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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN KOSOVO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Unpacking the Local Youth Action Councils impact on policymaking in Kosovo Local Government

European Union Kosovo

Lead NGO for publishing the report

Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Kosovo (YIHR KS) is a non-governmental organization with the mission to promoting human rights and democratic values as the foundation of a responsible and progressive society. YIHR KS is dedicated to the process of dealing with the past and reconciliation, protection of human rights, empowering the rule of law and the youth empowerment in Kosovo as well as in the region. YIHR KS is a member organization of the Equal Rights for All Coalition (ERAC).

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Equal Rights for All Coalition

ERAC brings together seven (7) NGOs that work in the domain of rule of law and fundamental rights that will work together with an additional nineteen (19) grass root NGOs, with a particular focus on the establishment of a sustainable network of NGOs that are active in the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of vulnerable and/or marginalised groups. The project's special focus are the following groups: all minority communities in Kosovo, women, youth and LGBT community. Although working on similar topics and issues, these NGOs are often divided on the basis of the particular target groups they are working with or the region they are active in. By establishing structural cooperation between selected NGOs and providing formal opportunities for continuous learning, the action generates the sharing of knowledge and experience between NGOs, strengthens their capacities for advocacy with relevant central and municipal institutions, and increases their visibility.

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- Youth Initiative for Human Rights;
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY....7

INTRODUCTION....9

METHODOLOGY....11
- PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY OF SELECTING 10 LYACS....11

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS....15

LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL - LYAC....16
- LYAC OPERATIONS AND STRUCTURES....16
- LYAC AS A MECHANISM TO IMPACT MUNICIPAL POLICYMAKING....18

UNPACKING THE LYACS' IMPACT ON POLICYMAKING IN KOSOVO LOCAL GOVERNMENT....19
- UNPACKING THE LYACS....19
- MAIN PROBLEMS THAT YOUTH FACES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL....19
  - LYACS' ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT....20
  - LYACS' ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY EXECUTIVE....21
  - LYACS' ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES....23
  - LYAC'S ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE LOCAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES....23
- LEVEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES AND LYACS AND VICE VERSA....24
  - THE OBLIGATIONS OF LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCILS – LYACS towards MUNICIPALITIES....24
  - THE OBLIGATIONS OF LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCILS – LYACS TOWARDS THE MUNICIPALITIES..25

CONCLUSIONS....26

RECOMMENDATIONS....27

ABBREVIATIONS

AKM	Association of Kosovo Municipalities
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCYS	Directorate of Culture, Youth and Sports (municipal level)
DOY	Department of Youth
KYSAP	Kosovo Youth Strategy and Action Plan
LYAC	Local Youth Action Council
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
REA	Regional Enterprise Agency
SOK	Statistical Office of Kosovo
TOR	Terms of Reference
TC	Technical Cooperation
LYEP	Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation
YO	Youth Officer
YIHR KS	Youth Initiative for Human Rights - Kosovo

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo – YIHR KS within the Equal Rights for All Coalition – ERAC, supported by the EU Office in Kosovo, conducted the research "Youth Engagement in Kosovo Local Government - Unpacking the LYAC's impact on policymaking in Kosovo Local Government".

The main findings of this research show that the main challenge faced by young people at the municipal level is the lack of perspective of employment, where 100% of respondents stated this is the main problem as far as young people are concerned. About 80% think that poverty and low standard of living are a major problem in this context, and around 60% of LYAC officials and activists see the lack of opportunities for youth participation in decision-making in local politics as one of the main problems faced by young people at the municipal level in Kosovo. Regarding the poor functioning of the education system in Kosovo, only 20% of them think this is the most important problem in their municipality, while about 80% of them think it is a problem of second-hand importance faced by young people at the local level.

Regarding specific issues related to the LYAC engagement in relation to the youth decision-making within the local government, the results of this research indicate that LYAC's officers and activists have sufficient knowledge of legal obligations and liabilities of municipalities. About 80% of the respondents stated that they know that their Municipalities have held public meetings with citizens, and the same percentage stated that representatives of the LYAC's concerned participated in these meetings.

About 75% of respondents from LYACs claimed to have presented and submitted requests pertaining to the youth issues to senior municipal officials and, in this context, they stated that about 80% of their requests have been approved.

Regarding the participation of the LYAC representatives in the public hearings organized by the respective municipalities in relation to the planning process and the preparation of the municipal annual budget, only 60% of them stated that they participated in these public hearings and that they presented and have submitted requests regarding the youth issues. About 67% of them stated that their municipality approved their requests and introduced them into the municipal annual budget.

The findings of this report point to a worrying situation regarding the use of the legal right and participation of LYAC representatives at regular meetings of Municipal Assemblies. Only 20% of the respondents stated that they have participated in these meetings.

Another level of reviewing the engagement of LYACs in order to increase the participation of young people in decision-making has been their cooperation with the municipal consultative committees. The level of participation of officials, activists or other members of LYACs that have been a part of this research in the meetings conducted by these committees is very low, where only 25% have stated that they have sometimes participated in these meetings, and that the number of the requests presented or submitted by the LYACs regarding youth issues to these committees is equal to zero.

YIHR KS has designed a special chapter on the relationship and the level of cooperation between municipalities and LYAC, and vice versa. In this context, YIHR KS has analysed the level of

cooperation as well as the level of fulfilment of the legal obligations that municipalities have in relation to the functioning of LYACs and also that LYACs have towards municipalities. For this reason, Municipal Youth Directorates, respective Municipal Youth Officers, were interviewed in the target municipalities.

About 83% of municipal youth officials interviewed in the framework of this survey stated that the municipality they represent has provided office space for the activity of the LYAC for the year 2016 while, on the other hand, about 67% of municipal officials have stated that their municipalities have fulfilled their financial obligations towards LYACs during 2016.

On the other hand, the data show that about 67% of LYACs have submitted six-month reports of their work while only 33% of LYACs have submitted annual work reports to the respective municipalities. As far as the six months financial reporting is concerned, only 50% of LYACs have submitted these reports on time, while 50% of other municipalities have stated that LYACs have not carried out this obligation to their municipality. Conversely, as regards the annual financial reports, only 33% of LYACs' financial reports have been submitted to the municipalities according to the municipal youth officials.

INTRODUCTION

Established in 2010 in Kosovo, LYACs are an increasingly common means of connecting youth with the local government. Jared Hays, the Acting Director of the OSCE Mission's Democratization Department, on October 2011 stated that "establishing the councils has given young people a voice in deciding on issues that affect their quality of life."[1] Regardless of Hays first estimate, no research has been done so far assessing the LYACs actual operational and mechanical impact. There is little empirical knowledge about how the LYACs influence youth participation in local governments and how their operational mechanisms impact local level policy-making – which would ensure that the youth's voice is heard in politics.[2]

According to the Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation in Kosovo[3], LYACs are "local formation advisory youth organizations, which operate at local level and represent the interests of youth and youth organizations to the institutions of local government". Further, "responsibilities of the Local Council on Youth Action [are] based on the principle of equality and equal participation for all, and are regulated by sub-legal acts"[4]. Responsibility towards youth, however, is legally stipulated on both sides, the LYACs and their respective municipalities, which in turn also have obligations towards each other[5].

This research will therefore try to contribute to an understanding of how the actual mechanisms are used to involve youth in policy-making and decision making at the local government level. Based on the Youth Empowerment Law, the focus will therefore be put on the LYACs in Kosovo by analysing 10 selected LYACs to achieve a thin description of their operational status and mechanisms of impact in local government.

LYACs are structures which can serve policy-makers to reach-out to the great number of young people in Kosovo that are not engaged in local politics, promoting the local government to younger generations while gathering information about the interests and needs of younger generations. This pioneering study, will therefore provide a descriptive analysis of the operational status of the LYACs and the mechanisms that impact the development of public policy on the local level. The guiding research questions are thus the following:

1. **What are the LYACs operations and structures to influence public policy-making on the Municipal level?**

2. **What are the mechanisms to impact municipal policy-making and how do the LYACs use them?**

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[1] Interview online: http://www.osce.org/kosovo/83370.

[2] Cf. Feltes, Tilmann (2013): Youth and Democracy: The Promotion of Youth Participation by the Intenational Community in Kosovo. Security and Human Rights 24(2), p.42f. **DOI:** 10.1163/18750230-02402010

[3] Kosovo Assembly (2009). Law No. 03/L-145 - Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation. Article 10 Local Youth Action Council. url.: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/02/Kosovo-Law-on-empowerment-and-participation-of-youth-2009.pdf

[4] Kosovo Assembly (2009). Law No. 03/L-145 - Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation. Article 11 Responsibilities of the local Council on youth action. url.: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/02/Kosovo-Law-on-empowerment-and-participation-of-youth-2009.pdf

[5] Ministry for Culture, Youth and Sports (2012). Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010 for responsibilities and procedures of the establishment and functioning of youth action councils in Kosovo. url.:http://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/U.A._Nr._9-2010_per_pergjegjesite_dhe_procedurat_e_themelimit_te_Keshillave_te_Veprimit_Rinor_ne_Kosove.pdf

This report provides operational definitions and background information about the local governments as a site of citizen participation, which serve as a backdrop of the study's data in order to contextualize the examined youth engagement in local government. The report therefore explores in a first step the LYAC mechanisms for youth engagement in local government, i.e. the general operations and structures of LYAC. The document analysis were complemented, in a second step, with the analysis of the interviews. The report concludes with the resulting findings and recommendations on how to improve the youth engagement through LYAC and vice versa in municipal level in Kosovo.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a combination of a quantitative and qualitative methodology. Firstly, we conducted a desk research on each LYAC. We collected relevant documentation related to the LYACs, including terms of reference, application forms, council motions, annual reports (at least for the past three years), as well as meeting minutes. Based on a process of selection which is described below, we have selected 10 LYACs based on the estimations of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, in order to investigate a manifold and diverse sample. The 10 LYACs vary greatly in size, ethnic and cultural composition and well-functioning.

Secondly, we have designed two questionnaires one of which was dedicated to LYACs, and the other was dedicated to the Municipal Directorates for Youth, respectively Youth Municipal Officials in 10 of the selected municipalities. Response rate was 40%, or four LYACs in the municipalities of Gjakova/Đakovica, Mitrovice/Mitrovica, Obiliq/Obilić, and Rahovec/Orahovac responded. Unlike LYACs' officers and activists, municipal officials have been much more cooperative where, out of the ten submitted requests, we have managed to get six responses from the Municipal Directorates for Youth, respectively Municipal Youth Officials (Municipality of Peja/ Peć, Mitrovice/Mitrovica, Podujeva/Podujevo, Obiliq/Obilić, Rahovec/ Orahovac and Lipjan).

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY OF SELECTING 10 LYACS

In order to have official data about the selection process of 10 LYAC, we have asked the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports – MCYS[6] to provide us with relevant data about LYACs that operate in Kosovo. After receiving the data by MCYS and the desk research conducted by the research team, we have conducted a general analysis of all the LYACs in order to make the selection process. We have evaluated data from 25 LYACs provided by MCYS.

Selection of the 10 LYACS was made based on the following criteria:

1. Youth participation,
2. Formal and non-formal education,
3. Hiring and Entrepreneurship,
4. Education and health promotion,
5. Human safety,
6. Social integration, volunteering, sport, culture and recreation.

1. The first criteria that we have evaluated were Youth Participation.

   For this criterion a measurement scale table was used, where the ranking began from the highest to the lowest value.

[6] Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports – MCYS (2016). The Assessment of the Youth Sector 2016.

Nr	Municipality	Youth Participation
1	Lipjan/Lipljan	1000
2	Mitrovice/Mitrovica	1000
3	Podujeva/Podujevo	800
4	Kaçanik/Kačanik	200
5	Gjakova/Đakovica	180
6	Peje/Peć	100
7	Drenas/Glogovac	75
8	Malisheve/Mališevo	50
9	Deçan/Dečani	50
10	Suhareka/ Suva Reka	30-50
11	Gjilan/Gnjilane	40
12	Rahovec/Orahovac	30
13	Obiliq/Obilić	30
14	Dragash/Dragaš	over 30
15	Hani i Elezit/Elez Han	25
16	Shtime/Štimlje	20-25
17	Viti/Vitina	20
18	Skënderaj/Srbica	0
19	Vushtrria/Vučitrn	0
20	Prizren	0
21	Kamenice/Kamenica	0
22	Gracanica/Gračanica	0
23	Ranillug/Ranilug	0
24	Junik	0
25	Ferizaj/Uroševac	0

Tab. 1. List of all LYACs evaluated based on youth participation criteria

2. The second criteria we have grouped ranking of the other five criteria[7] was made by using nominal and ordinal measurement scales and called **youth activities criteria**. The participants each representing their own LYAC had to answer if they held activities in the mentioned areas, if yes they had to mention which ones. A positive response was coded with 1 and a negative one with 0. The values for each area then were added. Based on the sum of these values they were ranked, where zero was the lowest and five the highest.

[7] Youth Activities criteria are composed by 1. Formal and non-formal education; 2. Hiring and Entrepreneurship; 3. Education and health promotion; 4. Human safety; 5. Social integration, volunteering, sport, culture and recreation.

Nr	Municipality	Youth Activities
1	Gjakova/Đakovica	5
2	Peje/Peć	5
3	Ferizaj/Uroševac	5
4	Rahovec/Orahovac	4
5	Prizren	3
6	Deçan/Dečani	3
7	Podujeva/Podujevo	3
8	Lipjan/Lipljan	3
9	Mitrovice/Mitrovica	2
10	Suhareka/ Suva Reka	2
11	Malisheve/Mališevo	2
12	Kaçanik/Kačanik	2
13	Junik	2
14	Ranillug/Ranilug	2
15	Gracanica/Gračanica	2
16	Gjilan/Gnjilane	1
17	Drenas/Glogovac	1
18	Skënderaj/Srbica	0
19	Vushtrria/Vučitrn	0
20	Dragash/Dragaš	0
21	Shtime/Štimlje	0
22	Hani i Elezit/Elez Han	0
23	Kamenice/Kamenica	0
24	Viti/Vitina	0
25	Obiliq/Obilić	0

Tab. 2. List of all LYACs evaluated based on youth activities criteria

The process of selecting of LYACs as a final step was based on the number of active youth and number of activities. The LYACs that ranked the highest were selected for further analysis in order to better understand their structures and the potential impact they are having in policy-making at the local level. LYACs that are not very active or not functional at all based on the criteria of youth participation and youth activities were excluded from the analysis. However, it is very concerning that based on the provided data by the MCYS, 8 LYACS out of 25, are not active at all nor functioning as local youth bodies.

No	Municipality	Final Order
1	Gjakova/Đakovica	3
2	Peje/Peć	4
3	Podujeva/Podujevo	4
4	Lipjan/Lipljan	5
5	Mitrovice/Mitrovica	6.5
6	Rahovec/Orahovac	8
7	Deçan/Dečani	8.5
8	Kaçanik/Kačanik	9
9	Obiliq/Obilić	9.5
10	Malisheve/Mališevo	10.5

Tab. 3. List of 10 LYACs selected for the purpose of the research

Gjakova/ Đakovica was ranked first because its LYAC has held activities, which enhanced youth participation in events directed towards all of the areas mentioned earlier. It was ranked first with 5 points for the activities, excluding the youth participation in which it was ranked fifth since the number of participants which was given was 180.

Peja/Peć comes in second place. Its LYAC was ranked second on the activities (5) and regarding youth participation (100) it was placed sixth. Activities of Peja's LYAC were more focused on courses, trainings, awareness campaigns for the use of drug and alcohol.

Podujeva/Podujevo comes in third place. The activities held by its LYAC were oriented towards all the five areas mentioned. The number of participants in those events reached the number of 800, which put its LYAC in the third place regarding youth participation.

Lipjan/Lipljan LYAC is the fourth. It was placed first with the number of youth participation (1,000) and eighth with activities (3). Even though with a large number of participants the only activities they held were training the youth in the work market, an awareness campaign for traffic safety and promotion of volunteer work.

Rahovec/Orahovac LYAC is ranked fifth. Its LYAC also was distinguished with a large number of participants – 1,000. This puts its LYAC in the second place regarding youth participation. Its other activities were focused in the areas of formal and informal education, social integration, volunteering, sport, culture and recreation.

Rahovec/Orahovac LYAC is placed in the sixth place. Its LYAC held activities in all the areas except the area of hiring and entrepreneurship. Since the number of participants reached only 30.

Deçan/Dečani LYAC is placed in the seventh place. Its activities were focused on three areas: formal and non-formal education, education and health promotion, social integration, volunteering, sport, culture and recreation. The number of participants reaches the number of 50.

Kaçanik/Kačanik LYAC is placed in the eighth place. It was placed fourth for the number of youth participation which was 200. Its activities revolved around formal and non-formal education, social integration, volunteering, sport, culture and recreation.

Obiliq/Obilić LYAC was placed in the ninth place. Its activities were focused in all areas except hiring and entrepreneurships. This placed it in the sixth place in the listing for youth activities. When it comes to youth participation it was placed thirteenth, with only 30 participants.

Malisheve/Mališevo LYAC was placed in the tenth place. Its LYAC focused its activities only in two areas: education and health promotion and social integration, volunteering, sport, culture and recreation. This positioned it in the thirteenth place in the listing regarding youth activities. The number of youth participation was 50.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: WHY LOCAL GOVERNMENT MATTERS

Municipal government should primarily be viewed in terms of the quality and effectiveness of service rather than being subject to political debates about their representation, which is perhaps why CSO's and other relevant stakeholders still haven't sufficiently and substantively explored the issues of youth public participation in local governments.

In its Article 124.1. Kosovo Constitutions states that "Municipalities enjoy a high degree of local self-governance and encourage and ensure the active participation of all citizens in the decision-making process of the municipal bodies"[8].The subservient legal role of municipal government is seen to have created the public image of Kosovar municipalities as service providers which do not have the ability to make serious policy decisions. This emphasis on formal powers clouds the degree to which municipalities actually do have a great deal of importance within the context of Kosovo society as foreseen by the Constitutions and legal framework. Based on the Law on Local Self Government, municipalities "have full and exclusive powers, insofar as they concern the local interest, while respecting the standards set forth in the applicable legislation" in the fields such as local economic development, provision and maintenance of public services and utilities, provision of public pre-primary, primary and secondary education, promotion and protection of human rights, provision of public primary health care, provision of family and other social welfare services, public housing, social and other cultural activities[9].

[8] Constitutional Court (2008). Constitution of Kosovo. Chapter X. Local Government and Territorial Organization. url.: http://www.kushtetutakosoves.info/repository/docs/Constitution.of.the.Republic.of.Kosovo.pdf

[9] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L040 - Law on Local Self Government. Article 17 Own Competencies. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L040_en.pdf

LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL - LYAC

LYAC OPERATIONS AND STRUCTURES

LYACs are "local formation advisory youth organizations, which operate at local level and represent the interests of youth and youth organizations to the institutions of local government" [10]. Further, "responsibilities of the Local Council on Youth Action [are] b ased on the principle of equality and equal participation for all, and are regulated by sub-legal acts"[11].

LYAC's hierarchy structure consists of the Chairman, Vice- Chairman, Secretary and Members. Every LYAC should regularly contribute toward the work of the municipality by representing the youth perspective through meetings with relevant municipal officials and regular participation in various municipal meetings. This is not limited to youth issues, but also refers to all policy issues discussed in the municipality, but from the youth perspective.

Specifically according to this Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010, LYACs[12] have the following responsibilities:

- To strengthen youth organizations of the municipalities where they work towards building a common vision for youth;
- Appropriate actions to prepare action plans to achieve such vision;
- To promote the specified vision toward local institutions and bodies of other organizations that address youth issues in municipality;
- To promote, coordinate and exchange good experiences with youth organizations;
- To cooperate related to matters affecting youth interests with other local and international public and private institutions.

Also based on Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010, LYACs have the following duties:

- To represent the youth organizations of the municipality before the respective local institutions;
- To address youth issues of municipality before municipal institutions and before other public and private persons, but also in meetings with CYAC[13]when they are part of it;
- To provide opinions and advice toward bodies and municipal institutions for actions that they should undertake regarding the youth in the municipality;
- To present views on legal documents and other documents regarding youth issues in the municipality;

[10] Kosovo Assembly (2009). Law No. 03/L-145 - Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation. Article 10 Local Youth Action Council. url.: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/02/Kosovo-Law-on-empowerment-and-participation-of-youth-2009.pdf

[11] Kosovo Assembly (2009). Law No. 03/L-145 - Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation. Article 11 Responsibilities of the local Council on youth action. url.: http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/02/Kosovo-Law-on-empowerment-and-participation-of-youth-2009.pdf

[12] Ministry for Culture, Youth and Sports (2012). Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010 for responsibilities and procedures of the establishment and functioning of youth action councils in Kosovo. Chapter 2. Local Youth Action Council. Article 10. Responsibilities and obligations of LYAC. url.:http://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/U.A._Nr._9-2010_per_pergjegjesite_dhe_procedurat_e_themelimit_te_Keshillave_te_Veprimit_Rinor_ne_Kosove.pdf

[13] CYAC is abbreviation for Central Youth Action Council.

- Participate in the design, implementation, evaluation and management of youth policies related to youth issues in municipality level;
- Participate in and contribute to the drafting of the Youth Action Plan of Kosovo Municipalities and the drafting of petitions and resolutions for youth;
- In cooperation with the municipality to organize the Annual Conference for Youth in Kosovo;
- Participate and contribute to the drafting of the annual municipal budget proposal for youth;
- To make the planning of voluntary youth service activities and other youth activities.

In order to ensure that a LYAC qualifies as a legal entity, which will grant youth the rights mentioned above, it must be registered within the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) – Department Non-Governmental Organizations. This is because as a network of youth CSOs, LYACs are subject to respecting the registration procedures prescribed in the Law on Freedom of Association of Non-Governmental Organizations[14]. In addition to that, based on Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010, every LYAC should apply for recognition by each respective municipality through a written request, by addressing the youth section within the department of culture youth and sport (or its equivalent) and delivered to the Citizen Service Centre of respective municipality.

Regarding structure of LYACs, based on Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010, every LYAC should draft a statute as its governing document to define its internal structures and rules. Include a description of the purpose of the organization, criteria for membership, composition of members, rules governing the boards of directors, etc.

Governing structures of the Local Youth Action Council – LYAC according to Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010 are General Assembly and the Board of Directors.

LYAC Assembly is composed of all organizations and youth groups foreseen by LYAC statute. The LYAC Assembly is the highest legislative body of the council and has the responsibilities of holding at least one annual meeting, which will review and approve the assets, liabilities, incomes, expenses, council programs for the previous year and plan the assets, revenues, expenses and council programs for the following year. While the Board of Directors is an executive body of LYAC which is composed by the Director, Deputy Director, Secretary and members, which they will be accountable to LYAC Assembly.

The Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010 in its article 16 obliges every municipality to provide space and all necessary financial (budget) support for the operation of the LYAC. In this regard, every LYAC besides being accountable toward General Assembly they should also report semi-annually and on an annual basis towards municipality, specifically to Youth Department.

[14] Official Gazette (2009). Law No. 03/L-134 - Law on Freedom of Association of Non-Governmental Organizations. Article 9. Registration.
url.: http://www.gazetazyrtare.com/e-gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=333&lang=en

LYAC AS A MECHANISM TO IMPACT MUNICIPAL POLICYMAKING

The Law on Local Self Government sets that every municipality is obliged to organize public meetings with its own citizens twice per year[15]. These meetings are the most important mechanisms and opportunity for LYACs to have direct contacts with high municipal officials and voice their opinions about matters of youth in their respective municipalities.

According to the Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability, every municipal assembly during the municipal annual budget preparation are obliged to organize public hearings with its own citizens[16]. Public budget hearings can be utilized by LYACs as part of their responsibilities to participate, advocate and contribute in drafting the municipal annual budget for youth.

Furthermore, every municipality should establish and functionalize consultative committees that are participatory mechanisms, made up by residents and representatives of CSOs to enable the participation of the public in the decision making process[17]. In municipalities where consultative committees are functioning, LYACs are encouraged to apply for membership and actively participate in committees dealing with youth issues.

With the Law on Local Self Government, every municipal assembly should organize ten meetings per year[18]. LYACs can use these meetings to participate in the discussion of agenda items concerning youth, by following the rules of procedure of municipalities. Meanwhile, active monitoring of the sessions will increase LYACs' visibility and ability to understand ongoing developments in their municipalities, provide necessary information to constructively participate in discussions, and propose topics related to youth.

[15] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L040 - Law on Local Self Government. Chapter IX Direct democracy and citizen participation mechanisms. Article 68 Public Information and Consultation. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L040_en.pdf

[16] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L048 Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability. Article 61 Review of the Municipal Budget by the Municipal Assembly. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L048_en.pdf

[17] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L040 - Law on Local Self Government. Article 73 Consultative Committees. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L040_en.pdf

[18] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L040 - Law on Local Self Government. Article 43 Meetings of Municipal Assembly. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L040_en.pdf

UNPACKING THE LYACS' IMPACT ON POLICYMAKING IN KOSOVO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

UNPACKING THE LYACS

As we have described in the aforementioned chapters, YIHR KS has used specific criteria in selecting LYACs in order to examine the operational status of LYACs in 10 municipalities and the mechanisms that these units possess to influence development of local public policies. In this context, YIHR KS has conducted a preliminary examination of the activity of the LYACs of 28 municipalities and, according to the results of this examination, it resulted that LYACs from the municipalities of Gjakova/Đakovica, Peje/Peć, Podujeva/Podujevo, Lipjan/Lipljan, Mitrovice/Mitrovica, Rahovec/Orahovac, Deçan/Dečani, Kaçanik/Kačanik, Obiliq/Obilić and Malisheve/Mališevo are the most active councils compared to the LYACs of other municipalities. So, having this in mind, we have selected these LYACs to be part of the research and by being some of the most successful LYACs in Kosovo, after the publication of this research, they could serve as better examples for the organization, activity, and success. Also, YIHR KS has decided to examine within this research the work, performance and cooperation between LYACs and Municipal Directorates for Youth in these 10 municipalities, respectively Youth Officials for the above mentioned municipalities.

MAIN PROBLEMS THAT YOUTH FACES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In this research, LYAC officials and activists were asked to identify the main problems faced by young people at the municipal level in Kosovo. According to the findings of the research, in general ranking it results that about 100% of LYAC's officials and activists consider the main problem to be youth unemployment, about 80% think that poverty and low standard of living are a major problem in this context, and around 60% of LYAC officials and activists see the lack of opportunities for youth participation in decision-making in local politics as one of the main problems faced by young people at the municipal level in Kosovo. Another important problem is the lack of opportunities for social integration, volunteering, sport, culture and recreation for young people of these municipalities, where 60% of respondents consider it to be a major problem.

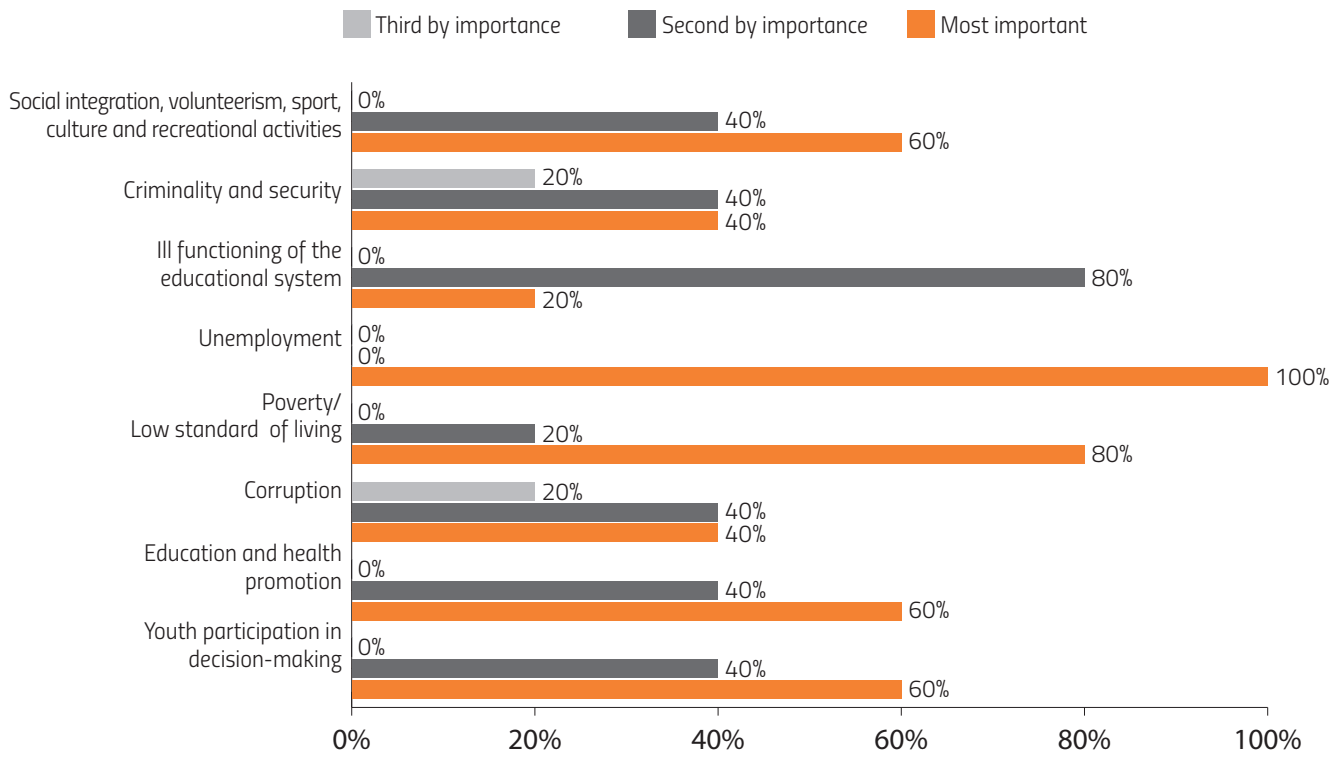
In regards to the work and performance of municipalities, respondents said that 60% of the work and performance of the Municipalities is the most important problem.

When asked about health education and promotion, 60% of LYAC officials and activists answered that this is the most important problem faced by young people at the municipal level.

As the next issue that respondents from LYACs have identified emerges the high level of corruption and its broad reach into local public institutions. As the survey data show, about 40% of the respondents think it is the main problem at the municipal level.

We have approximately the same results in relation to the issue of criminality and insecurity in the municipalities. 40% of LYAC officials and activists consider this to be the main problem, 40% consider this a second-rate problem in regards to its importance, and 20% of them think it is a problem of third importance in the municipalities where they come from.

Additionally, within this research LYAC officials and activists were asked about their views on the poor functioning of the education system in Kosovo and they have expressed these attitudes which show that only 20% of them think this is the most important problem in their municipality, while about 80% of them think it is a problem of second-hand importance faced by young people at the local level.



Tab. 1. LYAC's opinions regarding the main problems that the youth face at the local level

LYACS' ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In order to explore at what level the legal mechanisms and other practices that enable LYACs to be more active in youth decision-making at the local level are used, we have designed several sections for each mechanism separately.

Initially, we focused on getting information and analysing them in relation to the activities of LYACs related to increasing participation of young people in decision-making of young people. In this context, we were focused on two categories of decision-making at the local level, i.e. how active they were and what were the results achieved by LYACs during the organization of public meetings and during the planning process and preparation of the annual municipal budget.

LYACS' ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY EXECUTIVE

According to the Law on Local Self Government of the Republic of Kosovo (Law No 03-L040), each municipality is obliged to organize at least two public meetings with the citizens of that municipality[19]. In this context, we have asked LYAC officials and activists whether they have any information that their municipality has held public meetings with citizens in 2016. About 80% of respondents stated that they are informed that their municipality has held public meetings with citizens, while 20% of them have stated that they have no information on the development of these meetings.

Consequently, LYAC officials and activists were asked whether they or any of the other members of LYACs have participated in any of these meetings held by their municipality in 2016. 80% of them stated that they participated in these meetings held by their municipality, while 20% stated that they did not attend these meetings. Those who stated that they or any of the other members of the LYACs participated in any of these meetings held by their municipality in 2016, were asked whether they have presented and submitted any request regarding the area of youth in front of senior municipal officials (Mayors and Directors of Municipal Directorates). Of those who stated that they participated in these meetings, about 75% claimed that they have presented and submitted requests regarding the youth issues to senior municipal officials, while about 25% of them stated that they have no information that the LYACs they represent have presented or submitted any request.

LYAC officials and activists who stated that they submitted requests regarding the youth issues to senior municipal officials during the public meetings have listed the main requirements, which are led by the requirements for a) providing facilities for youth center activities at the municipal level; b) the allocation of the youth sub-code budget within municipal budgets; c) to increase institutional and financial support for young people; and d) to promote volunteer work for young people in the respective municipalities.

In response to our question about what was the official response of the Municipality regarding the requirements presented and submitted, the respondents' answers were that about 80% of their requests were approved by municipalities, while only 20% of those requests were not approved. Some of the examples of requests that were approved include requests to organize youth activities like workshops, trainings, campaigns, etc. Some of the examples of requests that were rejected include providing scholarships for university students and renovating the city library of Deçan.

The other section of this research is focused on the activity undertaken by LYACs in the planning and preparation of municipal budgets in 2017. According to the Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability (Law No. 03-L048), each municipality is obliged to organize public hearings with its citizens during the planning and preparation of the annual budget [20].

[19] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L040 - Law on Local Self Government. Chapter IX Direct democracy and citizen participation mechanisms. Article 68 Public Information and Consultation. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L040_en.pdf

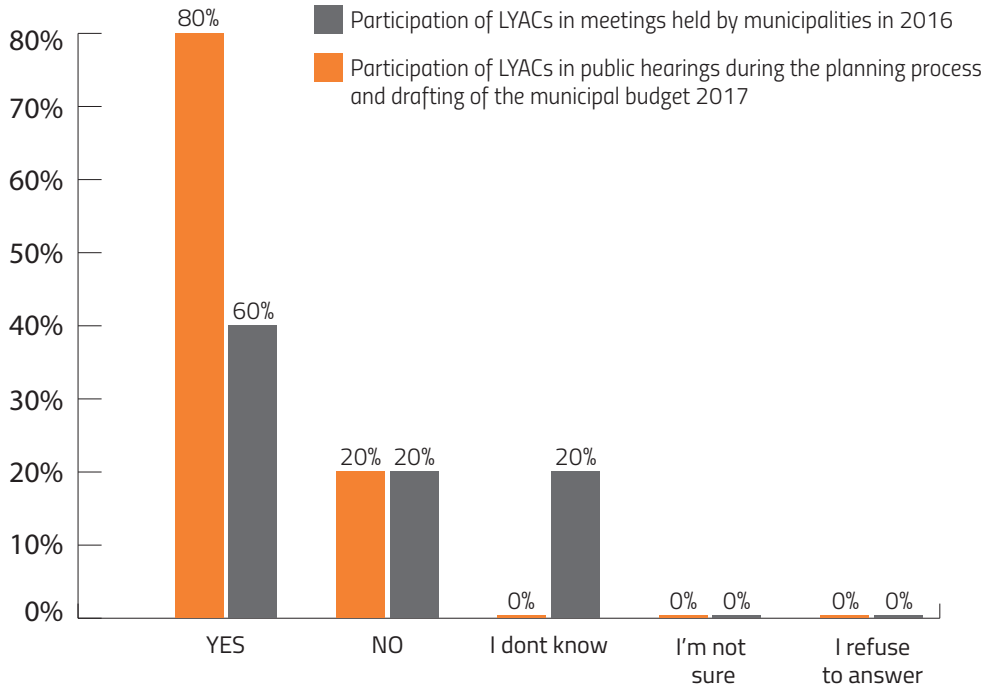
[20] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L048 Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability. Article 61 Review of the Municipal Budget by the Municipal Assembly. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L048_en.pdf

LYAC officers and activists interviewed within this research were asked whether they have information that their municipality has held public hearings with citizens in 2016, during the planning and preparation of their municipality's budget for 2017. Based on the answers received, about 80% of the respondents stated that they had this information, while about 20% stated that they do not have such information.

In this context, the LYAC officials and activists of the respective municipalities were asked whether they or any of the other members of the LYACs participated in any of these public hearings developed by their municipality in 2016 regarding the planning and preparation of the annual municipal budget. Only 60% of them stated that they participated in these public hearings, 20% stated that they did not participate at all in these public hearings, while about 20% of respondents stated that they did not know if they or any of the other members of the LYACs they represent participated in any of these public hearings held by their municipality in 2016.

Of those who stated that they participated in public hearings, either in person or by any of the other members of the LYACs they represent were also asked whether they have presented and submitted any requests regarding the youth issues for the 2017 budget for their municipality. About 60% stated that they have done so, about 20% denied having presented or submitted any requests during these public hearings, while about 20% said they did not know if the LYACs where they are active have presented or submitted any claim regarding the youth issues for the 2017 budget.

Regarding the type of requests they have presented and submitted in this context, the following requirements are also leading: a) requests for the allocation of the municipal youth budget sub-code; b) Provision of spaces and removal of expenses for the operation of LYACs by municipalities; and c) provide grants for LYACs by respective municipalities. Regarding the question about the official response of the municipalities about the requests presented and submitted, about 67% of the respondents stated that their municipality approved these requests, whereas 33% of them stated that the municipality did not take into account or did not approve their requests.



Tab. 2. Participation of LYACs in public meetings / hearings organized by relevant municipalities for 2016.

LYACS' ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES

A separate section of this research is dedicated to the level of participation and influence in decision-making and policy-making of LYACs vis-à-vis the Municipal Assemblies in the respective municipalities. According to the Law on Local Self-Government of the Republic of Kosovo (Law No. 03-L040), Municipal Assemblies of each municipality are obliged to conduct at least ten Municipal Assembly meetings [21].

In response to the question posed for LYAC officials and activists of the relevant municipalities on whether they are aware that Municipal Assemblies of their Municipality have held meetings in 2016, around 60% of them stated that they were not aware, about 20% of respondents stated that they did not have any information, while around 20% others refused to comment on this issue. As for the question of whether they or any of the other members of the LYACs participated in any of these meetings of the Municipal Assemblies of the respective municipalities, only 20% of the respondents stated that they participated in these meetings, whereas about 60% stated that neither they nor any of the other members of the LYACs that they represent attended these meetings, while 20% of them refused to answer.

Those who answered that they participated in these meetings stated that they presented or submitted requests regarding the youth issues to the municipal advisers of the Municipal Assemblies of their municipalities and that according to their answers given during the implementation of this research their requirements were approved by the municipal advisers of Municipal Assemblies. Most of the responses from the respondents have mentioned that the requests that were approved from the Municipalities were youth activities like trainings and workshops that were planned to be organized throughout the year by LYACs.

LYAC'S ACTIVITIES IN DECISION-MAKING WITHIN THE LOCAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

At the end of this chapter, YIHR KS has also attempted to explore other mechanisms where LYACs can have an impact in increasing youth decision-making at the municipal level through their involvement in the Municipal Consultative Committees. According to the Law on Local Self-Government of the Republic of Kosovo (Law No. 03-L040), each municipality is obliged to establish and functionalize the Consultative Committees [22].

In this section, in response to the question whether the respondents are aware of the establishment of Local Consultative Committees by the respective Municipalities, about 40% stated that they have information about the process of establishing these committees, 40% stated that they have no information about the establishment and activity of these committees, while about 20% stated that they did not know if these committees were established or if they were functional. We asked the respondents who are aware of these committees to list the committees that they know. They stated that in their municipalities there are: a) Policy and Finance Committee; b) Communities Committee; c) Community Safety Committee; and d) Environment Committee.

[21] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L040 - Law on Local Self Government. Article 43 Meetings of Municipal Assembly. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L040_en.pdf

[22] Kosovo Assembly (2008). Law No. 03-L040 - Law on Local Self Government. Article 73 Consultative Committees. url.: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L040_en.pdf

The level of participation of officials and activists of LYACs that have been part of this research in the meetings conducted by these committees is very low where only 25% stated that they ever participated in these meetings, while 75% of the respondents stated that they did not attend the meetings held by the local Consultative Committees. Also, no requests were presented or submitted by LYACs regarding the youth issues to these committees during 2016.

LEVEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES AND LYACS AND VICE VERSA

YIHR KS, within this section of the research has examined the level of cooperation between Municipalities and LYACs in the area of raising awareness, respecting legal and institutional obligations by both sides, improving access of young people to municipal services and increasing youth decision-making in local public policies.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCILS – LYACS towards MUNICIPALITIES

The Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010 on the Responsibilities and Procedures for the Establishment of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo (Article 16) obliges each municipality to provide and create office space and provide financial support for the functioning of the LYACs[23]. YIHR KS has examined the level of cooperation as well as the level of fulfilment of legal obligations that municipalities have in relation to the functioning of LYACs.

Within this framework, YIHR KS interviewed the Municipal Directorates for Youth, respectively Municipal Youth Officials in the respective municipalities. In the first section of this research chapter, YIHR KS has focused on researching and analysing data on municipalities' obligations to provide room for the functioning of LYACs and financial assets or municipal budgets for the development of LYAC activities.

About 83% of municipal youth officials interviewed within the framework of this research stated that the municipality they represent has provided space (offices) for the activities of the LYAC for 2016 while 17% stated that their municipality did not provide such a service to LYACs. In this context, it is worth emphasizing that apart from the Municipality of Peja/Peć which has provided a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Municipality of Peja/Peć and the LYAC of Peja/Peć to use the premises that belong to the Municipality of Peja/Peć, none of the other participating municipalities of this research have documented this with the justification that they do not possess any documents of that kind.

[23] Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (2012). Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010 for responsibilities and procedures of the establishment and functioning of youth action councils in Kosovo. Chapter 2. Local Youth Action Council. Article 16. Responsibilities and obligations of Municipalities.
url.:http://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/U.A._Nr._9-2010_per_pergjegjesite_dhe_procedurat_e_themelimit_te_Keshillave_te_Veprimit_Rinor_ne_Kosove.pdf

THE OBLIGATIONS OF LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCILS – LYACS TOWARDS THE MUNICIPALITIES

Whereas, in regards to the issue of whether these Municipalities have or have not offered financial support for the activities of the LYACs for 2016, about 67% of the municipal officials stated that their municipalities fulfilled these obligations towards LYAC during 2016, whereas 33% of these municipalities stated that they did not do this. In this case as well, apart from the Municipality of Peje/Peć and Lipjan/Lipljan, none of the above mentioned municipalities offered evidence or documents to prove such a financial support for LYACs.

On the other hand, according to Administrative Instruction no. 9/2010 on Responsibilities and Procedures for the Establishment of Youth Action Councils in Kosovo (Article 15), Local Youth Action Councils - LYACs are obliged to report (working reports and financial reports) on a six month and annual basis in the Municipal Youth Directorates of the respective Municipality[24].

In relation to this, we asked the Municipal Youth Officials whether they have any information that the LYACs in the respective Municipalities have submitted a report of the work on a six month basis to the Youth Directorate in the Municipality for 2016. About 67% of municipal officials confirmed that LYACs have submitted six-month reports of their work, about 17% of interviewed officials denied that the municipality or their department has received six-month working reports from the LYACs, and 17% stated that they did not know and did not have information that LYACs submitted or reported on a six months basis to the respective municipalities.

In regards to other legal obligations of the LYACs, that of annual reporting to the respective municipalities, only 33% of these officials confirmed that the LYACs have submitted annual reports of their work, about 50% of the interviewed officials denied that the municipality or their directorate has received annual reports from the LYACs, and 17% stated that they did not know and did not have any information that LYACs have submitted or reported annually to the respective municipalities.

[24] Ministry for Culture, Youth and Sports (2012). Administrative Instruction No. 9/2010 for responsibilities and procedures of the establishment and functioning of youth action councils in Kosovo. Chapter 2. Local Youth Action Council. Article 15. Responsibilities and obligations of LYAC.
url.:http://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/U.A._Nr._9-2010_per_pergjegjesite_dhe_procedurat_e_themelimit_te_Keshillave_te_Veprimit_Rinor_ne_Kosove.pdf

CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the legal framework in the field of youth and citizen participation in decision-making, Kosovo has made progress by preparing and adopting laws that regulate these areas. The Kosovo Assembly has adopted the Law on Youth, while the MCYS has prepared and approved administrative instructions through which the way for the establishment of structural mechanisms was paved at the local and central level as far as the youth issues are concerned.

Also, the Assembly of Kosovo has adopted sectorial laws in the area of local policies and the area of budgeting and management of public finances. This legal infrastructure has produced sufficient mechanisms to increase the participation of Kosovo's citizens in decision-making without overlooking the youth sector. One of the key legal mechanisms is that the logical framework obliges local public institutions to be open and accountable to citizens.

In this context, based on the Law on Youth and administrative instructions at the local level, it is foreseen to establish LYACs which have the responsibility to engage, promote and protect the interests of youth in the respective municipalities. In most of the municipalities in Kosovo, these councils have been established, but the challenge is their functionalization and de-politicization of these units.

Based on the preliminary assessments, it appears that most of these LYACs have been active in organizing activities that are not primarily aimed at promoting youth participation in decision-making. Whereas, based on this research conducted by YIHR KS, it emerges that LYACs have been more active in terms of cooperation and promotion of youth decision-making towards the Executive of Municipalities while far less active regarding the relations with the Municipal Assemblies and the outcomes are worrying regarding the participation of youth in Municipal Consultative Committees. However, LYACS in eight (8) municipalities are not active and operational. Another concerning aspect remains the non-fulfilment of the legal obligations regarding the regular reporting of LYACs financial reports to the Municipalities, although it has been stated that the Municipalities have in most cases approved the LYACs requirements regarding the spaces, budgets and activities from the latter.

The inability to prove with legal documents most of the LYAC's and Municipal Directorates' declarations indicates the lack of a transparent and accountable system between these parties and the public as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this research YIHR KS recommends that:

- The MCYS in cooperation with Municipalities and Local Youth Action Councils should create an online platform that includes all LYACs, where each LYAC would present activities, finances and the level of cooperation between LYACs, Municipalities, the Government of Kosovo and Youth.
- The MCYS, in cooperation with Municipalities and other stakeholders should conduct regular monitoring and assessment of the impact of LYACs in general in the field of youth, and particularly in the area of youth participation in local policy-making.
- The MYCS should provide capacity building activities for officials and activists of the LYACs.
- The CYAC of Kosovo should prepare manuals regarding youth participation in policy-making and decision-making at the local government level. In this framework, YIHR KS recommends that LYACs, in cooperation with the CYAC and other stakeholders, should select 2019 as a year of youth in decision-making where educational programs and activities related to direct democracy at the municipal level would be implemented.
- Every LYAC should prepare a strategy and an action plan.
- LYACs should be transparent and accountable in terms of financial management by publishing regular monthly reports on activities and budged planning on platforms easily accessible to the public as well as report to the respective municipal bodies.
- The MEST and other relevant stakeholders should design educational programs related to the right to participation in decision-making at the local level, which would serve as programs offered as part of school curriculum for pre-university schools.
- Kosovo municipalities should provide technical and financial support to LYACs in order to increase their capacities and become active youth organizations at the local level by representing youth interests and demands towards local government.
- Kosovo municipalities should follow the example of the Municipality of Gjakova/Đakovica which has established a youth budget sub-code.
- Kosovo Municipalities should be transparent and accountable in terms of financial management by publishing regular monthly reports on activities and budget planning on platforms easily accessible to the public.

Kosovo Municipalities should involve LYACs in policy-making of local public policies and take into consideration their inputs.


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