

Snapshots

Current needs, challenges and developments – Young people and the youth field in the Western Balkans

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SALTO-YOUTH
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RESOURCE CENTRE



Erasmus+

The geographical context: what countries do we work with?

- Neighbouring Partner Countries Erasmus+ (2017: AL, BA, MN, XS – Serbia under preparatory measures)
- Western Balkan 6 (E+ NPC + MK / EU accession perspective)
- Ex-Yugoslavia (including Croatia and Slovenia, but not Albania)
- The greater Balkan region (including Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, ...???)

➡ Historical/political/geographical context matters depending on themes and objectives of support and cooperation: Supporting E+ project development, regional cooperation, reconciliation, political developments (e.g. recognition of youth work)...What is the region and how can we work with it?

Stagnating high youth unemployment, little impact of existing policy measures

- grey economy, risk of social exclusion, poverty, criminal behaviour, brain drain/emigration...

Table 1: Youth Unemployment Rates (% of total labor force – ages 15-24)

CEFTA 5 (or Balkan countries)					EU members neighboring CEFTA 5				
Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	Country	2011	2012	2013	2014
<i>Albania</i>	27.0	28.3	28.7	29.2	<i>Bulgaria</i>	25.2	28.2	29.7	25.9
<i>Bosnia & Herzegovina</i>	57.1	61.7	57.4	57.5	<i>Croatia</i>	36.6	44.1	50.3	45.9
<i>Macedonia/ FYROM</i>	55.4	53.8	51.8	50.8	<i>Greece</i>	44.1	54.7	58.0	53.9
<i>Montenegro</i>	37.2	41.3	40.5	39.5	<i>Hungary</i>	26.0	27.9	27.0	21.0
<i>Serbia</i>	50.4	50.6	49.7	49.5	<i>Romania</i>	23.9	22.8	23.8	25.1
					<i>Slovenia</i>	15.8	20.6	22.8	20.8

Source: the [World Bank](#)

Other issues:

- EU accession process – how can the process be supported in the youth field?
- Geopolitical interests (Russia, USA, Turkey,...)
- Small countries, influence of political affiliation and personal connections into all spheres of life
- Democratic culture?, limited freedom of expression in media
- Ethnic groups/nationality vs citizenship – limited national stability
- Social norms and expectations – importance of education, family, work – no space/limited support for traveling and volunteering (abroad)

Youth field

- Active but rather weak civil society and youth sector
- Some organisations with big capacities (political affiliation)
- Little support for smaller independent organisations (Lack of financial support at national level, donors left/leaving the region)
- Activist post war generation – what is coming now?
- Importance of Erasmus+ for European cooperation - accessibility?
Need for support of regional cooperation (- RYCO to respond?)
- Efforts towards professional recognition of youth work in some countries of the region (especially Serbia and Macedonia)
- Youth activists/youth work have an important role in promoting social/political developments

Challenges for European cooperation

- At national level, lack of networking and sharing of information among organisations / lack of structured youth information channels
- Lack of recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education
- Financial instability / lack of sustainability of many youth organisations
- Partnerships with organisations in Europe! (There are some long-standing partnerships, but organisations have difficulties to find new partners)
- Negative stereotypes (especially towards Albania and Kosovo)
- Lack of other bi- or multilateral programmes for youth cooperation (besides Erasmus+)
- Lack of knowledge about E+ in relevant ministries and institutions – difficulties with visa, residence permits for EVS volunteers...
- Bilateral difficulties to travel within the region (e.g. Kosovo – BiH)

Potentials

- High motivation for cooperation
- Competences and capacities exist!
- Efforts to make a change in often difficult environments
- Cooperation has an impact! (There is nothing to replace E+)
- Intercultural dimension is important! – sharing of experiences and realities, experiencing Europe, opening up of communities, overcoming stereotypes and prejudices, foreign language learning...
- Promoting the integration of the Western Balkan countries into Europe (beyond the EU)