

# **Report on Youth Policy at local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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## **Acknowledgment**

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The overall objective of the Programme has focused on empowering young people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to involve them into the socio-economic life of the country and promote their role as active citizens in regard to the on-going stabilization and democratization process. Besides other specific objective, the Programme aimed at reinforcing capacity building of institutions, both at local and central level and at promoting social and youth policies.

It is within this framework that the present report on youth policy at local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina is promoted. The aim of the report is to give an updated description of the current situation and provide recommendations in support of the work of BiH institutions dealing with youth-related issues. This is indeed the core in order to build the country’s future on stable foundations.

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The Municipalities involved in the Programme are Breza, Bugojno, Busovača, Čajniče, Donji Vakuf, Fojnica, Goražde, Gradiška, Jajce, Kalesija, Kalinovik, Kotor Varoš, Kupres, Lopare, Milići, Mrkonjić Grad, Nevesinje, Novi Travnik, Osmaci, Prozor Rama, Sanski Most, Šekovići, Šipovo, Sokolac, Teslić, Ugljevik, Vareš, Višegrad, Vitez, Žepče.

*The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”*

## **General data of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**

### **Brief description of the project**

The Italian Cooperation and the Temporary Association of five Italian NGOs have joined efforts, expertise and resources to support the youth focused activities. The Programme “Improving the Conditions of Children and Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina” aimed at intervening in the youth sector by applying integrated and cross-sector approach both at local and state level. Thus, the Programme supported the process of youth policy development, and furthermore, at local level, it promoted and assisted the creation of means and tools of youth participation in the socio-economic life. Through this integrated approach, the Programme involved 700 direct beneficiaries in training activities and about 3000 beneficiaries in active citizenship initiatives at local level.

### **Objectives**

#### **Main objective of the project**

Promote the reconciliation process and social reconstruction within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### **Specific objective of the project**

Empower the youth population of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the socio-economic life of the country and promote the active role of youth in the stabilization and democratization process.

### **Expected outcome**

1. Reinforced capacity of local Institutions, at local and central level, to promote social and youth policies and carry out other initiatives aiming at improving life conditions of children and youth, with particular attention on groups at risk.
2. Strengthened skills of both teachers and social workers in order to better cope with social unrest among youth;
3. Supported and reinforced role of youth associations and their capacity of dialogue with the Institutions;
4. Strengthened entrepreneurial skills among youth and improve access to credit tools.

### **The Programme focused on three main topics**

A. Capacity building activities for local institutions
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→ Support to the development of youth policies

- Training courses and seminars on youth policies for governmental officers at central level (Commission for the Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- International conference on youth issues
- Support to the development of a national youth action plan
- Support to the development of youth policies at local level
- Training courses for municipal civil servants on youth policies
- Study visits to Italy
- Technical assistance of Italian experts

→ Support to school and social sector

- Training courses for about 200 teachers (topics: inclusive education, active learning, school management, peace education and children’s rights, project cycle management)

- Training and update courses and seminars for about 140 social workers and social assistants (topics: youth at risk, individual and group therapy, youth delinquency, drug prevention, management of burn out, project cycle management)
- Realization of micro-projects

**B. Activities finalized to promote the youth association sector**

- Training courses and seminary activities for about 150 beneficiaries aiming at strengthening youth associations
- Organization of 5 regional conferences about youth policies and youth association sector
- Support to the activities of Youth Centres/NGOs through small grants for the implementation of micro-projects
- Study visits to Italy
- Technical assistance of Italian experts
- Realization of national information/awareness raising campaigns on the condition and problems of youth. Privileged channels are TV spots, posters and newspaper's articles

**C. Interventions aiming at promotion of youth small business and Local Economic Development**

- Realization of an updated analysis of the local labour market situation, focusing on the possibilities of employment for local youth population
- International conference on youth employment
- Realization of training courses for potential young entrepreneurs for the promotion of youth's small business
- Creation of a guarantee fund-credit scheme in collaboration with Unicredit Zagrebacka Banka, Serda (Sarajevo Economic Regional Development Agency) and LiNK Mostar (Association of entrepreneurs). Technical support provided by CeBEDA, Nerda, Sinergija and Taldi.
- Scholarships for Master Courses in Italy

*“Young people should be regarded as a resource, and not as a problem to be resolved. If we regard young people as a resource and focus on long-term solutions, the identification of needs and the development of policy, we shall encourage young people to become aware of their own full potential as citizens and will allow society to harvest the fruits of their intellectual capital.”*

The European Youth Forum

**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

BiH- Bosnia and Herzegovina

CIDA – Canadian International Development Agency

CoE- Council of Europe

DEZA/SDC - Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit (Swiss Development Cooperation)

DFID – Department for International Development

EC – European Commission

EYF- European Youth Forum

GTZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit

HDZ – Hrvatska demokratska zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union)

IC- International Community

NGO- Non- Governmental Organisation

OHR- Office of the High Representative

OIA- Omladinska Informativna Agencija (Youth Information Agency)

OIA SIROP- OIA Specijalni Izvjestaj o Razvoju Omladinske Politike (OIA Special Report on Youth Policy Development)

OSCE- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PDP – Party of Democratic Progress (Partija demokratskog progres)

RS- Republic of Srpska

SDA – Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije)

SDP – Social-Democratic Party

SDS – Serb Democratic Party (Srpska demokratska stranka)

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

UNDP HDR- United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report

UNICEF- United Nations Children’s Fund

YNGO- Youth Non-Governmental Organisation

YO- Youth Organisation

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction .....	9
2. Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina - general perspective of the current status and socio-economic and political prospects.....	11
3. Youth Policy – concept, background and state of youth policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina .....	14
4. Youth Policy at local level. Key results achieved in the framework of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina” .....	20
4.1 Youth Policy Design Process .....	21
4.2 Youth Policy standards and priorities .....	24
4.3 Youth Policy structures .....	27
4.3.1 Youth Officer .....	27
4.3.2 Municipal Youth Commission .....	28
4.3.3 Youth Advisory Board .....	29
4.3.4 Budget for youth.....	29
4.4 What does a Youth Policy Document need to include? .....	29
5. Meaningful youth policy at local level – is it possible? .....	31
5.1 Factors influencing the youth policy development process .....	31
5.2 Advantages.....	32
5.3 Needs.....	34
6. Systematized presentation of the recommendations developed in the regional conferences of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina” .....	36
6.1 Young People and Education .....	36
6.2 Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship .....	37
6.3 Youth Inclusion and Participation in Public and Political life .....	38
6.4 Social and Health Protection .....	38
6.5 Youth Voluntarism, Activism and Youth Work .....	40
6.6 Leisure Activities .....	40
6.7 Access to Information .....	41
6.8 Youth Policy.....	42
7. Conclusions and recommendations .....	43
8. References .....	46

## 1. Introduction

Promotion and protection of children and youth rights was the foundation for principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and two additional UN protocols (2002).

Creation of sustainable support measures for youth empowerment has been a serious issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the year 2000, when the UNDP Human Development Report on Youth indicated that 62% of young people would leave the country if given the opportunity to. At that point, BiH society was still deeply concerned with basic post-war reconstruction and relief, with no serious input into focusing on youth specifically. Yet, the worrying data have stirred up the public and the first serious programmes and initiatives were undertaken to tackle the youth issue. However, three years later, in 2003, new UN Report on Youth indicated that the situation did not improve, but in fact, worsened. This research study indicated that young people not only wanted to leave the country but also were disillusioned that they may have any influence or impact on decision making processes in the country.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2003, international and local organisations have worked hard to put the youth issue on the agenda of the governments at all levels, especially the state and local level, which were seen as the pillars of the good quality youth policy. Many goals have been achieved - Bosnia and Herzegovina today has the state level Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues (*hereinafter: Youth Commission*), while most of the municipalities have at least supported establishment of youth organisations, or even adopted a strong and efficient youth policy within the community.

This report, drawn up in the period of May – December 2007, describes one of the main outcomes of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>2</sup>” in the field of the activities supporting the process of youth policy at local level. It wants to contribute to the youth policy debate in the country, to the sharing understanding of the political and institutional development processes concerning youth policy work and to be a solid basis for the creation of a Youth Policy at state level<sup>3</sup>. Briefly, this report will:

- outline the situation of the young people updated to the year 2007 through an analysis of how far has the BiH society gone in creation of an integrated and youth friendly policy, which complies with the *European Charter on Youth Participation in Regional and Municipal life (1992)*, which came into power with the accession of BiH into the *Council of Europe (CoE)* in 2002;
- describe the different steps taken in the process aiming at identifying and promoting a youth policy at local level;
- assess the factors that contribute to or impede the development of coherent and sustainable measures to support the young people. and to develop youth friendly environment;
- provide concluding remarks and a set of recommendations to maintain a strong focus on youth and youth related issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The UN Agencies Report on Youth in 2003 indicated that 77% of young people wish to leave Bosnia, out of which 24% want to leave forever, while only 1% of young people believe that they can have an impacts on politics; UN Agencies Report on Youth in 2003, UN Agencies, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> The Programme is financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Italy – Italian Cooperation and is implemented by the Temporary Association of Italian NGOs, CISP as the leading agency, CESVI, COSV, Intersos and Movimondo.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the report is being prepared in the period when a number of other relevant studies on youth and youth policy have been initiated or prepared: OIA manual: *Lokalne vlasti i mladi (Local Government and Youth)*, OIA 2006.; GTZ Study on Youth in preparation at the moment of drafting this report.

### **Methodological approach and research framework of the report**

The report, besides studies<sup>4</sup> and reports carried out within the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, draws on a number of other research studies and reports conducted by organizations such as UNDP, World Bank, Youth Information Agency (Omladinska Informativna Agencija-OIA), and Council of Europe.

It is enriched by a qualitative research conducted in 23 communities out of 30 municipalities involved in the Programme<sup>5</sup>. In 2006, this qualitative research was conducted to enable youth referents to share and discuss the youth policymaking processes in their communities and factors contributing or impeding the work on this important issue. In addition, five (5) focus groups were organized during August and September 2007, hosting participants from the following municipalities: Vares, Fojnica, Busovaca, Vitez, Višegrad, Sokolac, Nevesinje, Sanski Most, Osmaci, Kalesija, Šekovići, Lopare, Milici, Ugljevik, Bugojno and Novi Travnik. Focus groups were organized in a semi-structured way, with facilitation of discussion on a number of set topics, while a special attention was given to free expression of opinions and perceptions of all other issues relevant to the discussion. All the Programme staff was involved through individual interviews and discussions on the level of support that municipalities in their area of responsibility<sup>6</sup> provided to the youth policy development processes.

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<sup>4</sup> Davorin Pavelic, Study on youth employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Study finalized in the framework of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, December 2006. And: Report on training activities in the education sector; report on the training activities in the social sector, report on the training activities implemented in favour of the economic sector; report on the activities implemented in favour of the youth associations etc.

<sup>5</sup> These are: Prozor/Rama, Bugojno, Novi Travnik, Vareš, Fojnica, Vitez, Žepče, Breza, Busovača, Milići, Šekovići, Osmaci, Kalesija, Ugljevik, Višegrad, Nevesinje, Sokolac, Gradiška, Mrkonjić Grad, Kotor Varoš, Sanski Most, Šipovo, Lopare.

<sup>6</sup> CISP area: Lopare, Ugljevik, Kalesija, Milići, Šekovići, Osmaci;  
CESVI area: Gradiška, Kotor Varoš, Mrkonjić Grad, Sanski Most, Šipovo, Teslić;  
COSV area: Bugojno, Donji Vakuf, Novi Travnik, Kupres, Prozor Rama, Jajce.  
INTERSOS area: Breza, Busovača, Fojnica, Vitez, Vareš, Žepče;  
MOVIMONDO area: Nevesinje, Kalinovik, Goražde, Čajniče, Višegrad, Sokolac.

## **2. Youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina - general perspective of the current status and socio-economic and political prospects**

The UN defines young people as persons aged between 14 and 25<sup>7</sup>. This age definition of young people came as a result of a debate linked to all changes that a person encounters on his/her way from childhood to adulthood, i.e. a distinct area of internal and external changes and choices that a person makes throughout this age. A young person's development falls under influence of a number of individual or combined external factors (such as economic, social and political factors) that significantly influence on choices and decisions on the future. The external factors particularly referring to a range of social conditions, such as poverty, uncertainty, low employment rate deeply affect choices of a young person until he/she starts his/her own independent life. However, due to all the post-war transitional dynamics in the BiH society, the prospects for a young person's development are not so optimistic and positive. That is why, the general understanding of the age span of youth in the country is between 14 and 30<sup>8</sup>.

Namely, Bosnia and Herzegovina is still recovering from a painful and slow transition from communism to democracy and from a planned to a market oriented economy, accompanied with the devastating war, which resulted in a heavy destruction not only in terms of infrastructure, but also in terms of brain drain, which was significant during the war and the years after. The current socio-economic situation in the country is still negative, especially in small communities, as unemployment is very high. It is worth noting that according to official data more than 60% of BiH youth citizens are not employed<sup>9</sup>. Worrying trends are shown in the table below:

*Table 1: Comparison of basic indicators of youth employment status*<sup>10</sup>

Indicator	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2006
Youth activity rate	49.9%	23.2%	34%	32%	33%	33.4%
Youth unemployment ratio	33.2%	10.3%	26%	22%	22%	20.8%
Youth employment ratio	17%	12.9%	15%	15%	17%	12.6%
Youth unemployment rate	67%	44.6%	67%	61%	57%	62.3%

One of the main reasons for weak employment prospects of the young people is found in inadequate education, which does not meet employment market needs. Neither young people nor employers are satisfied with educational standards and vocational trainings in schools, as these do not provide adequate knowledge and skills to young people to meet the needs of new jobs appearing in the job market. Besides finishing secondary or higher education, young people need to attend additional trainings and courses, which are further difficult as they require additional finances and time, precious in the period when young people urgently need employment. That is why, 80% of young people are unsatisfied with the educational system as they think it is old fashioned and inadequate.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> As proclaimed by the General Assembly Resolutions no. 40/14 1985 and 50/81 1995 and by the International Year of Youth in 1985

<sup>8</sup> Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues (IBHI) – UNDP Human development report Bosnia and Herzegovina 2000. Youth, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Davorin Pavelic, Study on youth employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Study finalized in the framework of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, December 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p 24.

<sup>11</sup> UN Agencies Report on Youth 2003, Are you a part of the problem or part of the solution? UN Agencies 2003.

Political prospects of young people are further disillusioning and difficult. Young people feel very much marginalised from the society as they feel that they cannot influence any decision-making processes at any level of government.

In terms of minimal political participation of young people, official statistics show that last general elections in 2006 marked higher level of youth participation, as 47% voted, while 25% of young people voted in 2004 elections<sup>12</sup>. This is a very promising change to better with regards to youth political participation<sup>13</sup>. However, it is just a small step in the general political participation. In terms of deeper - maximal - participation of young people, i.e. full involvement in the political and decision-making processes in the country through political parties or individual engagement, surveys showed that only 1% of young people believe that they can have impact on politics, while only 6% of them are members of any political party.<sup>14</sup> Young people rarely visit or participate in any decision-making processes, while only 8% of them are volunteers in youth organisations or initiatives.<sup>15</sup> The low participation means low influence, so it is not surprising that the youth issues is very low in the priority lists of governments at each level.

The social and health prospects of young people do not look very promising either. Major problems that affect young people are the problems of worrying trends of risky behaviour in terms of sexual and reproductive health and drug abuse, mental health, lack of access to youth friendly health and social services. In general, young people's health culture is low, as young people are not accustomed at taking responsibility for their health and regular check-ups. It is worth noting that different research studies show that more than half of the youth population, 55% consume cigarettes, while 60% consume alcohol.<sup>16</sup> Most of the youth workers in the country agree that these worrying trends of drug abuse are largely the outcome of the general disillusionment and marginalisation of the young people, associated with very weak social and economic prospects. In addition, young people are not very well informed regarding sexual and reproductive health, and the health institutions are not equipped and trained adequately to provide information and testing services in a youth friendly way.

Social protection is also very weak in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Young people with special needs constantly face barriers in accessing institutions and, thus information or services they need, which further marginalises this group of young people. The Centres for Social Work and other relevant institutions struggle with resources to provide adequate services in social protection, while relevant social policies are inadequately implemented and monitored.

Being generally disillusioned with their educational, employment, political, health and social prospects, young people spend most of their time in coffee shops and streets (78%), while 29% of young people practice sports<sup>17</sup>. Yet, there has been an increase of internet use between 2000 (7%)<sup>18</sup> and 2003 (15%)<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Centralna izborna komisija (Central Election Commission) [www.izbori.ba](http://www.izbori.ba)

<sup>13</sup> This positive trend is most probably a good result of changes in the voter registration system, thanks to automatic, passive registration of voters through the *Citizen Identification Protection System (CIPS)*. This new registration process does not require additional time and resources to be registered. The old system required each voter to be registered through a complicated and time-consuming process, which was one of the reasons for low turnout of (young) people in previous elections.

<sup>14</sup> UN Agencies Report on Youth 2003, Are you a part of the problem or part of the solution? UN Agencies 2003, p. 23

<sup>15</sup> IBID, p. 29

<sup>16</sup> IBID, p. 21

<sup>17</sup> UN Agencies Report on Youth 2003, Are you a part of the problem or part of the solution? UN Agencies 2003, p. 29

<sup>18</sup> UNDP Human Development Report on Youth 2000

<sup>19</sup> UN Agencies Report on Youth 2003, Are you a part of the problem or part of the solution? UN Agencies 2003

It sounds realistic that due to all these reasons, young people decide to leave the country in seeking for better prospects. The general trend of young people wishing to leave the country, where 77% of young people want to leave the country, is supported by the data that at least over 100,000 of young people have left the country after the end of the war, and statistics show that young people would leave the country if only given a chance to go somewhere else<sup>20</sup>.

It is true that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a young country, which is slowly getting rid of reminiscence of communism, and central economy and that lot of efforts are directed into fixing and setting basis for country's economy, social and governance systems. These democratisation processes are very painful and are taking a lot of energy of already poor and disillusioned people, but are necessary path that a country needs to undertake.

Yet, young people are the driving force of the development and as such, the government should invest into their educational, political and social prospects in order to ensure the future of the country and its sustainable development. One of the possible responses for these problems of young people is design and implementation of a coherent youth policy at state level followed with adequate policies and concrete actions at local level.

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<sup>20</sup> OIA; Prirucnik: "Lokalne vlasti i mladi" OIA 2006-Manual "Local Government and Youth" OIA 2006; UN Agencies Report on Youth 2003 indicates that 62% of young people would leave Bosnia and Herzegovina if given a chance

### **3. Youth Policy – concept, background and state of youth policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The main issues young people face in their everyday life are interconnected and multidimensional, and as such require a well thought and comprehensive policy in the attempt to reduce their negative effects. This policy requires participation of institutions and stakeholders in order to exchange good practices, information, and experiences and finally create and implement it for the best interests of young people in every country.

This Chapter will define concept of the youth policy as well as illustrate the youth policy development process and its main actors.

#### **Concept of “Public Policy”**

Public policy is defined as a “...series of pattern of governmental activities or decisions that are designed to remedy some public problem... public policies are always subject to change on the basis of new information about their effects...”<sup>21</sup>

As such, the *public policy* is a complex set measures to improve the living conditions and thus contribute to the development of a society.

In local languages, the term “(public) policy” (*javna politika*) is easily mixed with the term “politics” (*politika*), thus leaving space for manipulation and misunderstanding of the concept, meaning and scope of the public policy. *Policy* is seen as a political process, and recipients, especially young people, believe that *public policy process* is intended only for those in *politics*, so they do not get involved, as they fear that it is outside of their area of participation as individuals. On the contrary, it should be noted that *public policy*, and especially *youth policy*, is and should be a “set of governmental actions”, decided upon the identified need and inclusive policy definition process and approach. It is also important to emphasise that the public policies are subject to change, and thus set basis for further development processes in the society.

#### **Concept of “Youth Policy”**

Definitions of the *Youth Policy* go from the minimal description of the youth work, to identification of comprehensive and *overarching policy* that encompasses *social, economic, political, cultural and developmental needs of young people*. For the purpose of this report, we will use the definition coined by the European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field (CDEJ definition of Youth), where the youth policy..

..*deals with young people’s economic, social and cultural situation, their access to information and advice, vocational training, employment, housing, health and cultural and leisure activities, and which encourages them to participate in society.*”<sup>22</sup> ...

The *Youth Policy* definition clearly outlines all the areas of youth life and development that should be adequately tackled if the Government wants to empower the youth to benefit from as well as contribute to the development of their society. The definition also seeks to involve all

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<sup>21</sup> Lester, James P. and Joseph Stewart, Jr.; *Public Policy: An Evolutionary Approach*. San Francisco; West Publishing, 1996

<sup>22</sup> European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field (CDEJ); “Draft recommendation on Youth Participation and Future of Civil Society”; Council of Europe, Strasbourg, December 1996.

young people, whether or not they belong to or are involved in any political or other categories of association.

When this definition is converted to action, it covers a number of policy domains that need to be fulfilled in order to adequately tackle needs of the young people. These policy domains are:

- ❖ Education
- ❖ Employment and entrepreneurship
- ❖ Social protection, welfare and family
- ❖ Housing
- ❖ Health protection and reproductive health
- ❖ Active participation
- ❖ Civil society empowerment
- ❖ Culture and leisure time
- ❖ Criminal justice
- ❖ Information sharing and
- ❖ Youth mobility<sup>23</sup>

The youth policy signifies a clear consensus-based vision of the kind of future decision-makers a country needs. Youth policy should be integrated, cross-sectional and coherent, interdisciplinary, inter-ministerial and multi-departmental. Only in such a way, it can address the multifaceted (civil, political, economic, social and cultural) needs of young people. The youth policy should be built upon the national consensus based on consultation of all concerned, particularly youth, and should provide both the Government and young people with a long term, sustainable instrument.

As we can see, the CDEJ definition of Youth (see Footnote<sup>22</sup> above denotes a very complex and relevant set of issues to solve and stakeholders to involve. The complexity of the youth policy and its implementation process may be seen through the two dimensions that characterise it: *vertical* and *horizontal* dimension<sup>24</sup>.

The *vertical dimension* of the youth policy covers all sets of relations, interests and influence that lay between the central and local levels of government. It provides answer to the question of what central government does in setting standards and goals for youth policy implementation. Major issue linked to this is the strength and the interest of the central government in the youth issue, and the impact of the decisions made at central level on the implementation that should be initiated at the local level. Logically, these relations strongly depend on the strength of the central governance and the ways in which the central government steers the youth work at local level.

The *horizontal dimension* gives us the insight into the interconnectedness of the youth work and other factors relevant for the living conditions of the youth, and the impact that these factors have on achieving the goals set forth by the youth focused strategy. These factors are related to education, economic, social and political sectors that shape life and development of a young person. Closely linked to this, the horizontal dimension defines all cross-sectoral relations and their success. However, the horizontal dimension is always open to debate, as it is open for discussion on whether the youth work should focus solely to the leisure activities or it should encompass issues such as education, health, mobility or any other related issue.

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<sup>23</sup> See more on this in Williamson, Howard: Supporting Young People in Europe, Principles, Policy and Practice, Council of Europe, 2002

<sup>24</sup> Williamson, Howard: Supporting young people in Europe - Principles, policy and practice, Council of Europe, (2002)

This is a relevant debate in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. There is a general consensus that the youth policy should encompass all *economic, social, cultural, housing, health, political and leisure spheres* of a young person's life. All documents related to youth policy in the country today, theorize about strategies, recommendations and advice on the extent and goals of the youth empowerment. However, the "youth policy in practice" looks a little bit different. Most of the initiatives and action plans at the end of the day focus on mere "youth work" in its minimal definition-provision of adequate leisure time activities for the youth.

On the other hand, there are individual strategies for each separate area, so there has been a lot of discussion on the education, especially higher education; youth employment; housing; health, especially reproductive health, etc. These individual strategies outline measures that would solve temporarily the issues young people face, but, sustainable conditions for youth development could be provided only if a comprehensive, multidimensional and overarching policy for youth is created.

Pioneer steps in this regards have been taken in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past years. The Council of Ministers and respective Chair of the Council of Ministers have recognised the need to set up a permanent body within the institution dealing with the youth sector. This resulted in the establishment of the Commission for the Coordination of Youth Issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Youth Commission) at the state level in December 2004<sup>25</sup>. The Youth Commission has 18 members: 8 representatives from different Ministries<sup>26</sup> and 10 representatives from the youth sector.

The mission of the Youth Commission is to coordinate activities relevant to the promotion and protection of youth status; works on youth policy development and realizes international cooperation with the goal to achieve European standards in the quality of life of young people. In particular, the Youth Commission has the following assignments<sup>27</sup>, according to the authorities of relevant institutions:

- ❖ Confirming the basic principles of the coordination of activities related to youth;
- ❖ Harmonizing plans of entity bodies of government in connection to youth;
- ❖ Defining strategies with international plans regarding youth;
- ❖ Analyzing problems of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- ❖ Coordinating youth projects;
- ❖ Gathering and distributing information about youth problematic.

and the following working groups in order to elaborate specific action plans in the areas of:

- ❖ Analysis of youth needs and development of proposed measures for youth policies;
- ❖ Coordination of youth projects and cooperation with youth associations;
- ❖ International cooperation;
- ❖ Information;
- ❖ Cooperation with governmental institutions;
- ❖ Youth employment.

The Youth Commission has close cooperation with different actors in order to support and develop capacities of the government to work adequately on youth issues. Additionally, the Youth

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<sup>25</sup> The Commission for the Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH was established on the basis of article 17th, paragraph 1, of the Law on Council of Ministries Bosnia and Herzegovina („Official gazette BiH“, no.: 30/03 and 42/03), Council of Ministries of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 72nd meeting held on 16th December of 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Presidency of BiH (1 representative); Office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of BiH (1 representative); Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH (1 representative); Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH (1 representative); Directorate for European Integration (1 representative); Government of the Republic of Srpska (1 representative); Government of the Federation of BiH (1 representative); Government of the Brcko District of BiH (1 representative).

<sup>27</sup> Information from the web site of the Commission of the Coordination of Youth Issues in BiH: [www.mladi.gov.ba](http://www.mladi.gov.ba).

Commission has started preparing the state legislation on youth, and it is in the phase of collecting the best practices and relevant standards in the countries from the region and EU.

The situation at the Entity level is somewhat different, as there is a big discrepancy between the youth policy actions in Republic of Srpska (RS) and the Federation BiH (FBiH). Namely, RS Government has already adopted the Law on Youth organising<sup>28</sup> in November 2004, thus setting standards for youth work and policies in this Entity. This Law, published in the RS Official Gazette, no. 98/04 regulates different organisational shapes that may appear in the youth sector, defines the processes of youth and youth organisations' inclusion in decision-making in the RS, as thus setting the basis for youth policy and youth work in the RS. This work is further supported by the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of the Republic of Srpska Government, which implements activities set forth in the Law and further decisions related to the issue. Besides this, the RS Assembly has adopted a Resolution by which it marked the year 2004 and 2005 "Year of youth and solidarity".

Following the European standards and the Resolution of the Rome Conference on Youth in South Eastern Europe<sup>29</sup>, where the governmental mechanisms that should be in place for the development and implementation of Youth Policy were determined, Youth NGOs from RS have established RS Youth Council. The RS Youth Council is an umbrella institution gathering youth organizations, with an Assembly and a President that operate according to a dedicated Statute and Rule of Procedure. The tasks of the RS Youth Council are: to represent the interests of the young population; to provide guidance in the planning, development and implementation of the Youth policy; to provide information to young population on issues related to youth policy; to coordinate with responsible authorities in RS. These initiatives have enabled the youth in RS to systematically advocate and implement many actions that are directed towards the youth empowerment and participation.

The situation in the FBiH is going slowly. The FBiH has no umbrella youth association neither any relevant Law. The Federal Ministry for Culture and Sports has the youth within its portfolio, but this institution did not implement many activities focusing on youth and youth policy. The Ministry has established a Centre for Youth in 2004. However, the Centre deals mostly with individual cases of talented youth. Besides this, representative of the Ministry is a member of the Youth Commission. In July 2007 the Government and the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted a decision for inclusion of youth issues into the program activities of that Ministry. The Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Federation BiH will be renamed into the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of the Federation BiH.

Similar situation is at the cantonal level, the lower level of executive and legislative power in FBiH, where no coherent and substantial work has been done in this field. In some Cantons, such as Central Bosnia and Hercegovacko-Neretvanski Canton, some youth organisations have worked together to establish joint actions with regards to the youth policy at cantonal level, however none of these initiatives were fruitful.

In preceding chapters, we have already mentioned the fact that the issue of youth was taken seriously after publishing the UNDP Human Development Report on Youth in 2000. Many important local and international stakeholders have focused their activities on the youth, and thus

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<sup>28</sup> Zakon o omladinskom organizovanju, Republika Srpska, (the Law on Youth organising, Republic of Srpska) RS Official Gazette, no. 98/04.

<sup>29</sup> The "Conference on Youth in South Eastern Europe: Policy for Participation, Empowerment and Social Inclusion" held in Rome on 29-31 May 2002, was a joint initiative of the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Region Social Development Group and UNICEF Area Offices for South Eastern Europe. The Conference provided an important forum for meaningful dialogue between government, international actors, youth and civil society and the media, to raise awareness of the importance of investing in youth.

a lot of effort has been put to support and promote the youth initiatives in the country. The joint international and local support has achieved a lot on, primarily, raising awareness that young people need special attention, while a lot was also done on establishment of the basis for sustainable youth policy at both the state and other levels of government. The stakeholders that play an important role in the process are: Youth NGOs, Youth Information Agency (Omladinska Informativna Agencija) OIA, RS Youth Council (Omladinski savjet RS), Youth branches of political parties.

Exact data on the number of youth organisations in BIH do not exist, due to the fact that the NGO databases in the relevant Ministries only have the data on the overall number of NGOs registered. Yet, the Youth Information Agency (Omladinska Informativna Agencija) OIA Manual indicates that over 250 youth NGOs operate in the country today<sup>30</sup>, dealing with a wide range of activities in the area of sports, culture, leisure time, ecology, music, non-formal education, etc. in local communities. Although this is a huge number, many of these organisations are very weak, facing serious problems linked to finances, space and adequate support from either local governments or donors.

The research conducted for the purpose of this report indicated that a large number of youth organisations in the Municipalities involved in the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina” advocate and contribute to the youth policy development process. Out of 23 communities involved in the research, youth organisations from 16 communities are actively advocating for youth policy in their communities, through the organizations of events, debates, round tables and awareness campaigns<sup>31</sup>.

Yet, the greatest contribution and work in the field of youth policy at both state and local level was provided by the Youth Information Agency (Omladinska Informativna Agencija-OIA), whose major activity was advocacy, research and analysis in this field. OIA has prepared a research study and manual for youth work and youth policy; both of them are an excellent input in the work and advocacy efforts of the local organisations<sup>32</sup>.

The RS Youth Council (Omladinski Savjet RS) has been the most active organised youth initiative in the country. Its excellent advocacy and youth work resulted in ongoing support and legislation in the RS. The RS Youth Council is an umbrella organisation of youth leaders and organisations in the RS.

Youth branches of political parties were very active in the period of 2003-2004, within the Youth Branches of Political Parties project implemented by UNDP/UNV Integrated Youth Programme. Representatives from all more active parties were members of the Working group on Youth Policy whose work resulted in a *Joint Document on Youth Policy*, the first document of this kind in the youth policy development process in the country. The Document was a set of recommendations and strategies for creation of a sustainable youth policy at state level.<sup>33</sup> Besides this, many youth branches of respective political parties have worked hard on internal lobbying for increase in representation of young members in elections. The best results have been achieved in the Social Democratic Party (SDP) BiH, which decided that 33% of members in election lists should be young people under 33. Similarly, Party of Democratic Action (SDA) decided to have 30% of young people in their election lists, while Party of Democratic Progress (PDP) had 20% of young people in their committees and election lists. Parties like SDP, SDA, Croatian Democratic

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<sup>30</sup> OIA: Manual; Lokalne vlasti i mladi, (Local Government and Youth) , OIA, 2006, p.126

<sup>31</sup> These are youth organizations from Bugojno, Novi Travnik, Prozor/Rama, Vitez, Vareš, Breza, Žepče, Sokolac, Nevesinje, Kalesija, Milići, Lopare, Šekovići, Mrkonjić Grad, Gradiška, Kotor Varoš. Usually, members of the youth organizations participate in the working groups in charge to elaborate the youth policy document. Please refer to Chapter 4 for the youth policy process.

<sup>32</sup> More on Youth Information Agency (OIA) on [www.oiabih.info](http://www.oiabih.info)

<sup>33</sup> Full document may be found at [www.youth.undp.ba](http://www.youth.undp.ba)

Union (HDZ), PDP, Serbs Democratic Party (SDS) also have Youth Action plans, outlining main activities for young people in BIH.

Young people have a chance to participate and change the status of youth in the communities and higher levels of government. Yet, it must be noted that most of this work on advocacy and promotion of the youth issues mostly comes to individual leaders whose energy and motivation is a driving force of change.

Important support has been invested in the youth policy work in the country by International organisations. If we look at the work of International organisations, we can see two patterns and two levels of involvement: donor support and agency for projects and programmes. Donors are mostly Governmental Development Agencies and International Non Governmental Organisations, such as CIDA, DEZA/SDC, DFID, Dutch Embassy, EC, GTZ, Italian Cooperation, SIDA, SOROS, USAID, etc. These agencies provide grants and funds for projects and initiatives both to local and international implementing partners. Currently, funds are mostly directed towards capacity building of organisations and youth employment projects.

#### **4. Youth Policy at local level.**

##### **Key results achieved in the framework of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**

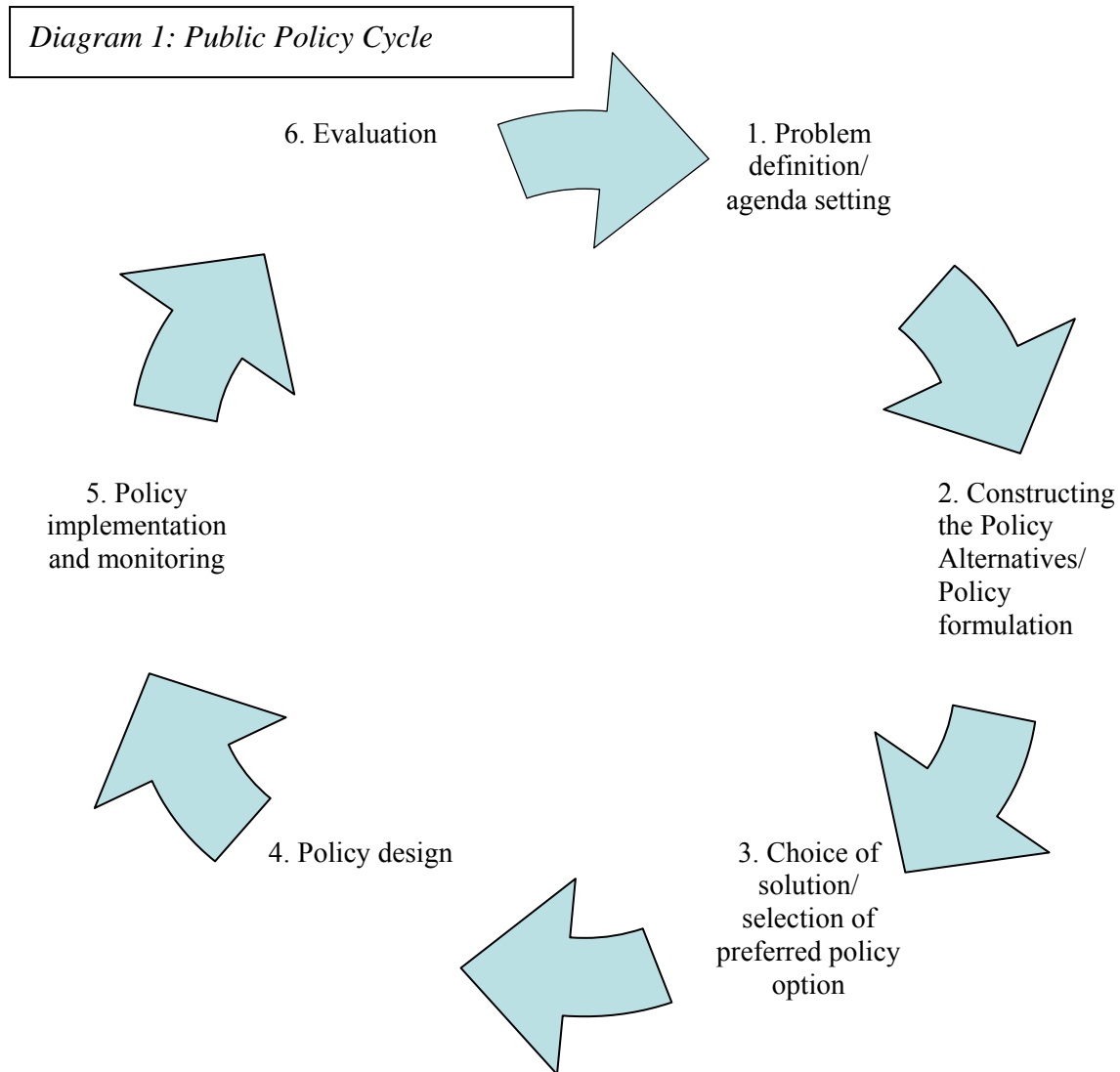
Local governments are, inherently, the primary institutions to create and deal with policies that concern their citizens primarily by virtue of their close interface with local communities. That is why the general opinion is that the state level government should define the guiding principles and directions in which a relevant policy should go, while the local governments, as closest to citizens should be concerned with transforming these guiding principles into living and working actions and initiatives to solve relevant issues.

This Chapter describes the results achieved by the Programme in this specific sector. Relating data have been collected during five (5) focus groups organized in August-September 2007 with representatives of the following communities: Vareš, Vitez, Fojnica, Busovača, Višegrad, Nevesinje, Sokolac, Sanski Most, Osmaci, Šekovići, Milići, Kalesija, Ugljevik, Lopare, Bugojno and Novi Travnik. Data from other communities involved in the Programme have been collected through the field offices located in the five areas where the Programme is being implemented: i.e. Banja Luka, Bugojno, Foča, Tuzla and Zenica.

It is important to note that this report is being drafted in the period when most of the municipalities involved in the research are in the process of drafting the Youth Policy Documents, which are to be adopted by the end of the year 2007. Hopefully, the report will provide a useful source of information about obstacles and positive factors contributing to improving the conditions of youth, and as such to be used in the youth policy development process.

#### 4.1 Youth Policy Design Process

International standards for public policy making and implementation follow model process map that is outlined in the following Diagram<sup>34</sup>:



This Model of Policy making cycle shows clearly that the policy making is not a one-off stand alone activity but an ongoing effort, exploration of status and needs, re-thinking and redesigning the policies and actions aiming at solving problems and developing society. It requires participation and inclusion of all stakeholders and inputs from different sides in shaping and implementing activities. This is especially true when it comes to youth policy development process, as youth needs are multidimensional and require constant feedback, monitoring of implementation to feed into the development process and outcomes.

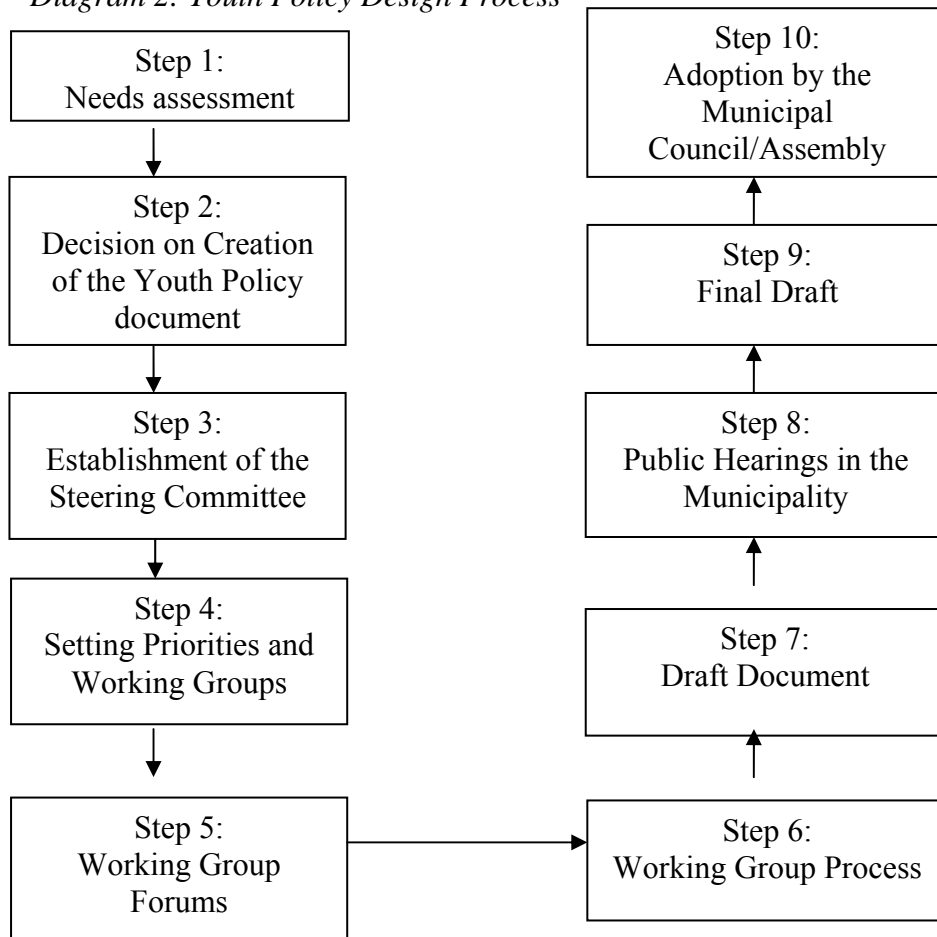
General trend in BiH is that local governments have started focusing more on the developmental issues, after years of post war reconstruction and rehabilitation. Fortunately, one of these issues is youth and there is a positive trend of putting the youth on the local agenda,

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<sup>34</sup> Young and Quinn, Writing effective policy papers, 2002, p. 12

especially in the areas of financing youth initiatives and youth inclusion. Further, local communities recognised that they need to start with design of the youth policies. The research conducted for the purpose of this report indicates that most target communities have already been passed first initial stages of the youth policy development cycle. Municipalities, supported by the Programme have applied the following approach in reaching the adequate policy design:

*Diagram 2: Youth Policy Design Process*



As we can see, the steps to reach the policy design follow the standard model for policymaking cycle, and actually subsequence the general steps in policymaking. Each step in this process marks significant activities carrying out by relevant actors in the community. The needs assessments (Step 1) for example, have been conducted mainly by Youth Officers, with support and input from local youth organisations and the Programme staff.

Based on the needs assessment, Mayor or Municipal Council/Assembly adopts the Decision on Creation of the Youth Policy Document, which marks the beginning of the work (Step 2).

Steering Committee is established and priorities are defined, which are further elaborated to create action plans in the working groups that are composed of community actors relevant for priority areas set. Members of the Steering Committee are the coordinators of the working groups (Step 3 and 4).

The working group process starts with initial forum. The aim of the forum (Step 5) is as follows:

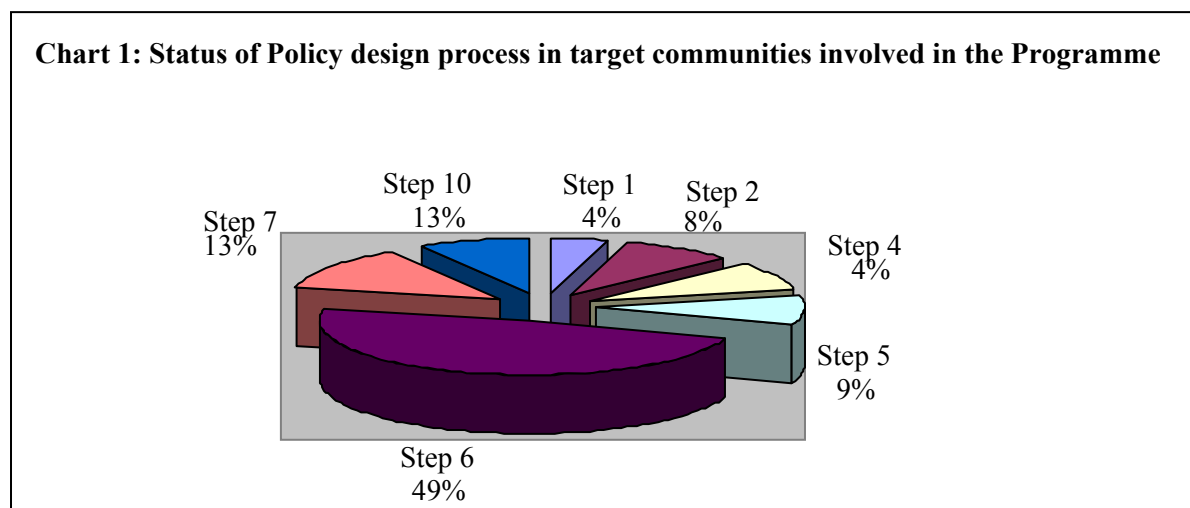
- To develop understanding about youth policy at local level;
- To develop understanding about concrete steps and methods in the youth policy writing;
- To improve skills of working groups members for work on policy paper for youth.

Right after the forum, the process might foresee the organizations of follow up forum, meetings and round tables in order to carry out consultations on the different sectors with the involvement of experts from each field according to the needs. On such basis, the different chapters of the youth policy documents are consequently drafted. All sector papers are then merged in the main draft document (Step 7).

Public hearing in the municipality aims at ensuring participation and inputs from citizens, whose inputs are integrated in the final draft, which is adopted by the Municipal Council/Assembly (Step 8-10).

However, the status of the policy design process varies significantly in the communities.

The Chart 1 below shows the status of youth policy design process in target communities involved in the Programme:



The above Chart shows that out of 23<sup>35</sup> communities involved in the research, 13% equal to three communities, have succeeded in adopting the Youth Policy Document. These are the Municipality of Bugojno, Municipality of Kalesija and Municipality of Šekovići.

Yet, almost half of the target municipalities have come to the Step 6, i.e. are in the working group process to draft segments of the youth policy documents, according to the set priorities by the Municipality. It is expected that the processes in most municipalities will be finalised by the end of the 2007, so that the implementation may start in 2008. Municipalities involved in the research intend to link their youth policy documents with the Municipal Development Strategy. This is essential for the new phase in the BiH development since there is intention of some international donors such as EC (IPA funds) and BEACON scheme of OSCE to

<sup>35</sup> The Municipalities involved in the youth policy process are the following:  
Banja Luka Area: Gradiška, Kotor Varoš, Mrkonjić Grad, Sanski Most, Šipovo;  
Bugojno Area: Bugojno, Prozor Rama and Novi Travnik;  
Foca Area: Nevesinje, Sokolac and Višegrad;  
Tuzla Area: Kalesija, Lopare, Milići, Osmaci, Ugljevik, and Šekovići;  
Zenica Area: Busovača, Breza, Fojnica, Vareš, Vitez and Žepče.

support and invest in the communities that have adopted documents related to local development with the youth policy document as a significant part of it.

#### **4.2 Youth Policy standards and priorities**

When it comes to local level policy making, relevant standards and Laws on Local Self Governance instruct local governance to enable and nurture citizen participation in all spheres of community life and decision-making<sup>36</sup>. These standards encompass citizen participation in decision-making, initiation of decisions and changing the decisions and general official records that lay under competencies of the Local governance, recommending and protesting against the operations or decisions of the government, etc. The EU standards for youth policy and youth participation at local and regional level clearly define participation and policy indicators that need to be fulfilled in building democratic, inclusive and prosperous society and inclusive governance.<sup>37</sup> These indicators measure the extent to which the government has succeeded in achievement of results in the relevant policy domains, discussed in Chapter 3 on Youth Policy concept. Thus, they help to measure level of inclusion and development of each community about youth empowerment.

Following this logic, the Council of Europe has set a number of indicators that are crucial for youth development, and that should be taken into account in creation of youth policies at local level<sup>38</sup>. These are:

- education;
- access to modern technologies
- professional advisory and professional orientation
- information
- opportunities for social and health protection;
- housing;
- employment;
- mobility and travel;
- justice and youth rights;
- opportunities for participation and active citizenship;
- leisure, cultural and social contents for youth;
- sports;
- youth exchanges and international experience;
- safe environment

Municipalities usually agree that these indicators in setting priorities for their Youth Policy documents are important as they naturally cover all areas of a young person's life. The Municipalities participating in the research conducted for the purpose of this report, which have set the priorities, have the following ones on their agenda<sup>39</sup>:

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<sup>36</sup> These standards have been included in the Laws on Local Self-Governance in both RS and the FBiH.

<sup>37</sup> OSCE & CoE, European Charter on youth participation in local and regional life, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> Council of Europe (2003): Experts on Youth Policy Indicators, third and concluding meeting-Final report, Strasbourg

<sup>39</sup> Please note that Municipalities of Breza, Šipovo and Sanski Most have not set the priority areas at the moment of finalisation of this report, and therefore will not be taken into account in this section of analysis.

Table 2: Priorities

Municipality	Education	Employment and entrepreneurship	Leisure time, sports and culture	Health and prevention	Social protection	Access to information	Youth organising	Youth participation	Security of youth	Ecology
Vareš	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Gradiška	x	x	x	x	x					
Milici		x	x	x				x		x
Šekovici		x	x	x	x	x		x		
Ugljevik		x	x	x	x			x		
Lopare		x	x	x	x		x			
Osmaci	x	x	x	x	x			x		
Kalesija	x	x	x	x				x	x	
Fojnica	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Vitez	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Busovaca	x	x	x							
Višegrad	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Sokolac	x	x	x	x		x				
Nevesinje	x	x						x		x
Prozor/Rama	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Bugojno	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Žepce	x	x	x	x	x					
Mrkonjić Grad	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		
Kotor Varoš	x	x	x	x		x		x		
Novi Travnik	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		

As we can see from the table above, employment is defined as priority in all communities, while leisure time, sports and culture is selected as priority in 95% municipalities. Health and prevention is defined as priority in 90%, while education in almost 80% of municipalities. These are closely followed by social protection and youth participation (70%), access to information (55%), and other.

The priority selection meets well the needs of young people in local communities. As we could see in the Chapter 2, young people face most difficulties in education and employment prospects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The education directly influences the employment opportunities for young people, and thus affects their lives as adults. That is why, these priorities are important to be elaborated carefully in order to implement meaningful and sustainable projects. However, municipalities do not have competencies to change the educational system, as their responsibility is only at level of financing material costs of schools. Even though Municipalities do not have competencies in educational activities, it is important to highlight that these are envisaged in the youth policy drafts and focused on improvement of conditions in schools; scholarships for pupils and students; projects in non-formal education for student councils and youth organisations linked to raising awareness and educational activities and ecology.

There is a range of projects and initiatives that youth policy documents envisage with regards to employment and entrepreneurship. Activities within this area are linked to education of young people how to successfully look for employment, foreign languages courses, computers, career fairs, support to business start-ups for young people, support to enterprises employing young people, etc.

Although health and social protection are high in the priority list for Municipalities, these policies are very complex for municipalities to deal with, as most of the competencies in this area are managed by Cantonal or entity Ministries of Health and Labour and Social Welfare. That is why municipalities usually envisage awareness raising projects and educational activities to share knowledge on health and social issues affecting young people.

Leisure time is a very important focus for municipalities involved in our research. There is a different approach to this issue in municipalities, whereas some municipalities distinguish between sports and culture, while others provide solution to the cluster of issues linked to leisure time, thus including sports, culture and other leisure activities within one cluster. For the purposes of this report, we have also clustered them together. Activities in this area are primarily directed towards supporting sports and cultural events, together with support to sports and cultural organisations. Municipalities also envisage support to youth organisations in organisation and implementation of a variety of activities that would enhance creativity and talents of young people and provision of alternatives for leisure time.

As it can be seen from the Table 2 above, some municipalities are concerned with youth participation, activism and access to information. Prioritisation of these issues also complies with a general trend of inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes and overall democratisation of the governance. Municipalities see that these issues might be better tackled by activities that could actively involve citizens in decision-making processes such as seminars, open debates, public hearings, etc. Municipalities also envisage organisation of voluntary actions by which the citizens, especially young people would be involved, educated and invited to participate. Documents also emphasise the need to support youth organisations and young individuals to build capacities to contribute to decision-making processes in their communities.

Ecology and security have been pointed in certain municipalities, following the expressed need, and activities within this sector are focused mostly on awareness raising and voluntary actions in the communities.

The Youth policy document, as a comprehensive work on elaboration of actions and projects within each priority areas was organised through working groups or boards in all municipalities. Each municipality decided on the type of drafting process and way in which the working groups would focus on respective issues. Thus, the number of working groups and definition of work on the design vary from municipality to municipality, as it can be seen in the Table 3. Usually, the working groups are composed of representatives of the local government, youth sector and other institutions relevant for the specific priority area.

*Table 3: Working groups*

No. of working groups	1 working group	3 working groups	4 working groups	5 working groups	6 working groups	7 working groups
Community	Vareš, Višegrad, Nevesinje	Busovača	Milići, Ugljevik, Osmaci, Lopare, Šekovići, Novi Travnik	Kotor Varoš, Žepče, Gradiška, Sokolac, Vitez, Foynica	Kalesija, Mrkonjić Grad	Bugojno, Prozor/Rama

### **4.3 Youth Policy structures**

Structures and mechanisms are extremely important for a proper comprehensive approach to youth empowerment. It has been seen that the scope and choice of mechanisms in place may vary from community to community, depending on the community's features: level of development and post war rehabilitation, financial situation, level of development of the local civil society, etc. Some communities, therefore, are in a better position to work on the youth issues and devote human and financial resources for sustainable work on this, while some other municipalities may be overwhelmed with a range of problems, which may be decisive for their prioritisation. Due to these differences among municipalities, it is of crucial importance to create such programmes and initiatives that are community specific and that will not provide "all inclusive" solutions to problems.

The European Charter on youth participation at local and regional levels also sets standards for youth relevant structures within the governance. The Charter stipulates that local (and regional authorities) need to ensure legislations which grant support to structures of youth participation and to set the position of relevant person or body – to follow the implementation of support measures, to whom the relevant structures can refer in the case of need.<sup>40</sup>

The relevant public servant post is usually called the Youth Officer<sup>41</sup>, while the relevant bodies that participate in the youth policy process make up the Youth Commission or Youth Advisory Board. Additionally, bodies like Youth Parliament may be organised, although this is not common in small communities, therefore we will not discuss this body in this report<sup>42</sup>.

#### **4.3.1 Youth Officer**

The Youth officer is very new in the BiH government structure after the war. Before the war, there were similar servants, but they were very closely linked to the Communist party, whose members were also active members of the socialist youth.

The Youth Officer, by its definition, entails to have a person familiar and knowledgeable of the state of the youth and youth sector in the community; civil society and major trends in the field. Many advocates for establishment of this position prefer that this person is young, not a member of any party and not to have any additional portfolio besides the youth. However, the situation in the field shows a different reality. Many Youth Officers are experienced municipal administration employees, having a vast range of tasks within their portfolio. Besides, most of the times, Youth Officer is a member or close associate of a Mayor or a ruling majority in the Municipal Council.

By definition, the Youth officer is a person whose main responsibilities are to:

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<sup>40</sup> OSCE & CoE, European Charter on youth participation in local and regional life, Support to structures for youth participation, Article 68.

<sup>41</sup> Or "Referent za pitanja mladih" in local language.

<sup>42</sup> BiH Youth Parliament organized by OIA is not an institution, nor an official structure or formal network. It is a lobbying platform for youth, a meeting place, which is usually some legislative institution (eg. Parliament), for youth NVO representatives from BiH with other governmental, international etc. representatives where they discuss youth policy development and initiate some changes. It is an original mixture of state levels and youth themes and events happening in a parliamentary/legislative institution and/or in cooperation with it – thus the name Youth Parliament.

Please refer to OIA web site [www.oiabih.info](http://www.oiabih.info) and OIA Manual "Lokalne vlasti i mladi" (Local Government and Youth) for more information on Youth Parliament and other relevant bodies for youth.

- Act as intermediate between young people and their representatives and municipal government;
- Work on youth needs assessment and problem identification in the community
- Coordinate activities focusing on youth policies;
- Work on design of and inform young people on financial opportunities and activities within the municipality;
- Assist young people in advocacy for development and implementation of the youth policy at local and higher levels of government.

Out of communities involved in our research, only municipalities of Kalesija, Mrkonjić Grad, and Gradiška have this position defined, while Mayor's Assistant for NGOs, information and youth issues deals with these processes in Žepče and Šipovo. Similar situation is in Kotor Varoš where an officer in charge of NGOs also has youth in the job description. The process of setting up the youth policy in the municipalities may be a good point where it can be expected that concrete positions of Youth Officers will be initiated.

#### **4.3.2 Municipal Youth Commission**

European standards indicate that a Municipal Youth Commission should be established as a necessary and permanent body within the Municipal structure. This body proposes legislations relevant to youth in a form of action/strategic plan at local level. The Commission should be established by a Municipal Council as a permanent body that consists of seven members with different backgrounds. The tasks of the Commission usually include the following:

- Advocating and initiating dialogue on issues within the scope of the Commission; preparation of draft decisions and acts focusing on the youth for the Municipal Council
- Close monitoring of implementation of Municipal Council's acts and decisions with regards to youth;
- Initiate and nurture cooperation with relevant Municipal Departments, Municipal Council representatives, Commissions,
- Cooperation with Municipal Youth Commissions and other relevant bodies in other municipalities as well as representatives of other organizations dealing with youth

It seems that the Municipal Youth Commission is more popular body for the municipal governments. The research shows that out of 23 municipalities involved, 16 have Municipal Youth Commissions<sup>43</sup>. These commissions mainly deal with issues such as scholarships, grants for youth organizations, organization of the culture and sport events, cooperation with institutions and building relation between authorities and youth population.

The level of active involvement is a critical point of their work. Some Municipal Youth Commissions, e.g. Vitez, Šekovići, Gradiška, Mrkonjić Grad and Žepče have been very active and thus contributed to good work on youth issues, which is exactly their task - to be initiators of programmes for resolving the main youth problems.

The role and involvement of the Municipal Youth Commission is crucial for further development and implementation of the youth policy in local communities. The Municipal Youth Commissions should be the major actors in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process in the communities, and resource for policy inputs in the continuous cycle of the youth policy.

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<sup>43</sup> Municipalities of Vareš, Vitez, Busovača, Fojnica, Žepče, Breza, Kalesija, Šekovići, Milići, Ugljevik, Osmaci, Lopare, Bugojno, Mrkonjić Grad, Gradiška, Nevesinje, Višegrad.

### **4.3.3 Youth Advisory Board**

Youth Advisory Board is a voluntary youth forum that meets and discusses the youth issues and agrees on initiative to improve the living standard of young people. As such, its function is to advise, recommend and provide ideas for the development of the municipality, with a special emphasis on youth affirmation. Youth Advisory Board normally has between 10-15 members, who either are youth leaders or have experience in specific areas of youth policy.<sup>44</sup> So far, there are not many Youth Advisory Boards in the country, as most of the smaller communities believe that large body, as this Board is not necessary as the Youth Commission provides sufficient input into youth policy development process. Our research goes in favour of this statement, showing that out of 24 municipalities, only 2 municipalities Mrkonjic Grad and Sanski Most have the advisory boards established. On the other side, larger cities, like Sarajevo (City of Sarajevo, Municipality of Novi Grad) and Zenica have established such Boards to assist in recognition and solving the issues of youth concern.

In order to succeed in including and empowering the youth, governments should cooperate with Youth Sector in creation and implementation of a sustainable Youth Policy, which would enable youth participation both through active population represented through Youth Sector and delegates in the governments, i.e. youth advocates. The communication between youth and the Government should be clearly defined, systematically solved and in accordance with the European standards and practice, set out in the European Charter on participation of youth in Municipal and Regional life (1992).

### **4.3.4 Budget for youth**

Budget for youth activities is not a new procedure in BiH communities. The general practice in municipalities varies in terms of creating specific budget lines for youth and youth organisations, but most of municipalities cover the youth activities from different budget lines such as culture, sports, scholarships, NGOs, health, education, etc. i.e. ones regarded as comprising most of the youth needs. Municipalities often fund running costs of youth centres or organisations, as well as financing reconstruction of premises and space for youth activities.

The Youth Policy Documents – Strategies and Youth Action Plans need to envisage concrete budgets for implementation of activities, as integral part of the Documents adopted.

## **4.4 What does a Youth Policy Document need to include?**

We have seen that the very policymaking cycle model shows the process divided into three integral parts:

- a) Design;
- b) Implementation;
- c) Monitoring and evaluation.

The Design of the youth policy should be based according to the following questions:

1. Who is the target group?
2. What are the needs and issues of the youth population in the community?
3. What are the priorities that may be tackled and what are the goals to be achieved?
4. What measures within each priority should/can be applied?
5. How will the responsibilities be divided?
6. What is the financial and time framework for achievement of the set goals?
7. What are the Monitoring and Evaluation tools that need to be applied in order to ensure adequate and timely implementation of the policies in place?

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<sup>44</sup> OIA, SIROP4, April 2003. Recommendation no. 3; OIA BIH 2003.

Following this model, the Youth Policy Documents needs to have developed the following Sections:

1. Definition of the target group;
2. Context in the community - profile of the community and target group;
3. Goals and objectives within the respective Policy (based on set priorities);
4. Key actors in Policy Implementation;
6. Budget and Timeframe;
7. Monitoring and Evaluation plan.

Only in such way, the Youth Policy document may provide a meaningful base for further implementation of adequate measures for youth empowerment. Some municipalities are rather advanced and motivated to create a sustainable youth policy in their communities. Good examples of such practice are Kalesija, Sokolac and Šekovici.

Steering Committee and working groups in Kalesija have had a strong support from Mayor and Municipal Assembly members during the process of creation of Youth policy document. The Municipality has recognized the advantage of having that document adopted in order to present and to promote the Municipality to the potential donors. Municipality of Kalesija has been working on the local development strategy document and the youth policy document will be included. All projects that are foreseen in the action plan have been discussed among the wider population in Kalesija Municipality.

Municipality of Sokolac is advanced in the area of youth policy. The Municipality has created the draft of the Youth Action Plan, which envisages implementation of projects in the four priority areas: a) education; b) employment; c) leisure time; d) prevention of drug abuse. The projects are designed by working groups, which will also be in charge for the implementation. It is expected that the municipal budget will cover the costs of these projects in the period of three years, which is the duration of the Youth Action Plan.

#### **Case study: Šekovici**

Municipality of Šekovici is a small municipality whose 10,099 citizens face a lot of issues related to weak economic prospects and slow development. This municipality has been the most proactive in the matters concerning the youth and youth policies. Even though the municipality is small, civil society sphere is very colourful and active.

Šekovici has three active youth organisations, supported by the municipal budget and other forms of assistance. The new Youth Centre has been recently opened and is a space where young people gather and socialise, implement different activities. The organisations' members have been actively involved in the decision-making processes focused on youth in the community, while at the same time being active in provision of space and activities to gather young people and offer alternatives for their leisure time and non-formal education.

Besides provision of financial assistance to youth organisations, the Municipality has been very active in setting measures to empower young people to stay in the community and to enhance their socio-economic prospects by setting policies and actions. Firstly, the Municipality has adopted a Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Policy in March 2007. The Policy has set forth a range of measures to enhance employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people in the community, followed with budget specifically devoted to this activity. This Policy was soon followed by a multidimensional Youth Policy Document adopted in June 2007, for the period of 2007-2012.

The adopted Document was a result of inclusive drafting process, which focused on four priorities: a) employment and entrepreneurship, b) social and health protection, c) leisure time, sports and culture and d) participation and access to information. The Policy also envisages budgetary support to projects and activities in this regard. On the positive note, the Municipality has already started with implementation of projects from the Youth Policy document.

Both Youth focused policy documents are linked to the overall Municipal Development Strategy, which is additional marker of Municipality's commitment and vision of the issue.

## 5. Meaningful youth policy at local level – is it possible<sup>45</sup>?

In the Chapter 4, we have outlined the model of policy design process as well as the standard structures and frameworks that are needed for successful creation and implementation of youth empowerment measures. However, in practical terms, all these standards and structures are meaningless without serious political will, enabling working and social environment and adequate continuous support to people in charge with the implementation of set measures. Having in mind the importance of factors influencing the work on the policy setting and implementation, the Chapter 5 will try to capture present state of the youth policy environment in the target communities and perceptions of the future advantages and constraints in its implementation.

### 5.1 Factors influencing the youth policy development process

A significant share of the focus group work was devoted to discussing and reflecting on factors influencing the progress of the youth policy creation in local communities. The focus group discussions reflect the fact that work and the results achieved or to be achieved are being conducted in a very difficult surrounding, influenced by the following factors: a) external - those originating from a general socio-economic and political environment in the community and b) those relating to formal structures in the community. The Table 4 below summarizes the comments and opinions of focus groups participants:

*Table 4: Factors influencing the youth policy development process*

External	Formal structures in the community
Politics	Disinterest of stakeholders
Socio-economic situation in the community	Lack of recognition of young people as a priority (in some municipalities)
Specific features of a community	Lack of understanding and awareness of some key people in a community
Disinterest, pessimism and passivity of young people	People involved in the process (may be both an obstacle or advantage)
Prejudice, religious or ethnic differences and intolerance	Competition, prioritization and distribution of funds in the community
Brain drain	Policy development process end up as person-to-person relations
Constant turnover of young leaders is an obstacle to a sustainable youth policy development process	Older people see young people as a competition

<sup>45</sup> Outcomes of the focus groups held in the period August-September 2007 in Banja Luka, Bugojno, Foča, Tuzla and Zenica, with representatives of the following communities: Vareš, Vitez, Fojnica, Busovača, Višegrad, Nevesinje, Sokolac, Sanski Most, Osmaci, Šekovići, Milići, Kalesija, Ugljevik, Lopare, Bugojno and Novi Travnik.

Young people do not have capacities to be actively involved in the processes and gain benefits from them	Officers in charge of youth issues have more assignments in their portfolios, which prevents them to focus on this specific issue
Low quality of education and discrepancy between education and employment prospects	Procedures in municipal structures do not allow much field work with youth to youth officers
Lack of synchronized approach between the state/entity and local governments	Financial means for drafting and implementing youth policy
Local elections in 2008	Lack of real political support for youth issues
Lack of adequate employment opportunities for young people	

As we can see from the Table 4 above, municipal representatives see the general political and socio-economic environment as a major impediment in the youth work. The current socio-political situation is not very favourable for establishment of any meaningful and sustainable youth policy framework, as municipalities seem to be concerned with other issues that are set as their priority. Additionally, the municipal representatives state that the situation is made worse due to brain drain of youth to bigger communities either in BiH or abroad. This leads to a high turnover of young people, especially young leaders, who leave the community for studies or to find employment. The turnover of these leaders, who are bringing the youth policy development processes forward, leaves big gaps in the whole process, which slows down the process or even affects diminishing the results of the initiatives.

We have discussed the discrepancy between the education and employment prospects already in the Chapter 2. The discussions and statements from focus groups confirm such difficult situation, and effects that education system has on employment of young people. This is mostly seen in small communities where young people are caught between the lack of finances to continue their education and inability to find employment due to inadequate education.

The focus group discussions circled around the capacities and support to the matter within municipalities. Municipal representatives agree that there is no extensive support to the youth issue, mostly due to the fact that municipal legislative and executive powers see other issues as higher priority than young people. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule, and these may be found in the municipalities, which already have the Youth Policy document<sup>46</sup> or other relevant resources, such as budget. In general, the political will exists, but there is not much support to the operationalization of the youth initiatives and projects.

Additionally, municipalities lack serious capacities to adequately tackle the issues related to youth empowerment, mostly due to the fact that the people in charge of the youth issues also have a number of other issues in their portfolios, so they cannot devote all energy and time to this issue. This is a consequence of the fact that municipalities do not have sufficient resources to employ or grant one position for Youth issues, due to funding constraints and new needs of decentralisation processes.

## **5.2 Advantages**

Concerning the positive aspects, participants in all focus groups state that the personal engagement of people in charge of youth issues, whether they are Youth Officers or others, and

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<sup>46</sup> Example of Bugojno, Kalesija and Šekovici.

their motivation is the main drive of the youth policy development process. Most of the participants state that they use their everyday contacts and liaison with both legislative and executive branches to put the issue forward and speed up the process. The results vary due to the extent of influence and persistence of each individual officer. This is further supported by the extent of support and recognition of the importance by the Municipal Mayors and other relevant actors.

Another advantage as seen by the focus group participants is the extent of support from international and local organisations dealing with youth issues. Municipal representatives believe that this support was crucial and decisive in setting the youth issue on the agenda in municipalities.

Relevant is also the fact that the perception of the youth and youth policy is changing in local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. General agreement is that the communities have recognised the need to enable young people to actively participate in the community and to create empowering surrounding for youth development. This is also a result of the overall efforts and democratisation processes that have been happening in the country. The list of advantages as stated in the focus groups are listed in the Table 5 below:

*Table 5: Advantages in the youth policy development process*

<b>Advantages</b>
Advocacy and initiatives for youth policy
Personal engagement of youth referents
Young people as priority (in some municipalities)
Donations
Mayors recognise the need to tackle the youth issue
General perception of young people and youth policy is improving

It is important to mention that all interviewed (youth) officers agree that the capacity building processes provided by the Programme primarily, were of great assistance to them to understand, acquire knowledge and be further motivated to be involved in the youth issues. The general opinion is that such capacity building efforts are worth institutionalising as an ongoing possibility for on-job training and coaching.

In this regard, Youth Officers support and appreciate the establishment of the Association of Youth Officers<sup>47</sup> as an independent body that would provide commercial services of

- capacity building (through trainings and on-job coaching),
- monitoring of the youth policy implementation,
- consulting services in the youth policy documents design.

This Association (USM) is seen as very needed and beneficial for the work in this area.

Together with (youth) officers, youth organisations have played a very important role in the youth policy development process in local communities. The level of commitment and advocacy of youth organisations has been direct input into putting the youth on the agenda of municipalities in most communities. Thanks to the work of the youth organisations and youth leaders, the work on the Youth Policy documents was more intensive, and this is especially the case in Šekovici and Nevesinje. Some of the municipalities, like Nevesinje and Sanski Most also employed or plan to employ youth leaders as Youth Officers, thanks to their commitment and intensive work on the youth issues.

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<sup>47</sup> Udruženje službenika za mlade u BiH (USM), (Association of Youth Officers).

### **Case Study: Nevesinje**

Nevesinje is one of the poorest municipalities in RS and BiH. Its 18,858 citizens face a range of challenges linked to poor education, access to employment and overall development of the community. Due to this, the municipality faces a huge brain drain, especially of young educated people. These problems have prompted the local government to work on a set of measures in order to prevent the brain drain and attract young people to return to this community, marking the beginning of the youth relevant work, five years ago.

The set of measures included establishment of a modern kindergarten, music school with professional teachers with good education, finances for youth projects and initiatives, thus creating favourable conditions for young people to stay and/or return. Simultaneously, and in partnership with local government, the Youth NGO “Omladinska inicijativa Nevesinja” has designed and implemented a range of successful projects funded by donors such as Japanese Government and EC.

Municipality has been working on the youth policy standards for a while, although until recently it was more on a reactive basis. In spring this year, the Municipal Assembly has adopted the Act of youth policy document design. This Act envisaged establishment of the Management Committee, which would deal with design of the document. The Committee has 10 members, both from the government and others sectors in the community. The Youth Commission that has been formed is to monitor the design of the document and the implementation of the Youth Action Plan. The Youth Policy Document will focus on four priority areas: a) socialisation- youth participation and inclusion in decision-making processes; b) employment; c) education; d) ecology.

Not all these initiatives would be possible without great engagement of the Youth organisation members and their excellent advocacy and visibility in the community. The organisation has around 300 members, out of which over 50 are educated young people, who are also active at higher levels of government. The organisation is an active member of the Youth Council of Republic of Srpska, thus being involved in the advocacy at higher level of government. The youth organisation in partnership with Municipal government is currently working on a big project of establishment of the Youth Centre, which would also include business incubator, youth hostel, bowling room and venue for other activities. It is interesting that the Youth Centre will be established in the old abandoned army barracks. This big project is to be funded by the Japanese government. The Municipal government has also financed reconstruction of a sports hall.

Nevesinje Municipality is a good example of a community where even scarce resources may not be the obstacle or reason for lack of a coherent and successful work towards youth empowerment.

### **5.3 Needs**

Municipal representatives discussed a lot about the needs to successfully work on the youth policy design and implementation. A range of needs has been expressed during the discussion on the youth policy.

Firstly, the municipal representatives believe that comprehensive change of the public administration will contribute to change the approach towards youth issues. Only with changing the attitude and capacities of relevant personnel in the municipalities, youth issues will be tackled in a concrete and sustainable way. This change could come through changing the age and qualification structure of the municipal staff as well as by provision of additional trainings and

study visits in order to build the capacities and awareness of the importance and ways to solve the issues affecting young people. Such actions would contribute to the change in the mindset of municipal administration and whole communities as well as the approach to the issue.

The above-mentioned activities should be supported by strengthening and supporting the existing and new initiatives of young people or all others supporting this population.

Local governments need support from the higher levels of government, especially Entity and State level governments. Adequate and comprehensive frameworks would be of great importance for local communities to successfully address the needs of young people.

## **6. Systematized presentation of the recommendations developed in the regional conferences<sup>48</sup> of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**

The involvement and efforts that different actors have invested into the youth policy development processes at state and local levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been discussed in the Chapter 5. These efforts were invested into advocacy, promotion and support to capacity building measures for government officials and young people, as well as overall empowerment of young people to participate actively in decision-making processes in the country. Most importantly, vast interest and efforts have been invested into advocacy and support to youth policy development processes at local level. Thus empowering both the youth organisations and respective municipal authorities to designate, work on and adopt youth policy papers-strategies followed by Youth Action Plans.

As part of these efforts and in order to contribute to the local and regional debate on the youth policy development processes and needs, the Programme organized five (5) regional conferences on youth policy. The aim was to provide the basis to local authorities, young people and other relevant stakeholders to discuss, present, agree and recommend upon the most important segments to be covered by respective policies and actions.

Regional conferences were held in May and June 2007 and hosted over 710 participants from over 47 municipalities and organisations, representatives of different sectors of community.

Participants discussed and worked on the following topics:

- ↪ Education
- ↪ Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship
- ↪ Youth inclusion and participation in public and political life
- ↪ Social and health protection
- ↪ Youth work, Non-formal education and youth volunteerism
- ↪ Access to information
- ↪ Leisure activities (sports, culture, youth activism, voluntarism)

The working groups resulted in a set of recommendations that may be placed into eight (8) categories. The systematised recommendations are listed in the text below.

### **6.1 Young People and Education**

Educational institutions should adapt their programmes and be supported by Ministries of Education to provide adequate response to the job market needs. A large number of young people go on search for jobs after completing secondary school and face a problem of inadequate preparation profession due to inadequate education or vocational training. The recommendations are as follows:

- Even though local governments do not much influence on legislation which is decided upon at Cantonal level and Entity level, they can still use the experience and knowledge and provide suggestions and advice to higher level of government to contribute to reform processes, and support them further in Cantonal Assemblies;

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<sup>48</sup> The regional conferences were organized in the following municipalities: Bugojno on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007; in Foča on the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2007; in Tuzla on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2007; in Vitez on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2007 and in Mrkonjić Grad on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

- Change the Pedagogical standards, which are unacceptable and inhumane, especially in terms of number of students in classrooms, so that the quality of education is in question;
- Municipalities must and can support establishment of educational or municipal expert teams (pedagogies, special education teacher, speech therapist, paediatricians) to work with students with special needs, and also show support measures for entrepreneurs who employ these categories of people;
- Municipalities have to participate in activities that have already started in BiH in terms of opening info-points – places which would regularly update information on activities of educational and non-governmental sector, while municipal officers should forward this information to other institutions;
- Initiate activities to ensure conditions for extended stay of students in schools, in order to actively use all resources of educational and non governmental sector;
- Request special funds for talented students to motivate them;
- Request higher number of scholarships for best secondary school and university students;
- Free promotion of successful projects of educational workers and volunteers through local media (radio, magazines etc.);
- Municipalities should support actions of schools in equipping school with teaching material, as well as sports and cultural events;
- Stimulate projects of Parent-Teacher Councils as motivation for best projects. In this way, the work of Parent-Teacher Councils would improve to a large extent and thus contribute to better quality work with children and youth;
- Finances to out-of-school programmes (foreign languages, IT, etc);
- Design programmes of psycho-social and material assistance to vulnerable people;
- Support to creation of educational programmes for local media;
- Needs assessment in the areas of formal and non-formal education;
- Active design of enrolment policy;
- Organisation of a range of out-of-school activities;
- Support to practical training for students;
- Assessment and education on prevention of delinquency.

## **6.2 Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship**

- Adoption of a local youth employment strategy and relevant laws, as well as creation of less bureaucratic procedure in the process of employment of youth;
- Create a Law on decreasing taxes to companies employing young people and persons with special needs;
- Create a uniform data base of young unemployed people and jobs available;
- Better coordination and liaison of all sectors (government, civil society and businesses) to improve the conditions of youth employment;
- Young people should be involved in ongoing education processes and be active in job search. This means acquiring skills needed at application processes, CV writing, interviews, etc.
- Universities and other educational institutions should work on systematic education of cadres that are in demand. Schools should also cooperate more with employers and organise events such as “Career days”;
- Employment Agencies should improve cooperation with entrepreneurs in private sector, to promote youth employment by creation of favourable conditions for entrepreneurs who employ youth, such as financial contribution for first year of employment;
- Permanent market research, and informing the media on results;
- Education of unqualified unemployed persons to meet the market demands;
- Education on preparation of business plans should be provided by Employment agencies;
- Support to projects related to employment and self-employment;

- NGOs should create non-governmental employment agencies, whose main function would be promotion of active employment through:
  - Educational workshops aiming at training young people who are actively searching for job;
  - Brochures and other informational material on this subject;
  - Cooperate with local institutions and employment agencies on creation and implementation of special employment projects;
  - Educational activities in project writing for all NGOs who wish to become partners of non-governmental employment agencies.
  
- International organisations should have a special programme of support/financing the employment projects;
- Financial institutions (banks, micro-credit organisations, etc.) could contribute by designing a special “loan package for young people” based on favourable conditions;
- Municipality budgets should contain a line of support to business ideas of young people
- Establishment of centres for youth entrepreneurship;
- Improvement of inspection work;
- Inclusion of people with special needs into the employment processes;
- Sanctions to black job market;
- Protection of rights of workers;
- Prohibition of double engagement public-private sector;
- Accepting volunteer work as probationary work;
- Decrease taxes for business start-ups.

### **6.3 Youth Inclusion and Participation in Public and Political life**

- Design and realisation of the Youth Policy document, and thus systematic and institutional solution of the youth issues and their active participation in decision-making processes through Youth Advisory Boards, inter-sectoral bodies and Youth Council;
- Raise awareness of young people (age 15-30) on the need for active participation (elections, NGOs, political parties);
- Improvement in terms of: information, education, and training of young people engaged in public and political life;
- Set criteria for election of youth representatives (competition and competencies);
- Creation of Codex of behaviour and actions;
- Formal and non-formal education in terms of active participation;
- Promotion of best practice models;
- To decrease manipulation of young people;
- Decrease divisions of “old” and “young”;
- Young people should have concrete influence and not to be tools of senior politicians.

### **6.4 Social and Health Protection**

Social and health protection are both complex as the legislation linked to these is very disburbed and complicated, as laws are different in each Canton and Entity. This is especially visible in legislation linked to children and youth (in terms of social support measures, health protection, different rights and access for children and youth in different institutions.

There is no uniform database on social and health status of children and youth in the country, while young people are not interested to be organised and try to find ways to solve these issues. Health protection is envisaged as right based on obligatory health insurance that may be

obligatory, extended and voluntary. The term “health protection” encompasses a range of rights, before all: right to emergency assistance, protection from epidemics, health protection of children to age of 15, health protection during pregnancy and maternity, etc.

Social protection, on the other side, is organised work focusing on diminishing causes or outcomes of social needs states and offering assistance to citizens and their families that are in the state of social need. As this area is very complex, the set of recommendations is as follows:

- A special programme of health insurance for young (un)employed persons for one-month period should be established in coordination with employment and health institutions. The funds should be ensured from Cantonal budgets and/or Entity level;
- Educational Programme for young people in the area of rights linked to health protection should be organised in cooperation with Employment Agencies. This programme would educate young people on the right on health protection that they can apply upon finishing secondary school;
- Informing and educating young people on health and prevention (drug abuse, violence, prostitution, risky behaviour);
- Improve cooperation between schools and health institutions;
- Organisation of programmes and activities to promote healthy way of life;
- Support opening of Youth Centres and other specialised institutions;
- Assistance to young people with special needs;
- Strengthen NGO sector in terms of services to improve the state of children and youth;
- Improve cooperation between NGO sector and public institutions that deal with social and health issues;
- Inform and educate children and youth on legal rights in social and health protection;
- Creation of data base on health state of children and youth;
- Create and implement programmes on health and environment, while at the same time working on development of more favourable approach in schools and kindergartens;
- Involve young volunteers in municipal programmes of social and health protection;
- Increase inclusion of young people in development strategies with special emphasis on employment of young people with special needs;
- Reconciliation of marginalised ethnic groups (Roma) and their integration in community;
- Involve children and youth of socially excluded categories in programmes of youth organisations;
- Ensure more public space for issues linked to social and health protection of children and youth;
- Protection of children until age of 15, regardless of parents’ status or their insurance
- To place a ban on private praxes for health workers employed in the public sector;
- Start with adequate implementation of laws in the area of social and health protection;
- Establishment of expert team and commission in municipalities to coordinate the work on social and health protection;
- Establishment of health counselling for children and parents in order to provide information and counselling to children in the areas of reproductive health, drug abuse, etc.
- Establishment of centres for mental health;
- Analysis of the state of application of health insurance to be done at local level;
- Establishment of extended social protection for children of unemployed persons, budgeted from the municipal funds;
- Establishment of SOS phone for domestic violence;
- Establishment of shelters for victims of domestic violence.

## **6.5 Youth Voluntarism, Activism and Youth Work**

As discussed before, BiH youth faces a lot of problems linked to education, poverty, lack of information, low engagement of young people as well as disillusionment and no motivation to participate in society. Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have any Laws on volunteerism, and voluntary work is not recognized in any company or public sectors. Additionally, young people face the lack of adequate space to gather, to play sports or organise cultural events, lack of financial resources for youth activism, which contribute to further marginalisation and exclusion of young people. Recommendations to change the current situation are the following:

- Revision of the work of NGOs and their activities;
- Strengthening mutual cooperation in the community; advocacy, raising awareness on the need of joint actions;
- Establishment of youth clubs;
- Setting the budget for youth;
- Provision of information to young people and establishment of Youth Informational centres;
- Promotion of youth activism;
- Promotion and more active work of Municipal Sports associations;
- Establishment of positions of Youth referents in Municipal/Cantonal structures;
- Establishment of the youth policy structures at the state level and adopting relevant legislations;
- Strengthening of voluntarism, youth work and activism and adopting the Law on voluntarism;
- Education of youth workers;
- The volunteer engagement should be approved as a probationary work;
- Assess the possibilities of health insurance provision for volunteers;
- Networking of organisation dealing with voluntary work;
- Complete reform of education;
- Finances to local and regional volunteer services that will be coordinated by the State agency;
- Organise volunteer camps and hostels;
- Certificates from non-formal education centres should be approved in the process of job applications;
- Establish standardised tests for non-formal education, which would be the basis for issuing standard state certificates;
- Legalise non-formal education;
- Pre-qualification through youth schools;
- Organise different types of trainings with adequate methodologies.

## **6.6 Leisure Activities**

Many research studies indicate that a vast number of young people spend time without any plan or in any systematised way. Cultural and sports events are minimal, while there are not many other ways to actively spend the leisure time, especially in small communities. In order to solve these problems, the following measures should be taken:

- Assess the youth needs;
- Establish youth centres;
- Establishment of amateur theatres and scene;
- Organise youth events;
- Provide adequate information to young people;
- Provide adequate support to youth mobility;

- Set dates for traditional youth actions (voluntary actions such as cleaning, etc.);
- Construction of sports fields;
- Creation of cultural events and associations, especially music and literature;
- Peer education;
- Local communities should ensure more space for young people and stimulate youth workers to offer more youth related activities;
- Inform and educate young people to engage in citizen initiatives, in order to motivate them to participate in civil society activities;
- Nurture cooperation between youth organisations and local governments;
- Set criteria for subsidies for sports and culture, with a special focus on talented persons in sports, music and other cultural activities at local and state level;
- Stimulate young people by financial and other means (certificates, diplomas, awards, etc);
- Advocacy for establishment of adequate space and resources for leisure time;
- Raise awareness of significance and importance of non-formal education, culture and sports;
- Support the work of student council in primary and secondary schools;
- Support inclusion of children and youth with special needs in all leisure activities;
- Nurture tolerance and intercultural cooperation of young people throughout BIH.

### **6.7 Access to Information**

Young people are not adequately informed on opportunities provided by municipalities and other actors in their communities. Due to lack of information, young people are passive, as they do not know where to find answers or support for their concerns. This leads to the situation where young people spend their time inadequately, in cafes, bet shops, or streets. In these circumstances, young people encounter opportunities to turn to risky behaviour. Recommendations to improve access to information are the following:

- Improve access to information for young people;
- Draft a law on information;
- Education of young people on information channels;
- Setting up municipal bulletins, information boards, etc. especially in rural areas;
- Special links for young people on municipality websites and their regular updates;
- Organisation of “Open days” in communities where different organisations and institutions would present their projects and activities;
- Improve or set communication strategies in municipalities;
- Distribution of municipal bulletins in youth organisations and schools;
- Info desks in municipalities;
- Free internet access for young people in the municipality;
- Radio and TV shows with mayor, youth referents, politicians, NGO workers, etc.;
- SMS information actions;
- Mailing lists of youth organisations;
- School magazines, brochures and other informational material;
- IT education;
- Education in PR, communication and presentation;
- Volunteer actions to share and distribute information on interesting and important subjects;
- Promotion of youth actions and youth work.

## **6.8 Youth Policy**

Youth policy may only be created if there are preconditions for its creation. These could be summarized as follows: motivated Youth Officer, Youth Commission, Youth Council, space for young people, budget for youth, political will and existence of international documents adopted by BIH, and which are obligatory for government in the process of youth policy establishment. Strategy for young people should be integral part of the general Municipal Development Strategy and it is of great importance to create a “critical mass” of informed young people, who are able to implement adequate projects. Additionally, youth policy ensures easier access to donor funds and contributes to promotion of youth organisations and attracting general youth populations.

The recommendations for this area are the following:

- Establish institutional cooperation and partnership between local governments, youth, NGOs, representatives of other sectors, with special emphasis on involvement of young people in all working groups for youth policy creation as well as decision making processes at local level;
- Ongoing qualitative and quantitative assessment and research of current status, needs and problems of young people;
- Ensure advisory and support of experts in the youth policy development process;
- Create priority list of problems and needs, and work on their solutions (create action plans together with budgets);
- Design strategic and action plan for a given period of time;
- Educate and inform all actors involved in the process of youth policy creation (emphasis on Youth Officers and representatives of Municipal Councils);
- Involve active youth branches of political parties in the youth policy development processes;
- Ongoing monitoring – set up a Municipal working group that will monitor the process of implementation of the youth policy.

As we could see from the specific sets of recommendations, they provide comprehensive input into the policy debate and as such, they should be taken seriously into account in the process of creation of youth policies especially at local level. It is important to note that besides these Regional Conferences, an International Conference was organised in Sarajevo in December 2006, to present the “Study on Youth Employment”. This conference resulted in a set of recommendations that focused on youth employment<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Davorin Pavelic: Study on Youth Employment. The study is finalized in the framework of the Programme “Improving the conditions of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina”. The Recommendations may be found in the Annex V of the Study.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

*"The passage from authoritarianism to democracy is therefore a crucial time of growth for nations and their young people alike. And, in many ways, the ups and downs, the gains and losses and the missed opportunities of the transition nations are amplified and played out in lives of the young people."*

(UNICEF, "Young people in changing societies".  
Regional Monitoring Reports, no. 7. Florence: INICEF Innocenti  
Research Centre, 2000)

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been going through a painful and slow process of transition and post war reconstruction, in its mid-term causing major deterioration in vital segments of society. The socio-economic prospects of the country are still very bad, due to vast destruction of the big pre-war economy that relied mainly on large-scale and heavy communist industry, and slow transformation of the central economy to market economy. These factors are interconnected with the increase of the grey economy that now overwhelms BiH market and impedes the process of economic recovery.

Education system also decreased in the quality, which is closely linked to the brain drain and discrepancy between the education and employment prospects. As it has been demonstrated in the preceding Chapters, the economic and educational factors are interconnected and jointly create the feeling of poor and not prosperous future for the young people.

The political environment in the country is not very favourable and inclusive for young people either. As we could see in the preceding chapters, young people feel excluded from the decision-making processes in the country, while the youth policy development processes have only political support stated, while the operationalisation of these statements is slow in most of the communities. Above all, the hectic and painful democratisation process imposes many higher priorities, thus frequently neglecting the *"importance of essential support to creating beneficial status in the best interests of (...) young people"*<sup>50</sup>

These factors create a grim environment for a development of a young person, who is already going through a twofold transition (the internal transition, interlinked with and made more difficult by the external, society transition). A young person is already vulnerable just by undergoing their internal transitions and times for self-development and appreciation, exposed to and searching for new experiences (they engage in sexual relations, raise voice for or against different factors and events in either a family or community, may try to experiment with different drugs, etc). Inadequate education, lack of employment opportunities together with marginalisation and exclusion from decision-making processes in the community make a young person further vulnerable, practically unprepared, and not ready to face the consequences of their behaviour and decisions they make individually.

From the above stated, it is obvious that the young people's internal transition takes place in such an ambiguous and depressing environment, with no certainty that in future their "life projects" will be realised. Their vulnerability equals in increased apathy, uncertainty, and consequently disinterest in social interaction.

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<sup>50</sup> Sekulovic, Rasa; "Different Forms of Children's and Young People's Participation in SEE" at the web site:  
[http://www.coe.int/T/E/cultural%5Fco%2Doperation/Youth/Research/Papers/Individual\\_Research\\_Papers/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/cultural%5Fco%2Doperation/Youth/Research/Papers/Individual_Research_Papers/)

All these factors influencing life and development of a young people have larger scale of influence on the overall community development prospects for local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Local governments, as first instance of dealing with citizens and their needs, thus have a number of priorities to select and a number of different issues to deal with. That is why, most of the times, the local governments prioritise other issues, such infrastructure, over selecting issues directly tackling young people, justifying such approach by claiming that all projects are relevant for young people as citizens of given community. However, thanks to efforts of local and international stakeholders, and before all local youth organisations in respective communities, the youth policy has been set on the agenda of municipal authorities, together with the recognition of the need to tackle the ever-increasing youth marginalisation and brain drain. As an answer to these needs, municipalities have started thinking about possible comprehensive response to these needs. The response is mostly envisaged as a comprehensive youth policy document that would contain a range of initiatives and actions to solve the priority issues affecting youth in their communities, together with budgets devoted to these actions.

However, local communities have a long way to go in order to provide substantial input into youth empowerment. Municipalities face a number of difficulties linked to current municipal administration structure and budgeting, which does not allow a lot of freedom and space for additional portfolios, while the capacities of people are still underdeveloped and inadequate. People who deal with the youth issues in the municipalities are usually overburdened with other assignments, so the work on the youth issues remains slow and inadequate. This is further reinforced by the fact that relevant stakeholders from other sectors of society are not very interested and motivated to be involved in the youth policy development processes. There is no wide understanding of the importance and need to tackle this issue adequately, as other populations and other issues in the society are seen as a higher priority.

On the other side, there is a high turnover of young leaders who are a driving force of the youth policy development process. This additionally slows down and impedes the process, as the new leaders need a lot of time to understand, learn and respond to the needs and activities set forth by other stakeholders.

Yet, the youth issue has been set on the agenda and this is a non-reversible process, which is already giving some results. Local authorities have largely initiated the work on the youth policy documents, and most of the communities involved in the research for the purpose of this report expect to have the Youth Policy Document and the Youth Action Plan by the end of 2007. Municipalities have set priorities vis-à-vis youth and already discuss a range of activities and projects that will contribute to changing present reality and provide space for youth development. The local level work has been extended to higher levels by a number of regional exchanges and joint discussions and recommendations that are valuable input for creation of comprehensive and sustainable youth policy framework for the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This input may be brought together in the following recommendations for the higher levels of government:

1. Evidence based youth policy – the comprehensive framework for youth at the state/entity level should be built upon evidence collected in local communities in the country;
2. Vision of the youth empowerment should be transformed in a set of actions to enable young people to develop and grow;
3. Youth policy framework should be created in such a way to reduce gaps in its implementation;

4. Local governments and local realities should be taken into account in creation of a youth policy framework in order to incorporate realistic needs of young people;
5. State/entity governments should provide adequate support to local governments in solving the youth issues;

The youth policy at state/entity level is very important as a means of setting a comprehensive framework and standardisation of approach to youth issues at local level. The municipal governments have recognised that real work for young people starts and happens at local level. The municipalities should thus create *good quality documents* as a framework of local activities to tackle the youth issues. The framework should include a range of internal and external actions and projects in order to a) build capacities of municipal staff to work on the issues in a good quality way, b) enable serious and proactive inclusion of young people in all processes in the community, c) create or enable good conditions for youth development. This process should take into account the following recommendations:

1. Youth policy development process should be based on accurate, complete and adequate information and data on the status of young people in the community;
2. Youth policy development process should actively involve all relevant stakeholders, especially young people, in the community in order to create the most realistic document and actions;
3. Create a position of the Youth Officer within the Municipal Administration, with a clear portfolio and job description, and include this position in official systematisation of the Municipal Administration;
4. Ongoing capacity building of relevant municipal staff should be ensured together with quality assurance of all actions envisaged by the Document;
5. Municipalities should ensure adequate resources for implementation of actions and initiatives;
6. Youth Policy implementation process should envisage serious and well planned Monitoring and Evaluation plan;
7. Ensure complete transparency throughout the whole process of creation and implementation of the youth policy;
8. Youth policy development processes should serve as ongoing learning opportunity for local governments in improving their services and approach to citizens.

Only in this way, the youth policy development processes may become sustainable and adequate for youth empowerment and active participation in community life.

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