



Thematic
analysis/diagnosis:
Youth & sport sector

Executive Summary

Sport represents a tool for achieving better social and economic development and contributes to building a progressive, tolerant and inclusive society. Globally, the importance of sport is closely linked to social, economic and cultural trends. Sport is a significant driver towards meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, especially the goals related to health, education, gender equality and social inclusion.

Sport as a social phenomenon is a crucial and established part of a modern society and it is almost impossible to imagine everyday life without the participation or organization of sporting events. Mass sport is the basis for improving the health condition of the citizens and plays an important role in ensuring a long and high-quality life. **Regular physical activities provide a variety of social and health benefits.** Physical activities contribute to the promotion of physical and mental health and have a positive impact on cognitive development as well as educational performance and learning.

In addition to promoting public health, sports and physical activity also contribute significantly to **providing inclusive and high-quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning.** If an educational program is combined with physical activity and sports, the educational performance is multiplied. Namely, according to a research published in the study "Health and Academic Achievement" at the National Center for Prevention and Promotion of Chronic Diseases¹, students who are physically active tend to have better grades, better cognitive performances (for example, memory) and better classroom behaviors (for example, task-related behavior). Additionally, through participation in sports and recreational activities, children and young people are taught the most important sports values and social skills such as teamwork, fair play, cooperation, respect for rules and tolerance. These skills are also crucial for professional life, as young people acquire life skills that can be used outside of school, including in the workplace.

Young people are the ones who initiate, who are making and will make all the important changes in the society and it is they who must be involved in the decision-making processes and together with them we will build a society tailored to them, where their voices will not be only numbers, but an echo of positive changes.

Young people are the bearers of positive change and the future driving force of social and economic development, which is why they have a key role in building the foundations for the future of our country and this category brings huge potential as a key resource for social progress. Therefore, it is especially important to provide inclusive policies that will enable unhindered access to young people for their active participation in decision-making processes and in the creation of policies that are tailor-made for the youth. Investing in young people means developing competencies, skills and knowledge as well as providing opportunities and conditions for better education and employment,

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/health_and_academics/pdf/health-academic-achievement.pdf

and thus improving their standard of living and building their present and future in their own country.

Young people in the Republic of North Macedonia face serious challenges as a result of the unfavorable and inconsistent social and economic situation. It has a negative impact on their positive projection for their own future. One of the most important challenges for a young person is how to get a decent job and how to realize themselves within their profession and how to achieve their career aspirations.

For young people to have the desire and motivation to work, it is necessary to offer them the opportunity to work, to have real competition, where they can compete with knowledge, ideas and solutions, to be given space and opportunity to have their role and to influence social trends, to encourage youth activism, but without using the process of selectivity.

Youth participation is the basis for creating youth policies and it refers to the active participation of young people who convey initiatives, ideas and proposals for improving the positions of young people in the society. The process of mapping the needs, demands and challenges faced by young people as well as finding the desired solutions should be a comprehensive and long-term process. Creating long-term and sustainable strategies and implementing youth-centered policies is crucial for the society as a whole.

According to a survey conducted regarding the Socio-Political Youth Participation in North Macedonia: Inequality, Uncertainty and Different Expectations (2021, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, North Macedonia) 69.4% of young people have never been consulted by the authorities, neither locally nor centrally.²

² <https://mof.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Studija-Socio-Politicko-Ucestvo-na-Mladi-2021-MK-sml-1.pdf>