

YOUTH IN ALBANIA



MONITORING REPORT SUMMARY

**On the implementation of the National Action Plan
for Youth in Albania (2015-2020)**

2015-2017

Tirana, August 2018

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CRCA Albania and the National Youth Network in Albania would like to thank all young people and youth organizations that became part of the process of preparing the first report on monitoring the implementation of the National Youth Action Plan in Albania (2015-2020).

The preparation of this report is of special importance for Albania and the youth movement in our country. It is the first time that the youth movement has come together to monitor and evaluate the work of public institutions at central and local level, for young people and the impact that national youth policies have had on young people. In this regard, the daily experience of organizations and their confrontation with public institutions is an experience that needs to be measured and evaluated.

CRCA Albania and the Albanian National Youth Network, want to thank specially Mr. Altin Hazizaj for the preparation of this report and Mr. Klaudio Pulaha for all preparatory work and the creation of a cooperative and participatory environment for all civil society organizations and political forums working for young people in Albania.

The purpose of this Report and the accompanying Index extends to several plans. First, it seeks to inform young people, the public and state institutions in Albania on the situation of young people and young people in Albania and the problems identified in the implementation of the NYAP, the causes and weaknesses noted in terms of non-achievement of objectives within the timely extension envisioned by the Albanian Government.

Secondly, we would like to engage youth in a sustainable dialogue, the Government, Municipalities and state institutions working for youth, the Albanian Parliament and organizations representing young people and their interests, in a process that promotes participation and appreciation for young people, the state policy analysis, the establishment of sufficient human and financial resources for the implementation of the Plan, which together promote the advancement of young people and their rights in Albania. Third, the report seeks to create a climate where civil society organizations come together and increase the level of accountability of public institutions vis-à-vis its citizens, including young people.

We believe that this Report and its Index are a tool to increase the accountability of the Albanian Government and its institutions vis-à-vis young people in Albania. In this regard, we urge every youth organization and every youth in Albania to use this report to bring about a tangible change in their lives.

The Report was prepared in cooperation with the following organisations:



1. Introduction

On 6 May 2015, the Albanian Government approved the National Youth Action Plan (2015-2020), following consultations with organizations and young people in Albania. The Albanian National Youth Network (then called Tirana Youth Leadership) played an active role in the preparation, revision and consultation of the Action Plan with young people and young people and its member organizations.

In 2014, the Government started preparations with the broad participation of line ministries and CSOs, the National Action Plan for Youth (2015-2020). The plan set several tasks for the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, its subordinate institutions, other line ministries and municipalities, which are responsible for achieving its objectives.

It is believed that more than 12,000 young people across the country participated and contributed to the preparation of this political and strategic document. In the presentation of the Plan with many fans and under the broad presence of the media, youth and the diplomatic corps, the National Plan created the expectation that in a short time, thanks to the support of the Government and the Ministry of Welfare and Youth, the situation of young people will to see a drastic change and that this new national policy, already budgeted, was the means to move one of the most forgotten and neglected groups of society, young people.

The Plan is already in existence for 3 years since the beginning of its implementation. An Action Plan, no matter how good it is, never guarantees its beneficiaries that it will be implemented. Sometimes governments create ambitious or unrealistic plans whose goals are never achieved, but they look good in the eyes of the public and the beneficiaries. Likewise, despite their good intentions or objectivity, the plans do not translate into concrete actions to bring about change as they do not receive the necessary financial or human resources required for their implementation.

Each Government has a duty to report on the implementation of their policies in support of social groups. But these reports are never independent and there is always the possibility that they paint a "pink" world, when in fact the situation of young people has not improved or has not changed. In this regard, the Monitoring / Evaluation Reports prepared by young people and young people and their organizations are the tool that mobilizes civil society to give its opinion as independent and as objective as possible to identify the areas and objectives where the Government and its institutions have not worked enough or need to devote more resources to bring about the expected change.

CRCA Albania and the Albania National Youth Network (ANYN), following the adoption of the Plan, focused their efforts on monitoring its implementation and the wider engagement of youth and their organizations in the advocacy for general implementation of the objectives and activities envisaged in it.

Preparing a monitoring Report is a difficult enterprise for any organizations. Thanks to the 20 years of experience and expertise of partner organizations of the Albanian National Youth Network (ANYN), at the end of 2016, CRCA Albania and ANYN opened a wide consultation and information gathering process regarding the implementation of the Government's national youth policy. The process was accompanied by the official distribution of the questionnaire to

the organizations and institutions that were asked to complete it in the context of the preparation of the Report.

As will be explained in more detail in the methodology chapter, the questionnaire contained a long list of questions and assessment options (1 to 10) on the implementation of each major and specific objective and the activities contained in the National Action Plan and which should have been fulfilled by the end of 2017.

Following the preparation of the Report, a two-day retreat was organized by ANYN in Durres, with its member organizations, to answer questions and most important aspects of assessing the implementation of the Plan in Albania. Part of the consultation was invited to become not only NGOs, but also youth forums, as often their role in promoting active youth participation in decision-making is overlooked. Through 2017, young people and their organizations prepared a good basis for assessment and recommendations that have become part of this Report and the implementation index. Throughout the first six months of 2018, the experts who participated in this process followed the writing of the report, consultation with the official documents and the state budget, and with young people and young women about specific parts of the report.

At the same time, it was requested from the responsible Ministry to make available any monitoring and evaluation report made by its departments to observe the manner of monitoring and evaluation mechanism as well as the findings and recommendations made after each report. Until the finalization of this report either CRCA or ANYN did not provide any monitoring or evaluation report regarding the NYAP at its disposal.

The main purpose of this Report is to establish a sustainable process of monitoring and evaluating the performance of the Albanian Government and its institutions with regard to achieving youth objectives; the impact that national youth policy has had on the national and local level, as well as the changes it has brought to the lives of young people throughout Albania, coupled with increasing the active participation of the youth themselves in this process of democratic and civic empowerment.

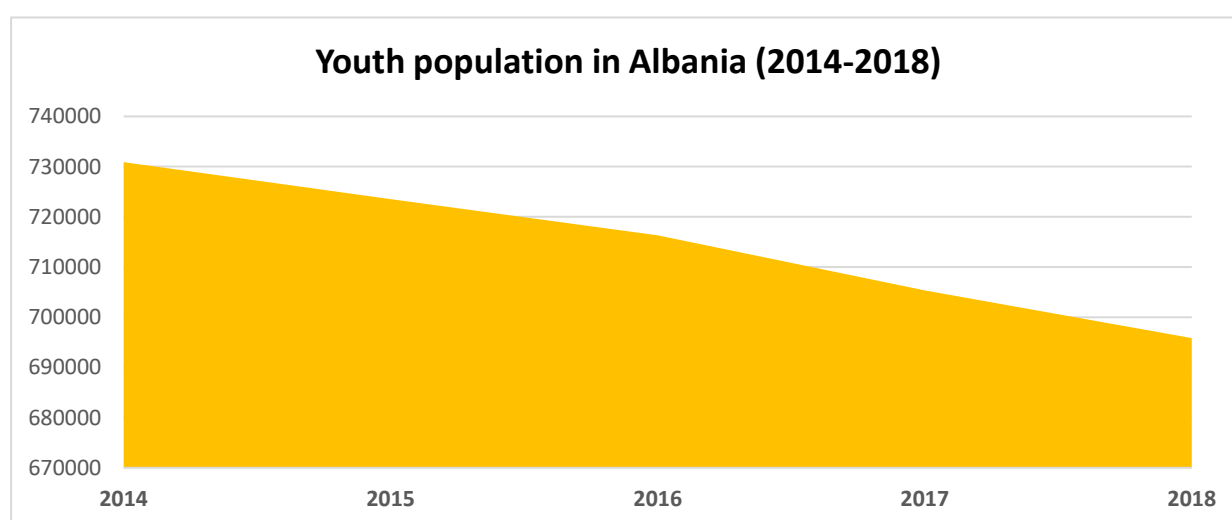
2. FORGOTTEN YOUTH? Data and statistics on youth in Albania

Albania has not been very supportive of young people and her youth. Statistical data collected from official sources in Albania, the European Union and the reports of international organizations, show that several negative phenomena have accompanied the country's youth development, such as poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunities etc., which have greatly influenced the desire of young people to leave the country and build their life somewhere else.

Below we are presenting some of the key data and factors that have accompanied the development of youth in Albania. The data collected and presented generally correspond to the same period that is consistent with the implementation of the National Action Plan for Youth (2015-2017). In some cases, the data belong to the last census conducted in Albania (2011) or years 2013-14, when the last official study of young people in Albania was conducted.

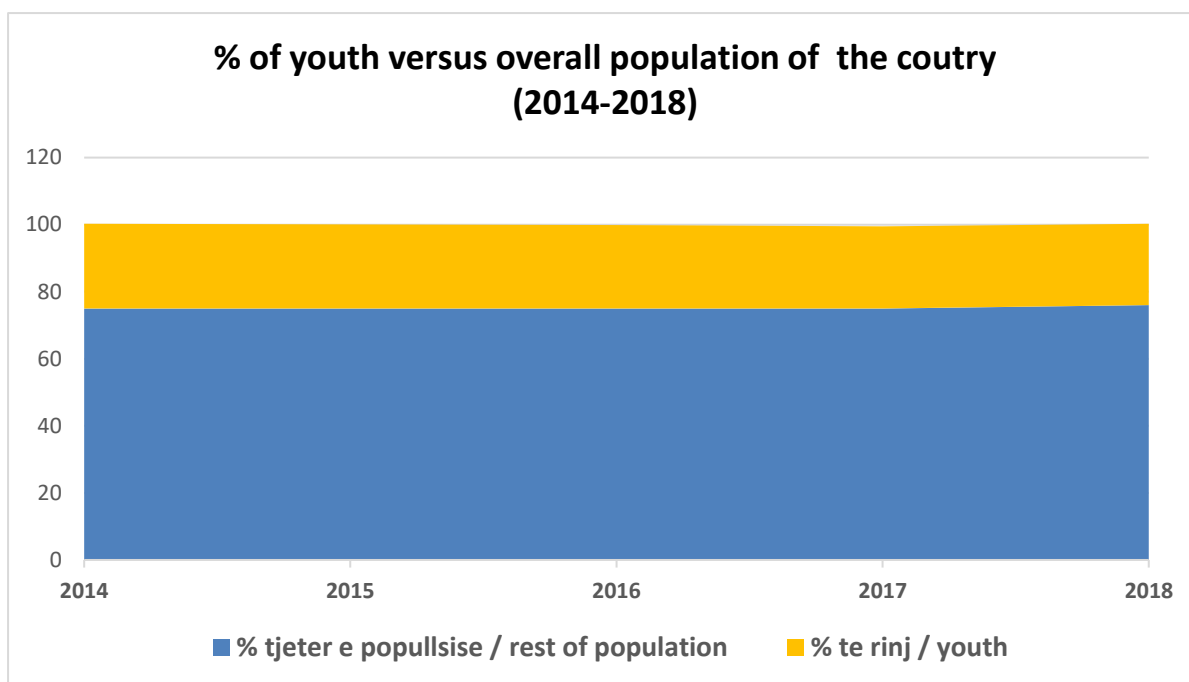
2.1 Youth Population in Albania¹

Several reports from national institutions and international organizations show their major concerns that the population in Albania is getting older and that risks being from the country with the youngest population in Europe (after Kosovo) to that of the oldest. Although the reports cite several factors such as reduced child births per household or migration, we believe that other factors should not be neglected such as lack of community social services, lack of opportunities to be well educated and employed in a job with a dignified payment.

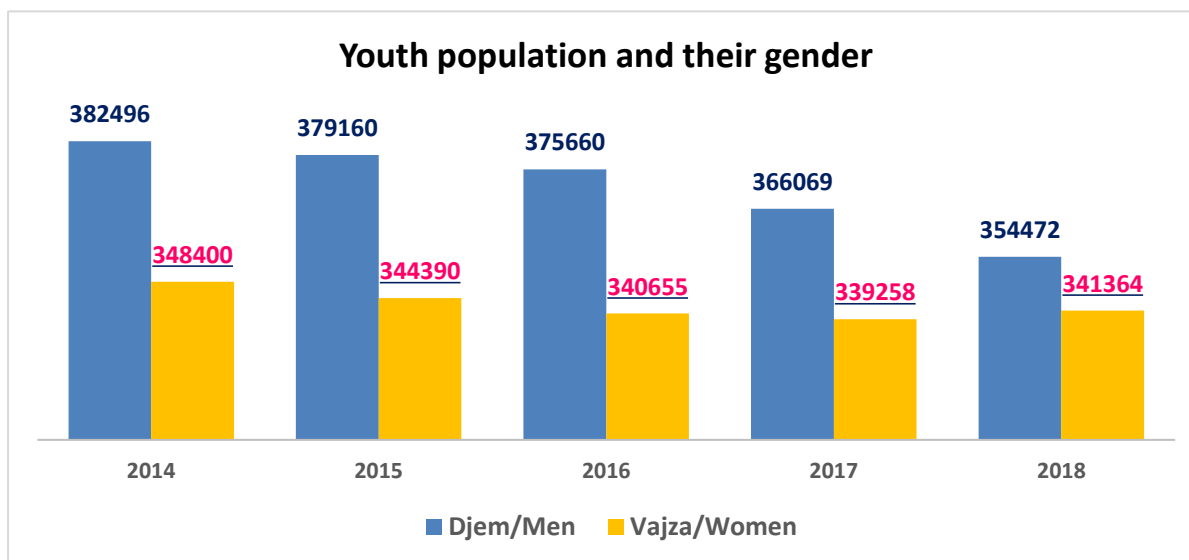


As we can see from the graph, the youth population in Albania is pursuing an ever-decreasing trajectory. In 2018, fewer than 700,000 young people under the age of 29 lived in Albania. By comparing the total number of young people (aged 15 to 29) of 2014 with data of 2018, we see that it has decreased by over 35,000 persons, which again shows the overall downtrend birth and aging population in Albania.

¹ Population data, INSTAT 2018.



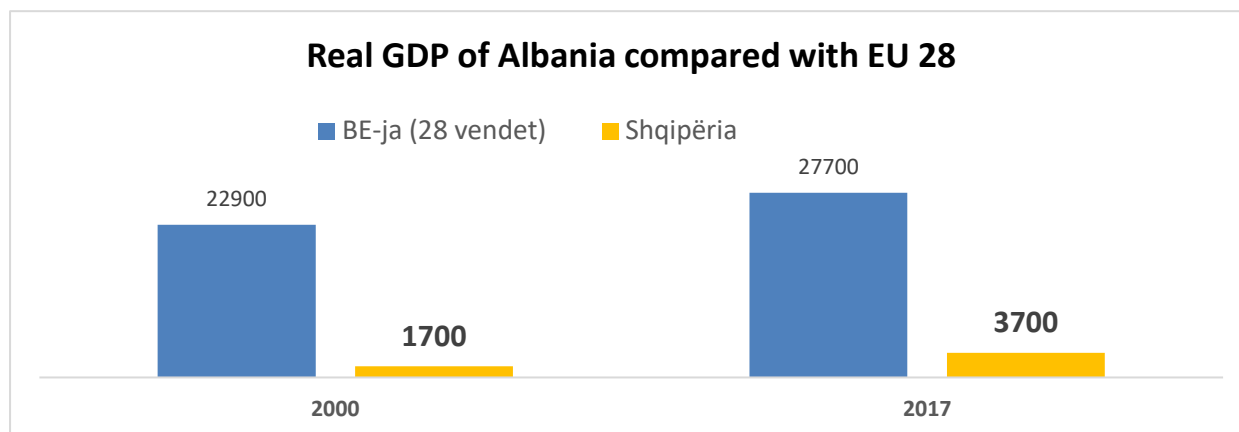
Data shows that during the period 2014-2018 there has been no significant change in the number of youth population in Albania. However, from 25% of population being youth in 2014, as of 2018, this figure went down to 24%, a decrease of 1%, which is one of the indicators of further aging of the population in the country.



The overall number of girls continues to have a marked difference with the overall number of boys, although it is narrowing. One of the main reasons often mentioned for this sensitive margin is the parents' preference for boys compared to girls, which leads to selective abortions. In 2018 the difference among both groups aged 15-29 is 13,108 in favour of boys. Although the law prohibits selective abortions in Albania again, data shows that the phenomenon continues to produce negative consequences, creating inequalities in what should be a natural parity of sexes and genders.

2.2 Poverty amongst youth in Albania

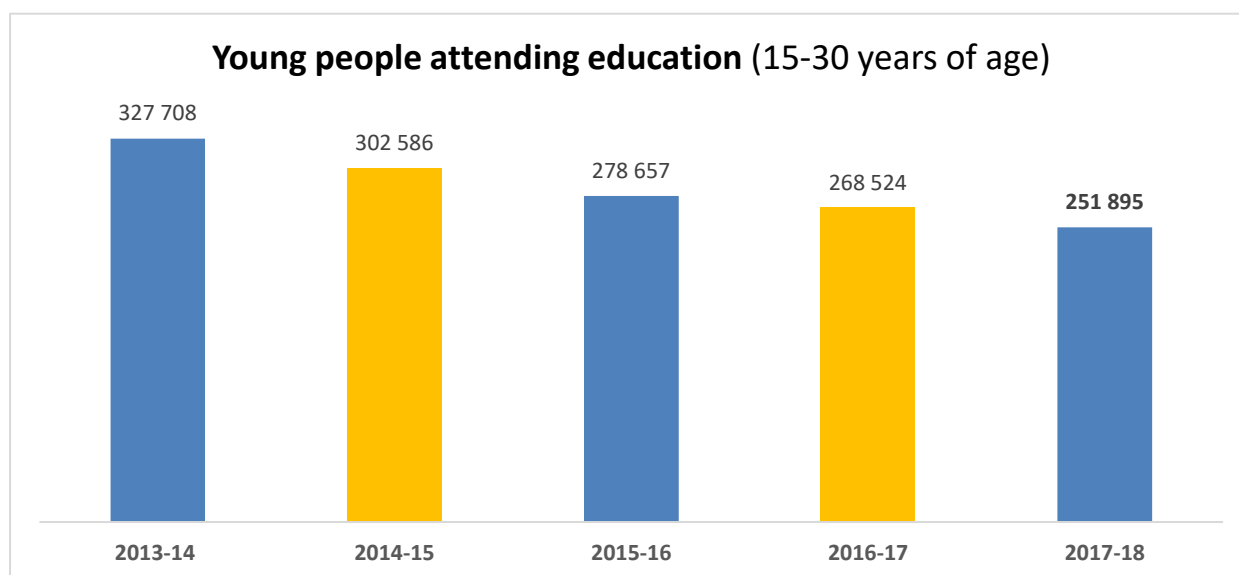
Albania does not have a study on the poverty of young people, so it is difficult to make an analysis of the facts and the actual data. For purposes of the study we are presenting data related to the general poverty of families in Albania. Albania continues to remain one of the poorest countries in Europe. Nearly 14 percent of the population continues to live in absolute poverty, while almost 47 percent of the population lives in relative poverty compared to 22



percent in the countries of the region. Poverty in Albania, after the 2008 economic crisis in the European Union, hit especially children, youth and retirees. Inequality, between those who have and those who do not have, deepens.

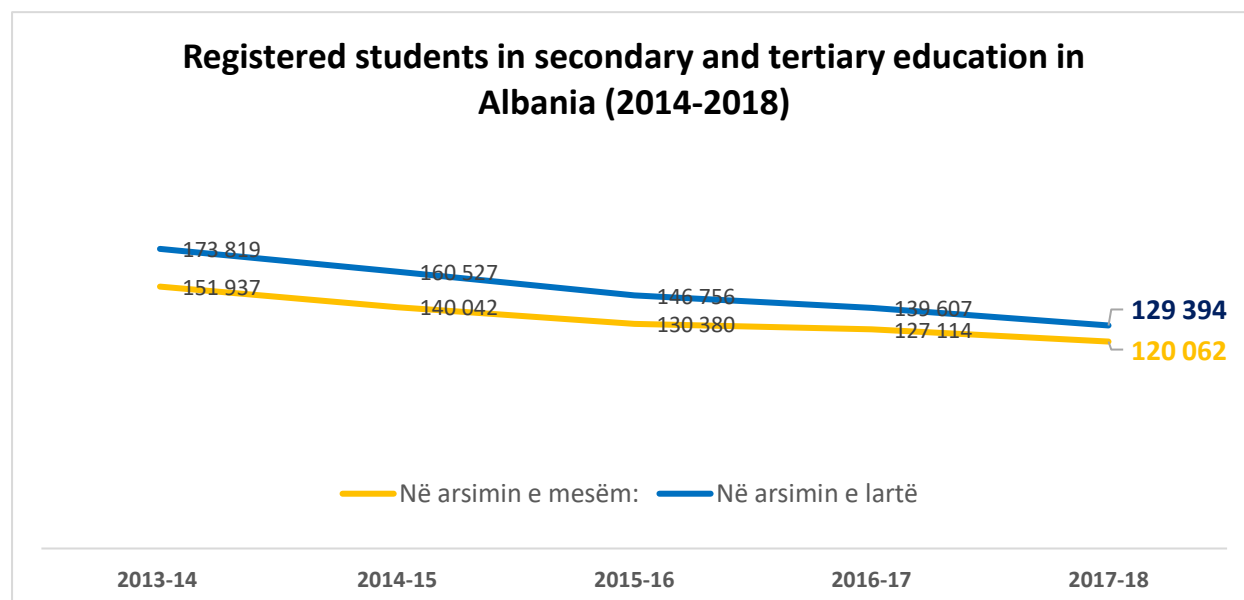
2.3 Youth Education in Albania²

Education is not only a right for young people, but also an opportunity to develop and advance in life. It is one of the main causes of poverty eradication and the increase of prosperity among young people. Family in Albania generally appreciates education and invests a lot for child education, but as the data show, girls often have fewer opportunities to attend secondary and tertiary education compared to boys.

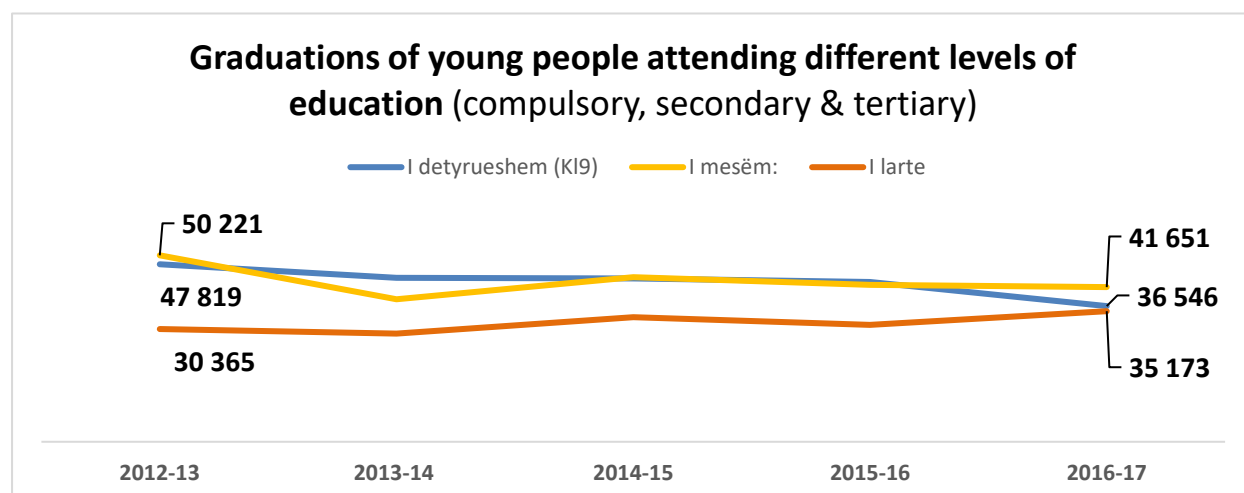


² Education data in Albania, INSTAT 2018.

The data presented in Graph shows the general tendency that the lowering the number of births has resulted in an overall decrease in the number of students attending secondary and tertiary education. This significant reduction of over 75,000 young people within a four-year period can not be explained solely by the reduction of births, but also by the lack of registration into secondary and tertiary education by a large proportion of young people. Secondary and tertiary education are not mandatory to follow in Albania.



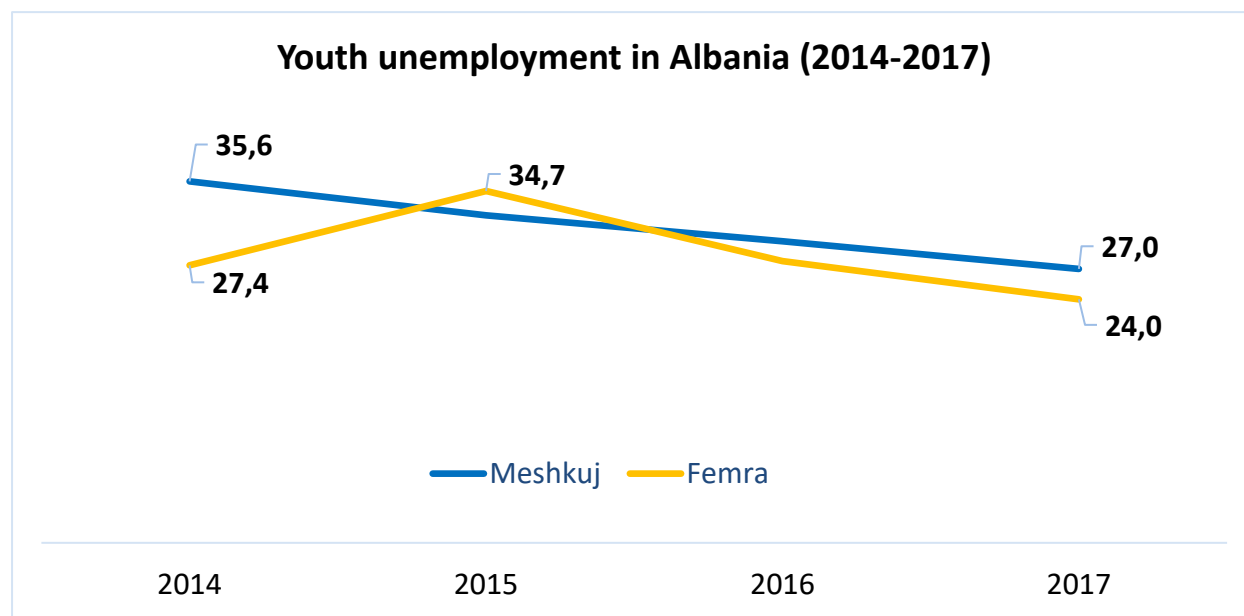
A positive aspect of attending the education of young people in Albania is the narrowing of the gap between young people who finish high schools and attend universities. If in the academic year 2013-14 this difference was over 20 thousand young people, in the current year this decreased to about 9 thousand young people.



The data in the graph above shows that the number of graduates between tertiary and compulsory education (9th grade) is almost the same, while there is a slight increase in the graduation of young people attending secondary education. Higher education degrees include not only young people but also other age groups older than 29 years, which may explain why they are almost the same as those of compulsory education. While the reduction in the number of graduates in compulsory education shows once again the overall tendency of youth population decrease due to lower births per household.

2.4 Youth unemployment in Albania³

Unemployment remains one of the major concerns for young people in Albania. In 2015, the International Labour Organization (ILO) raised its concern that Albania was the first country in Europe for the number of unemployed youths, where over 30% of young people were not able to become part of the labour market. The same figures or higher were reported by INSTAT for the same years, although since 2014 some things have changed for the better.



Youth unemployment affects more boys than girls. Although Albania has been implementing a national program for promoting employment and vocational training for several years, boys remain to a greater extent less employed than girls. In 2014 almost, 36 percent of all young men aged 15-29 were unemployed, compared to 27 percent of girls.

Inexplicably in 2015 we have a shift of roles, where we observe a 7% increase in girls' unemployment and a relative decrease for boys. Although the true causes of this difference are unknown, perhaps the closure of one or several industries specifically related to girls' employment may be one of the factors. Meanwhile, during the years 2016-17, we see a reduction of unemployment for both sexes, where again girls continue to be more integrated into the labour market.

| Scale of youth unemployment in Albania (persons 15-29 years of age) | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| years | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
| Total (in %) | 32,5 | 33,2 | 28,9 | 25,9 |

In overall can be said that unemployment remains one of the major concerns for youth, which produces poverty, social exclusion, immigration and criminality among young people in Albania. According to INSTAT data in 2017, almost 26% of young people able to join the labour market.

³ Employment data, INSTAT 2018.

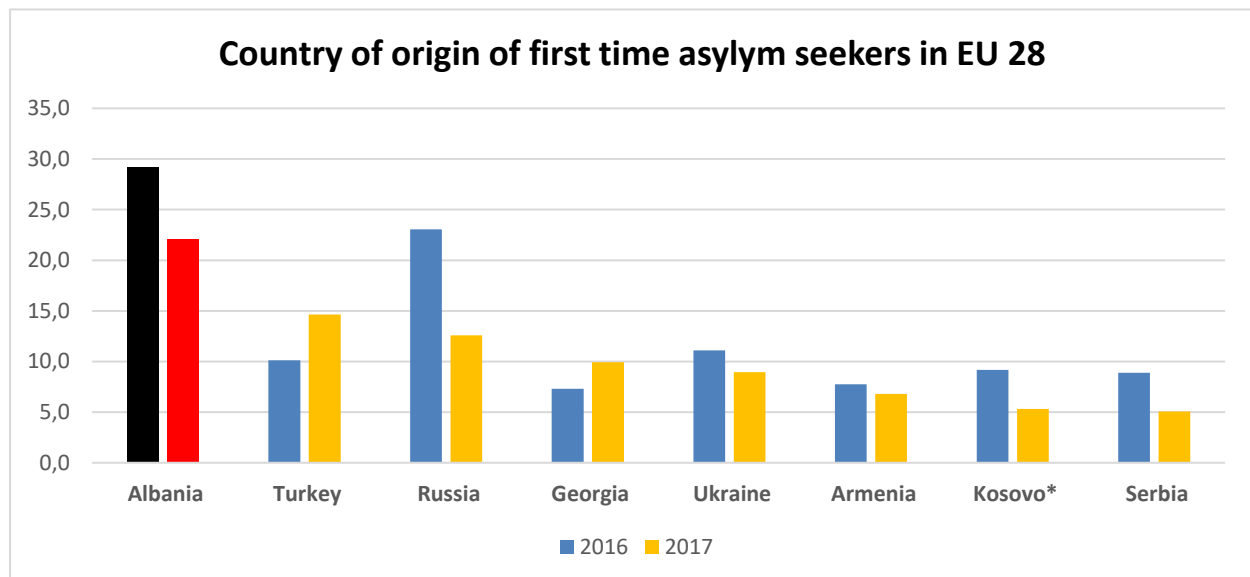
2.5 Youth migration⁴

Emigration and the massive desire of young people to leave Albania for a better life is another major challenge for the country and society. Although there is a tendency to reduce illegal migration and to replace it by lawful migration, the desire of young people to leave Albania remains at very high levels.

In 2015, INSTAT and World Vision reported that over 70 percent of young people wanted to leave Albania for a better life in another country. The percentage of was higher for boys than for girls. At the same time INSTAT reported based on data from their surveys, that 74 percent of respondents said they had migrated due to economic conditions in Albania.

Meanwhile, a Save the Children report, prepared with the participation of over 1,200 young people over the age of 15, showed that almost all the respondents wanted to leave Albania to work or study abroad. In the report, among other things, was written: "In addition, young people were clearly aware of the incentive factors to emigrate. Some considered it an opportunity to qualify for better education, but most of them were fuelled by poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, lack of opportunities, corruption ... "

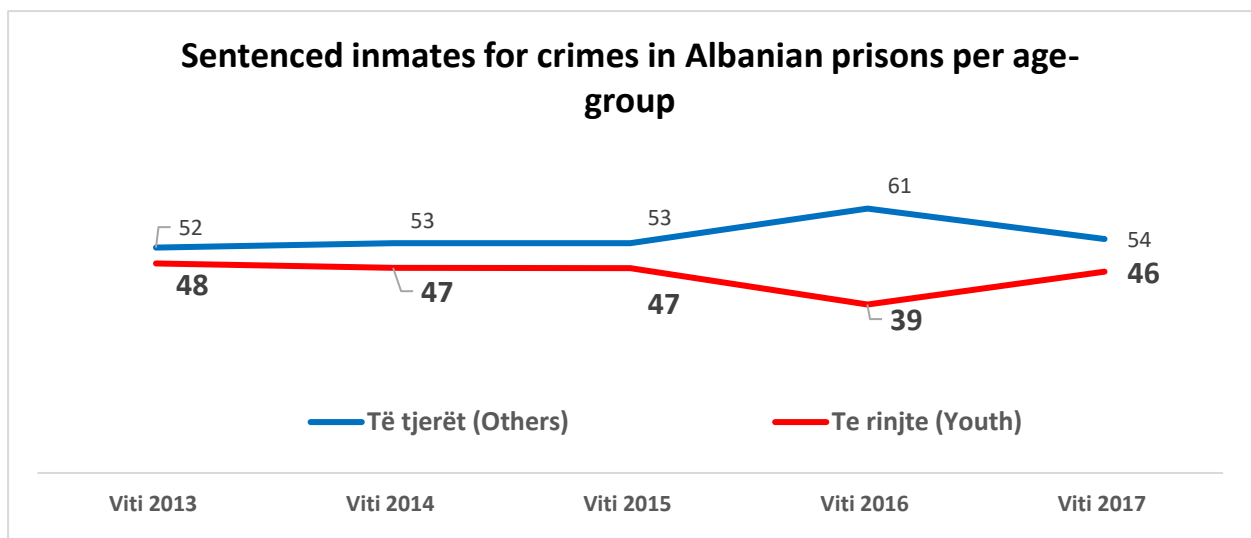
At the same time, data show that Albania remains the first country in Europe for the number of asylum seekers in EU. In 2015 more than 50,000 people from Albania applied for asylum in the EU, while in 2017 the numbers reduced to 22,000 first time asylum requests. According to INSTAT, almost half of all migrants from Albania are young people.



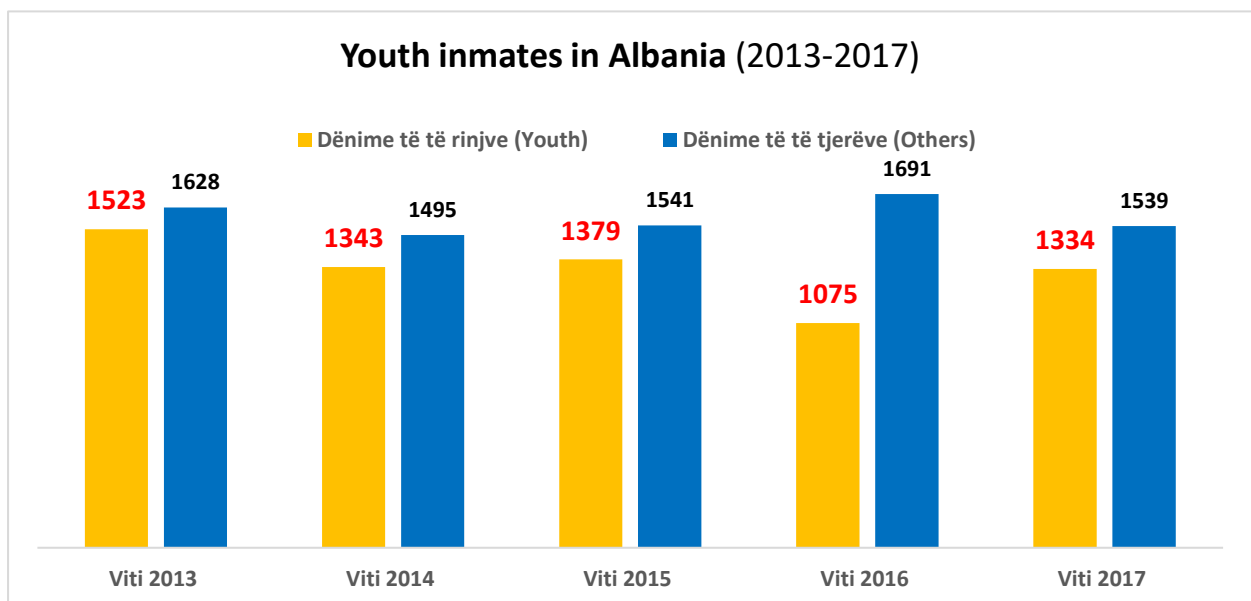
According to INSTAT "for 84 percent of male migrants, employment was the main goal of the movement; this percentage is lower for women - 61 percent. On the other hand, family causes play a role for one out of four women versus 8 percent of men. In general, education is a relatively small reason for migration abroad, though more important for women (11) than for men (only 6 percent). "

⁴ Employment data, INSTAT 2018.

2.6 Youth crime in Albania⁵



Albania presents some very worrying data regarding youth criminality. According to the Ministry of Justice and INSTAT, for the last four years almost half of the sentenced inmates for crimes in Albania were youth. The rest belongs to ages under 15 and over 30. This issue requires better addressing by the Government through introduction of new social justice policies that are currently lacking.



If we look at the figures of criminal sentences, we observe that in absolute figures except for 2016, there is no significant difference between the youth convictions and convictions in other age groups. Data for 2017 show that there is an increase in youth criminality in the country and, consequently, of new convicts. From 2016 to 2017, the number of youth convictions increased by 259, a worrying increase, probably due to the lack of programs and rehabilitation centres for young people who commit criminal offenses in Albania.

⁵ National Data Register of the Ministry of Justice / INSTAT data on crimes in Albania 2018.

3. National Youth Index of the implementation of National Youth Action Plan in Albania (2015-2020)

An important part of measuring the implementation of the National Action Plan for Youth was also indexing its implementation, based on the objectives and sub-objectives of the Plan (6 major objectives). In the instrument allocated to young people, besides each assessment question, a pointing system from 1 to 10, where the number 1 indicates a complete failure to implement the target or the predicted activity, while 10 shows its full implementation.

The scoring system was constructed as a tool that facilitates the assessment of the implementation of the Plan in the opinion and judgment of the young people, based on the experience and measurement they have made on the implementation of the goals and activities of the Plan.

All organizations that participated in the assessment were asked to complete together with the questionnaire the score-based assessment system for the work of the Government and the Municipalities to achieve any specific objectives of the NYAP. Since the activities of the Plan and the realization of the Objectives extend until the end of 2020, organizations were asked to evaluate only those sub-objectives and activities that should have been realized rather than those that were in the coming years (2018-2020).

At the end of the point evaluation, the experts calculated the total number of points awarded by the organizations and indexed them in percent, where 100 percent represents the maximum possible assessment at the point that could be given for the work of the Government and Municipalities to achieve the target while next to it was the percentage of young people estimated by the organization for the work actually done. Below we present the results of the evaluation.

Because the English version of the Report is presented as a summary, the National Youth Index is shared as a separate document. If you wish to receive the file, please send an e-mail to info@crca.al

4. Major findings and recommendations of the Report

4.1 Most critical findings

Only 21% of the Action Plan for Youth was implemented by the end of 2017!

The National Youth Action Plan has not been implemented in its entirety and according to the objectives and activities envisaged to be met during 2015-2017. Of the 48 activities envisaged to be implemented during this period, only 10 of them have been met.

26% of young people are currently unemployed in Albania! Youth unemployment is one of the main causes of illegal immigration of young people from Albania to EU countries!

Youth unemployment affects young men more. Although Albania has implemented some programs for promoting employment and vocational training for several years, boys remain unemployed compared to girls. In 2014 almost, 36 percent of all young boys aged 15-29 were unemployed, compared to 27 percent of girls. Meanwhile, during the years 2016-17, we see a positive reduction of unemployment for both groups. According to INSTAT, almost 26% of young people able to work were unemployed in Albania.

Over 70% of young people in Albania want to leave because of poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and corruption!

Despite the downward trend in emigration, the desire of young people to leave Albania remains at very high levels. In 2015, INSTAT reported that over 70 percent of young people wanted to leave Albania for a better life. Meanwhile, a 2017 report, drafted with the participation of over 1,200 young people over the age of 15, showed that almost all respondents wanted to leave Albania. Albania remains the first Western Balkan country for asylum seekers in the European Union. In 2015 more than 50,000 people from Albania applied for asylum in the EU, while in 2017 they were reduced to 22,000 requests. According to INSTAT, half of all Albanian emigrants are young and new.

Almost 50% of convicts for crimes in Albania belong to the age of 15-30 years. The country has no social or justice policy for the age group of 21-30 years!

Youth criminality should be a major concern for Albania. According to the Ministry of Justice data, nearly half of the final criminal sentences were imposed on young people. Data for 2017 show that there is an increase in youth criminality in the country and, consequently, of new youth convicts. From 2016 to 2017, the number of youth convictions increased by 259, a worrying fact due to the lack of programs and rehabilitation centres for young people who commit criminal offenses in Albania.

Until the end of 2017, neither the Government nor the municipalities established any structures for implementing the Action Plan for Youth!

Lack of institutional structures at the central and local level made it impossible to implement the Plan and the activities envisaged, and consequently the fulfilment of the objectives. Although the Plan provided for the establishment of an inter-ministerial group to monitor its implementation, it was not set up. Not having a full staff (only 2 people), the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Youth, had very limited capacities to work for young people, while lack of information on their roles and responsibilities, only added uncertainty over the roles of respective existing structures.

By the end of 2017, both the Government and the municipalities did not invest any funds on implementing the Action Plan for Youth!

The lack of the Youth Budget in the Ministry's overall budget did influence the lack of implementation of the Plan. Furthermore, it greatly increased the possibilities for the National Plan indicators not to be met in the foreseeable future.

The lack of a regulated funding scheme on supporting Youth CSOs and political youth forums prevented the implementation of the Action Plan by the organizations, as they could not effectively engage in implementing of one or more elements of the National Youth Plan. Consequently, even when CSOs tried to engage in the implementation of the Plan, this was backed by foreign funding, but not from the domestic resources of the Albanian Government.

Both, the Government and the municipalities did not support the strengthening of youth CSOs!

The lack of coordination structures at the central level, and lack of cooperation and structures for young people in the municipalities led to the failure to implement activities of the Plan. Apart from Tirana, other municipalities have neither a budget nor a specific structure for young people in their territory. Absence of a legal and regulatory framework that would make possible the coordination and implementation of the Action Plan, of a Youth Law in Albania and horizontal and vertical structure of youth policy implementation made the implementation of

the Plan almost impossible, both nationally and locally. The lack of youth participatory bodies further complicated the CSO-Government co-operation.

The government did not take any action to promote and support the participation of young people and young people!

Lack of political support and support for effective participation of young people in policy-making and decision-making (Assembly - Government - Local Government - CSOs) did not induce a broad participation or a national movement that could bring significant improvements and changes in the lives of young people. The Government did not support a greater role for young people across Albania.

The co-operation with civil society organisations, political forums and youth groups failed to create sustainable processes of empowering civil society, creating new synergies for empowering young people, which would then enable the independent monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Youth Action Plan and youth policies in Albania.

3 years after the approval of the Plan, no Monitoring or Evaluation Report has been prepared by the Government!

The lack of 6-month and year-long monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan and the lack of accountability within the Ministry itself, created a vacuum which further facilitated the lack of implementation of the national youth policy. As a result, almost three years after the adoption of the Plan, there are no Monitoring or Evaluation Reports drafted by the Government structures.

4.2 Major recommendations

For the Albanian Parliament

1. The Parliament should prioritize the adoption of the Youth Resolution and the establishment of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Youth within the Parliament. It is a positive outcome the organization of the first ever-hearing session on the situation of young people in Albania this June by the Social Affairs Parliamentary Commission. The Parliament should continue to take measures and increase the accountability of the Government regarding the fact that three years after its approval, the NYAP remains not implemented in its entirety;
2. The Special Electoral Reform Parliamentary Commission should consider the requirement of the NYAP for increasing participation and representation of young people at all levels of decision-making. In this regard, the sanctioning in the Electoral Code and the youth law of a minimum quota of 10% may be a positive incentive for young people participation in the country;

For the Albanian Government and the Council of Ministers

1. Youth unemployment is one of the main causes of illegal immigration of young people from Albania. Employment programs should address this by encouraging the creation of new sub-programs such as those for promoting self-employment for boys and establishment of youth led businesses;
2. In this context, the Government, together with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, should take seriously into account the opening of new programs for community support for young people both for their empowerment and for those young people who have anti-social or criminal behaviour, to create new opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society.
3. As often noted in this report, the NYAP has not been implemented in its entirety. In this regard, we recommend the Albanian Government to establish a specific Youth Budget within the budget of the Ministry of Education, which should account for at least 10% of the funds of the entire ministry;

For the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth

1. The Ministry of Youth should take swift measures to set up a National Youth Council, with the participation of all line ministries, municipalities and youth organizations in the country, based on the positive experience of such councils in Albania such as the civil society or gender equality ones.
2. It is very urgent to establish the Youth Policy Directorate, at the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, as an implementing unit of youth policy in Albania. This directorate should also be tasked with the preparation of periodic reports on the implementation of the NYAP, the strengthening of youth organizations, the preparation of specific youth policy proposals etc.
3. The adoption of a Youth is already an old request and recommendation of civil society. Although the Ministry started preparations for the law, the process and the way it has been organised so far, it shows that the participation of young people in it is not guaranteed. We would strongly recommend that not only the working group that is preparing the draft, but also the entire process be run and supported by young people.

For Municipalities in Albania

1. In every municipality, Youth Offices or sections shall be established, while City Councils should adopt a specific budget to fund programs for youth initiatives;
2. In every municipality, 3 to 5-year Youth Action Plans should be drafted and approved as one of the ways that local public policies address the shortcomings that Municipalities have in their youth work. The experience of the Municipality of Tirana can serve as a guide in this direction.