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ANALYSIS OF THE UN YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

Implementation in the Republic of Serbia





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INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Before you is a research that provides an overview and analysis of current public policies, public policy instruments (strategies, action plans, etc.) and institutions responsible for youth and security in the Republic of Serbia which include the specific goals of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. The research aims to determine whether and in what way the objectives of the Agenda have been implemented in the current public policies of the Republic of Serbia, in order to define the room in which it is necessary to pay more attention to their implementation at the national level. The research was conducted in the period from July to September 2023 and took into account the public policies that were in force in the Republic of Serbia during that period. According to the methodological approach and method of data collection, the research was done by analyzing public policy documents.

More specifically, the necessary data were collected through desk analysis, i.e. analysis of documents from the relevant fields. The team of authors, in accordance with the need, took into consideration legal acts, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, laws and by-laws. It also analyzed the planning documents, that is, public policy documents, which include strategies, action plans, programs and policy concepts. In addition to the documents that directly relate to youth policies and programs, those that regulate the following areas were also taken into account: youth policies and programs; peace and security policies and programs; foreign affairs and international cooperation; education, culture and art; economy and employment; judiciary and human rights; gender equality; healthcare; environment and climate change; science and technology.

Therefore, the analysis has included 10 mentioned areas, in connection to which the Agenda recognizes the need to improve the position of young people, as well as their role and participation in the policies covered by those areas. For each field individually, after the presented research, the team of authors will offer a set of recommendations that will focus on the steps through which the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda could be more comprehensively implemented in our country. Also, for the purpose of better understanding of both the benefits and the way the Agenda is implemented in specific cases, at the end of each field, an example of good practice from the countries around the world leading when it comes to accepting the Agenda's standards, will be highlighted.

On the one hand, the research is intended for institutions, so they can recognize failures in the implementation of the Agenda and, therefore, the problems that young people face, the need for their greater participation in public policies, primarily in those that directly affect them and the potential that young people possess, when it comes to maintaining and strengthening peace, security, tolerance and dialogue. Based on this, institutions should be encouraged to harmonize current public policies with the specific goals of the Agenda, to improve legislation and public policy instruments, as well as to direct the work of competent authorities in the direction of strengthening the role of young people in society. On the other hand, the analysis can also serve civil society organizations that deal with the position and problems of young people, so that they themselves can better understand the concept of the Agenda and see what the current situation is when it comes to its implementation in the Republic of Serbia. In this way, they can get an additional incentive to rely on the Agenda in their public advocacy and to invite institutions to devote themselves to its implementation in the fields of importance for the youth, as well as to implement projects and programs in the areas and with the goals defined by the Agenda.

UN YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA: GOAL AND PILLARS

Youth, Peace and Security Agenda (hereinafter: YPS) aims to point out that sustainable peace, at the global level, will not be achieved if young women and men are not represented in political life and if they do not participate in the political dialogue, reconciliation process, peace building and state building and if they do not have a share in deciding on their own future. The essence of the YPS Agenda consists of the following resolutions of the United Nations Security Council:

1. Resolution 2250, adopted in 2015, which recognized for the first time ***the positive role of young people in efforts to maintain and improve peace and security***,
2. Resolution 2419, adopted in 2018, which specifically calls for ***planned inclusion of young women and men in formal and informal peace processes***, as well as
3. Resolution 2535, adopted in 2020, which provides ***concrete steps for the implementation of the YPS Agenda and emphasizes the need for strengthening its technical capacities***.

By defining the young as those aged 18 to 29, Resolution 2250 recognizes variations of this term at the national and international levels, given that countries use different age groups for statistical and policy-making purposes. In any case, “youth” can be defined as the transition from childhood to adulthood, which brings with it different biological, sociological, economic, political and other characteristics of young people. Also, the concept of peace in the context of the Agenda should be understood not only as the absence of war and violence (negative peace), but also as the absence of structural violence, i.e., for example, poverty, discrimination and injustice. In this

regard, the aforementioned building of peace and security would involve engagement in several key areas:

- Overcoming the basic roots (drivers) of the conflict
- Police, rule of law, judiciary
- Reducing inequality and discrimination and other challenges to social cohesion
- Human rights
- Reintegration
- Security sector reform, peace operations, disarmament and arms control.

As the Resolution points out, today there are more young people than ever, and the worrying fact is that young men and women make up the majority of the population in the countries affected by a certain type of violence or armed conflict. However, young people can be one of **the key actors in peace processes** and by their involvement and participation they can contribute to the building of **inclusive and sustainable peace**. Significant youth participation and influence can improve the relevance, effectiveness and impact of peace and security initiatives, policies and other decisions.

On the one hand, young people can contribute to the establishment of peace through the engagement of their peers, working at the community level, encouraging dialogue and bridging the divisions that currently exist in a society. On the other, such participation can also be very significant for young people themselves, because in this way they learn to value peace, acquire civic skills and very often continue to engage in such activities throughout their lives.

In order for young people to really be able to achieve an effect in the formation of peace in the community, it is necessary for them to be given **space for participation**, which is particularly problematic if we bear in mind that they, espe-

cially young women, often face structural obstacles to participation in decision-making process. In this regard, it should be noted that **participation is a human right** which applies equally to everyone and is contained both in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In order for the Agenda to be adequately implemented, the essence is precisely that not only public opinion recognizes **the positive role of young people in society**, but also to provide the young with mechanisms so that they can **participate in decision-making, primarily about peace and security**.

Although the YPS Agenda continues to develop nowadays, we can say that it is based on five key pillars, which more specifically determine the areas and ways of integrating young people into peace and political processes.

Participation

It implies encouraging the participation of young people in decision-making processes in the formal and informal phases of achieving peace and security, as well as in terms of political transition. More specifically, according to this pillar, it is crucial to take into account the views of young people during the negotiation and implementation of public policies, in dialogues at the local and national level, in decision-making regarding transitional justice, during conflict resolution and during other political and governance processes.

Protection

It refers to the protection of young people who participate in the activities of establishing and maintaining peace, preventing violence and developing social cohesion. In this sense, it is important to ensure that young people do their work independently, in a safe and gender-sensitive environment, and

that, if they occur, threats and acts of violence against them be thoroughly investigated in order to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Prevention

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It strives to provide support to young people who continually participate in the activities aimed at preventing violence and promoting tolerance and intercultural dialogue. The key is primarily to recognize them as actors who are relevant for the establishment of social cohesion, and then to encourage them in their mission of conflict and violence prevention.

Partnership

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Stakeholders should establish new and strengthen the existing partnerships with young people involved in the processes related to peace and security. Special emphasis should be placed on developing cooperation with youth organizations, movements and networks.

Reintegration

.....

The last pillar requires the countries to take into account the needs of young people affected by armed conflict, in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities. Special attention is drawn to providing them with opportunities for employment through adequate labor policies and national youth employment plans, as well as to providing an incentive to invest in the skills and entrepreneurship of young people, which in turn strengthens economic growth. It also implies taking into account the fact that young women and men can play a positive role in the implementation of the reintegration process.

In addition to the framework created by the resolutions of the Security Council, there are other documents that have contributed to shaping the Agenda. One of them is the independent study “Missing peace”, which questioned the stereotypes and political myths associated with young people, providing concrete evidence of the positive impact of young people on peace and security and recommendations for participation and partnership with them in maintaining peace. Also, an important contribution to the development of the Agenda is provided by the document “We are here”, which, through concrete examples, identifies obstacles and opportunities for youth participation in formal peace processes. Its conclusion points to the usefulness of the presence of young people at the negotiating table.

AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY (YPS) AGENDA



In accordance with Resolution 2535 (2020) adopted by the United Nations Security Council on July 14, 2020 with the aim of encouraging member states to undertake development actions and implement public policies and programs in accordance with the YPS agenda, goals can be developed and policies created for them, in 10 different policy areas.¹

In this part, we'll present only the policy areas that are related to the YPS agenda, and in the next chapter we'll review and analyze public policies in the Republic of Serbia that include the goals of the YPS agenda and give recommendations accordingly. The analysis will include an overview of all public policy documents and instruments in certain areas, and then the public policy documents related to the goals of the YPS agenda will be presented in detail. For each sub-area, the objectives of the YPS agenda in the given area will be presented.

The areas of implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda include:

1. Youth policies and programs
2. Peace and security policies and programs
3. Foreign policy and international cooperation

1 For full details regarding the policy areas of the YPS agenda, see: Global Coalition on Youth, Peace, and Security (2022) "Implementing the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda at Country-level: A Guide for Public Officials". New York: Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. As well as the part of that publication: "Examples on Advancing Youth, Peace and Security".

4. Education, culture and art
5. Economic policy and employment policy
6. Justice and human rights policy
7. Gender equality
8. Health policy
9. Environmental protection and climate change
10. Policies in the field of science and technology

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC POLICIES THAT INCLUDE THE GOALS OF THE UN YPS AGENDA WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

In this central part of the research, we are analyzing the representation of the goals of the UN Youth, Peace and Security agenda in public policy documents in the Republic of Serbia according to the above-mentioned areas in which the goals of the agenda can be implemented.

1. Youth policies and programs

For the successful implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, youth policies and programs should recognize young people as adequate decision-makers at all levels. This would include, primarily, encouraging the political participation of young people through the opportunity to be elected to parliaments at the national and local levels. Advocates of the Agenda believe that the aforementioned can be achieved, for example, by introducing a system of quotas related to age and gender, reducing the age limit for running in elections, as

well as programs for building capacities of young people who are active in political parties. Also, special attention is given to overcoming obstacles for political participation of young people who are often marginalized, such as young women, young migrants and young people with disabilities. Next, the Agenda calls on the states to empower young people by ensuring their participation and becoming leaders in social, economic, humanitarian and cultural projects, but also their playing important roles in peace programs, through volunteer actions, paid internships or paid positions in relevant bodies. The young could acquire incentives for participation in peace building, conflict resolution, but also in civic engagement, through informal education and various types of training in that context. Finally, the Agenda sees the establishment of co-operation programs in the field of sports as a useful tool for youth development, strengthening their social inclusion, improving intercultural and interethnic dialogue and preventing violent extremism. Sports programs should be gender-sensitive and thus challenge stereotypes that sport is an exclusively male activity.

The area of youth policies and programs is regulated by the **Youth Act²**, **National Youth Strategy for the period from 2022 to 2030³** and **Action plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy for the period from 2022 to 2030.⁴** Law on the Election of Members

2 Youth Act, RS Official Gazette, no. 50/2011 and 116/2022 https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_mladima.html

3 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.mos.gov.rs/storage/2022/02/nacrt-strategije-za-mlade-za-period-od-2022-do-2030-godine.pdf>

4 Government of the Republic of Serbia, https://mto.gov.rs/extfile/sr/2540/akcioni_pl_2023-2025_z_a_mlade_RS_2023-2030_063_cyr.pdf

of Parliament⁵ and Law on Local Elections⁶ are also significant for the purposes of achieving the goals of the Agenda.

When it comes to the participation of young people in decision-making, primarily through national and local parliaments, it should be noted that there are no obstacles in our legislation that would prevent young people, aged 18 to 30, from doing so. **The Law on the Election of Members of Parliament** stipulates that the right to elect MP's and to be elected as an MP belongs to an adult citizen of the Republic of Serbia who has not been extended parental rights, i.e. who has not been completely deprived of legal capacity. Also, **the Law on Local Elections** stipulates that the right to elect municipal assembly members and to be elected as a municipal assembly member belongs to an adult citizen of the Republic of Serbia who has not been extended parental rights upon them, i.e. who is not completely deprived of legal capacity and who resides in the territory of the local self-government unit in which they exercise the right to vote.

Youth Act prescribes the possibility of establishing the Youth Council, the Provincial Youth Council and the youth council of local self-government units, the Youth Office and the Youth Agency, as very important bodies when it comes to the political participation of young people, but also to building their capacities and improving their position in society. More specifically, the Government of the Republic of Serbia, at the proposal of the Ministry, in accordance with the regulations governing the work of the Government, establishes the Council for Youth as an advisory body that encourages and coor-

5 Law on the Election of Members of Parliament, RS Official Gazette, no. 14/2022. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_izboru_narodnih_poslanika.html

6 Law on Local Elections, RS Official Gazette, no. 14/2022 https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_lokalnim_izborima.html

dinates activities related to the development, realization and implementation of youth policy and proposes measures for its improvement. At least one-third of the members of the Youth Council are youth representatives from associations and unions from Articles 13 and 14 of the Youth Act.

According to the text of the Law, in order to coordinate activities related to the implementation of youth policy on the territory of the autonomous province and the local self-government unit, the competent body of the autonomous province and the competent body of the local self-government unit can establish a provincial, city and municipal youth council.

The Youth Office is established by the local self-government unit in order to ensure the conditions for the active inclusion of young people in the life and work of the social community, the empowerment of young people, provision of support for the organization of various social activities of young people, learning and creative expression of young people's needs.

Finally, for the implementation of programs for young people, and in accordance with the programs of the European Union related to young people, an agency can be established, in accordance with a special law.

In this way, and as pointed out by **the National Youth Strategy for the period from 2022 to 2030**, young people are involved in making important decisions such as initiating projects and programs of importance for young people, adopting budgets, strategies and plans, and at the local level, work programs and reports of Youth Offices and/or institutions for youth, culture, youth centers and similar. For this reason, in the Youth Act, we can recognize the standards on which the Agenda is based, which insists that young people have an influence on decision-making, both at the national, regional and local levels.

Recognizing the need for youth participation in decision-making, **the National Youth Strategy for the period from 2022**

to 2030 states as a special goal for the upcoming period that young people are active participants in society at all levels. In order to achieve this, one of the measures will be the creation of conditions for the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes and policies of importance for young people, as well as their development, application, monitoring of implementation and evaluation. Regarding this measure, the Strategy points out that, in accordance with the principles of decentralization, it is important to have structures at the provincial and local level through which the voice of young people can be heard and respected. For this reason, special attention will be paid within this measure to the development of standards of inclusivity and functionality of local youth councils and the meaningful involvement of young people in the development, implementation and evaluation of the implementation of local action plans for young people, as well as other public policy documents of importance for young people adopted by the local government units. The strategy adds that access to integrated services at the local level is essential for young people, and that is why it is important to enable the participation of youth representatives in other advisory and permanent working bodies at the local and provincial level, such as councils for local economic development, social-economic councils, economic advice, employment advice, local migration advice, etc.

In order for young people to be active participants in society at all levels, the Strategy envisages strengthening and systemic support for associations and youth offices in the creation, implementation and monitoring of public policies through intersectoral cooperation and dialogue of all relevant actors. Special efforts will be made to increase capacities of the youth civil sector and youth offices for partaking in participatory democracy and democratic citizenship. According to the Strategy, for young people and those who work with young

people from the civil sector, it is important to empower them to use different mechanisms for participation in the creation, implementation and monitoring of the effects of public policies on young people.

Action plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy for the period from 2022 to 2030 lists the target values that will be pursued when it comes to the implementation of the above-mentioned special goal. It is predicted that in 2025, 66% of local self-government units will have an established youth council and that 50% of local self-government units will have an established youth council in which young people are members and which complies with the adopted standards and meets regularly. Also, starting in 2025, national, provincial and local youth councils should, each separately, meet at least 4 times a year, and the goal is that the share of young people in these bodies, in relation to the total number of members, should be 30%. In 2025, young people should give their opinion on 30% of proposals and draft regulations and public policy documents that are of interest to young people. According to the Action Plan, in 2025, standards for the active participation of young people in decision-making at all levels of government will be established, and the share of budget users budgeting funds for young people will increase to 25%. It is also planned to achieve the increase to 45% share of young people who are ready to engage in the work of bodies that initiate or make decisions of importance for young people (school/university student parliament, local youth council, association, political parties, etc.). Finally, the goal is to increase the number of activities supporting associations and youth offices in the creation, implementation and monitoring of public policies on an annual level to 3.

Therefore, when it comes to the political participation of young people, there are no legal obstacles that would prevent

young people of legal age from being elected representatives in national or local parliaments. However, there are currently a total number of nine young MP's in the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia, less than in the previous convocation, when there were fourteen, which means that today the number of MP's who fall under the category of the young is again lower than 5% and returns to the values from period 2012–2020. Also, the national parliament has not yet formed a Youth Committee, and in the current Government of the Republic of Serbia, no minister or member of the Government is in the category of young people. On the other hand, the Youth Strategy and its Action Plan provide an incentive when it comes to the participation of young people in youth councils and decision-making in the areas directly concerning young people. This is very important, but from the point of view of the Agenda, which advocates for the inclusion of young people in national and local parliaments, it is not enough and there are no clear steps that would provide this for young people. Also, apart from the age limit, there are no other incentives to achieve this, such as the introduction of quotas or work on building the capacities of young people who are active in political parties.

The next measure for achieving the aforementioned goal is to encourage volunteering and activism among young people, which is also relevant if we remember that the Agenda calls on the countries to include young people in volunteer programs aimed at peace building. Within it, the Strategy emphasizes that further development and support of the national volunteering program **“Young people are the law”** will continue, being implemented by the Ministry of Tourism and Youth in cooperation with civil society continuously since 2010. It is a program that, through local youth volunteer projects (YVP) and national/international volunteer camps, encourages activism and volunteering among young people,

the acquisition of skills for personal development and better employability, and also provides a significant contribution of young people to the sustainable development of local communities. Through this program, and as the Strategy points out, international youth camps will be organized, youth volunteer projects will be implemented, project ideas of informal youth groups for the improvement of the local environment will be developed with mentoring support and work actions with aimed at arranging space for young people in local communities, environmental protection, encouraging humanity and solidarity, understanding and tolerance, security and intergenerational cooperation.

The Agenda recognizes the need for young people to be empowered by getting involved in projects that will deal with social, economic, humanitarian and cultural issues. The strategy partly recognizes this within its special goal dedicated to ensuring that young people have equal opportunities and incentives to develop their potential and competences, which lead to social and economic independence. As a measure for its realization, the provision of support for the aesthetic competences and creativity of young people is mentioned. As the Strategy emphasizes, aesthetic competence, as one of the cross-curricular competences, is important for enriching young people in terms of a broad understanding of the cultural heritage of the human community, valuing works of art and culture in general, and developing awareness of the importance of culture for the development of human society. The action plan states the goal is that in 2025 the number of non-formal education programs/projects that contain activities for the development of aesthetic competences and creativity of young people is increased to 15, and that the number of young people involved in programs/projects/actions for the development of aesthetic competences and of youth cre-

ativity on an annual level is 4,000, 2,000 of which are women and 2,000 are men.

Support for youth entrepreneurship and employability is another measure that strives to achieve the above goal, which is stated to lead to a higher level of entrepreneurial competences of young people, better information of young people about opportunities and incentives offered to them for self-employment, increased sustainability of established entrepreneurial companies by young people. In connection with this measure, the Action Plan predicts that in 2025 the number of young people who are involved in projects/actions for the development of entrepreneurial competences, for improving the employability of young people and for inclusion in social entrepreneurship will amount to 3,000, i.e. 1,500 per gender, and the number of projects of citizens' associations and local self-government units to improve the employability of young people on an annual level, financed by the Ministry of Tourism and Youth, will reach 45.

Recommendations:

1. Establish incentive policies aimed at higher level of participation of young people in national and local parliaments. Also, in the National Assembly, form a Youth Caucus, whose task is to bring together young MP's, but also other MP's interested in youth issues, as well as youth representatives of political parties, youth representatives and associations. When enacting policies that directly affect young people, local and national parliaments should organize public hearings with their representatives.
2. Amendments to the Act on Volunteering should especially regulate the field of youth volunteering. Through the national volunteering program "Youth are the law", encourage the participation of young

people in volunteer actions dedicated to building peace, security, international and regional cooperation and the development of intercultural dialogue. Also, through non-formal education, work should be done to strengthen the capacities of young people in given areas, so that they can be trained both for volunteering and working in these.

3. In addition to involving young people in projects with cultural themes, which deal with aesthetic competences and creativity of young people and economic ones, dedicated to strengthening entrepreneurial competences and employment of young people, ensure their leadership in projects that have social and humanitarian content.
4. Develop youth sports programs, with the aim of their better socialization in society, development of skills and teamwork, and within these include young people from other countries of the region, for the development of intercultural and interethnic dialogue in the area.

An example of good practice: Turkey and the Platform for Young Volunteers

The Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Turkey has been running the Platform for Young Volunteers since 2015 with the aim of strengthening the culture of volunteering in the country. The platform provides an opportunity to overcome barriers to the participation of young people, especially those living in rural and hard-to-reach areas of Turkey, through the development of technology accessibility. Volunteering is considered important for strengthening mutual trust, solidarity and awareness of civic activism, reducing

tension and resolving disputes. By using the online platform, the ministry can more effectively identify and respond to the needs and priorities of young people, enabling them to influence both the demand and supply of volunteering opportunities. Through the platform, organizations looking for volunteers can create and announce notices, and young people who want to be volunteers can simultaneously access and sign up for all notices made in six categories: sports, culture and tourism, environment, disasters and emergencies, education, health and social services. The platform has particular advantages, such as providing institutional members with the ability to set their preferences and administrative systems. In this way, announcements made by institutional members can reach every corner of the country, and organizations can search for young volunteers with different skills and experiences throughout Turkey. The Youth Volunteer Platform is an example of a government-led initiative that seeks to increase the effective participation of young people in social and civic life through volunteering.

2. Peace and security policies and programs

In the field of peace and security policy, the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda is focused on strengthening the role of young people in peace processes and the security sector, whether national or international security. For this reason, it encourages the countries to include young people in decision-making processes within the framework of security policy, through, for example, engagement in the formation of strategies or other documents related to the security of the country or in the reform of the security sector. It advocates the participation of young people in initiatives related to the prevention of

violence, organized crime and the monitoring of hate speech, as well as for young people to play a role in the development of reconciliation policy and peace building at the regional level and disarmament. It calls on governments to maintain a dialogue with young people on the topic of their security and to draw up operational plans that will focus on protecting young people from security threats.

The field of security in the Republic of Serbia is governed by a large number of legal acts, of which the following were analyzed for the purpose of work: the Law on the Confirmation of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, with the Statute of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, of this work.⁷, Police Act⁸, Law on Public Order and Peace⁹, Law on Information Security¹⁰, Defense Law¹¹, Law on the Serbian Armed Forces¹², Law on the use of the Serbian Armed Forces and other defense forces in multinational operations outside the borders of the Republic of

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- 7 Law on Confirmation of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, with the Statute of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, Official Gazette of RS, no. 4/2017. http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2017_05/t05_0439.htm
 - 8 Law on Police, Official Gazette of RS, no. 6/2016, 24/2018 and 87/2018. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_policiji.html
 - 9 Law on Public Order and Peace, Official Gazette of RS, no. 6/2016 and 24/2018. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_javnom_redu_i_miru.html
 - 10 Law on Information Security, Official Gazette of RS, no. 6/2016, 94/2017 and 77/2019. [https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_informacion-
oj_bezbednosti.html](https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_informacion-
oj_bezbednosti.html)
 - 11 Defense Law, Official Gazette of RS, no. 116/2007, 88/2009, 88/2009 – state law, 104/2009 – state law, 10/2015 and 36/2018. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_odbrani.html
 - 12 Law on the Serbian Armed Forces, Official Gazette of RS, no. 116/2007, 88/2009, 101/2010 – state law, 10/2015, 88/2015 – Constitutional decision, 36/2018, 94/2019 and 74/2021 – Constitutional decision. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_vojsci_srbije.html

Serbia¹³, Law on the Basics of Organizing the Security Services of the Republic of Serbia¹⁴, Law on Security and Information Agency¹⁵ and the Law on the Military Security Agency and the Military Intelligence Agency¹⁶. Taken into account were also the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia¹⁷, Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia¹⁸, Strategy for the fight against high-tech crime for the period from 2019 to 2023¹⁹, Strategy for the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing for the period from 2022 to 2024²⁰ and Action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for

- 13 Law on the use of the Serbian Armed Forces and other defense forces in multinational operations outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette of RS, 88/2009 and 36/2018. <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2018/36/5/reg>
- 14 Law on the Basics of Organizing the Security Services of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette of RS, no. 116/2007 and 72/2012. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_osnovama_uredjenja_sluzbi_bezbednosti_republike_srbije.html
- 15 Law on the Security and Information Agency, Official Gazette of RS, no. 42/2002, 111/2009, 65/2014 – Constitutional decision, 66/2014 and 36/2018. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_bezbednosno-informativnoj_agenciji.html
- 16 Law on the Military Security Agency and the Military Intelligence Agency, Official Gazette of RS, no. 88/2009, 55/2012 – Constitutional decision and 17/2013. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_vojnobezbednosnoj_agenciji_i_vojnoobavestajnoj_agenciji.html
- 17 National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/strategija/2019/94/2>
- 18 National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/strategija/2019/94/1>
- 19 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2018/71/1/reg>
- 20 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/14/1/reg>

the fight against money laundering and financing of terrorism for the period from 2022 to 2024²¹, Youth Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030 and Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Strategy for Youth in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030.

Among the mentioned national documents, YPS standards are recognized in **the Law on Confirmation of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, with the Statute of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, the Youth Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030 and the Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Strategy for young people in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030.**

Law on Confirmation of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, with the Statute of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation is significant in the context of the YPS standard, given that it officially made Serbia part of the Office. The one that gives young people the opportunity to encourage peaceful relations with their neighbors through dialogue thereby strengthening regional security. The text of the Agreement confirms the above, by stating that the mission of the Office is to support the regional exchange of young people and their exchange of ideas, as the basis of future prospects for cooperation in the region, based on the values of coexistence, tolerance, respect for human rights and diversity, as well as commitment to inclusion and security. The participation of young people from Serbia in the work of the Office directly responds to the Agenda's request that young people be involved in the development of

21 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/drugiakt/2022/40/1>

peace processes and the strengthening of regional security, which is particularly important for the Western Balkans region as a post-conflict area.

The Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030, as one of the special goals, recognizes the creation of conditions for good health, safe environment and social well-being of young people. The measure provided for the implementation of the goal includes support for the existing and new youth security improvement programs and is aimed at increasing the security culture of young people, i.e. improving their knowledge, skills, abilities and adopted attitudes of respecting security rules. The strategy states that in the coming period, it will cooperate with associations and youth offices for the purpose of implementation of programs aimed at preventing all forms of violence, both in physical and virtual space. In this regard, a special focus will be on developing a network of peer support for young people who are victims of violence or are exposed to the risk of becoming one, as well as on developing an online tool for early signaling of a risk situation in order to provide timely support.

Action plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030, gives a more detailed insight into the measure related to the provision of support to the existing and new youth security improvement programs. In this regard, the Action Plan aims to increase the number of young people who have been participating in the prevention and support programs for improving security during the calendar year, from 3,000, which is the target value for 2023, to 10,000 in 2025. The measure takes into account gender equality, which the Agenda also insists on, and expects that an equal number of young women and men participates in the programs. The implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan in this domain is useful from the perspective of the

Agenda, which considers the presence of young people in initiatives and programs dedicated to the prevention of violence at the local level extremely important.

The Youth Strategy also, citing international documents that are relevant and represent its framework, highlights the Strategy of the Council of Europe's youth sector until 2030, which advocates the leadership of young people in preventing violence, resolving conflicts and building a culture of peace.

The umbrella organization of the youth of Serbia continuously organizes youth dialogues with institutions thus providing an opportunity for young people to directly communicate the needs of young people in Serbia to decision makers, as well as offering proposals for improving the position of young people. In February 2023, the fourth **Youth dialogue with the Prime Minister of Serbia**, Ana Brnabić, was held in the organization of KOMS, during which youth representatives addressed the Prime Minister and presented some of the problems and challenges they face, together with their peers. One of the topics of the discussion was the security and health of young people, during which the problem of digital violence perpetrated against them was highlighted, the scarcity of data on the number of young people who suffer violence and on the sanctions of those who commit violence, as well as the threat to the health of young people as a result of environmental pollution. Developing such a dialogue is in line with the Agenda's aspiration to hold regular consultations with different groups of young people in order to identify their needs and priorities when it comes to youth safety.

In the domain of peace and security policy, we recognize certain goals of the Agenda, but there is plenty of room for its further application. Particularly challenging is the fact that none of the laws or public policy documents related to national security pay special attention to the security of young people.

Also, the analysis did not reveal any current projects or programs of state institutions that deal exclusively with the protection of young people, the prevention of violence against young people or improve their safety in any other way. If we take into account the current arrangement of the security policy of the Republic of Serbia, we can also conclude that young people are not involved in its creation, nor do they participate in the adoption of strategies or other national documents in this area, as well as in the reform of the security sector, which the Agenda specifically advocates. Although **Action plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030** recognizes the need for an increase in the number of expert analyses on security challenges, risks and threats to which young people are exposed in Serbia, it aims to increase the number from 1 in 2023 to 2 analyses in 2025. This is still a small number of analyses, especially if we take into account the fact that the security challenges faced by young people change on an annual basis.

Recommendations

1. With the support of young people, create a public policy document that will focus on the safety of young people, the security risks and threats they most often face, ways to overcome them and concrete steps for strengthening the protection of young people.
2. Encourage an annual dialogue among different social groups of young people, including marginalized groups of young people, and competent institutions on the topic of youth security in order to determine the current situation in the field of youth security and develop adequate policies that will respond to their security challenges.

3. At the local and national level, strengthen the capacities of competent institutions for the development of project activities that will be dedicated to improving the security culture of young people, and primarily to raising awareness of issues related to digital media literacy and the fight against fake news, hate speech, misogyny and discrimination of young people on social networks.
4. Recognize and promote young people as actors who influence the creation of the security policy of the Republic of Serbia, as well as in building a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and inclusion at the national and regional level.
5. Pay special attention to protecting the safety of young activists who peacefully express their views and prevent their targeting by any individual, especially state officials.

Kyrgyzstan: Youth participation in the creation of security policy

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In Kyrgyzstan, the international civil society organization Search for Common Ground (SFCG) established a dialogue between young people and the representatives of state security agencies, in an effort to bridge the divisions in society and solve the problem of violent extremism. As a result of the dialogue, the National Consultative Working Group was formed, which, in addition to young people, decision-makers and civil society organizations, also gathered women, academics and members of religious organizations. It was established as a platform for discussion on the topic of security, with the aim of developing recommendations related to the fight against radicalization and extremism that would be addressed to

decision makers in state security agencies. The initiative was successful, especially thanks to the positive reaction of the security authorities, who recognized the exceptional advantage of engaging young people and the opportunity to hear their perceptions of the security challenges the country is facing. The project, by strengthening their skills, increased the participation of young people in combating violent extremism, which proved to be very beneficial for both the state and the youth. Most importantly, it enabled security policy-making to become an inclusive process, sensitive to the needs of different social groups, which proved to be key to building trust and cooperation.

3. Foreign policy and international cooperation

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The Agenda recognizes young people as relevant actors in the field of foreign affairs and cooperation, and especially in providing support for the strengthening of peace processes and post-conflict recovery. It recognizes the need for young people to participate in regional and multilateral work, primarily through expressing their views within regional or international organizations. It also points to the importance of creating opportunities for young people to contribute to the adoption of documents related to foreign policy, such as action plans or other documents that define its priorities. The countries should direct their efforts to implement YPS standards within national documents and policies in this area, as well as promote them both at the international level, by providing support to United Nations bodies such as the Security Council and the UN Peacebuilding Commission, as well as and at the regional level, through organizations such as the European Union and the Organization for European Security and Cooperation.

The national documents governing the foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia are the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia²², Law on Foreign Affairs²³, Law on Ministries²⁴ as well as the Law on Confirmation of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, with the Statute of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation. When it comes to European integration, the National Program for the Adoption of the Legal Acquis of the European Union 2022-2025 is relevant.²⁵, Communication strategy on the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union²⁶ and other documents related to Serbia's accession to the European Union. Finally, the foreign policy is also taken into account by the documents directly dealing with young people: the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030 and the Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030.

Among the above-mentioned national documents, we recognize the YPS standards in **The Law on Confirmation of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation with the Statute of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, the Youth Strategy in the Republic of**

22 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette of RS, no. 98/2006 and 115/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/ustav_republike_srbije.html

23 Law on Foreign Affairs, Official Gazette of RS, no. 116/2007, 126/2007 – corr. and 41/2009. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_spoljnim_poslovima.html

24 Law on Ministries, Official Gazette of RS, no. 128/2020 and 116/2022. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_ministarstvima.html

25 Government of the Republic of Serbia, https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/npaa/NPAA_2022-2025_002.pdf

26 Government of the Republic of Serbia, https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/strategija_komunikacije_2011.pdf

Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030 and the Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030.

Law on confirmation of the agreement on the establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, with the Statute of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation confirms the Agreement on the establishment of the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, which was signed in Paris on July 4, 2016. It is an institutional mechanism that functions independently and was founded by six countries from the Western Balkans. The mission of the Regional Office is to support the regional exchange of young people and their exchange of ideas, as the basis of future perspectives for cooperation in the region, to intensify the regional cooperation of young people and institutions dealing with young people, as well as to coordinate the cooperation of young people in the Western Balkans. Its program focuses on creating opportunities for young people to engage in activities that build mutual understanding and reconciliation in the civic, social, educational, cultural and sports domains.

The Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030 is, analyzing the institutional framework of the youth policy of the Republic of Serbia, referred to **The European Union Youth Strategy for the period from 2019 to 2027**, which focuses on meaningful civic, economic, social, cultural and political participation of young people. The European Union Youth Strategy, among other things, invites member states and the European Commission to support the establishment and development of youth representation at the local, regional and national level, acknowledging the right of young people to participate and self-organize, with the recognition of youth representative structures and their

inclusion in the work of local, regional, national and European authorities. According to the text of the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia, all proposals of the European Union Youth Strategy for the meaningful and active participation of young people in society, including the one mentioned, are relevant for the Republic of Serbia as a candidate country for joining the European Union.

In addition, one of the special goals of the Youth Strategy of the Republic of Serbia envisages that young people are active participants in society at all levels, and the measure for its realization is the creation of conditions for the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes and policies that have impact on them. The strategy points out that active participation of young people in bodies, structures and conferences at the international level is extremely important for the Republic of Serbia, and that special attention within the aforementioned measure will be directed towards further development of mechanisms for the participation of young people and representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and Youth in the work of management of the bodies of the Council of Europe and the Regional Office for Youth Cooperation, as well as in international conferences and forums (ECOSOC, UNESCO, etc.).

The next measure that the Strategy mentions as important for the realization of the above goal is the improvement of international cooperation, the exchange of experience and practices of young people and other subjects of youth policy and participation in the development, monitoring and evaluation of international documents of youth policy. As part of this measure, as the Strategy states, concrete activities will be implemented aimed at greater participation of young people in international conferences, forums, exchanges, participation in EU programs and funds and in regional initiatives, engaging, connecting and empowering young people and youth organ-

izations in order to exchange experiences, examples of good practice and implementation of joint projects.

In this regard, the Strategy reminds of the existence of the **Permanent expert team for EU youth dialogue**, founded at the Youth Council, which is seen as a way to ensure the participation of young people from the Republic of Serbia and to make their opinion be heard on important processes at the level of the European Union and the Council of Europe, as well as **the Permanent expert team for the implementation of the Bonn process**, which provides the prerequisites for the implementation of the Declaration on Youth Work. The aspiration to continue supporting the work of youth delegates at the United Nations is emphasized, in order to hear the voice of young people from the Republic of Serbia in various bodies at the UN, as well as to support activities that contribute to the inclusion of young people from the Republic of Serbia in various international youth activities, gatherings, manifestations as well as in the implementation of international agreements and memoranda on cooperation.

It should also be noted that the Youth Strategy cites regional, European and international documents as its framework for drafting, many of which recognize the importance of youth in building peace and improving diplomatic relations. These include the **United Nations Youth Strategy**, the **Strategy of the youth sector of the Council of Europe until 2030**, the above stated **European Union Youth Strategy for the period from 2019 to 2027** and the **Agreement on the establishment of the Regional Youth Office** as well as the **EU strategy for the Western Balkans 2018**.

Action plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030. analyzes in more detail the measures that should be taken at the national level in order to ensure the implementation of the Strategy's goals. When

it comes to the above measure that relates to the creation of conditions for the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes and policies that have impact on them, the Action Plan sees an increase in the number of young people involved in the EU dialogue mechanism in one calendar year as one of the ways to achieve it, i.e. from 300, as predicted in 2023, to 1,500 in 2025. In this regard, the Action Plan envisages the provision of financial support for the projects aimed at educating and informing young people about the EU youth dialogue, and their inclusion in various formats (consultations, questionnaires, etc.) in the processes relevant to the EU dialogue.

In addition, the Action Plan explains as well the goals of the measure related to the improvement of international cooperation, exchange of experiences and practices of young people and other subjects of youth policy and participation in the development, monitoring and evaluation of international documents of youth policy. First, the idea is to increase the amount of funds of the ministry, provincial authorities and local self-government units intended to support the participation of young people and subjects of youth policy in international bodies/processes/forums and organizations. Then, the goal is to increase the number of international processes/mechanisms in which young people influence decision-making on an annual level, from 3, as predicted for 2023, to 7 in 2025. Finally, there is an aspiration to increase the number of international youth policy documents in the development, monitoring and evaluation of which young people participate, from 2, as predicted for 2023, to 4 in 2025.

The aforementioned Law, Strategy and Action Plan recognize certain standards of the YPS strategy by identifying the need to involve young people in the field of foreign affairs and cooperation, support the creation of space for young people to express their views on foreign policy at the regional and inter-

national level, as well as to influence to decision-making within international conferences and participate in other ways in regional and multilateral work. However, as stated, apart from the explained Law, no national document dealing with the field of foreign policy sees young people as significant actors in this field. In addition, as Serbia does not have a Foreign Policy Strategy, it cannot be determined with precision whether decision-makers see young people as relevant subjects that would be included in such a document. Based on the analyzed documents, there is no tendency of decision-makers to engage young people in the creation of strategic documents governing foreign affairs, which is one of the objectives of the Agenda.

Recommendations

1. Implement the Agenda in public policy documents that directly relate to the areas of foreign affairs and cooperation, and primarily in the future strategy of Serbia's foreign policy.
2. Hold regular consultations between representatives of parliaments and young people in order to increase the influence of young people in the formation of national documents and strategic decisions related to foreign affairs and cooperation.
3. Encourage the participation of young people in the given area by organizing trainings, workshops and educational programs on cooperation with the bodies of the United Nations or the European Union.
4. Make efforts to strengthen the dialogue of young people from Serbia and Kosovo*, while recognizing the important role of young people in developing peaceful relations between the two sides in the future.

An example of good practice: the USA and the draft Law on Youth, Peace and Security

In 2020, members of the House of Representatives of the United States of America presented a draft Law on Youth, Peace and Security, which aims to support the inclusive and meaningful participation of young people in the field of foreign affairs, international cooperation, peace building, prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. As stated in the draft Law, the youth and youth organizations have proved their ability to play a key role in de-escalating conflicts and maintaining peace agreements, which is an additional incentive for their engagement in strengthening peaceful cooperation through diplomatic negotiations and programs. The draft law, which is currently in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, is the result of cooperation between the YPS Coalition and members of the House of Representatives, who often point out that the voice of young people has been ignored for too long and that the goal of the act they are working on is to provide young people with a place at the table in solving conflicts that directly affect them. The coalition consists of over 70 civil society organizations that deal with young people and work on their mobilization within the global YPS movement, and their advocacy of changing the Agenda at the national level was supported by the representatives of both the Democratic and Republican parties. Today, the youth and the lawmakers they support are continuously working to persuade other members of the House of Representatives to pass the Act, which would make the United States the first country to make YPS standards a foreign policy priority. This initiative, which strives to implement the Agenda through the legislature, points to the steps that should be taken in its advocacy: creating a coalition of young people who are familiar with the Agenda and see the importance of its implementation at the national level, gaining support for implementation through dialogue with people's

representatives and cooperation with them on establishing a legislative initiative on YPS standards.

4. Education, culture and art

The agenda promotes the development of an educational system that, at the national level, would encourage peace and, within formal and informal education, insist on learning the topics of conflict resolution, gender equality, human rights and sustainable development. The agenda recognizes as particularly important the strengthening of inclusive and equal access to education, without inequality, discrimination and marginalization of young people, as well as solving the digital gap in education and enabling access to digital technologies. The agenda insists on promoting peace and social cohesion through the education system, inclusive education policy, multilingual curriculum, curriculum reform and teacher training. The agenda includes the development of a media literacy program so that young people acquire critical thinking skills and recognize fake news, hate speech, etc. Also, it invites the countries to involve young people in fostering culture through non-formal education, through organizing festivals, theater performances, etc. The agenda also emphasizes the importance of creating programs and space for intercultural learning and interreligious dialogue among young people.

The field of education, culture and art in the Republic of Serbia is governed by the Law on the Basics of the Education System²⁷, Law on Secondary Education²⁸, Law on School and

27 Law on the Basics of the Education, Official Gazette of RS, no. 88/2017, 27/2018 – state law, 10/2019, 27/2018 – state law, 6/2020 and 129/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_osnovama_sistema_obrazovanja_i_vaspitanja.html

28 Law on Secondary Education, Official Gazette of RS, no. 55/2013, 101/2017, 27/2018 – state law, 6/2020, 52/2021, 129/2021 and 129/2021 – state law. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_srednjem_obrazovanju_i_vaspitanju.html

University Student Standards²⁹, Law on Dual Education³⁰, Law on Higher Education³¹, Adult Education Act³², Law on the dual model of studies in higher education³³ and the Law on the National Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Serbia³⁴, Law on Culture³⁵, Law on Cultural Property³⁶ and others laws in the field of culture, Strategy for the development of education in the Republic of Serbia until 2030³⁷ and Strategy for the development of the public

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- 29 Law on School and University Student Standards, Official Gazette of RS, no. 18/2010, 55/2013, 27/2018 – state law and 10/2019. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_ucenickom_i_studentskom_standardu.html
- 30 Law on Dual Education, Official Gazette of RS, no. 101/2017 and 6/2020. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-dualnom-obrazovanju.html>
- 31 Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette of RS, no. 88/2017, 73/2018, 27/2018 – state law, 67/2019, 6/2020 – state laws, 11/2021 – authentic interpretation, 67/2021 and 67/2021 – state law. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_visokom_obrazovanju.html
- 32 Adult Education Act, Official Gazette of RS, no. 55/2013, 88/2017 – state law, 27/2018 – state law and 6/2020 – state law. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-obrazovanju-odraslih-republike-srbije.html>
- 33 Law on the Dual Model of Studies in Higher Education, Official Gazette of RS, no. 66/2019. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-dualnom-modelu-studija-u-visokom-obrazovanju.html>
- 34 Law on the National Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette of RS, no. 27/2018, 6/2020 and 129/2021 – state law. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-nacionalnom-okviru-kvalifikacija-republike-srbije.html>
- 35 Law on Culture, Official Gazette of RS., no. 72/2009, 13/2016, 30/2016 – correction, 6/2020, 47/2021 and 78/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_kulturi.html
- 36 Law on Cultural Property, Official Gazette of RS, no. 71/94, 52/2011 – state laws, 99/2011 – state law, 6/2020 state law and 35/2021 – state law and 129/2021 – state law. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_kulturnim_dobrima.html
- 37 Government of the Republic of Serbia, https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/1-SROVRS-2030_MASTER_0402_V1.pdf

information system in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2025³⁸.

YPS standards can be recognized in the **Law on the Basics of the Education System, the Law on Secondary Education, the Law on Higher Education, the Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia until 2030 and the Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System in the Republic of Serbia for the Period from 2020 to 2025**. In the context of the Agenda, it is important to point out here the **Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022-2030**³⁹, **Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030, Strategy for the development of digital skills in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2024**⁴⁰ and **Digital Education Action Plan 2019–2027 of the European Union**.

Law on the Basics of the Education System governs the basics of the system of preschool, primary and secondary education and education and adult education. The law states that the system of education must ensure equality and availability of exercising the right to education based on social justice and the principle of equal opportunities without discrimination for all children, students and adults. The law expressly prohibits discrimination and discriminatory treatment in educational institutions, which makes a difference or unequal treatment in relation to a person or groups of persons in an open or covert manner, and which is based on race, skin color,

38 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/11/1>

39 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2022/23/1>

40 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/21/2/reg/>

citizenship, ethnic origin, gender, religious or political beliefs. The law is inclusive with regard to national minorities, given that it indicates that for members of a national minority, educational work is carried out in the language, i.e. the speech and writing of the national minority, while also providing the possibility for the education to be carried out bilingually, both in in the language and script of the national minority and the Serbian language, in accordance with a special law.

Law on Secondary Education states, among other things, the goals of secondary education and, among which is respect for racial, national, cultural, linguistic, religious, gender, sex and age equality, tolerance and respect for diversity. The law, like the previous one, indicates that for members of the national minority, educational work is carried out in the language and script of the national minority, i.e. bilingually, if at least 15 students opt for it when enrolling in the first grade. The school can carry out educational work in the language and script of the national minority, i.e. bilingually for less than 15 students enrolled in the first grade, with the consent of the ministry responsible for education, in accordance with the law. The law also determines the content of school curriculums, and as some of the programs that should be included in classes, which are relevant to the YPS agenda, it states programs for protection against violence, abuse and neglect, programs for the prevention of other forms of risky behavior, and a program for protection against discrimination, school's cultural activities program and environmental protection program. Additionally, it states that the educational work for a person who uses sign language, i.e. a special script or other technical solutions, can be carried out in sign language and using the means of that language.

Law on Higher Education, defining the principles on which higher education is based, states respect for human rights and civil liberties, including the prohibition of all forms of dis-

crimination. Like the previous one, this Law provides the possibility to organize exams and certain parts of studies, as well as preparation and defense of the final, master's and specialist thesis and doctoral dissertation in the language of the national minority and in a foreign language, in accordance with the statute. A higher education institution can implement a study program in the language of a national minority and a foreign language if such a program is approved or accredited. Also, for students with disabilities, studies, or certain parts of studies, can be organized and conducted in sign language.

Thus, the above three laws recognize the aspirations of the Agenda aimed at inclusive education and the prohibition of discrimination in the education system, on any basis. They recognize the needs of national minorities when it comes to education in their language, as well as people with disabilities, for whom the possibility of organizing lessons in sign language opens up. What is particularly important is that the YPS standards see that through the policy of inclusive education and multilingual teaching, social cohesion is also strengthened, and in this case too, young people can play a significant role in peace building, through mutual understanding and tolerance.

Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2030 emphasizes that the adoption of the aforementioned Law on the Basics of the Education System in 2009 marked a turning point in the introduction of inclusive education, which the Agenda particularly insists on, with an emphasis on the equal right to education, without discrimination and segregation, for all children, students and adults. According to the text of the Strategy, in the period from 2017 to 2019, a set of new and/or amended laws and by-laws in the field of education were adopted, with most of the provisions dedicated to the further development of inclusive education. However, after 10 years of implementation of inclusive educa-

tion, the capacities for implementation have not yet reached the level of legal innovations and changes. Progress has been made at all levels, but the capacities of teachers and institutions to adopt and apply new practices and knowledge varies significantly, resulting in gaps in equity.

Speaking about the current situation when it comes to the education and training of members of national minorities, the Strategy states that the entire educational work in the Republic of Serbia is carried out in Serbian and eight languages of national minorities (Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Croatian language). Although it observes some progress in the implementation of the goals of the previous strategy when it comes to additional financing of the specific costs of the education of national minorities and the representation of national minorities in the management and leadership bodies of educational institutions, the Strategy notes that there is room for progress in this area, especially when it comes to training of teachers who teach in the language and script of the national minority.

The general goal of the Strategy for the next period is improved accessibility, fairness and openness to university education, and one of the indicators of its achievement is the increased number of employees in education and training who have improved their competences for working in an inclusive environment, as well as the percentage of students with developmental disabilities and disabilities included in regular primary and secondary education. Measures leading to the achievement of this goal are the establishment of new and improvement of existing support mechanisms for educational institutions in achieving openness, fairness and accessibility and encouraging interculturality in education. According to the Strategy, the main measures in this area relate to desegregation and the provision of relevant, high-quality support to children in an inclusive environment, which will require

stronger support for regular schools in the process of inclusion of students who are educated in schools for the education of students with developmental disabilities and disabilities or schools for adult education.

Another general goal of the Strategy is the improved availability, quality, relevance and fairness of higher education, and within it, the improved scope and fairness of higher education stands out as a special goal. The outcome indicators for this special goal include, among other things: an increase in the percentage of students who received support based on the new Rulebook on financial support for students; an increase in the percentage of students from vulnerable social groups (people of Roma nationality, people with disabilities, people of low SES, etc.) who enroll at studies and an increase in the percentage of students who are supported in the form of interpreters for the Serbian sign language. Increasing the scope and fairness of education will be pursued through the implementation of measures: improving accessibility and supporting the success of studies and supporting higher education institutions in achieving continuous lifelong education. In order to adequately support students of low socio-economic status during their studies, as stated in the Strategy, a plan (concrete measures, activities and deadlines) will be defined to increase the scope of higher education while developing expedient models for providing incentive funds, which will be formalized in the Rulebook on financial support for students and amendments to the Law on School and University Student Standards. In order to improve the accessibility of higher education for the deaf and hard of hearing students, the legal framework will be revised in terms of specifying who is responsible for providing support to these students in the form of interpreters for the Serbian sign language.

Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2030 recognizes the shortcomings that exist in the ed-

ucation system when it comes to the full implementation of the above-mentioned laws, highlighting the steps that would overcome them. It recognizes the YPS standards, by seeing more inclusive education as its goals and by stating the measures that would make it more accessible to vulnerable social groups. In this sense, the implementation of the Strategy in the coming period is crucial in order for all school and university students to have equal access to education at all levels.

Strategy for improving the position of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2024 and Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022-2030 also foresee goals and measures within these aimed at more advanced inclusion of vulnerable social groups in the education system.

Strategy for improving the position of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2024 is important in the context of their inclusion within the educational system. One of the special goals of the Strategy is the systematic introduction of the disability perspective into the adoption, implementation and monitoring of public policies, especially public policies in the areas of employment, education and training, social and health care. As the Strategy indicates, fulfilling the given goal implies the improvement of inclusive education and lifelong learning for people with disabilities, and the key performance indicator of the given goal is, among other things, the observed effects of all public policies on the position of people with disabilities in the above areas, including education.

Specific objective of the **Strategy for the social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022–2030** is a developed education system as an inclusive, intercultural, non-discriminatory and safe environment

for children of Roma nationality and all other children, ensuring full inclusion in preschool, primary, secondary and higher education, and providing support for the functional education of adult Roma men and women, while increasing effectiveness and efficiency mechanisms for combating discrimination and “gypsyism” as a form of racism. In order for this to be implemented, the Strategy recognizes as important the implementation of measures to increase the competences of students and adults belonging to the Roma national minority for entering the world of work and higher education by applying affirmative measures in secondary and higher education and reducing dropouts from the education system.

Strategy for the development of the public information system in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2025 sees the improvement of professional knowledge and developed digital competence of citizens, institutions, media, journalists and media workers in the media environment as its special goal. The education sector is recognized in the Strategy, given that the measure for the implementation of the stated goal implies continuing the process of introducing media literacy into the formal education system, as well as developing the competence of teachers and professors in the field of media literacy. As the Agenda draws the attention of countries to the importance of developing media literacy among young people, the implementation of these measures is of crucial importance.

Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030 to a certain extent takes into account the Agenda’s request, which refers to providing young people, through the education system, with the opportunity to develop basic life skills, which are important when we talk about economic and social inclusion. The special goal of the Strategy foresees that youth work is standardized in the system of non-formal education, as well as that it is continuously implemented, and

some of the measures for its implementation include: established system of quality assurance of youth work programs and informal education of young people, implementation of youth work programs continuously in cooperation with local partners and the recognition and appreciation of youth work in the system of informal youth education. The stated goal and measure within it are important because the stated programs can ensure the development of skills among young people, which are very important for them when it comes to encouraging employment, self-employment, entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship and raising the quality of life of young people.

Digital skills development strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2024 is also relevant for the Agenda, considering that it recognizes the need to improve digital competences in the educational system. To achieve this goal, the Strategy outlines two measures, the first of which involves ensuring the conditions for learning and acquiring digital competences in the educational system through the following activities: improving the central communication infrastructure and building local wireless communication infrastructure (WLAN) in educational institutions, including preschools and cultural institutions; provision of digital equipment and teaching materials in educational institutions; analysis of available trainings for acquiring digital competences for teachers, educators and professional associates and mentoring work with teachers and young talents in the field of mathematics, physics, technical sciences and informatics. As part of the second measure, the Strategy advocates for the improvement of teaching and learning plans and programs aimed at acquiring digital competencies in pre-university education, through: revising the teaching plans and programs and learning of digital

competencies; analysis of the success of the implementation of the teaching program for learning digital competences; implementation of an educational campaign for children on the safe use of the Internet and the use of modern technologies (IT Caravan); organizing national school competitions in the field of digital skills and developing training programs for the implementation of online and hybrid teaching in primary and secondary education.

The EU has also adopted the **Digital Education Action Plan 2019–2027**, which renewed the EU policy initiative to support the sustainable and efficient adaptation of the education and training systems of EU member states to the digital age. Two priority areas have been identified: 1) Encouraging the development of a high-performance digital education ecosystem, which includes infrastructure, connectivity and digital equipment, effective planning and development of digital capacities, including state-of-the-art organizational capabilities, digitally competent and secure teachers and education and training staff, high-quality learning content, user-friendly tools and secure platforms that respect e-privacy rules and ethical standards and 2) Improving digital skills and competencies for digital transformation, i.e. basic digital skills and competencies from an early age, digital literacy, including combating misinformation, computer education, good knowledge and understanding of data-intensive technologies such as artificial intelligence, advanced digital skills, producing more digital experts, ensuring that girls and young women are equally represented in Digital Studies and Career.

Recommendations

1. Enable the involvement of young people in decision-making in the field of education, both at the school and university level, as well as at higher levels.

2. Within the educational system, more attention should be paid to young people acquiring civic education and ensuring that they leave high school with sufficient knowledge regarding gender equality, human rights, tolerance, peace-building and sustainable development.
3. Modernize education and harmonize it with the modern labor market, in order to ensure that young people acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that are crucial for successful adaptation to the labor market in the 21st century.
4. All relevant institutions (educational, health and social care) should include in their work and development plans specific measures for increasing the level of inclusion (for example, how to enroll and attract Roma people and their children, how to prevent discrimination, how to define sanctions for unacceptable behaviors and practice). For this purpose, it is necessary to develop a list of indicators of discriminatory behavior and use it for the supervision/monitoring of implementation in the above institutions. All for the purpose of solving the problems that the Agenda insists on, such as solving the issues of inequality, discrimination and marginalization of young people.
5. Continuously monitor the state of intercultural education in schools and higher education institutions in Serbia, through internal and external evaluation and self-evaluation of schools and higher education institutions, in order to assess the current situation and ensure development planning in accordance with needs.

An example of good practice: Global Image Network of Europe (GENE)

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The Global Education Network of Europe (GENE) is a network of European ministries and agencies that develop education policies and fund global education programs. Its aspiration is to support national structures in their work to improve the quality of education in Europe, through networking, peer learning, exchange of education strategies and conducting research in this area. Dedicated to the development of universal access to education, the Network aims to ensure that all people in Europe, along with people around the world, have access to quality education. In order to succeed in this, this organization encourages national policy makers to share experiences and strategies with each other in order to inform each other about the best practices in this area at the national level, learn from the previous experiences of other countries and develop a joint European agenda on the development of global and European education. Starting in 2001, with 6 national institutions from 6 countries, GENE has continuously developed over the years, so that today it includes over 50 ministries, agencies and other bodies from over 25 countries, including Serbia and its Ministry of Education (formerly the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development). It is of particular importance to the Agenda the fact that the Global Education Network of Europe includes young people, who, together with other interested parties, were involved in the period from June 2021 to November 2022, in the process of creating the new Declaration on Global Education, which was adopted on November 4 at the congress in Dublin. Also, the Network insists that peace education, education on global citizenship, education on sustainable development and other topics relevant to the Agenda, become an integral part of the formal education of national countries.

5. Economic policy and employment policy



The Agenda recognizes youth as relevant actors in the area of promoting social, economic and gender-sensitive youth-centered development, including the provision of decent and affordable employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas. The Agenda insists on solving challenges related to basic economic needs for life, gender-specific inequalities, obstacles in the inclusion of young people with disabilities, marginalized and minority groups. It is important to develop professional and technical competitions for youth employment, especially in post-conflict environments and marginalized areas. The Agenda also emphasizes the importance of supporting businesses run by young people through an approach to financing and business that is adapted to young people, with the additional provision of youth training on business management skills. As youth employment represents a serious challenge for every economy, regardless of its level of development, every country should make efforts to implement YPS standards within national documents and policies in this area. Young people in Serbia face the problems of outdated educational programs and their incompatibility with the needs of the labor market.

The national documents governing the economic and employment policy of the Republic of Serbia are the Labor Law⁴¹, Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance⁴², Law on

41 Labor Law, Official Gazette of RS, no. 24/2005, 61/2005, 54/2009, 32/2013, 75/2014, 13/2017 – Constitutional decision, 113/2017 and 95/2018 – authentic interpretation. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_radu.html

42 Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance, Official Gazette of RS, no. 36/2009, 88/2010, 38/2015, 113/2017, 113/2017 – state law and 49/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zaposljavanju_i_osiguranju_zaslucaj_nezaposlenosti.html

Volunteering⁴³, Law on Associations⁴⁴, Law on Cooperatives⁴⁵, Strategy on economic migrations of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2027⁴⁶, Strategy of agriculture and rural development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2024⁴⁷, Employment strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2026⁴⁸, Economic Reform Program (ERP) for the period 2023–2025⁴⁹ and the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030.

Among the above-mentioned national documents, we recognize the YPS standards in **the Labor Law, the Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance, the Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2024, the Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2026, the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030.**

The basic law in this area is the **Labor Law** which regulates the rights, obligations and responsibilities from the employ-

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- 43 Law on Volunteering, Official Gazette of RS, no. 36/2010. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_volontiranju.html
- 44 Law on Associations, Official Gazette of RS, no. 51/2009, 99/2011 – state laws and 44/2018 – state law. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_udruzenjima.html
- 45 Law on Cooperatives, Official Gazette of RS, no. 112/2015. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zadrugama.html
- 46 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/21/1/reg>
- 47 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <http://www.minpolj.gov.rs/download/strategija-poljoprivrede-i-ruralnog-razvoja-republike-srbije-za-period-2014-2024-godine/>
- 48 Government of the Republic of Serbia, https://www.nsz.gov.rs/live/digitalAssets/15/15855_strategija_zaposljavanja_u_rs_2021-2026.pdf
- 49 Government of the Republic of Serbia, https://www.mfin.gov.rs/upload/media/G8MXn2_63e625e554bd3.pdf

ment relationship, that is, based on work. Based on this law, employed persons with disabilities have the right to special protection, which the YPS standards insist on. Additionally, the law prohibits direct and indirect discrimination against persons seeking employment, on any basis, including gender and age. The establishment of an employment relationship and the protection of employees, especially the protection of young people, are regulated in a way that young people cannot do certain jobs, nor can they work longer than 35 hours a week.

Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance organizes employment matters such as notifications on opportunities and conditions for employment, mediation in employment in the country and abroad, professional orientation and counseling on career planning and implementation of active employment policy measures. It also regulates the rights and obligations of the unemployed person and the employer, support in professional orientation and counseling on career planning, support for self-employment, additional education and training, employment in public works, unemployment insurance, employment abroad.

Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2026, is a strategic document adopted with the aim of establishing stable and sustainable employment growth based on knowledge and dignified work. Among other things, data on all forms and trends in the employment of young people are presented, with the fact that young people are defined as persons aged 15 to 24. This document proposes measures to improve the position of young people on the labor market: connecting young people with the labor market while still in formal education, improving the regulatory framework for the forms of work that young people most often undertake, introducing the formalization of work practices, a systematic approach to youth entrepreneurship, espe-

cially young women, additional education and training, especially for active job search, piloting of some of the measures of the EU program “Youth Guarantee”, greater financial investments from the RS budget for youth employment.

Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2024 defines the improvement of the quality of life in rural areas and the reduction of poverty as one of the strategic development goals. The Strategy identified a number of challenges that young people from rural areas face and proposed support measures to improve their situation. Among the areas of strategic changes are two that directly concern young people: a) diversification of the rural economy and preservation of cultural and natural heritage through various types of investment and advisory support in agriculture, which will enable rural areas to offer more attractive jobs to a younger and more educated population and b) improvement of the social structure and strengthening of social capital through operational goals: stopping negative demographic trends in rural areas, greater availability of social services to the rural population and affirmation of entrepreneurship of women and young people in rural areas.

Strategy for improving the position of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2020 to 2024 as a general goal, it sets equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to enjoy all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, with full respect for their dignity and individual autonomy, ensuring independence, freedom of choice and full and effective participation in all areas of social life, including community life. In order to achieve the general goal of this strategy, special goals have been established, which also apply to young people with disabilities: increased social inclusion of people with disabilities, ensuring the enjoyment of the rights of people with disabilities to business capacity and family life on an equal basis with others, effective protec-

tion from discrimination, violence and abuse and the systemic introduction of the perspective of disability in the adoption, implementation and monitoring of public policies.

Strategy for social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025 sets the improvement of the social and economic position of the Roma national minority in the Republic of Serbia as a general goal, with the full enjoyment of minority rights, the elimination of discrimination and the achievement of greater social inclusion of Roma men and women in all segments of society. Several of the set outcomes by 2025 within this document directly recognize young people, among others, a reduced share of young people aged 18-24 in the Roma population who left education prematurely, an increased number of young people from the Roma community who completed secondary education and an improvement of their educational achievements, effective identification and legal processing of cases of discrimination against young people from the Roma community in access to quality services in the field of education and implementation of internship programs for highly educated young Roma men and women at the national and local institutions' level, YPS standards recognize minorities as marginalized and insist on their inclusion.

Youth workers represent professionals, engaged in civil society associations, institutions and local self-government, who carry out youth work activities, and whose competencies are defined by occupational standards in the field of youth work. One of the most important results of the valid **Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030**, is the recognition and appreciation of youth work as a service that contributes to improving the position of young people. The challenges are the impossibility to acquire the title of youth worker through formal education and the lack of continuous training for youth workers (because the avail-

ability of training depends on the projects). A multisectoral approach and stronger cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and Youth and the Ministry of Education are required in order to create mechanisms that enable the acquisition of formal qualifications.⁵⁰

Additionally, the Strategy singles out as a special goal, that youth work must be standardized in the system of non-formal education. Special measures are foreseen for this goal, such as: improving the system of professional development of youth workers, establishing a quality assurance system for youth work programs and informal education of young people, as well as the measure that youth work programs are implemented continuously in cooperation with local partners and the harmonization of youth work with international standards.

We can single out the following specific recommendations,

1. The solution to the problem of unemployment lies in encouraging entrepreneurial behavior among young people in order to train them to run their own business. Although this idea already exists in some developed countries, the only novelty is the improvement of the environment that will encourage young people to start their own business. Accordingly, we propose creating a legal framework for a faster and easier business process for young entrepreneurs, as well as the existence of a strategy for the development of the concept of entrepreneurship among young people.
2. In addition, successful domestic entrepreneurs could talk about their beginnings, i.e. the reasons for starting their business and the difficulties they

50 <https://www.mos.gov.rs/storage/2022/02/ex-ante-analiza-nsm.pdf>

had before reaching the current level, in public forums at universities and colleges. In this way, domestic entrepreneurs encourage young people to start their own business, but also expose various prejudices and preconceptions that young people may have. These activities should especially be aimed at young women, bearing in mind that they are less likely to decide to start their own business. In order for young entrepreneurs to avoid a series of obstacles they may face, the focus should be on providing the necessary information and providing financial and mentoring support to young people when starting a business, as well as other types of support.

3. It is very important to support young people in the transition from education to quality jobs. This recommendation includes various activities related to providing support to young people in the transition from education to the labor market through short-term and long-term programs. Thereby, special attention should be paid to the fact that this transition leads to quality jobs, which enable dignified work. One type of support for young people is enabling them to develop the necessary skills important for employability and to gain relevant work experience through informal education programs, work practices and other innovative support models. This recommendation should encourage as many young people as possible to join these programs and ensure the quality of those programs. Special attention should be paid to the further improvement of the career guidance and counseling system, which plays an important role in improving the employability of young people. Career guidance and counseling services should be of high quality,

- in accordance with adopted standards, and accessible to all young people, especially the young from vulnerable groups.
4. In the recommendations related to employment, we believe that special attention should be paid on supporting young people from vulnerable groups. Numerous researches⁵¹ indicate that a small number of young people are involved in non-formal education programs, especially young people from vulnerable groups. Access to secondary and higher education is difficult because support programs for young people from vulnerable groups, especially young people of lower socio-economic status, are not sufficiently developed. There are various obstacles that young people from vulnerable groups face in relation to quality employment and starting their own business. By providing support in relation to these obstacles, young people would be provided with equal opportunities in finding quality jobs. It is worrying that in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people from vulnerable groups have faced additional obstacles and this requires that, in addition to technical resources, additional support programs be created in order to respond to the challenges they are facing.
 5. Implement the Youth Guarantee program on the territory of the entire Republic of Serbia. This program is mandatory for implementation in all member states of the European Union, and aims to provide young people with a quality offer for employment, continuing education, practice or training after completing their education.

51 <https://sociojalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/vodic-kroz-radna-i-soc-prava.pdf>

An example of good practice: National strategy for intergenerational employment equality in Ecuador

Ecuador has adopted the National Strategy for the Equality of All Generations, which aims to protect and guarantee the employment rights of young people compared to older people with more experience. The strategy aims to reduce the gap in economic inequality that exists between generations. The government has appointed a special body that will take care of the consistent implementation of this strategy, the National Council for Intergenerational Equality. This body acts in several main directions, education, employment, space for youth participation. The ultimate goal of all actions is to solve the social, economic and cultural inequalities that exist in different generations in order to improve the inclusion of the entire society and guarantee conditions of respect and equality in employment, whether you are young without experience or an older generation with a long working experience. The Strategy itself is part of the Ecuadorian “Plan for creating opportunities for youth 2021-2025”, which itself insists on five guidelines for action, namely: economic above all, social, security, ecological and institutional. Ecuador’s experience in implementing the strategy showed that there was a real need to put this issue of intergenerational equality into consideration and initiate the change.

6. Justice and human rights policy

The Agenda recognizes young people as relevant actors in the field of justice and human rights through developing networks of young mediators and promoting their integration into public and private mediation services. The YPS standards insist on strengthening mechanisms for the protection of human rights in accordance with international law and that the state undertakes concrete measures to ensure the protection

of young people who advocate for peace and the protection of human rights. According to the Agenda, it is also important to include young people in traditional mechanisms of justice, in social audits and accountability processes, and to further improve access to justice equally for women and men. The Agenda specifically emphasizes that the YPS standards should be applied in crime prevention and indicates the need for social reintegration of young offenders and prisoners.

For the purpose of analysis, public policy documents governing the areas of justice and human rights in the Republic of Serbia have been reviewed. Among them are the Law on Organization of Courts⁵², Law on Public Prosecution⁵³, Law on Obligations⁵⁴, Rehabilitation Act⁵⁵, Criminal Procedure Law⁵⁶, Law on Free Legal Aid⁵⁷, Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions⁵⁸, Mediation Act⁵⁹, Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders

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- 52 Law on Organization of Courts, Official Gazette of RS, no. 10/2023. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_uredjenju_sudova.html
- 53 Law on Public Prosecution, Official Gazette of RS, no. 10/2023. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_javnom_tuzilastvu.html
- 54 Law on Obligations, Official Gazette of RS, no. no. 29/78, 39/85, 45/89 – decision of the USY and 57/89, “Official Gazette of the FRY”, no. 31/93, “Official Gazette of SCG”, no. 1/2003 – Constitutional Charter and “Official Gazette of RS”, no. 18/2020. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_obligacionim_odnosima.html
- 55 Rehabilitation Act, Official Gazette of the RS, no. 92/2011. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_rehabilitaciji.html
- 56 Criminal Procedure Law, Official Gazette of RS, no. 72/2011, 101/2011, 121/2012, 32/2013, 45/2013, 55/2014, 35/2019, 27/2021 – Constitutional decision and 62/2021 – Constitutional decision. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakonik_o_kvivicnom_postupku.html
- 57 Law on Free Legal Aid, Official Gazette of RS, no. 87/2018. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-besplatnoj-pravnoj-pomoci.html>
- 58 Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions, Official Gazette of RS, no. 55/2014 and 35/2019. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_izvršenju_kvivicnih_sankcija.html
- 59 Mediation Act, Official Gazette of the RS, no. 18/2005. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_posredovanju_medijaciji.html

and Criminal Protection of Juveniles⁶⁰, Law on the Protector of Citizens⁶¹, Law on Youth, Law on Prohibition of Discrimination⁶² and the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities⁶³. The Youth Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2030, the Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2030, the Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination Strategy for the period from 2022 to 2030⁶⁴ and the Action Plan for the period from 2022 to 2023 for the implementation of the Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination for the period from 2022 to 2030⁶⁵ – have been taken into consideration as well.

Among the above-mentioned documents, the following are relevant for the area of justice and human rights in terms of the YPS agenda: **Law on Free Legal Aid, Law on Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions, Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juveniles, Law on Youth, Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, Law on the Protector of Citi-**

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- 60 Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juveniles, Official Gazette of RS, no. 85/2005. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_maloletnim_uciniocima_krivicnih_dela_i_krivicno-pravnoj_zastiti_maloletnih_lica.html
- 61 Law on the Protector of Citizens, Official Gazette of RS, no. 105/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastitniku_gradjana.html
- 62 Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, Official Gazette of RS, no. 22/2009 and 52/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zabrani_diskriminacije.html
- 63 Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, Official Gazette of RS, no. no. 11/2002, "Official Gazette of SCG", no. 1/2003 – Constitutional Charter and "Official Gazette of RS", no. 72/2009 – state law, 97/2013 – const. decision and 47/2018. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_prava_i_sloboda_nacionalnih_manjina.html
- 64 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2022/12/2>
- 65 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/drugiakt/2022/11/2/1>

zens, **Youth Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2030 and the Action Plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2030.**

Law on Youth guarantees the equality of all young people and points out that any discrimination or unequal treatment of young people, directly or indirectly, on any basis, especially on the basis of race, gender, nationality, religious belief, language, etc., is prohibited. **Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030**, also stating the principles that should be applied to all policies and activities related to young people, with the first one to be emphasized respect for human and minority rights, equality and the prohibition of discrimination, adding that all young people are equal and enjoy equal status and legal protection, regardless to personal characteristics.

The Agenda invites the countries to improve their access to justice for young people, and within the legal system of the Republic of Serbia, several laws have been, to a certain extent, adapted to this goal. First, **by the Law on Free Legal Aid** the general conditions under which authorities are obliged to provide citizens with free legal aid, if they cannot exercise that right according to other laws, are prescribed, as well as the procedure for exercising it. It prescribes two criteria on the basis of which citizens can become beneficiaries of free legal aid: the first is property status, and the second is belonging to a certain vulnerable/sensitive group. A citizen of the Republic of Serbia, a person without citizenship, a foreign citizen with a permanent residence in the Republic of Serbia and other persons entitled to free legal aid according to another law or a confirmed international agreement can be provided with free legal aid if it is, among other things, children and young people whose social housing service has ended until they are 26 of age.

Then, the **Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juveniles**⁶⁶, obligates that the Judicial Center for Training and Professional Development in cooperation with relevant ministries of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, scientific institutions, expert and professional associations take care of the acquisition of special knowledge and professional development of persons working in the field of children's rights, juvenile delinquency and criminal protection of minors. and civil society organizations. The center organizes regular professional counseling, knowledge tests and other forms of additional professional training and ongoing training for juvenile judges, juvenile public prosecutors, judges and public prosecutors, police officers, experts from social protection authorities, institutions and institutions for the execution of institutional sanctions, lawyers and other professional persons. Therefore, the work of this Judicial Center has a significant role in ensuring the quality of work with young people who are in conflict with the law.

Also, in connection with the social reintegration of young offenders and prisoners, we can refer to the provisions **of the Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions**, when it comes to the possibility of young people to exercise the right to work and the right to education in institutions for the execution of criminal sanctions, which is of great importance for the successful reintegration of convicted persons into society. The Law on the Execution of Criminal Sanctions stipulates that

66 According to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia, a juvenile is a person who has reached the age of fourteen and has not reached the age of eighteen, and a minor is a person who has not reached the age of eighteen. Although United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 considers youth to be persons over the age of 18, the team of authors considers Law on Juvenile Criminal Offenders and Criminal Protection of Juveniles to be relevant, given that the Law on Youth of the Republic of Serbia considers persons from the age of 15 to over 30 years of age.

the work of convicts must be purposeful, that it must not be humiliating and that the achievement of economic benefit from the work of convicts must not harm the achievement of the purpose of that work. According to the Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions, the convicted person has the right to primary and secondary education, which is organized in the institution in accordance with the regulations governing education. It stipulates that the institute also organizes other types of education. In addition, the director of the institution can approve part-time education for the convict if the education program can be harmonized with the security assessment, and the cost of the part-time education is borne by the convict.

In the end, the **Action plan for the period from 2023 to 2025 for the implementation of the Youth Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2030**, as one of the measures foresees the provision of financial support for the projects and programs of resocialization and reintegration of young people who were under institutional measures/execution of educational measures in an institution, serving a sentence of juvenile detention or prison.

Due to the Agenda's insistence that the countries work on strengthening mechanisms for the protection of human rights in accordance with the international law, in Serbia the Protector of Citizens and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality are two institutions that should offer young people mechanisms to protect and improve respect for young people's rights, in accordance with their needs and specificities. **The Law on the Protector of Citizens** emphasizes that it is an independent institution that takes care of the protection and promotion of human and minority rights and freedoms. **The regular annual report of the Protector of Citizens for 2022** points out that it paid special attention, among other things, to the protection of the rights of children and young people,

as a sensitive social group with a particularly noticeable unfavorable economic and social position.⁶⁷

Law on Prohibition of Discrimination highlights the general prohibition of discrimination, stating the procedures for protection against discrimination and draws attention to the fact that discrimination is especially prohibited in the field of work (as well of students and trainees) or on the basis of age, which is often perceived as a problem with which young people meet. Also, the Law establishes the institution of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality as an independent state body whose main task is prevention and response in cases of discrimination. **The Regular Annual Report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality for 2022** emphasizes that without understanding, cooperation and synergy with young people, it is difficult to improve equality and fight against discrimination. Also, it is stated that the Commissioner organized the Conference: Youth for Equality as part of the Youth Panel, where, in an equal discussion with the representatives of primary and secondary schools and university students, the problems faced by young people were pointed out as well as how they see a way to solve them.⁶⁸

When it comes to protecting the human rights of young people from the Republic of Serbia at the international level, the cooperation of state institutions with the United Nations bodies responsible for this is very important. The foundations of the protection of human rights were established in this way by the fact that the Republic of Serbia ratified eight of the nine most important international treaties on human rights adopted under the auspices of the United Nations. All these international treaties have their accompanying treaty bodies,

67 <https://www.ombudsman.rs/attachments/article/7685/Redovan%20GI%20za%202022.%20god.pdf>

68 <https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/doc/publikacije-ocd/BGCLJP-Ljudska-prava-u-Srbiji-2021.pdf>

whose main task is to supervise the implementation of the treaty and give the contracting country their opinion and recommendations in order to improve the existing state of human rights within its borders. Although there is no special international treaty that explicitly deals with the rights of young people, their rights can be protected and observed through the provisions of all existing international instruments that refer to this category.

Although the Agenda envisages that the country encourages the development of a network of young mediators, who as young lawyers could be involved in mediation as an alternative way to resolve disputes, for now such initiatives do not exist in the Republic of Serbia. In the area of crime prevention, the analysis showed the absence of the application of YPS standards, partly due to the absence of public policy documents that exclusively deal with the mentioned topic. The explained Law on the Execution of Criminal Sanctions provides the basis for the social reintegration of criminals and prisoners, but some related reports that the team of authors came across showed failures in its implementation. Research⁶⁹ conducted by the Belgrade Center for Human Rights on this issue, shows that young people in institutions for the execution of criminal sanctions were engaged mainly in simple jobs, and not in jobs of medium complexity and the most complex jobs that would help them develop skills that would have been useful for them upon serving the sentence. The legal system of the Republic of Serbia facilitates to some extent the access of young criminals to justice, but there is room for further improvement of their legal assistance. Also, there are no public policies that would be specially adapted to young people as victims of criminal acts and enable the development of mechanisms that would increase trust in protection mechanisms.

69 Available at: <https://www.bgcentar.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/izvestaj-o-ljudskim-pravima-mladih-u-republici-srbiji-u-2022-godini-3.pdf>

Recommendations

1. Additionally, adjust access to legal aid for young people, and especially improve the mechanisms for protecting young victims of human rights violations, so that they feel safer when addressing the competent institutions.
2. In order to resocialize young offenders and prisoners as successfully as possible, make efforts to increase the number of young people who work in institutions for the execution of criminal offenses in jobs that will improve their skills and help them find work after serving their sentence. Also, create the conditions to provide young people with the right to education, especially elementary and high school, in as many institutions for the commission of criminal offenses as possible.
3. Develop a network of young lawyers who will be given the opportunity to practically improve their skills in the field of mediation, in order to fully realize their potential in resolving disputes in this way.
4. In addition to the youth panel, which currently consists of young people aged 13 to 15, the Protector of Citizens should establish a panel consisting of young people aged 15 to 30, aimed at better understanding and information in the field of the protection of human rights of young people.
5. The commissioner for the protection of equality should launch an initiative for the prevention of discrimination against young people, with the aim of raising awareness of the importance of equal treatment.

6. Implement the recommendations of United Nations mechanisms for human rights, primarily the Universal Periodic Review, which directly relate to the protection of the human rights of young people or can be linked to young people.

An example of good practice: Cameroon and the Creative Skills for Peace Initiative

The initiative Creative Skills for Peace, launched by young people in Cameroon, supports the reintegration processes of young people who are violent offenders and are serving a prison sentence of more than eight years or staying in one of Cameroon's correctional institutions. Within this Initiative, young people want to show their peers that there are better alternatives to violence and crime. The Initiative itself envisages work and activities based on research by young scientists on the issue of good practice in the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent offenders. Their work with young people focuses on several areas, primarily learning craft skills, but also organizing trainings to promote peace, civic education, etc. Over time, the project gained wide support and began to be applied to the employees in prison institutions with an emphasis on the issue of treatment of prisoners. The results of this Initiative in the past few years have been work with over five thousand prisoners who have been empowered and trained in various skills so that after their release they can more easily adapt and use their skills in the community. Institutions in Cameroon supported this initiative and marked it as very successful, because it goes beyond the usual financial and material support for prisoners, and focuses on their independence and the period of adaptation when they leave the prison premises.

7. Gender equality

The Agenda recognizes young people as relevant actors in the field of gender equality and advocates the promotion of agencies for young women in formal and informal political processes and institutions, through political education and initiatives for supporting young women. The Agenda wants to ensure that all public policies in the fields of education, youth, peace and security adopt a gender- and age-appropriate approach. Also, to adopt a gender-responsive approach in demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programs with adequate work with men and women who are ex-combatants or are involved in war operations. The YPS standards envisage the development of programs for raising awareness of the root causes of gender-based violence and discrimination, including all stereotypical thinking and expectations that can negatively affect and limit the potential of young people of different sex and gender identities. The Agenda pays special attention to the issue of strengthening the protection program against sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as issues of prevention of gender-based violence. Also, the importance of policies and programs for child care, i.e. the issue of maternity leave for young women, is emphasized, which would help create a more favorable environment for young women. Each country should make efforts to implement YPS standards within national documents and policies in this area.

The national documents governing the field of gender equality in the Republic of Serbia are the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (Articles 15 and 21), the Law on Gender Equality from 2021⁷⁰, Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence⁷¹, Law

70 Law on Gender Equality, Official Gazette of the RS, no. 52/2021. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.html>

71 Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, Official Gazette of the RS, no. 10/2023. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_sprecavanju_nasilja_u_porodici.html

on Prohibition of Discrimination, Law on the Budget System⁷², Law on Public Information and Media⁷³, Strategy for gender equality for the period from 2021 to 2030⁷⁴, Strategy for preventing and combating gender-based violence against women and domestic violence from 2021 to 2025⁷⁵, National strategy for prevention and protection against discrimination for the period 2022 to 3030⁷⁶ and Action plan for the implementation of the strategy for gender equality.⁷⁷

When it comes to international ratified documents, relevant are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁷⁸, as well as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence⁷⁹ which the Republic of Serbia ratified in 2013. In addition to the above, it also rati-

72 Law on the Budget System, Official Gazette of RS, No. 118\2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_sprecavanju_nasilja_u_porodici.html

73 Law on Public Information and Media, Official Gazette of RS, no. 12/2016. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_javnom_informisanju_i_medijima.html

74 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SIGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2021/103/1>

75 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr/dokumenti/ostalo/sektor-za-socijalnu-zastitu/strategija-za-sprecavanje-i-borbu-protiv-rodno-zasnovanog-nasilja-prema-zenama-i-nasilja-u-porodici-za-period-2021-2025-godine>

76 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SIGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2022/12/2>

77 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.rodnaravno-pravnost.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2022-08/Akcioni%20plan%20za%20period%20od%202022-2023%20za%20sprovedjenje%20Strategije%20za%20rodnu%20ravnopravnost%202021-2030.pdf>

78 <https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/medjunarodni-ugovori-konvencija-CE-DAW.php>

79 <https://rm.coe.int/1680462540>

fied the most important universal instruments that guarantee human rights and the prohibition of discrimination, where the prohibition of discrimination, on the basis of sex/gender as well, is guaranteed by all ratified international instruments.

Among the above-mentioned national documents, we recognize the YPS standards in **the Constitution of the RS, the Law on Gender Equality, the Law on the Budget System, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence, the Law on Public Information and Media, the Strategy for Gender Equality for the period from 2021 to 2030 and the Strategy for Prevention and Combat against gender-based violence against women and domestic violence for the period from 2021 to 2025.**

Article 15 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, as one of the principles, prescribes that the country guarantees the equality of women and men and develops a policy of equal opportunities, where these guarantees of equality of women and men, along with the obligation of the country to develop a policy of equal opportunities, rank Serbia among few countries that have constitutional guarantees of equality for women and men in their basic provisions.

In addition, the prohibition of discrimination is stipulated by Article 21 of the Constitution of Serbia, "Everyone is equal before the Constitution and the law". Everyone has the right to equal legal protection, without discrimination. Any discrimination, direct or indirect, on any basis, and especially on the basis of race, gender, nationality, social origin, birth, religion, political or other belief, financial status, culture, language, age and mental or physical disability is prohibited. Article 21 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia expressly stipulates that special measures that the Republic of Serbia may introduce in order to achieve full equality of persons or groups of persons who are in a fundamentally unequal position with other cit-

izens, shall not be considered discrimination. This is very important for achieving gender equality and improving the position of young women, because women in Serbia, despite a good legislative framework, are still exposed to discrimination in all areas of social life. The adoption and implementation of the UN Agenda for Youth, Peace and Security would create a good platform for the adoption and implementation of new legal acts in the field of gender equality.⁸⁰

The Republic of Serbia is also a signatory of **the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, by which it obliged to take appropriate measures to prevent any form of direct and indirect discrimination against women, ensure full development and progress and thus guarantee women to exercise and enjoy human rights and basic freedoms on an equal basis with men. The Convention guarantees civil and political rights (the right to vote, equality before the law, the right to citizenship), but also economic, social and cultural rights (the right to work, education, health, as well as relevant rights in economic and social life) equally to all young women and men.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Serbia was ratified in 2013 and this is the first legally binding document at the level of the Council of Europe that regulates the field of violence against women. During 2018, the Republic of Serbia submitted the first report to the GREVIO group, and civil society organizations dealing with gender equality submitted reports from the shadows and pointed to the problems and challenges in the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Serbia.

80 <http://bgcentar.rs/bgcentar/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Nulti-izvestaj-o-pravima-mladih.pdf>

The prohibition of discrimination is stipulated in various international conventions ratified by the Republic of Serbia, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention). Serbia also ratified the UN conventions dealing with the elimination of discrimination, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Similarly, some other conventions ratified by Serbia contain anti-discrimination clauses, such as Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or Article 5 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Republic of Serbia is one of few countries that legally established the obligation of gender-responsive budgeting in 2015. By adoption of the **Law on Budget System**, promoting gender equality is recognized as one of the budget goals and as an obligation in the course of budget planning and execution. Gender responsive budgeting is an innovative public policy tool that assesses the impact of policies and budgets from a gender perspective and ensures that they do not deepen gender inequality, but contribute to a more equal society for young women and men.

The progress in the field of gender equality is reflected in the introduction of the new **Law on Gender Equality** at the beginning of 2021, which should contribute to the strengthening of the institutional framework for implementing the policy of equal opportunities and equality between women and men. The novelty in the Law (compared to the one from 2009) is the inclusion of a definition of gender equality that is in line with the UN definition, the introduction of new concepts such as multiple discrimination, balanced representation

of the sexes, as well as unpaid domestic work. An additional point of interest introduced by the new Law concerns the term “gender-sensitive language”. Namely, the Law introduces the definition of gender-sensitive language as a language that promotes the equality of women and men, as well as the way in which it can influence the consciousness of those who use that language. Also, according to the Law, the use of gender-sensitive language is foreseen in the field of education, among other things, in textbooks, teaching materials, in certificates, diplomas, classifications, titles, professions, etc. Likewise, the Law on Public Information and Media stipulates that media are obliged to use gender-sensitive language when reporting and thus participate in developing awareness of the importance of gender equality, which further leads to the eradication of gender stereotypes, discrimination based on gender, as well as gender based on violence, domestic violence and violence against women.⁸¹

Article 20 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination prescribes discrimination on the basis of gender that exists if one acts contrary to the principle of gender equality, i.e. the principle of respect for equal rights and freedoms of women and men in political, economic, cultural and other aspects of public, professional, private and family life. According to the annual report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, in 2022 a total of 128 complaints were filed due to discrimination on the basis of gender, the year was also marked by a large number of reports of violence against women and domestic violence, according to data provided by the Commissioner – as many as 26 women lost life as a consequence of violence. In addition, as one of the key problems in 2022, the still present discriminatory speech in the public space is singled out, as indicated by more than 60 opinions of the Com-

81 <https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/doc/publikacije-ocd/BGCLJP-Ljudska-prava-u-Srbiji-2021.pdf>

missioner, which were adopted mostly due to the violation of Article 12 of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, which refers to sex and gender harassment.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has adopted the **Strategy for gender equality for the period from 2021 to 2030** in which we can recognize YPS standards. The overall goal of the Strategy is to overcome the gender gap and achieve gender equality as a prerequisite for the development of society and the improvement of the daily life of women and men, girls and boys. Certain shortcomings of this strategy can be clearly observed, which would be overcome by the implementation of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, namely insufficiently strong institutional mechanisms of gender equality, lack of financial resources for their activities, insufficiently used potential of CSOs dealing with gender equality, dysfunctional system of providing free legal aid, insufficient capacities of employees in public authorities for gender-responsive policy planning and others.

An issue to which the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda pays special attention is the issue of violence against women. Since 2017, the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence has been in force in Serbia, which was adopted with the aim of a general and uniform way of regulating the actions of state authorities in connection with the prevention and protection of domestic violence. The majority of victims of domestic violence are women, and certain statistics indicate that this is about 92% of cases, which is an alarming figure. A good implementation of YPS standards would potentially help reduce the percentage of women who are victims of domestic violence in Serbia.⁸²

Six years after the expiration of the previous strategic document, **the Strategy for the prevention and fight against gen-**

82 https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/EU_Gender_Labour_2022_SRB.pdf

der-based violence against women and domestic violence from 2021-2025 was adopted, which aims to establish effective prevention and protection against all forms of violence against women and girls, domestic violence and the development of a gender-responsive system of support services for victims of violence. The special goals of this strategy refer to the improved action of all actors in the prevention of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, ensuring efficient and effective protection of victims and adequate support services for victims of domestic violence, and integrating public policies and establishing a system for collecting and analyzing data on gender-based violence against young women and domestic violence. One of the novelties included in the Strategy is the prevention of femicide as an extreme manifestation of violence against young women by establishing a control mechanism for monitoring cases of femicide – Femicide Watch. This will also contribute to the collection of relevant data, given that there are still no reliable official statistics on femicide in Serbia, and the data on the number of women murdered is mostly collected from the media. In the case of the adoption and implementation of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda, which foresees as one of its goals the prevention of gender-based violence and the development of programs for raising awareness of the root causes of gender-based violence and discrimination, a clear map could be set for solving this and similar problems. Additionally, although the then president of the Coordinating Body for Gender Equality in Serbia, Zorana Mihajlović, promised to establish a supervisory body for monitoring femicide in Serbia back in 2018, by the end of August 2023, this body was not established.

Despite positive developments in the field of gender equality, especially when it comes to the legislative framework, in the Republic of Serbia we often witness incidents and affairs that

reveal misogynistic tendencies and gender-based violence against women in Serbian society. As specific recommendations for improvement in this area, we single out:

1. Gender-sensitive policies and goals are essential; it is necessary that all kinds of policies are expressed and articulated in the necessary norms of gender equality. The examples of this are gender-sensitive state and local documents for youth, national strategies and action plans that will be open to the inclusion of youth of both sexes.
2. Informal education of young people on the topics of gender, gender and equality.
3. All important public, state and official documents, programs and invitations should preferably be written in gender-sensitive language, in this way non-violent communication and respect for human rights will be promoted through gender-sensitive language.
4. Affirming the social inclusion of women through the achievement of affirmative actions for young women through donations, programs and training of state services and citizens. Also, the affirmation of state institutions and associations of citizens of the civil sector that deal with issues of gender equality.
5. Public actions, campaigns, forums as tools of public advocacy and lobbying for gender equality as one of the basic human values and rights.
6. Directing the population policy measures towards gender equality and equal participation of men in care, raising children and housework and using the right to leave for child care. In the process of harmonizing the regulations with the regulations of the

European Union, it is necessary to harmonize the provisions related to fathers' absence from work for child care with the European Union Directive on the balance between work and private life of parents and caregivers.

7. As the Agenda pays special attention to the issue of strengthening the protection program against sexual exploitation and abuse and to the issues of prevention of gender-based violence, it is important to improve the synchronized and coordinated action of all actors in the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence and to timely sanction the perpetrators. It is necessary to establish a national control mechanism for monitoring cases of femicide in the Republic of Serbia based on regular monitoring and analysis of the occurrence of violence and femicide.

An example of good practice: Equimundo – Organization of young men organized in the fight against violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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In Congo, young men organized and gathered with the goal of achieving gender equality, trying to influence the coming generations of men and their patterns of attitudes towards women and to transform them from harmful to patterns of care, empathy and understanding towards young women. Through their work, they try to question patterns such as patriarchy and find a social interest in overcoming it, as well as numerous other issues that bring women to a subordinate position. In addition to men, this organization also works with women, so at workshops and programs they present their experiences and turn to them for help. This example shows that

the participation of men as allies is very important in achieving gender equality of young women, it shows that they are not alone and that there is an understanding of the other gender for their position.

8. Health policy

The Agenda recognizes young people as relevant actors in the field of health policy and programs by opening space for young people and creating ways to actively work with young people in order to provide support for the mental health of young people, especially those struggling with problems such as trauma and stress, caused by violent conflict, discrimination or other forms of violence because of their identity, origin or their civic involvement. Also, a special approach is insisted on when it comes to drug addiction and criminality among young people and their greater involvement as partners in solving problems related to the health of young people. Each country should make efforts to implement YPS standards within national documents and policies in this area. Investing in good health of the population, especially the young, is beneficial for the future not only for the individuals but also for the entire society, and therefore an integrated action of all social factors is essential.

The national documents governing the health policy of the Republic of Serbia are the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, the Law on Health Care⁸³, Law on Health Insurance⁸⁴, Rulebook on the content and scope of the right to health

83 Law on Health Care, Official Gazette of RS, no. 25/2019. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zdravstvenoj_zastiti.html

84 Law on Health Insurance, Official Gazette of RS, no. 25/2019. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zdravstvenom_osiguranju.html

care from compulsory health insurance and on participation for 2022⁸⁵, Regulation on the health care of women, children, school children and students⁸⁶. In addition to the above, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted in 2018 the Public Health Strategy in the Republic of Serbia from 2018 to 2026⁸⁷, and a year after this document, the Program on Mental Health Protection in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2019 to 2026⁸⁸ was adopted. In this context, the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030 is also important.

Among the above-mentioned national documents, the YPS standards are recognized in **the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030, the Strategy for Public Health in the Republic of Serbia from 2018 to 2026 and the Program on Mental Health Protection in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2019-2026.**

YPS standards are visible in the **Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030.** Namely, as one of the objectives of the strategy, “improvement and equipping of spaces for young people in all local self-governments” and “active and functional mechanisms of active participation of young people” are mentioned. The strategy foresees the improvement of the conditions for the social and economic independence of young people, with a special emphasis on the health, safety and well-being of young people.

85 Ministry of Health, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/ministarstva/pravilnik/2022/24/3/reg>

86 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/uredba/1995/49/2>

87 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2018/61/1/reg>

88 Government of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.zdravlje.gov.rs/tekst/343487/program-o-zastiti-mentalnog-zdravlja-u-republici-srbiji-za-period-2019-2026-godine-.php>

Public Health Strategy in the Republic of Serbia 2018-2026

is also in accordance with the YPS standards, supporting the improvement of health, prevention of diseases and prolonging the quality of life of the population. The strategy sets as its goals the improvement of health and the decrease of inequality in health, the improvement of the environment and the working environment, the prevention and suppression of diseases and leading risks to the health of the population as well as the young. It also insists on the development of health promotion actions in the community, which provides support for the development of accessible, high-quality and efficient health care, as well as the development of a public health system based on evidence from research. This document plans health promotion measures in the community, special research of vulnerable groups of the working population, including young people, improvement of the accessibility of health services and the availability of health care to vulnerable social groups in the territory of local self-government units, prevention and suppression of smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke, harmful use of alcohol and drug abuse, which is a specifically indicated issue in the YPS standards' application.

The Agenda believes that the creation of support services for the mental health of young people is important for the implementation of health policy, and the legislation of the Republic of Serbia contains **the Program on mental health protection in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2019-2026** which represents a harmonized system of measures, conditions and instruments of public policy that should be implemented for the purpose of protecting mental health by preventing the occurrence of mental disorders and improving mental health. Young people (ages 15-24) are recognized in this program as one of the particularly vulnerable groups,

and it is envisaged that the work on the prevention of mental disorders and the improvement of mental health is especially focused on young people and the development of a network of specific services thus be supported.

Investing in good health of citizens, especially the young, is a benefit for the future, not only for the individuals but also for the entire society, and that is why, as the very YPS standards declare, an integrated action of all social factors is necessary. However, although there are legal acts and by-laws in the field of health in the Republic of Serbia that recognize young people, the consistent and practical application of these acts is questionable. Namely, the health culture of the population in general is at a very low level, including young people. That's why we also recognize the need to work on the early detection of diseases at the level of the entire society and popularize regular visits to doctors aimed at preserving good health of young people in our country. These are the concrete recommendations:

1. Establishing centers, counseling centers, for preventive protection, improvement of mental health of young people and provision of psychological and social services to young people at the local level (independent of health centers) and thus make counseling and psychological help easily accessible to young people at the local level.
2. What we single out as a special sub-area that should be given more attention is the issue of drug use among young people. Constantly and clearly conveying messages and talking to young people about drugs and their consequences is necessary and represents the basis of prevention, that is why it

is important to work more specifically on this issue in practice and set as the primary goal the prevention or at least delaying the early use of narcotics, psychoactive substances and tobacco among young people. Prevention must be implemented through school programs that are adapted to the age and development of students. Also, the education of students, as well as of the teaching staff of primary, secondary and higher education institutions on recognizing the harmful use of alcohol among young people is of particular importance in prevention.

3. Forming a unique register of individuals, professional organizations, institutions and private organizations that deal with the preservation and improvement of mental health
4. Introducing the formal education in the field of mental health as well as the education in the field of the harmful effects of narcotics and tobacco into the education system
5. Media coverage must be in line with the protection of the victims' personality as well as the destigmatization of the users of psychological and social services (bring closer and encourage individuals to use the services through professional, educational content)
6. Implementation of continuous primary prevention at all levels and ages aimed at raising awareness among the citizens of the Republic of Serbia about the importance and impact of mental health on the overall health status and quality of life (first through information and education in the field of mental hygiene starting from the youngest ages)

7. Establishing cooperation between relevant Ministries and non-governmental organizations in the field of improving mental health

An example of good practice: Mexico and the National Strategy for the Prevention of Addiction Diseases

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The Mexican president launched an addiction prevention program to reduce the increasing use of narcotics, especially among juveniles and young people. The initiative is called “Together for Peace” and is based on the joint cooperation of numerous institutions and a comprehensive Prevention Strategy that includes the Ministry of Education, Sports and a large number of social workers who work together on this issue. In addition, it is planned that more than 5 thousand young people are trained how to send preventive messages to young people about the harmfulness of these substances through communication, lectures in schools and in other ways; in this way young people will communicate with each other about their problems and share them with their peers. Precisely this communication of young people among each other, who better understand their peers, has proven to be a good practice here and they consider this to be key to their success when it comes to recognizing and dissuading young people from consuming drugs in the adolescent period and later. That is why our proposal is that, based on good practice in Mexico and the Republic of Serbia, young people organize and communicate with their peers about problems, because the chances for more open communication and problem mapping are much greater than when we expect young people to seek help from institutions themselves, either for addiction or mental health problems.

9. Environmental protection and climate change

The Agenda recognizes young people as relevant actors in the field of environmental protection and climate change and advocates for the creation of space for the participation of young people in decision-making processes about a healthy environment, which implies the inclusion of young experts and scientists in the field of ecology and social sciences who are engaged in research on topics of environment, conflict and security. Also, the Agenda insists on organizing programs for environmental protection and conflict prevention with young people. Each country should make efforts to implement the YPS standards within their national documents and policies in this area.

The national documents governing environmental protection and climate change policies in the Republic of Serbia are the Constitution of the RS, the Law on Environmental Protection⁸⁹, Law on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment⁹⁰, Law on Climate Change⁹¹, Law on Integrated Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution⁹², Law on Biocidal Products⁹³, Law on Environmental Noise Protection⁹⁴, Law on Energy Efficient-

89 Law on Environmental Protection, Official Gazette of the RS no. 96/2018. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_zivotne_sredine.html

90 Law on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment, Official Gazette of RS no. 88/2010. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_strateskoj_proцени_уticaja_na_zivotnu_sredinu.html

91 Law on Climate Change, Official Gazette of RS no. 25/2021. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-klimatskim-promenama.html>

92 Law on Integrated Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution, Official Gazette of RS no. 109/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_integrisanom_sprecavanju_i_kontroli_zagadjivanja_zivotne_sredine.html

93 Law on Biocidal Products, Official Gazette of RS no. 109/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_biocidnim_proizvodima.html

94 Law on Environmental Noise Protection, Official Gazette of RS no. 96/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_od_buke_u_zivotnoj_sredini.html

cy and Rational Use of Energy⁹⁵, Law on Amendments to the Law on Mining and Geological Research⁹⁶, Law on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources⁹⁷, Law on Amendments to the Law on Energy⁹⁸, Law on Amendments to the Law on Nature Protection⁹⁹, Air Protection Act¹⁰⁰, Water Act¹⁰¹, and Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030. Environmental protection is also regulated by a number of other legal acts and by-laws that regulate special areas, such as air protection, nature protection, environmental noise protection, chemicals, biocidal products, waste management, protection against non-ionizing radiation, etc.

When it comes to the international ratified documents, the Framework Convention on Climate Change is relevant¹⁰², Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (Kyoto Protocol)¹⁰³, Convention on Long-Range Transbound-

95 Law on Energy Efficiency and Rational Use of Energy, Official Gazette of RS no. 40/2021. <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SIGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2021/40/4/reg>

96 Law on Amendments to the Law on Mining and Geological Research, Official Gazette of RS No. 40/2021. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-rudarstvu-i-geoloskim-istrazivanjima.html>

97 Law on the use of renewable energy sources, Official Gazette of the RS no. 35/2023. [law-on-use-of-renewable-energy-sources.html](http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-izmenama-i-dopunama-zakona-o-energetici.html)

98 Law on Amendments to the Law on Energy, Official Gazette of RS no. 63/2023. https://www.paragraf.rs/izmene_i_dopune/270723-zakon-o-izmenama-i-dopunama-zakona-o-energetici.html

99 Law on Amendments to the Law on Nature Protection, Official Gazette of RS no. 71/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/izmene_i_dopune/150721-zakon-o-izmenama-i-dopunama-zakona-o-zastiti-prirode.html

100 Air Protection Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 26/2021. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_vazduha.html

101 Water Act, Official Gazette of RS no. 95/2018. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_vodama.html

102 https://www.ekologija.gov.rs/sites/default/files/old-documents/Klimatske_promene/Zakoni/Okvirna%20konvencija%20UN%20o%20promeni%20klime.pdf

103 http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2007_09/t09_0103.htm

ary Air Pollution, Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer¹⁰⁴, Convention on the availability of information, public participation in decision-making and the right to legal protection in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention¹⁰⁵, and the Strategy for the Implementation of this Convention), the European Green Deal¹⁰⁶, United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development from 2015 to 2030.

Among the above-mentioned documents, the YPS standards are recognized in **The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development from 2015 to 2030 (Agenda 2030) and the Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030, as well as in the Action Plan for the implementation of this strategy.**

The right to a healthy environment is one of the human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the international treaties, but also by the laws of the Republic of Serbia. Environmental law in general, as a branch of law, is increasingly developing, which is accompanied by a large number of adopted international multilateral and bilateral agreements. Accordingly, in the legal system of the Republic of Serbia, there are more and more laws and by-laws that contain norms related to a healthy environment, such as the Law on Environmental Protection, which is the most important law in this area, which regulates the system of environmental protection and which ensures the realization of the human right to life and development in a healthy environment and a balanced relationship

104 https://www.ekologija.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2021-12/zakon_o_ratifikaciji_bechke_konvencije_o_zashtiti_ozonskog_omotacha_sa_prilozima_i_i_ii.pdf

105 <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2011/103/1/reg>

106 <https://www.pregovarackagrupa27.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Evropski-zeleni-dogovor-finalni-SRP.pdf>

between economic development and the environment in Serbia, and as such does not include young people. The implementation of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda would open the possibility for young scientists and researchers to offer positive solutions and work on improving the environment in Serbia.

Positive progress in the field of environmental protection is represented by the adoption of the Law on Climate Change, which was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in 2021. On the basis of this document, Serbia should develop an integrated national energy and climate plan in a transparent and effective manner, which would direct its commitment to **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans** which is of great importance. Namely, the European Green Deal is a set of strategic initiatives of the European Commission with the principal goal of making the EU climate neutral by 2025. The implementation of the European Green Deal is important for young people, as it will create new opportunities for innovation, investment and jobs for young people, it will also reduce harmful emissions and energy poverty, reduce dependence on external energy and improve the health and well-being of young people as well as all future generations. The inclusion of young people in its implementation is extremely important for the realization of the goals of the European Green Deal, since only talking about climate change and its consequences is not enough. And that is why there is a need for significant engagement of young people in climate policy, which the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda supports, by insisting on creating space for youth participation in decision-making about the environment and climate change, with the additional organization of environmental conflict prevention programs realized with young people.¹⁰⁷

107 <https://koms.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Istrazivanje-Zdravlje-mladih-.pdf>

The United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development from 2015 to 2030 (Agenda 2030) deals with essential issues that concern the entire global society. The Agenda for sustainable development is relevant for young people as part of the general population, and the areas of ending poverty, health, inclusive and quality education, gender equality, economic growth and employment, encouraging innovation, climate change and its consequences, a peaceful and inclusive society, environmental protection and others are particularly highlighted. The agenda defines 17 main goals of sustainable development for the period until 2030, of which for the UN Youth Peace and Security Agenda the most important goals are: 4. "Ensure inclusive and fair, quality education of young people and promote the possibility of lifelong learning for everyone"; goal 8. "Promote continuous, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for everyone", but also goal 3. "Ensure healthy life and promote well-being for people of all generations, women and men"; goal 16. "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensure access to justice for all and build effective, responsible and inclusive institutions at all levels". Bearing in mind the complexity of this document, several principles important for young people are singled out: the principle of freedom and equality, in the form of dignity and the realization of all rights, the principle of equality, in the form of non-discrimination when exercising rights, the principle of the right to life, liberty and security, the principle of the right to education, etc. The Government of the Republic of Serbia directly participated in the development and compiling of the Sustainable Development Agenda, through the inclusion of citizens in the process, through consultations and direct participation of state representatives in global forums, where the goals of sustainable development are defined. In December 2015, a multi-departmental working group was established for the implementation of the Agenda for

Sustainable Development 2030, with the task of monitoring its implementation, coordinating the positions of the relevant ministries and preparing periodic reports on its implementation. The achievement of goals is monitored through 247 indicators, of which in Serbia, data are collected and reported on 107 indicators by the Republic Institute of Statistics, as a national statistical institution.

The Youth Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030 points out that the participation of young people in the programs for educating the population and raising public awareness of the importance of environmental protection is insufficient, because there are not adequately developed mechanisms for citizens' participation in decision-making on the problems related to this area, and one of the expected results is the improvement of the availability of information to young people about the state of the environment in cooperation with subjects of youth policy. In addition, the Action Plan for implementing the youth strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2023 to 2030 envisages the support for the development of youth programs and for young people in the field of environmental protection and encourages greater participation of young people in the adoption of public policies on the topic of sustainable development and environmental protection.

We can single out the following specific recommendations:

1. It is necessary to involve young people in decision-making processes in the area of environmental protection both at the local and national level, in order to raise their awareness and build strong arguments for their further participation in environmental policy;
3. Better cooperation between institutions, primarily the Ministry of Environmental Protection, local au-

- thorities, other institutions and civil society organizations, is necessary;
4. It is also necessary to build and maintain a platform for the dialogue and understanding between government actors, non-profit organizations, the United Nations and youth by bringing young activists to high-level events and panel discussions to advocate for an accelerated resolution of climate change. In this way, space will be opened for the participation of young experts and scientists in the field of ecology, to which the Agenda pays special attention;
 5. Improving the availability of information to young people about the state of the environment in the Republic of Serbia, which, although guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, has not been properly implemented in practice.

An example of good practice: Association for environmental protection and cross-border cooperation in Moldova and Ukraine

“Dniester Commission” is an association for environmental protection and cross-border cooperation that works with young people from Moldova and Ukraine. As part of their work activities, this association organizes a summer school for young people (“DNIESTER-2023”) where the young learn about the problems and risks of climate change in an age-appropriate manner. The summer school brings together over 50 young people aged 15 to 20 from both sides of the Dniester River and aims to raise awareness among young people about climate change and its impact on human health, forestry, agriculture, water, nature and the ecosystem. The participants of the summer school actively discuss the possibilities

of adopting new legal acts, even though these young people have no experience, they are presented with drafts of various programs that the Governments of the above countries are to adopt. This is a good example of how countries are able to, not only involve young people, but also train them how to understand and interpret legal acts and thus help in their improvement and adoption of new measures aimed at improving environmental legislation.

10. Policies in the field of science and technology

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The implementation of the Agenda in the field of science and technology has not yet been precisely determined, but it is recognized that there is a need to carry out scientific research at the national level that deals with topics relevant to YPS standards, such as the formation of the identity of young people in conflict environments, the role of young people in building peace and security and examining the impact of hate speech on young people. The countries are also invited to include young experts and scientists, taking gender equality into account, in peace and security research, as well as in all other research relevant to the implementation of the Agenda. Finally, the aspiration for the participation of young people in the decision-making processes in the field of science and technology is highlighted, along with solving the gender gap in scientific research and the use of technology.

The national documents governing the field of science and technology in the Republic of Serbia are the Law on Science and Research of the Republic of Serbia¹⁰⁸, Law on the

108 Law on Science and Research of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette of RS, no. 49/2019. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-nau-ci-i-istrazivanjima.html>

Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia¹⁰⁹ and the Law on Innovative Activity¹¹⁰. The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025 “The Power of Knowledge”¹¹¹, the Action plan for the implementation of the Scientific and Technological Development Strategy “The Power of Knowledge” for the period from 2021 to 2023¹¹², the Strategy for the development of the startup ecosystem of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025¹¹³, Action plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of the Startup Ecosystem of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025¹¹⁴, the strategy of smart specialization for the period from 2020 to 2027¹¹⁵, Strategy for the development of digital skills in the Republic of Serbia for the period from

109 Law on the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette of RS, no. 95/2018. <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-fondu-za-nauku-republike-srbije.html>

110 Law on Innovative Activity, Official Gazette of RS, no. 129/2019. https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_inovacionoj_delatnosti.html

111 Government of the Republic of Serbia. <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2021/10/1/reg>

112 Government of the Republic of Serbia. <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2021/10/1/reg>

113 Government of the Republic of Serbia. <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Strategija-razvoja-startup-ekosistema-RS-od-2021-do-2025.pdf>

114 Government of the Republic of Serbia. <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/AP-Strategija-razvoja-startup-ekosistema-do-decembra-2022.docx.pdf>

115 Government of the Republic of Serbia. <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/21/3/reg>

2020 to 2024¹¹⁶ and the Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2020-2025¹¹⁷.

Among the above national documents, the youth is recognized in **the Law on Science and Research of the Republic of Serbia, the Law on the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, the Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025 “The Power of Knowledge” and the Action Plan for the Strategy for Scientific and Technological Development for the period from 2021 to 2023.**

Law on Science and Research of the Republic of Serbia, citing programs in the field of scientific research activities that are of general interest to the Republic of Serbia, highlights the program of co-financing the construction of apartments for the needs of young researchers and scientists in the Republic of Serbia, as well as the program of co-financing program activities of scientific and educational centers, specialized organizations and associations, which deal with additional education and training of talented school and university students to engage in scientific research work. **Law on the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia** regulates the establishment and operation of **the Science Fund** which enables the development of scientific research by providing financial resources and professional support to researchers, offering a variety of programs designed to respond to various social challenges and needs.

116 Government of the Republic of Serbia. <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2020/21/2/reg/>

117 Government of the Republic of Serbia. <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2019/96/1/reg/>

One of them is **Program for excellent projects of young researchers and early career scientists (PROMIS)**, which strives to empower young PhDs to manage projects, strengthen the professional capacities of young researchers and scientists at the beginning of their careers, and train them to apply for research and development projects at the national and international level, especially in the European Union. Since the projects within the program do not have predetermined topics and can be applied in all scientific fields, we may say that this indirectly gives young people the chance to apply for support for projects that would deal with topics relevant to the Agenda, such as peace, security, foreign affairs etc. The project, which previously received support through PROMIS, focuses on the comparative research of the foreign policy strategic conceptions of the two Yugoslavias¹¹⁸, which achieved one of the objectives of the Agenda aimed at giving young researchers the chance to get involved in the study of fields from the aspect of science, for which it considers the participation of young people to be extremely useful.

The fund for young talents, within **“Identities” Program**, finances projects in the field of social sciences and humanities that deal with ethnic and national identities, diplomacy, security, law, migration, gender identities and the like. In 2022, a number of projects that have been approved for funding focused on young people: the issue of ethnic identities of adolescents of culturally dominant and minority origin and the impact of school on their formation, research into the (re)construction of the identity of students studying abroad and the examination of identity and mental health of adolescents¹¹⁹. As mentioned earlier, the Agenda invites scientists to deal with the identity of young people in conflict areas, which is

118 More at: <https://fondzanauku.gov.rs/yeh/>

119 More at: <https://fondzanauku.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Program-Identities-Konacna-rang-list.pdf>

not relevant for Serbia in the current situation. However, since it is a country that represents a post-conflict area, the Agenda would see it as relevant research that has the topic of the identity of young people who are members of minorities, which is the case with the project that received financial support from the Fund. The other two projects, we can also be considered useful from the aspect of the YPS standards, because they explore the areas that are in their focus. Likewise, of the 16 projects approved for funding in 2022, 10 project managers are women, which is important for the implementation of the Agenda, given its insistence on gender equality.

Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025 “Power of knowledge”, as one of the goals in the forthcoming period states the provision of the necessary conditions for the dynamic development of science, technological development and innovation. As a measure to achieve this goal, it emphasizes the development of human resources, which will, among other things, be realized through the programs and scholarships of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (now the separate ministries) and the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia for the inclusion of young researchers in scientific research work. In this regard, **the Action plan of the Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development for the period from 2021 to 2023** points to the aspiration to increase the number of young researchers involved in scientific research from 500 in 2020 to 750 in 2023.

The special goal of the Strategy refers to nurturing the top quality of science and technological development and strengthening the competitiveness of the economy. With regard to this goal, the Strategy points out that both the defense and the security of the country require new knowledge without which the development and improvement of the existing systems are not possible, recognizing that they can

only be achieved by fostering top scientific research. In this regard, the Strategy adds that by providing all forms of support to talented and gifted students, a new generation of researchers trained to develop new products and technologies is formed. Special programs of encouragement and scholarships for young and gifted people for scientific research work, as the Strategy points out, co-finance the scientific research activities of young researchers with the aim of creating conditions for the preservation and development of young scientific researchers and preventing the outflow of scientific staff. Therefore, the Strategy recognizes the need to increase the number of young researchers in the Republic of Serbia, but also to provide support to young people in the development of capacities so that they are able to participate in the launch of new products and technologies, and it is also emphasized that they are needed both for the defense and security of the country.

As one of the objectives of the Strategy, the strengthening of international cooperation is stated, and among the measures for its realization, the establishment of a support program for young researchers for participation in the European Research Council (ERC) program, as well as the establishment of cooperation with the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT), which is also seen as a way to improve participation in the Horizon Europe program. Next, the Strategy points out that the Republic of Serbia achieves scientific and technical cooperation with the Federal Republic of Germany through the Program for the Joint Promotion of the Exchange of Participants in Projects, whose goal is the development of scientific cooperation between the two countries through the exchange of scientific workers, especially young scientists, on joint research projects in all scientific fields. Since 2007, the Republic of Serbia has been an associate member of the United Institute for Nuclear Research, which is one of the largest research centers in the world in the fields of condensed mat-

ter physics, nuclear physics and particle physics. Cooperation, among other things, includes education and training primarily of young researchers from several scientific and educational institutions from the Republic of Serbia. The inclusion of young people in the international cooperation at the level of scientific research is useful from the point of view of the Agenda, which recognizes the need for young people to participate as much as possible in international relations.

The above analysis shows that through the Strategy of Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2021 to 2025 “The Power of Knowledge” and the work of the Science Fund, the foundations for the implementation of the Agenda have been laid. However, it should be pointed out that in addition to this Strategy, in other aforementioned national documents, young people are either not mentioned, or are taken into account, but not to a sufficient extent as required by the YPS standards. In addition, the tendencies for the inclusion of young people in the creation of public policies in the field of science and technology are not recognized, which should be the initial step in their regulation that would be adapted both to students who are improving and to young people who have already obtained the title of a researcher. Although the PROMIS and Identities programs recognize certain tendencies of the Agenda when it comes to giving young people the chance to lead research and the realization of research that focuses on young people, they usually do so in an indirect way, hence the need for a stronger encouragement of the study of topics relevant to the Agenda is recognized.

Recommendations

1. When making public policy documents in the field of science and technology, as well as other decisions, consult with young people and bear in mind the interests of young researchers of the Republic of Serbia;

2. Encourage regional cooperation of young researchers from the Republic of Serbia with young researchers from other countries in the Western Balkans, especially in the direction of developing comparative scientific research dealing with the topics of peace, security and the development of good neighborly relations;
3. Realize the support programs for providing funding for projects of young researchers who deal with the topics relevant to the Agenda, as well as the projects focusing on research on young people in the context of areas that are the focus of the Agenda. As one of the criteria for approving a project in the PROMIS program of the Science Fund, it could be a requirement that young people engage in research on the topics called for by the Agenda.
4. In addition to the inclusion of young researchers, consider gender equality as a priority when making decisions in the field of science and technology.

An example of good practice: Youth Group of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

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In 2016, at the “Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security” conference, young people formed a Youth Group within the framework of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. The group, which includes more than 1,200 young people from 117 countries, is open to all students and graduates between the ages of 20 and 30 who want to contribute to the development of global peace and security and actively engage in the promotion of the Treaty. As part of it, the dialogue between young scientists and young decision-makers

in the field of nuclear security is encouraged, intergenerational and regional dialogue, awareness is raised about the prohibition of nuclear testing, and work is being done to introduce new technologies that strengthen the sustainability of the Treaty. In 2021, the youth group attended the Science and Technology Conference 2021, which gathered over 1000 scientists, academics and students with the aim of presenting research on disarmament and science communication. In cooperation with the government of Switzerland, it also organized the project “Building bridges, nurture partnerships and embrace dialogue”, which was dedicated to the development of dialogue with other youth organizations on the topic of peace, security, disarmament, climate change and sustainable development goals. Among other things, the project is designed as a platform that will encourage youth representatives to understand the importance of the Treaty and join the work on its full implementation at the global level. The initiative of the Youth Group is an example of the significant participation of young people, especially students, young experts and scientists, in promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. As the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has ensured that representatives of its Youth Group have a seat at the table at United Nations forums (such as Security Council briefings), we have another reason to confirm that this is a good practice.

CONCLUDING REMARKS



Research into the normative framework and public policy documents of the Republic of Serbia has shown that the foundations for the implementation of the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda have been established in this domain, as well as that a significant number of public policy documents, to a greater or lesser extent, recognize its specific goals. However, it was also pointed out that there is a lot of room for further work on its implementation, as well as that in certain areas, the Republic of Serbia still does not record a more concrete progress when it comes to YPS standards. For this reason, it is necessary for the competent institutions to make an effort to direct their resources and capacities to this field and, following the example of many European and other countries, take a more adequate approach to the young and youth policies, all with the aim of understanding the needs and the potential of young people.

Such approach should be comprehensive, and include not only the Ministry of Tourism and Youth, but also all other institutions that deal with youth policy in their work, as well as those institutions that regulate and create policies that are indirectly related to young people, that is, which regulate policies that are important for young people. It is important to note that this implies the commitment of both national and local authorities, which should take into account the specific needs of the youth in a specific local community. The research offers recommendations, which should serve as an initial step in the creation of public policies aimed at implementing the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

The Agenda invites the countries to recognize young people as relevant actors who can play a key role in building peace and maintaining security. It realizes that, regardless of gender,

young people today can be the backbone of a better society, which will be more tolerant and inclusive, in which work will be done to suppress discrimination and develop dialogue between different nations, religions, ethnicities and the like. Today, Serbia is not a country that is in conflict, but it is a post-conflict area, where the consequences of unpleasant events from the nineties of the previous century are still felt. By following the Agenda, we can understand all the benefits of involving young people in building better neighborly relations, as well as in working to ensure a better understanding between the peoples of the Western Balkans, in order to prevent any conflicts from recurring in the future which certainly belongs to the young.

Global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, terrorism, violent extremism, the spread of misinformation and hate speech and immigration also have adverse effect on young people, shaping their lives. In understanding the consequences they upon young people as a particularly sensitive social group, it is necessary to adapt public policies, that are a response to the challenges, specifically to them and give them the chance to participate in their creation, since they best understand the needs of their generation. In addition to the above, the well-being of young people is threatened by peer violence and bullying, discrimination and mental health problems that are increasingly piling up without any concrete solutions. Sustainable peace and sustainable solutions cannot be achieved without the participation of society as a whole, including the youth, who should be the most important actors in combating all the problems they face.

The adoption of a national action plan that would exclusively deal with ways of implementing the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in the analyzed areas could most effectively translate the YPS standards to domestic public policies. Finland, the first country to adopt the National Action Plan for

Youth, Peace and Security, which aims to include young people in relevant domestic and foreign policies in accordance with the obligations assumed within the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250, could well serve as a role model in this regard. After the adoption of UNSCR 2250, Finland recognized the NAP as the most suitable and effective way to support the implementation of the Agenda, and the Government of Finland initiated its creation in cooperation with Network 2250 of Finland, an open platform that includes both individuals and organizations, namely a significant number of young people and organizations of young people and for young people.

Should the Government of Serbia decide to take that step, the strong involvement of young people throughout the process is a key factor for building trust and ensuring a high-quality NAP, as well as the strong engagement of all. What can be very useful and speed up the NAP development process related to the UN Youth, Peace and Security Agenda is the experience in the development of the National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council – Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2017 to 2020. As in the case of Finland, Serbia should also engage youth organizations and organizations for youth in the working group that would potentially deal with the adoption of the NAP, as civil society actors who best understand the needs and position of young people in Serbia. Therefore, one of the first steps should be to strengthen the capacities of those organizations and other young activists so that through trainings, workshops or workshops they can get to know the Agenda in as much detail as possible and, based on that, they can actively participate in its adaptation in our country.

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