth state of affairs on political, social, and economic participation.

This report data are also included in the regional annual report of the Youth Hub Network reflecting comparative data from the 5 country reports.



**“Several data which are
neither measured nor
updated and institutions
non-responsiveness
remains an issue to be
addressed”**

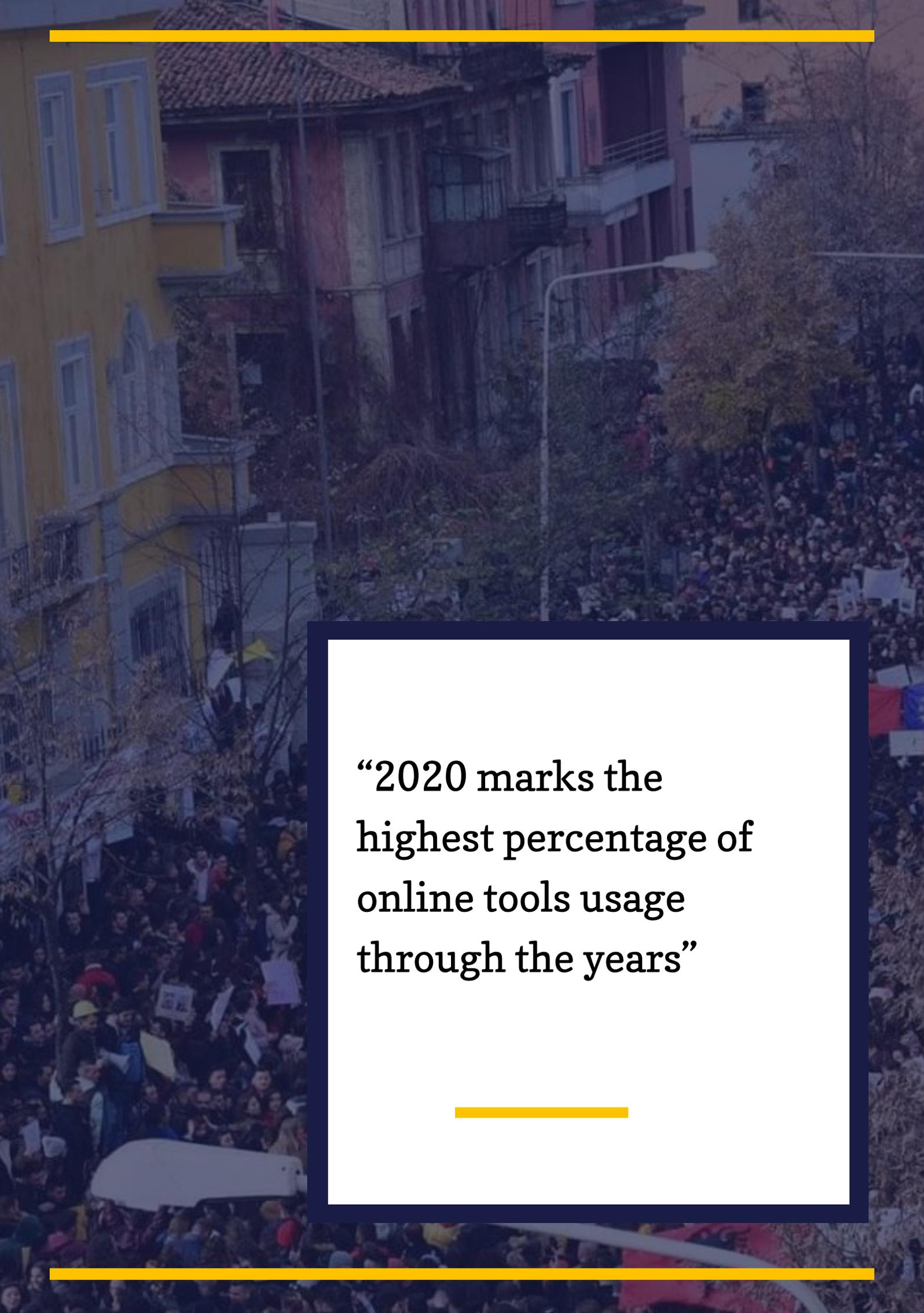
Data on Political Participation of Youth

INDICATORS	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	YEAR
Young ministers in government	0%	0%	0%	2020 ¹
Young deputy ministers in government	3%	3%	0%	2020 ¹
Young MPs in the parliament	4%	3%	1%	2020 ¹
Young mayors	0%	0%	0%	2020 ¹
On-line tools for information and participation in decision making of government and parliament	98%			2020 ¹
On-line tools for information and participation in decision making of municipalities	74%			2020 ¹
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on national level	0%			2020 ²
Existence of youth structure (councils/parliaments/unions) on local level	46.0%			2020 ³

[1] Desk Research

[2] Request for Information to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth

[3] Request for Information to the 61 Municipalities of Albania

A large crowd of people is gathered in a city street, with buildings in the background. The scene is captured from an elevated perspective, showing a dense crowd of people filling the street. The buildings are multi-story and have a mix of colors, including yellow and red. The crowd appears to be participating in a public event or protest, with some people holding signs and banners. The overall atmosphere is one of a significant public gathering.

**“2020 marks the
highest percentage of
online tools usage
through the years”**

Data on Social Participation of Youth

INDICATORS	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	YEAR
Young people at risk of poverty	No data	-	-	2020 ⁴
The percentage of young poor people (the young people who lives under the line of poverty) (No of young poor people / no of young people)	No data	-	-	2020 ¹
Young people in prisons	30%	0%	30%	2020 ⁵
Young people part of social welfare system (who receive financial support in Social Protection System) divided with the young people who are in the social welfare system	No data	-	-	2020 ⁶
Dropout from the secondary education	1.8%	0.9%	2.8%	2019-2020 ²
Young people enrolled in tertiary education	91.6%	-	-	2019-2020 ⁷
Young people graduated from tertiary education	25%	28%	22%	2019-2020 ¹

[4] Partners Albania sent a request for information to the National Institute of Statistics but they responded that this data is not measured for 2020

[5] Request for Information to the General Directorate of Prisons

[6] Partners Albania sent a request for information to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection but the Ministry did not reply.

[7] Request for Information to the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

“The number of students who dropout from secondary education is halved compared to five years ago”

Data on Economic Participation of Youth

INDICATORS	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	YEAR
NEET rate	27.9%	30%	25.8%	2020 ⁸
Youth unemployment rate	20.9%	21.1%	20.8%	2020 ⁷
Long-term youth unemployment rate	11.4%	10.2%	12.6%	2020 ⁷
Youth Labor force participation rate	52.1%	44.7%	59.3%	2020 ⁷
Youth Employment rate	41.2%	35.3%	46.9%	2020 ⁷
Young people that started their own business with the financial support of state	3%	-	-	2020 ⁹
Self-employed young people	18.5%	16.5%	20.5%	2020 ¹

[8] Instat- Albania in Figures 2020

[9] Request for Information to the Ministry of Finances and Economy and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development



“In the last five years the number of youngsters that started their own business with the support of state has decreased by 51.5%”

Comparisons of data during 4 years of monitoring

Overall several indicators have changed positively and negatively through the years, but compared to data reported in the first index, five years ago, there is a noticeable improvement.

Some of the indicators in the **political participation dimension** have remained the same. *The number of young ministers in government* and the *existence of youth structures at the national level* have shown no progress through the years and remained unchanged at 0%. While *the number of young deputy ministers in government* and *youth structures at the local level* has reached its highest level in 2019 respectively at 7% and 57.4%, in 2020 both indicators have decreased, especially youth structures by 11.4% compared to the previous year. *The number of young mayors* has been constant till 2018, but in the last two years, a serious change is noticed, with the rate decreasing from 6% to 0%.

2020 marked the highest percentage of online tools used through the years. *The online tools for information and participation in the decision-making* at government and parliament levels were increased by 18.7% in 2020. *The online tools for information and participation in the decision-making at the local level* have also shown a positive increase through the years with the highest percentage at 74% in 2020.

Data for the **Social Participation Dimension**, specifically indicators such as *young people at risk of poverty*, the percentage of *poor people*, and *young people part of the social welfare system*, are lacking because these indicators are either not measured by the relevant institutions, or they have failed to provide information.

Data on *young people in prison* indicate a relevant decrease in the last two years with an average of 9%, with 2020 showing the lowest percentage of young people in prison since 2016.

Education indicators show significant improvement compared to the first year of the monitoring index, especially *dropout from secondary education*, which is the only indicator that has decreased through all the years, with the lowest value in 2020 at 1.8%.

The rate of *young people enrolled in tertiary education* has had a slight and constant change at the range of 90% till 2018, but in 2019 was noticed a significant decrease of 25.5%, which was considerably improved in 2020 with a rate of 91.6%. *Young people graduated from tertiary education* has shown an increasing trend with an average of 2% through 4 years (2016-2019), while in 2020 for the first time this indicator shows a decrease of 1.70% compared to 2019. In comparison with young men, young women are more devoted to education and have a lower ratio of dropout from secondary education and a higher ratio of graduation from tertiary education.

In terms of **economic participation dimension**, certain changes in indicators have accompanied the year 2020, such as *NEET*, which has had a decreasing trend with small percentages through the years with the highest decrease in 2019, but in 2020 it is noticed a slight improvement by 1.3%.

Youth unemployment and the *long-term unemployment rate* are the indicators that have shown a decrease in all the years. *Youth employment rate* and *youth labor force participation rate* show an increase respectively by 8.8% and 6.4% in comparison to 5 years ago.

The indicator which has marked a significant decrease (51.5%) is *young people that started their own business with the financial support of the state*. The number of *self-employed youngsters* has increased by an average of 9.13% these last two years, after a significant decrease of 17.40 % in 2018.

Young men continue to have a better inclusion than young women in youth employment rate, youth labor force participation, NEET, youth unemployment rate, and self-employment. While young women have a better performance compared to men in long-term unemployment rate indicator.

Policy recommendations and issues for advocacy

This session provides several policy recommendations per each dimension, which should be addressed by institutions and actors working in the respective fields.

In the fifth consecutive year of monitoring, the lack of statistical data on the social participation of youth remains still an issue.

YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- The pandemic situation and the lack of experience of municipalities in creating the *youth structures* have led to a decrease in their number during 2020. Most municipalities cooperate with civil society organizations for the creation of these structures but it is necessary to create a guiding manual (best practices of other municipalities as an example) which would facilitate and unify the way of organization and functioning of these structures in all municipalities.
- In 2020 there were no elections and the representation of *young MPs in the parliament* continues to remain the same as last year with 4%, while the number of *young mayors* continues to remain at 0% in 2020, same as 2019, also due to the non-participation of opposition parties in local elections of 2019.
- There is a significant increase in terms of *online tools used for information and participation in the decision-making* at both national and local levels. However, some of the web pages of public institutions can not be reached, and some others lack the necessary information they should provide, or the information is outdated. In this context ministries and municipalities should update their websites and social media accounts as well as share more information to their citizens and provide them the possibility to participate in different activities and processes.

YOUTH SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

- Taking into consideration that during 2020 all educational program was conducted online, there have been many problems in the strategy and infrastructure used. As the pandemic continues, it is important to create curricula that are easily understood by students and transmitted through online platforms. Technology played a key role during this period, therefore education and training in the field of technology, and equipping schools with the necessary tools and facilities are important.
- Schools should cooperate more with the civil society organizations to develop training on various topics, such as youth rights, involvement in decision-making, project writing, which would enhance students' skills beyond the curriculum.
- Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth should apply specific programs for youngsters from marginalized groups, to help them continue their studies.
- A special focus should be given to the establishment of career guidance centers in high schools, with qualified and professional staff aiming to orient youngsters in the selection of their career paths.
- Respective institutions, municipalities, and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth should create more public entertainment spaces dedicated to cultural and sports activities, in all cities.
- It is essential that responsible institutions identify *young people at risk of poverty* and *young poor people* and assist them to improve their situation and prevent their emigration.
- Enhancement of education curricula, student-professor relationship, extracurricular activities, presence of career guidance specialists and psychologists, are among elements that engage youngsters and help keep them away from crime and illegal activities.
- For *youngsters in prison*, it is necessary the establishment of reintegration programs tailored to their needs. Training on various topics, information technology courses, and vocational training of their interest would be very valuable for the development of their life skills needed for the labor market. Continuous information on what is happening and what are the major developments at the local, national and global levels remains important.

YOUTH ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

- The *NEET rate* in 2020 showed an increase of 1.3% compared to 2019. In order to reduce the high level of NEET rate, respective institutions play an important role by identifying the youth groups in NEET, analyzing their problems, and taking actions to engage youth in education, training, and later in employment through various supporting programs.
- One other advocacy issue is the strengthening of the mechanisms for job search and access through the enhancement of informative online tools. The establishment of a platform that collects all vacancies by public and private institutions in Albania would positively contribute to the decrease of the *youth unemployment rate*.
- To match demand and supply in the labor market and align students' interests with market needs, it is necessary the establishment of career guidance centers that provide counseling, research the needs of the market, and orient students towards the jobs of the future.
- According to data from the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Albanian Investment Development Agency has not provided financial grants for the period January – December 2020. Only 3% of the grant support given by the Agency for Agricultural and Rural Development was awarded to youngsters. It is obvious that the lack of funds provided by the state continues to be an issue. It is important to provide more access to finance for young entrepreneurs by both central and local governments. There is not only the need to establish more start-up funds but also to promote all the financial schemes available for young entrepreneurs in Albania. In addition, the information should be accessible by all youngsters living in urban and rural areas, accompanied by more transparency for the usage of these funds.
- However, in Albania operate many local and foreign organizations which assist young entrepreneurs with financial support, and mentoring to further develop their skills. The government is working for the creation of the first Techno Park in Albania, which will allow all small-medium businesses to work in a mutual area, but this does not eliminate the need for a professional incubator and accelerator on the national level, which will offer packages that include access in funds, training & mentoring programs, networking opportunities, exposure to international markets, business angels and impact investment schemes.

COVID-19 Impact on Youth Participation

COVID-19 has influenced the lives of young people in Albania and worldwide, affecting their economic, social, and political participation.

Since the closure of schools in March 2020, around 572,000 students from preschool to higher education shifted to online education, which limited the social interaction of in-school youth. Access to online learning was also a major problem as an estimated 11,000 students, mainly those living in rural areas, couldn't attend online learning due to lack of internet access or digital devices. Also, when considering children with learning difficulties and disabilities, 1 in 2 children with disabilities could not assess education activities online.¹⁰ There has been a decrease of 1.7% compared to 2019, in the number of graduates due to difficulties in the process of developing online learning.

Due to the quarantine period and restrictive measures for the gathering and movement of people, according to the information provided by the municipalities, the number of youth centers and together with them the youth activation and activities have decreased by 11.4% compared to 2019. Municipalities used online tools to enhance youth involvement in decision-making, inviting youngsters to participate in discussions on various topics in their communities.

The pandemic situation has affected businesses in every sector of the economy, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Due to COVID-19 restriction measures, they faced reduction in capacity utilization, supply of labor, and liquidity shortage. As a consequence, SMEs were not able to pay salaries to their employees. The surveys to date show that apart from lack of customers, lack of liquidity, and lack of a contingency plan, the small businesses have difficulties in meeting tax obligations. Also, the number of self-employed young people has decreased by 10.7%, mainly because of the difficult situation and the lack of government support. The poverty rate in Albania is estimated to double in a short time with the assumption that the self-employed lose 100% of their income and wage employees lose 50%, resulting in an additional 115,000-230,000 people moving below the poverty line in the country.¹⁰

Unemployment has decreased slightly by 0.6% while youth employment rate and labor force participation rate have not changed in comparison to 2019. Even though in these indicators the COVID-19 might not have had an immediate impact, youngsters have been living with the constant stress that their jobs are at risk due to the restriction measures and pandemic situation.

In conclusion, even though 2020 has been a difficult year due to COVID-19 and more other factors that have contributed to lower participation of young people, the government should take all necessary measures and introduce new methods to adapt to the current situation, with the goal to return to normality, especially for the youth who are the driving force of the future.

[10] <https://partnersalbania.org/publication/effectiveness-in-covid-19-response-albania-case-study-report/>



www.partnersalbania.org

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