

Youth Policies and Priorities

Youth Policy and Engagement Forum

May 20th 2022

[Young Cities](#) is the youth pillar of the [Strong Cities Network](#) (SCN) that connects young people with local governments, enabling common solutions to the challenges of hate, polarisation and extremism around the world. Its work is geared towards building mutual trust between young people and institutions and creates opportunities to address the most pressing issues facing their communities.

SCN has been operating in the Republic of North Macedonia since 2016. In 2020, the Young Cities programme built on the success and trust of the network by bridging the gap between youth and municipalities in addressing local challenges and building more resilient communities. For that purpose, the programme supported 14 informal youth groups from Gostivar and Skopje to create and deliver social change initiatives in their communities. Additionally, the programme supported two city initiatives by the Municipalities of Gostivar and Cair that strengthened their youth engagement efforts.

As part of our engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia, Young Cities is organizing the Youth Policies and Engagement Forum. The event aims to start an extremely important dialogue between institutions and youth and to offer a platform where young people can represent themselves and their communities beyond the framework of daily politics. The young activists who are ambassadors of the Young Cities programme participated in a one-day policy-making workshop where they were introduced to key policy-making processes, competencies of institutions and the legal framework, on the basis of which they created this document with a set of policies and priorities.

The document consists of two layers of priorities and recommendations stratified by level of government, i.e. at the local and central level drafted by the Young Cities Ambassadors in Skopje and Gostivar. With this document, the Young Cities programme calls upon the Secretariat for European Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Agency for Youth and Sports, the City of Skopje, the Municipality of Gostivar, the Municipality of Cair and other relevant stakeholders to consider youth priorities at the forum and take them into consideration for implementation in accordance with existing legally prescribed competencies.

Below are the specific priorities and recommendations produced by the Ambassadors of the Young Cities programme.

Priorities and recommendations for local self-government units

- Establishment of a Local Youth Council in accordance with the Law on Youth Participation in the Municipality of Cair
- Involvement of representatives of youth organizations in the creation of the Local Youth Strategy as well as the Local Youth Council upon its establishment
- Greater transparency in the election of members of the Youth Council and its work in the Municipality of Gostivar
- Commencement of a nation-wide capacity building programme for Local Youth Councils for more effective participation in policy-making, with a pilot phase in the City of Skopje with the ultimate goal of implementation at the national level
- Revitalization of abandoned buildings in municipal ownership and the opening of a city library and theater in the Municipality of Gostivar
- Drafting a Local Green Strategy for the Municipality of Gostivar which will contain recommendations for public transport, public spaces and safety of the local community
- Commencement of municipal cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science for training of psychologists in primary schools to prevent peer-to-peer violence

Priorities and recommendations for central government institutions

- The Ministry of Education and Science to prepare an action plan for dealing with peer-to-peer violence in public educational institutions and to cooperate with the municipalities in the implementation of trainings for psychologists in schools to address this challenge
- The Ministry of Education to increase the budget for inclusion of persons with disabilities in the education system and to prepare an action plan for reform steps
- The Ministry of Education and Science to prepare a strategy in cooperation with youth organizations for retaining scholarship holders, strengthening their engagement in public institutions, and offering other employment opportunities in the country
- The Ministry of Education and Science to adjust the curriculum of civic education courses to provide an explanation of the state system, levels of government, competencies of institutions and the overall decision-making structure
- The Ministry of Culture to establish a Youth Council that will contribute to the design of public funding opportunities and competitions that include the youth perspective and provide support and resourcing to young cultural actors
- The Ministry of Culture to foresee a budget and open special competitions and programmes to encourage and support young artists

- The Agency for Youth and Sports to increase the percentage of the budget allocated to youth activities and to cooperate with the Secretariat for European Affairs for the implementation of youth initiatives with international funds
- The Secretariat for European Affairs to be included in the establishment of Local Youth Councils in accordance with the Law on Youth Participation and to support the capacity building and development of activities of the Local Youth Councils with the funding mechanisms available