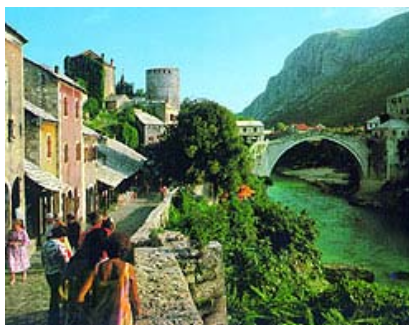




Highlights from the Country Profiles



On the situation of youth, youth NGOs and youth policy in South East Europe in 2003 / 2004



What are the country profiles?

Between September 2003 and October 2004, 6 trainees from different countries of the Western Balkans have worked for 1 - 2 months each at the SALTO-YOUTH SEE Resource Centre. All of them are young people in their mid-twenties who are actively involved in youth work in their country or region. They were asked to collect and write down information that would be relevant for youth workers or other actors in the field of youth from other countries intending to organise youth activities in their country, according to their best knowledge, experience and interest.

More information about the countries of the Western Balkans, including interesting links and the complete country profiles, is published on the SALTO-YOUTH website under <http://www.salto-youth.net/infosee/>.

Following are extracts from each issue of the country profiles. Please note that so far, the country profiles do not yet cover information about Albania and Kosovo.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Nebojša Kurusović

Youth documents

As is well known, the worst policy is not to have a policy at all, and that is just the way how the B&H system has been treating youth for all these years. The greatest problem of youth in B&H is that it is not a political issue. And if you are not a political issue, the chances for you to be put onto the agenda are minimal. Consequently, if you are not on the political agenda, the chances for your problems to be solved are even lower. The consequence of this condition is the painful truth that almost none of more important documents that can systematically start solving youth problems and create a strategy for dealing with them have been adopted so far. A document on youth policy has not yet been adopted by government at any level, from local up to the state level...

The education reform as an essential segment of the relationship to youth is left hanging in mid-air. So far, only a law on primary and secondary education has been adopted and that has happened at the state level, but we are still waiting for its adoption on lower, entity level, in order to start with its implementation. The law on higher education is still in preparation and its adoption is expected by the end of 2004...

Governmental bodies for youth

Unfortunately, governmental bodies for youth do not exist on every state level. On the state level, there is no department for youth within the executive power, nor is there any person whose job description includes direct work with youth. It must be admitted that the furthest steps in this respect have been made on lower levels. In the Republic of Srpska, at the Ministry of Education and Culture there is the Republic Secretariat for Sport and Youth, and in Federation of B&H, there is the Centre for Youth at the Ministry of Education.

Youth sector

The first problems that NGOs encountered in the society were ignorance of the concept and role of NGOs. It took a lot of time and efforts to understand that young people who are actively

involved in the work of NGOs were not members of some sect or some foreign element, or spies. It seems that by now, the community has slowly begun to accept NGO as something that belongs to them, as a means that can help them solve some of their problems. Today, there are approximately 200 youth NGOs in B&H. Some of these organisations are among the best ones in the Southern East Europe and they can serve as good examples to many other organisations...

The biggest problems are the lack of technical equipment and not possessing one's own space. Around 50 % of the organisations have only a part of their own computer equipment and 23 % do not have their own computer capacities. Only 17 % have their own space, 50 % have rented space, and 23 % of the organisations do not have any working facilities...

Education

It is important to mention that the quality of education has been tremendously poor in the post-war period. Besides this, students consider that the major problems are the lack of teaching aids and faculties and very complex and overloaded curricula and the course of study. Certainly, one of the urgent problems is that students in B&H are still only passive recipients of knowledge (the practice from ex-SFRJ), and that there is no real communication between teachers and students, who cannot state their opinions and attitudes. The step forward is certainly the programme of education reform that has been presented to the Council of peacekeeping in Brussels, in November 2002, by the ministers of education and human rights and ministers for refugees from the whole B&H. According to this programme, the authorities in B&H have been obliged to carry out the reforms...

According to the Bologna Declaration, the higher education reforms should be carried out in B&H, and this means that faculties will get more autonomy, a new score system (or the system of credits) should be introduced in July 2004, a university degree will be acknowledged, as well as studying in adult age. After the signature of the Dayton peace agreement, the authority for curricula development was given to the entities, so today there are three different curricula in B&H. The first one is being put into effect in the part of the Federation of B&H with Bosnian majority, the second one within the Croatian majority of the Federation of B&H, and the third one in the Republica Srpska. According to the latest surveys, a vast majority of young people wants more coordinated curricula. Such a curriculum exists in the district of Brcko where subjects have been taught together for all ethnic groups except of the so-called national group of subjects (language, history, geography, and music culture)...

Youth and economy

It is often possible for young people to find employment more easily in the informal sector, where workers in most cases are not registered. Most of the highly educated young people who speak foreign languages and have computer skills are working in the non-governmental sector or in international organizations. Many young people are employed under contract, so employers do not pay taxes for their social and health insurance. This is followed by a well-known story which says that the systems related to social insurance, health care and pension funds have been deprived of considerable resources that should have been paid as taxes. According to statistics, the rate of unemployment is highest among the ages between 21 and 25...

Youth and political life

To STAY, LEAVE or RETURN?

According to surveys on the territory of B&H, the vast majority of young people want to leave the country in order to work or study abroad. A great part of them would really like to leave the country for good. Every fifth person who wants to leave the country takes concrete steps in order to achieve this goal. Young people are frustrated because of the current system of education, the high rate of unemployment, and a part of them shows fear of insecurity. The number of young people who want to leave B&H is equal among all ethnic groups. Most Serbs generally do not see any perspective in B&H, while most Bosniacs are worried about the economy. As far as the devotion of young people to B&H or other ex-YU countries is concerned, each fifth person still is not attached to B&H. Every third person has emphasized their loyalty to one of the entities in B&H, but not to the whole of B&H. 50 % of Bosniacs feel total devotion to B&H. According to research carried out in 2000, most Croats and Serbs feel more devoted to Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro than to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three years later the situation among Croats remains the same, while the number of Serbs who feel more devoted to Serbia and Montenegro had increased. These results clearly show that young people identify themselves with their religious affiliation and ethnic background...

Youth and free time

Young people in B&H does not use, or do not have access to the Internet. Today, only 16 % of young people use Internet in our country. The number of young people who never use the Internet has been decreased from 80 to 51 % over last three years. The tendency towards increasing the number of Internet users is obvious from day to day. On the basis of the latest data, only 5 percent of young people in B&H are involved in the work of youth non-governmental organisations...

In the field of culture, the situation is disastrous. In our country, only 3 % of young people go to the theatre, only 5 % are engaged in art and 7 % go to galleries. Cultural life is being reduced to watching television or listening to the radio, mostly at home. These results show indifference and apathy among youth. Poor economy is also a limiting factor for spending one's free time and a reason for leaving cultural events unattended by young people...

Youth mobility

One of the biggest problems of youth in B&H is surely its mobility. Youth in B&H essentially lives in a ghetto. The poor financial situation along with the visa regime narrows their radius of movement to 200 km. In such a situation, young people do not have an opportunity to meet other cultures through direct contact and to assure themselves that national, racial and religious tolerance is applicable in practice. This is very important since young people in B&H have survived the great ethnic war. The state does not have a strategy on any of its levels that could improve youth mobility. B&H only partially participates in the YOUTH programme of European Commission, because it is not one of the "Programme countries" but a "third country". And participation in European programmes is difficult because of the rigorous visa regime for the citizens of B&H...

Youth employment and unemployment

At the moment, Croatia is struggling with a high unemployment rate as the main problem in country. High unemployment is not only the result of the real economic situation, but it is also related to the transition process of moving to the market economy, difficult privatisation process, and of course the heritage of war. The problem affects the lives of youth and prolongs their socio-economic dependence and marginalisation. At the end of December 2001, according to evidence compiled by the Croatian Office for Employment, the number of unemployed persons was 395, 141. 41.6% of these were young people between 15 and 29 years of age. Appropriate work experience is required for a number of jobs and this represents some difficulties for youth employment. At the end of October 2001, in the age group of 15 to 29 years of age, there were 82, 472 persons without required work experience...

Governmental authorities responsible for youth

From 2004, the Ministry of the Family, Veteran's Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity is taking over the responsibilities of the State Institute for the Protection of Family, Motherhood and Youth. The Youth Department comprises three sections:

- general youth protection issues
- youth advice
- the protection of young people with special needs.

A committee dealing with matters relating to employment, health, social issues, the family and youth has been set up in the House of Representatives of the Croatian Parliament. The Committee for Family, Youth and Sport has the following obligations:

- * to follow the policy concerning youth and the protection of children and young people and
- * to take account the status of youth in some documents and monitor their implementation.

Youth and social issues

The National Programme of Action for Youth (2002) defines a set of fundamental principles of the government policy on youth between 15 and 29 years of age, and a working plan that guides different segments of central and local government and self-government, as well as public institutions and non-governmental and civil organisations in the implementation of these principles (www.dzzomm.hr). Some of the basic goals of the national policy towards youth refer to the following:

- Protection of human rights and the fundamental freedoms
- Promotion of mutual respect and understanding among young persons of different sexes, races, nationalities, social origins, religious affiliations, cultural orientation, political convictions and other characteristics
- Prevention of all forms of violence, intolerance and discrimination
- Promotion of active participation of youth in decision making at all levels
- Promotion of peaceful resolution of social conflicts, cooperation, and mutual respect among the nations
- Promotion of volunteer work and socially beneficial activities
- Introduction of an open system of formal and informal education, as well as the promotion of continuous and life-long skill oriented learning

...

Active participation of youth in society

Today, young people see their future more as a goal that can be achieved depending on one's own strengths and patience, including the support of friends and family, rather than on the institutions of society. In a way, young people take a distance from public life, but at the same time believe that they should be better represented in the political life of the country. Confronted with unemployment, social and economic stagnation, they are showing suspicion towards our government and apathy, which result in avoiding any kind of engagement. Young persons between 18 and 29 years of age represent 22 % of the Croatian electoral body; they constitute 15 % to 30 % of the membership of political parties and of the body of authorities. Research has shown that the majority of young people are aware of their own political marginalisation...

In Croatia, the Programme of Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Non-governmental and Non-profit Sector was defined in 2000, in which all the types of associations as active bearers of the development of civil society were included – social initiatives, religious organisations, unions, local communities, institutions, foundations, interest groups and male and female citizens' initiatives. This programme is based on the following values: social responsibility, cooperation, solidarity, social justice, transparency, personal power and responsibility, appreciation of differences, participation in decision making, self-organisation and continuing education. Unfortunately, there are no classical youth information centres in Croatia, and only one of their functions is performed by larger Internet clubs and youth tourism bureaus in macro-regional centres. The lack of information centres affects the level to which young persons are informed and the degree of their social activity...

Youth organisations

So far, local youth councils exist only in four cities. A significant problem is the lack of a national umbrella association which would include the majority of the most important national youth NGOs. Up to now, several attempts have been recorded concerning the formation and activities of such associations, but none of these initiatives was accepted and legitimised by the majority of the relevant associations. The lack of this kind of co-ordination is slowing down the communication between the youth NGO sector and the state and local selfmanagement; it causes low public outreach, keeping Croatia outside the framework of the most important European youth organisations, and many opportunities in this respect. Interest for civil initiatives is getting lost in a confusion that exists in the media, because non-governmental organisations do not have enough developed a system of communication with citizens. Some youth organisations show a lot of effort through their projects on local level, but there is a lack of effective coordination and mid or long term programming.

The greatest problem concerning youth activities is the lack of availability of adequate premises and operational problems caused by different unfavourable conditions. Sometimes, NGO members feel that donors manipulate with civil initiatives because they finance only those projects that are suitable to their interests. This leads to a lack of interest for projects attractive to donors and of implementing projects that are the result of citizens' ideas.

Youth volunteer work

Croatian legislation does not recognise the concept of volunteer work and has not ratified the Convention on the Promotion of International Long-Term Youth Volunteer Work of the Council of Europe, which empowers volunteer services and permits free international mobility of young

volunteers. The status of foreign volunteers in Croatia has not been resolved because their work is considered to be another form of work according to the Employment of Foreigners Act...

Youth mobility

Educational mobility of youth in Croatia is far from the desired intensity level and is limited by many factors: social living conditions and economic standards of the parents, the capacities of dormitories, enrollment policy of the colleges and universities, study curricula, employment perspectives etc. Youth tourist mobility is stagnant; Croatia has got 9 youth hotels, resorts and hostels, with somewhat more than a thousand beds, with only 3 hostels, which have about 490 beds, which meet the criteria of the International Hostelling standards, and which operate throughout the whole year. The organization of scouts has 5 international centers in our country, with a total capacity of 600 accommodation places in buildings and camps, of which just 2 centers with only 77 accommodation places operate during the whole year. The universities do not possess any facilities for university students' vacations and recreation...

Youth Issues

Today's youth - let's say an average 20 year old - is in a situation when s/he has spent two parts of her/his life in two completely different communities. S/He does not remember vividly the first community because s/he was around 10 when it just disappeared. Somehow, out of nowhere, all of the values that s/he was learning about at school and in his/her family turned out to be unsuitable and not functional. His/her parent's favorite topic all of a sudden became the rapid shrinking of their salaries and vacation mysteriously became a luxury. Ever since, s/he has been put in a new environment. In this new environment things are mixed. The old and clearly wrong "setup" of doctrines and ideologies needs to be literally amputated from the society and this needs to be done as painless and fast as possible. By the time that s/he gets through the middle of high school s/he has enlightened Her-/himself with the eye opener that the people that are in the position of doing this actually grew up learning how to preserve the previous "setup"! This is completely inappropriate for the tasks that they have been given. So, a chain of consequences result of this incompatibility...

This is the kind of spinner in which the typical Macedonian youngster is stuck. But despite of all this, it is surprising that no negativity can be felt on the streets. The cafes are full of energetic youth that is slowly drinking their refreshment. Slowly, because they can only afford one. With an average pocket money of 1 Euro / 60 denars per day, or one sandwich in an average snack bar in Macedonia, young people are attracted by the small, but fortunately growing, number of presented opportunities for a better life. Young people in Macedonia are swiftly driven by the breaks that youth based NGOs offer to them. The number of young people that are joining the new associations of citizens - the legally correct but unpopular term for NGO - is growing continuously because through them young people can spend some time abroad in work camps or some other kind of voluntary activity.

After the crash of communism, the possibility for this kind of free grouping of people on any topic was accepted with enormous interest. Today the number of associations of citizens that function independently is around 11.000 (there is no official statistical number for this) and the number of fields that these NGOs cover is big. But still, even if this number looks notable considering the "magnitude" of Macedonia, the level of functioning of many organisations is questionable. There is only a handful of organisations that are active on national level, and even less organisations function or work on international level...

Youth organizations, foundations, support structures

There are few foundations that have offices or function from Macedonia. However there are a number of foundations and programmes whose target area is Macedonia as a part of the South East Europe region, including Soros/Open Society Institute Macedonia, the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, or the Institute for Sustainable Communities conducting the Democracy Network Program (DNP) in Macedonia. One of the projects/network that is directly related to youth is the network of Macedonian NGO's "MaNGO". MaNGO is the most popular and currently most functional online network in Macedonia on national level concerning NGOs.

The number of NGOs in Macedonia is around 11000. They all function on different level according to their capacities and finances. Major youth NGOs include student associations, the Macedonian Center for Multiethnic Cooperation (Makedonski centar za Multietnicka Sorabotka - MCMS), Save the Children Macedonia, which has around 250 members and five local

organizations in towns of Macedonia, Youth Forum EYE, a relatively new organisation that works on several fields, but is most active on the field of youth and the Macedonian branch of YMCA.

(Un)Employment of youth

Unfortunately the word “job” seems to be slowly disappearing from the vocabulary of not only the young people but the overall population of Macedonia. This, slightly overstated conclusion, does not come as a result of the laziness of the complete population that lives in Macedonia, but as a result of the huge percentage of unemployed people. To be more accurate, the rate of unemployed people living in Macedonia is on the verge of reaching over one third of the total work force. The process of transition to a market based economy that has been going on for too long has put Macedonia in this situation. The lack of transparency of the privatization procedure that was filled with suspicion, as well as the lack of ideas for creating sustainable foundations for a market based economy are the main reasons for this situation. The country gave signs of an unstable society that is incapable of providing a suitable judicial system for illegal activities. This gave the “go ahead” for the Mafia that is using this country as a road to transport illegal goods to Albania and then to Western Europe. ..

Government

Several ministries of the government of Macedonia, such as the Ministry for Education and Sport, and the Ministry of Culture cover the issue of youth. The government has also set up an agency for youth and sport. Nevertheless, there are several obstacles that are limiting the maneuvering capability of this - at the moment only - governmental body responsible for youth of Macedonia. The lack of funding for reaching its goals is definitely the biggest and most relevant one. But still, there are areas that do not rely on money and are yet not functioning as they could. The present lack of promotion of the YOUTH programme of the European Commission should not be explained with the fact that Macedonia is not a programme country, since three of the Actions are indeed open (Action 1, 2 and 5) for organisations that work with youth in Macedonia...

The strategy for youth of Macedonia is still in the process of defining a clear picture of the current situation youth, its needs and youth trends. This is a basis that still needs to be identified. After that, based on this a National Strategy for Youth can be placed. The number of young people between the ages of 15 - 25 (according to the official results of the census in 1994) are 316 342. This makes them 16,45% of the total population of Macedonia...

Serbia and Montenegro

Montenegro

By Ajša Hadzibegović

National strategy for youth

It is no surprise that Montenegro doesn't have a Youth Policy or a National Strategy for Youth or National Action Plan for Youth. This is the case because since the Nineties youth was never close to being a priority for the government and sometimes also for institutions and NGOs. While there were more urgent problems to be solved in a country that has been going through a transition process for a period of time that is interesting for the Guinness book of records, the fact that young people are not satisfied with their education system, health care, employment possibilities, decision making power, mobility, and cultural life, and that more and more are just leaving country was not on the agenda.

Today, we may say that the situation is better. There were several attempts to put youth in focus (mainly coming from the side of NGOs) which were more or less successful. Now, the Ministry of Education and Science have signed an agreement with PRONI – Institute for Social Education and CRS – Catholic Relief Service which is envisaging the development of a Youth Policy with many players involved (young people included). This might be a promising process although the time restriction of nine months for this development could be tight...

Youth organisations and structures

...Now, there is no recognised Youth Council. In June 2003 a non-formal group of active youth NGOs in Montenegro was formed on the initiative of the Scout Association of Montenegro, PRONI and CRS, and it is now functioning under the name Youth Montenegro. This group is a unique effort of youth NGOs in Montenegro to build trust and partnerships, to share ideas and activities in order to prevent overlapping, and to improve the "offer" for the overall situation of youth. Also, one of the driving ideas for forming the Group was to have a stable partner from the side of NGOs for youth policy development.

The visibility of the Youth Montenegro Group initiated the creation of a new sector in the services that two major networks (www.mans.cg.yu & www.crnvo.cg.yu) of /for NGOs in Montenegro offer. Now their newsletters have a Youth section and they are more sensitive to youth issues. Still, there is a lot more to be done before the youth NGO sector will grow enough to build an independent umbrella organisation which will represent the interests of youth NGOs and young people...

Youth and Formal Education

...what one finds in terms of youth and education in Montenegro is not very close to the ideal situation. There are many reasons: lack of modern and updated facilities for conducting the teaching in schools and universities, old and out-of-date teaching plans and programs, lack of relevant literature accessible to students, poor pedagogy of those educators who have completely lost their enthusiasm to teach due to the lack of that little motivation called the 'payslip'. All this could easily be overcome but the question that is pending is: "What future awaits the student once he/she goes through the whole educational process?"

Still, the situation is improving bit by bit every day. Educational reforms are on the way (hopefully, the decision on which kinds of studies will be offered will be part of an overall

strategy for development and will be based on thorough analyses of the job-market). Programs and the educational approach of kindergardens, primary and secondary schools are revised and new ones are put in practice as pilot projects. The education system and the conditions of schools in rural areas have been improved. The University of Montenegro signed the Bologna Declaration, and students of the 2004/5 generation are the first to have a chance to study according to new adjusted programmes. Students that are on the state budget do not need to pay anything except insurance, while those above quota are paying for their education from 200 – 500 EUR per semester. Conditions of student dormitories are also getting better. Student dormitories and the main building of the University (where all technical faculties are held) are accessible for wheel chair users.

Youth employment

Programs for employment, in general, were very poor in Montenegro, and with the black market blooming nobody seemed to mind. Still, a great number of educated young people and of experts in different fields left the country in pursuit of better possibilities. This is more and more evident and is becoming an obstacle for reforms that ought to take place. All our experts are somewhere outside of Montenegro. Taking that into consideration, and also knowing about traditional Montenegrin society and strong family relations (especially recognised is the role of “kum” – godfather), it is no surprise that often your qualifications and/or experience might mean nothing if you do not know the right person.

Data from 2002 are showing that from the 76.293 unemployed persons in Montenegro registered with the Employment Agency, 25% were young people till 25 years of age, and a striking 44% of people till 30 years. This is merely reflecting the situation in the field where every new position that is opened requires years and years of experience, or qualifications that are impossible to get at the very poor choice of studies in Montenegro...

Youth and Culture

The first thing that comes to mind when considering the culture and young people in Montenegro, is the lack of offer, choice, and diversity. Cultural activities, especially those targeting youth are scarce, rare and random. A music gig here and there, an occasional exhibition, festival, concert or theatre performance, is about all a young person can hope for. And that is, if one is lucky to live in the capital, or along the coast, because not even that much attention is given to the Northern parts of the country...

...More recently, one can feel the things shifting towards the better. Young people are awakening and becoming less lethargic. Their cultural needs are evolving, and they are becoming choosier about the cultural offer. The general hunger for the cultural activities can be felt everywhere, but there is also a demand for quality, rather than just for quantity. One must note that an important thing in this process played the proliferation of the NGO sector and its work, the increased use of the Internet, as well as the modern program schemes of the new electronic media in Montenegro. However, this is just the awakening phase, a little rebellion that is not sweeping through the country at an equal rate, and there is much promotion that still has to be done.

Youth and Health

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Science in this area are co-operating with a number of NGOs which are working on preventive programs with primary and secondary school youth. International donors have supported programs of several help lines: TEEN phone, AIDS INFO phone, SOS phone for children and women victims of violence. What

is missing are programs that will offer more organised support, advice and help for those in need. And again NGOs are trying to fill this gap too. The first self-support group for people living with HIV/AIDS in Montenegro and counseling service have been created by CAZAS (Montenegrin Association against AIDS). Drug addicts have fewer choices, since apart from the health institution in Kotor that deals with alcoholics we have no program that will offer help for addicts who want to fight their addiction.

Youth Information and Rights

Information especially designed for youth and offered in a youth friendly manner is an unknown concept in Montenegro. Here if you are young and want to find any information you have to do all the work by yourself and hope that in some general information here and there you will be able to find specific things that interest you. Some newspapers have a weekly addition for children and teenagers which provide only "interesting" stories from the world. The choice of subjects and news shows that youth information is treated without strategy or at least knowledge of what are the needs. Also, only few NGOs include information as a priority in their mission and are working to promote better youth info services or to provide information requested and needed...

Youth Mobility

Sometimes even travelling to neighbouring countries is almost impossible, especially because of the visa process that is discouraging Montenegrins. Still, "where there is a will, there are the means" - young people have proven pretty successful in overcoming various barriers and achieving their aims.

Special discounts for traveling (by bus, train or plane) are available through the EURO<26 Card. Several NGOs promote youth mobility (Youth Hostel Association, Scout Association, etc.) and are offering to their membership activities through which they are able to travel, meet other cultures, learn about different places from "first hand". In any other respect, youth mobility is not promoted neither for educational nor purely tourist purposes.

Serbia

By Aleksandar Gavrilović

Basic information about young people

The average adolescent can be described as an optimistic youngster set in a gloomy surrounding. Young people regard the economic situation in their families as far from good: one quarter of Serbian and Montenegrin families do not have a vehicle, one third live in an extended family (three generations live together) and one third have never gone on holidays with their family. The average adolescent pocket money amounts to 1 EUR per week. Up to 70% of secondary school students do not have access to a computer. But despite every day difficulties the average adolescent is healthy and feels happy most of the time. Quiet often he/she is nervous, sometimes depressed; however, the predominant feeling is one of the self-confidence and energy...

Youth in Serbia and Montenegro are also faced with a social crisis of sorts, or at the very least a changing social landscape. They can find it hard to relate to parents who grew up in a profoundly different world, one that was highly controlled but stable. Ethnic tensions have resurfaced and boiled over and young people can still be taught in school to hate their

neighbors. Patriarchal traditions have also resurfaced in some parts of the country, especially rural areas and the south, and that has affected the girls and young women especially...

It is difficult to argue that the young people of Serbia and Montenegro are too young to have a full say in the transition of their nation. Youth in this country have experienced a lot for their years: political revolutions, war, economic shock, not to mention the large life events that can arise in any young person's life: unplanned pregnancy, trouble with alcohol or drug abuse, violence or abuse at home or in the streets, or conflict with the law. Youth refers also to some of the best Serbia and Montenegro athletes, most compelling artists, great entertainers, business people, smart thinkers and innovators...

Participation of young people

Almost half of young people (48%) in Serbia and Montenegro belong to an organized group- the second highest participation rate in Europe, after the Baltic States. Boys are more likely to belong than girls (53% compared to 43%). Young people spread themselves around a number of different types of groups: 7% musical groups or bands; 5% - sport clubs; 4% - religious groups; 3% - scouts, political associations, dance groups; 2% - art clubs; 1% volunteer groups. (In the survey, almost a quarter didn't specify which kind of group they had joined.) Only four organizations function at the national level and only two (Scout association and Red Cross) have a complete organizational structure covering all levels. The strong interest of young people in joining club might be an inheritance of the communistic past when mass participation by children and youth in extracurricular groups was common as these organizations had a strong presence in schools and participation was free...

Although the government's treatment of the NGO's has improved since 2000, development of the legislative framework for local and international NGO's has been very slow. With the excuse that there are more important priorities, the government still hasn't done anything to change the current law on non-governmental organizations in accordance with European standards...

Youth Council of Serbia

The main goal that the OSS leadership has set out is to create a strong youth umbrella organization that will serve the needs of its members and represent it to the decision-makers. Membership should be expanded to all kinds of youth organizations, including independent students' organizations and party youth. In a situation where the government doesn't have a clear youth policy, the need for a strong youth council is obvious. Only strong and organized action could help different youth needs and views attract wider attention.

Serbia and Montenegro has a wide range of "new" youth organizations organized as NGO's, some 5000 in the country. The number of NGO's is hard to determine both due to the growing numbers and to difficulties in classifying which ones should be defined as "youth organizations". There are two basic types of youth related NGO's - those organized by young people around a theme and those which have a youth focus but are not limited to young people...

Development of National Youth Strategy and Policy in the Republic of Serbia

The Youth Section's main goals include:

- Defining the national youth strategy and policy (long-term, based on reliable data, as well as on the cooperation with youth organizations and other ministries)
- Establishing cooperation with youth and expert organizations (on the local, national and international level)

- Support for youth projects in the Republic of Serbia
- Preparatory phase expanding responsibilities with the redefinition of the Federation, including international cooperation

On the occasion of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the Ministers responsible for Youth Issues, held in Thessalonica in November 2002, an official document was presented outlining the planned activities in the process of the development of a national youth strategy and policy. Preparatory steps have been made in the communication with the respective ministries, and contacts with more than 200 non-governmental organizations, as well as a pre-selection of 50 youth organizations (including a review of their activities and interviews), from which 25 will be selected to take active part in the whole process...

In 2004 youth organizations and their activities will be supported with 15 million Dinars for their activities from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Sports through an open tender. The Youth Section will continue to support projects in which the Ministry of Education and Sports was involved as a partner in 2002/2003, such as:

- Youth Information and Media Center in Belgrade, established in 2002 in cooperation with the Belgrade Youth Council and the City of Belgrade.
- BUNT Belgrade, within the New Wave Project aiming at the development of a local youth strategy in Belgrade, coordinated by the Belgrade Youth Council and embraced by 75 youth organizations based in Belgrade
- Support for approximately 50 youth empowerment measures through support for diverse seminars, trainings and conferences, partnership in regional and international youth projects, Youth Against Violence, promotion of the YOUTH program of European Commission, and realization of the Assistance Program of the Council of Europe.
- Youth Parliaments Project whose aim is the reform of pupils associations, as precondition for youth participation in decision-making processes in the school environment. The Youth Section supported, in cooperation with the Nis local government the establishment of pupils' parliaments in all primary and high schools in Nis, and the establishment of a City Children and Youth Parliament.

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