



TITLE: Youth Needs and Visibility of Youth Programmes in the Field of Culture in the North Macedonia

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1. INTRODUCTION

The regional project "The Melting Pot" is a partnership initiative implemented in 3 countries (Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia) with the support of the Erasmus+ programme through the National Agency Tempus Foundation from Serbia, with a duration from March 2021 to September 2022. From each of the included countries, one national network and one institution from the field of culture were involved in the implementation of the project: National Association of Youth Work Practitioners - NAPOR and the Gallery of Matica Srpska from Serbia, the Croatian Youth Network and the Zagreb Center for Independent culture and youth "Pogon" from Croatia, and the Union for Youth Work and the Museum of the city of Negotino from North Macedonia. The partners joined together in a strategic partnership in order to contribute to bringing the youth and cultural institutions closer together through youth programs.

During the planning of the project, the partners from the cultural institutions noticed that young people are less and less interested in the offer of the traditional cultural content (exhibitions, performances, concerts and film screenings). Having in mind data by Eurostat that in 2019, 94 % of young people in the EU-27 made daily use of the internet, and that 92% of young people used mobile phones for that purpose, it is clear that cultural institutions need to follow the development of technology and create different interactive methods and approaches in presentation of culture contents to young people. Also, the partners took the recommendations from the final report from the EACEA "Access of young people to culture" into account, where it is emphasized that access and participation are the key elements for ensuring the cultural rights of young people, therefore, it is recommended to "take into consideration the non-users – through surveys, contacts with communities and NGOs. Analyse the reasons for not coming, and what it would require to bring different audiences to the institution. The use of new technologies, non-formal educational programs and volunteer activities may help to engage them. Equip staff with the expertise and skills to manage cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. This may require the setting up of training and discussions also in networks and partnerships with other cultural and academic institutions and with NGOs, etc."

The general intention of the partners with this project is to contribute to bringing cultural institutions closer to all young people through youth work and programs with the inclusion of interactive and innovative methods and tools, as well as creating prerequisites for the professionalization of youth workers and employees in cultural institutions. Therefore, they set specific goals:

- To increase visibility and recognition of youth work and cultural institutions' potential to respond to the identified needs of various youth groups at local, national, regional and EU level.
- To raise the quality of youth work across the region by introducing innovative and creative methods integrated into culture and arts programs.
- To increase the professionalism of youth workers and employees in cultural institutions by creating curricula for their education.
- To establish cross-sectoral cooperation among youth workers and cultural institutions at the national and regional level.

In order to achieve the project goals, the partners planned and implemented a series of different activities:

- Conducting comparative research on the needs of young people in culture, based on national research in each of the countries (based on surveys for youth, focus groups for youth, surveys for cultural institutions, analysis of documents) in which it was planned to include 320 young people from the three countries.
- Developing a curriculum for the education of youth workers in cultural institutions.
- Developing of six (6) educational youth programs and testing half of them, that is, implementing three (3) of the developed educational youth programs in cultural institutions, while involving 60 young people.
- Development of a booklet "*Melting pot of innovation in youth work and cultural institutions*" with fifteen identified examples of innovative and creative methods in working with young people from Croatia, Serbia, North Macedonia and Europe.
- Organizing national and regional events for the presentation of the achieved results and products of the project, and for raising awareness about the needs of young people, about the importance of investing in developing services for youth work in cultural institutions due to the positive impact on the development of young people, like: study visit for 12 youth workers and cultural workers in Serbia; breakfasts with journalists in each country; interactive event realized at the same time and connecting participants from Serbia, North Macedonia and Croatia via the Internet; regional conference in Croatia.

With the activities, it is planned to reach at least 150 organizations and 150 cultural institutions from Serbia, Croatia and North Macedonia, and to about 200.000 citizens. The project partners put special emphasis on the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.

Through the implementation of the project, the partners strengthened mutual relations and cooperation, determined some of the challenges in the area of cooperation and communication between young people and institutions in the field of culture and art, explored innovative practices, and developed and tested new youth programs. With the finalization of this project, the partnership does not end, but the partners are determined and better prepared to continue working on overcoming challenges and improving conditions for working with young people and youth programs in the field of culture and art through future collaborations.

This partnership and the project itself are particularly interesting and useful for several reasons:

- They represent a rare example of strategic cooperation between the youth and cultural sectors, which can be learned from and built upon;
- Provide data on the needs of young people in the field of culture and on the visibility of cultural programs for young people, and also present the recommendations provided by the young people themselves, which can

and should be used in the future during planning in the field of culture and youth work, since, in reality, such data is something that was missing in the region;

- Create products (curriculum for education of youth and cultural workers, booklet with positive practices, youth programs) that are relevant, current and in accordance with the needs, and that have a high usable value for both the youth and cultural sectors in the region and in Europe.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conducted research shows that there is a lot of space and opportunities for improvements in the field of culture and the participation of young people in culture; it is necessary to invest more in strengthening the ties between the cultural institutions and organizations and the young people, in order to create conditions for equal access to culture for all youth and therefore to contribute to their development.

The current opportunities are limited and limiting, that is, there is a lack of long-term youth programs which are carefully planned and implemented in continuity by youth or cultural workers and by application of youth work methods; also, there is a lack of research and data in the field of culture in order to lay a solid foundation for realistic planning in the future.

Regarding the participation of young people in the culture, it is considered from three aspects within the framework of the research: youth (1) as participants in processes related to the area of culture, that is, decision-making or participation in such processes, (2) as creators of a cultural product and, (3) as consumers of the cultural product, that is, the audience. Regarding all aspects – the conclusion is that the participation of young people is on a very low level. Young people were very rarely asked for their opinion on programs and cultural contents, or when creating policies in the field of culture by organizations or institutions, and it has most often been done by an association/organization and within some project, and almost negligible – by an institution. Regarding the opportunity to be involved as "creators of a cultural product", young people are also very poorly involved, noting that the opportunities are somewhat greater in the capital, and almost non-existent in the rest of the towns in the country; also, there is a lack of encouragement for this kind of involvement of young people.

Young people, although they are mostly seen as consumers of the cultural product, that is, as an audience, are not very active or present in that way, too. Important to note here is that there is a difference in the perception of the cultural institutions and the young people about the reasons for their non-attendance of cultural contents. From the cultural institutions (the respondents of the questionnaire for cultural institutions actually answered that they are somewhat satisfied with the interest and attendance by young people) as reasons why the response/attendance by young people is not satisfactory, they rank the highest the reason that the "young people are generally uninterested for culture and arts" and that "the contents are incomprehensible for young people". The young respondents to the survey questionnaire and the participants in the focus groups,

on the other hand, say that (before COVID-19¹) their attendance at cultural events was relatively weak (that is, rarely or sometimes). The most common reasons why young people do not visit cultural institutions and events of the independent cultural scene are that "there are not enough such events in the young people's place of residence", "inaccessibility due to the place of residence (happens elsewhere)" and "lack of event promotion", as opposed to "they are not interested" and "they don't have time", which are at the bottom of the list of possible reasons for non-attendance.

The youth also recommend that "- Decentralization of culture is necessary – all citizens deserve equal access to culture."

Regarding the alternative/independent cultural scene, young people note that it "practically does not exist except in the capital".

An additional topic of interest, if we want to achieve increased involvement and participation of young people, is the way of informing young people about cultural events, contents and opportunities, and it is necessary to take into account that they are a specific and separate audience/target group that needs specific ways to inform and encourage. Therefore, it should be taken into account that young people are informed about cultural events mostly through social networks (Facebook and Instagram) and recommendation from friends (word of mouth), as well as through their schools (if in education).

The needs of young people, as well as their habits and interests, are an important starting point in order to create an offer and conditions for their inclusion in cultural programs. Given that youth work, as well as visiting cultural content, usually takes place in their free time and on a voluntary basis, it is significant to take into account how young people spend their free time. They mostly use their free time in: listening to music, hanging out with friends, spending time on social networks, spending time with family, followed by activities such as nothing/relaxing, reading books, watching series and movies, as well as sports activities, and even in the middle of the list, there are the creative activities and visiting cultural events in places of the independent cultural scene, and even lower – visiting cultural institutions, while volunteering and spending time in youth centers are at the bottom of the list. Part of this is certainly related to the available opportunities, especially when one takes into account the satisfaction with the quality of life in the places of residence of the young people, which is generally below average, but still, we conclude that they are most satisfied with the opportunities for going out, entertainment, nightlife, then, from the opportunities for non-formal education and sports activities, followed by the opportunities for continuing education, and finally the cultural content and offer, public transport and employment prospects.

In terms of cultural events and contents, asked in terms of preferences, that is, which of the (offered) list of events/contents they would like to see more of in the

¹ Pre-Covid-19 period is the period that the research team considered should be taken into account due to the limitations in the operation of cultural institutions with preventive measures.

future, young people say that they are interested in: cinema/film screenings, film festivals, theater performances, concerts of foreign mainstream music, creative and educative workshops, exhibitions in museums and spaces of the independent cultural scene, book promotions and literary readings, etc., while at the bottom of the list they place: opera, ballet or classical music concerts; contemporary circus performances and contemporary dance performances.

Finally, and in relation to the needs of the institutions, according to the responses of the representatives from the cultural institutions, where the highest ranked need in terms of improving their work with young people is cooperation with youth organizations and youth workers, it is clear that a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge in the field of youth work has been observed. Furthermore, the need for better inter-institutional cooperation and cooperation with the civil sector and the independent cultural scene is noted. Also, in order to address the shortcomings in the current work, it is recommended to take into account the reasons for non-attendance of cultural institutions/organizations provided by the young people.

3. APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

With an aim to determine the needs of young people in the field of culture and the reasons for their (non)involvement in the cultural institutions, a quantitative and qualitative research was conducted in each of the included countries, while following the same methodology.

The basic questions that were attempted to be answered through the research emerged from the project:

1. Why (the main reasons) young people are not involved in cultural institutions;
2. What are the ways to involve young people in cultural programs (identifying channels to be used, communications messages, as well as different innovative methods to be used in programs);
3. What are the real needs of young people when it comes to culture and art.

Accordingly, the main questions of the research were related to the examination of a) the real needs of young people when it comes to culture and art, and b) what is the visibility of cultural programs for young people.

The research hypotheses are:

- There is no difference in the perception of the young people and the representatives of cultural institutions regarding the reasons why young people do not attend the programs of cultural institutions.
- Young people are dissatisfied with the available offer of cultural programs in their place of residence by cultural organizations/institutions.
- The young people, in contrast to cultural institutions/organizations, believe that cultural institutions/organizations do not enable the inclusion of young people in planning cultural programs.

Research instruments for collecting qualitative and quantitative data included: document analysis, online questionnaires and focus groups.

During the detailed planning of the methodology and design of the research instruments, and the preparations for the implementation, the research team and the partner organizations faced various challenges, and were limited in terms of funds and time, as well as coping with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic which affected every society, but nevertheless made special efforts to make the research as comprehensive as possible, and usable according to the requirements of the project, but also to the needs of the partners, and especially considering that during the planning of the project itself, it was determined that there is a real lack of research in the area.

Also, in order to harmonize the understanding of the different terms and terminology used in the included countries, as well as to facilitate the research process, the partners and the research team set some basic "definitions" for certain terms, phrases, which were considered important for the context of and for the needs of this research, such as:

- "culture" includes the arts;
- "cultural programs" – refers to programs in the field of culture;
- "cultural institutions" and "cultural organizations" refer to institutions, ie institutions, and organizations working in the field of culture;
- "cultural workers" – the term will be used in a broader sense and will refer to persons who work in the field of culture and/or arts, such as: artists, independent artists, artistic collaborators, professional collaborators who work in various cultural institutions and activities
- "independent cultural scene" – consists mainly of organizations dealing with contemporary culture and art, encouraging interaction between art, technology, culture and society. Independent culture organizations introduce new themes, ways of working and production in contemporary culture and art, and through activism, education and networking, work to improve the contemporary culture and art.
- "youth programs" – are specifically planned programs for young people that are not one-time events/activities, but are implemented over a certain period of time by youth or cultural workers using methods of youth work;
- "participation of young people" – will be considered from 3 aspects: young people as participants in decision-making processes related to the area of culture; young people as creators of a cultural product; and, young people as consumers of the cultural product, that is, the audience.

In North Macedonia, a quantitative and qualitative research was conducted, and the planned research instruments were used:

- **Analysis of documents**, in order to identify existing youth programs and methods used in the work with youth in the cultural institutions (museums, theaters, houses of culture, galleries, etc.). The analysis was conducted in the period December 2021 – January 2022, through a search of available

documents and information about existing programs for youth in the field of culture on the internet.

- **Online questionnaire for cultural institutions** – to identify examples of programs for youth, and ways of communicating with youth (communication and marketing channels). The prepared questionnaire was sent to cultural institutions and organizations via e-mail to official e-mail addresses, after which a second e-mail reminder was sent a few days before the end of the specified deadline, followed by a phone call. Responsiveness was generally weak, that is, only about one third, ie. only 8 out of a total of 21 targeted institutions/organizations submitted answered questionnaires.

In addition, and in order to overcome the challenge of low responsiveness, the research team made an effort to conduct telephone interviews with a selected number of questions with around 20 other local and national institutions, about half of which answered the questions.

- **An online questionnaire for young people** – to determine the needs and interests of young people, was made on the LimeSurvey platform and available for responses in the period from September 7 - 21, 2021, after a previous one week test period. The online survey was published on the website of the Union for Youth Work and distributed through social media, which was also assisted by the member organizations of the Union for Youth Work and other partners (networks and organizations) through their e-mailing lists.

The random sample is 127 respondents, young people aged 15-30 years, with an average age of 21.5 years. Most of them (66.97%) are women, less (31.19%) are men, and 2 participants (1.83%) describe themselves in another way. The sample includes a significant representation, i.e. even half (50.82%), of members of one or more marginalized or vulnerable categories of citizens (who face poverty, live in a rural areas, belong to a minority ethnic community, belong to the LGBTQ community and/or are physically or intellectually challenged persons.

- **Focus groups for young people.** In addition, 3 focus groups were conducted with young people. The focus groups, were held online through the ZOOM platform due to the restrictions for live gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic, during October, 2021. A total of 24 young people with an average age of 24.08 years participated in the focus groups, over 70% of which were women, while 41.67% of the total number of the participants stated that they belonged to one or more marginalized or vulnerable categories of citizens.

4. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

WHAT IS...

In this part we shall review the current situation i.e. what IS now.

4.1. YOUTH CULTURAL PROGRAMS

It is obvious that there is a lack of long-term youth programs that are implemented in cultural institutions in North Macedonia, and which are carefully planned and implemented continuously by youth or cultural workers. Here, we note that the research team was faced with the limitation of the basic search of what is available on the internet, and recommends that – in order to determine the real situation regarding the existence of youth programs with a long-term character and applying the methods of youth work – it is necessary to conduct additional and specific research by requesting access to information directly from institutions and interviews with persons involved in youth programs.

What was determined by reviewing the available documents is that although funds from the Ministry of Culture are allocated to national and local institutions through the annual call/competition for financing projects of national interest in culture, there is no specific review of the funds spent on youth, especially for development and implementation of youth programs. Within the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2022-2024², where a review of the results for 2020 and 2021 is provided, a project for "developing habits of cultural perception among children" is mentioned, but by searching for available documents on the Internet, the researchers failed to find more details than what is stated as a description of it in the Strategic Plan itself, that is, that "The project envisages the realization of cycles of program content from all artistic fields intended for children and youth" in order to influence the perception of the young audience with affinities for participation in cultural life. Also, in the reports³ of the Ministry of Culture, a number of projects for youth are listed, but mainly only as titles, without description.

Furthermore, we emphasize that part of the cultural institutions (local and national) primarily have the youth (or children and youth) as their primary target audience, such as the Youth Cultural Center (with the main goal and task of "promotion of culture, cultural and scientific values of young people"⁴) or the Theater for Children and Youth (which is "the only national theater specialized in the program for children and youth"⁵); a series of events, festivals and

² Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2022 – 2024:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fkultura.gov.mk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2022%2F01%2F%25D0%25A1%25D1%2582%25D1%2580%25D0%25B5%25D1%2582%25D0%25B5%25D1%2588%25D0%25BA%25D0%25B8-%25D0%25BF%25D0%25BB%25D0%25B0%25D0%25BD-2022-2024-2.doc&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

³ <https://kultura.gov.mk/%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B8/>

⁴ <https://mkc.mk/za-mkc/>

⁵ <https://www.puppet.com.mk/ZA-TDM>

manifestations are organized for young people, a large part of which are traditionally held every year, even decades ago; there is also certain information about different types of workshops and lectures for children and young people, etc.

It must be noted here that a large part of the content is not with free entrance, for example, the ticket for regular open lectures in the Planetarium of the Youth Cultural Center costs 150 denars, the Cinematheque of Macedonia traditionally organizes screenings exclusively of animated films and teenage dramas in the month of January for which the entrance ticket costs mainly 100 denars, but for certain screenings it can be 150 denars, etc. Of course, there are a huge number of events that are open (no tickets or entrance fees), or there are opportunities for free entry for young people (such as, for example, for visiting the permanent exhibition of the Archaeological Museum, where students can enter for free every Thursday, and high school students – every Wednesday), but with this review we want to note that "culture is not for free" for young people even in state institutions.

In addition, examples from the survey of representatives from cultural institutions, and, telephone interviews, show that there are rarely long-term programs for young people, very often they are one-off events or recurring events, and also often focus more on developing programs for children, than for the youth age group, while a large part of the events are often intended for the general public/audience.

Through the answers of the participants in the focus groups, it can be concluded that there is really a lack of opportunities for youth involvement (with the exception of the offer in Skopje, the capital, and compared to the very weak offer in other cities), "...and that's mainly as an audience, without many opportunities for young people to get involved in planning and organizing events and programs through which their creativity would be nurtured."

Confirmation can also be found in the responses of the respondents of the survey for youth, that is: they evaluate the cultural content and offer (question no. 13) in their place of residence with a worryingly low score; before the Covid-19 pandemic, relatively few attended creative workshops and educations (question no. 14); the most frequently chosen reason for the low attendance of cultural institutions (question no. 16) and the independent cultural scene (question no. 17) by young people is that "There are not enough such events in the place where young people live."; and in their recommendations (questions no. 18 and 19) which they give as suggestions for solutions to increase the interest of young people, the highest ranked choice is "To increase opportunities for young people to participate and attend cultural content (greater availability of such content.)".

The previously mentioned remarks and views of the young participants at the focus groups about the limited opportunities support the identified shortcomings in the National Strategy for the Development of Culture of the Republic of

Macedonia 2018-2020⁶, which are expected to be targeted within one of the ten strategic goals and priorities for "Decentralization and de-metropolization in culture".

It is inevitable to mention that many events and manifestations are carried out by the civil or private sector in the area of culture, which are largely financially dependent on various donors other than the state budget. Also, some of the national and local institutions provide additional funds for their programs from foreign donors.

In the field of culture, we conclude that the support from the European Union is particularly significant, especially through the Creative Europe program (2014-2020) subprogram Culture⁷, through which the Macedonian cultural operators are involved in 68 projects, and appear as project coordinators in 45 of them.

Regarding the state funding, the Ministry of Culture disposes of the budget for culture, which in 2021 amounts to 3,276,430,000 denars (53 million euros), and in relation to the entire budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, it amounts to 1.23%. The budget for culture finances projects of national interest (which amounts to 970,100,000 denars or about 15.5 million euros) and capital (infrastructural) investment projects (which amounts to 217,000,000 denars or about 3.5 million euros)⁸.

Within the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2022-2024, it is not visible how much of the funds are intended for young people, but we note that there is a program for "supporting young talents" as a special program among a total of eighteen programs within the budget proposal for implementation at the Annual competition for financing projects of national interest in culture (for 2022 it is proposed to allocate 4,000,000 denars to support young talents, which represents 0.38% of the total proposed budget; for 2023 – 5,000,000 million denars (0.43%), and for 2024 – 6,000,000 million denars (0.46%))

In terms of documents/policies, the Republic of North Macedonia has no special documents that specifically determine and refer to (any kind of) youth participation in culture.

Basic documents that regulate youth policies and measures in the Republic of North Macedonia are the National Strategy for Youth 2016-2022⁹ (where one of the nine thematic areas is the area of culture) and the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies (adopted in 2020)¹⁰.

⁶ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gfzA76RBOTS1_A00fNn62n352E3nr8kB/view

⁷ Review of projects supported by the Creative Europe (2014-2020)– subprogramme Culture <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lj9so1K055CPdZPns0sCdYq-8pLiHayc/view>

⁸ Review of Cultural Policies of Republic of North Macedonia <https://rm.coe.int/cultural-policy-review-of-the-north-republic-of-macedonia-/1680a1bd28>

⁹ <https://ams.gov.mk/public-information/nacionalna-strategija-za-mladi-2016-2025>

¹⁰ <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>

Regarding the area of culture, a National Strategy for the Development of Culture in the Republic of Macedonia in the period 2018-2022 with an Action Plan and a Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2022-2024 was adopted, based on the Law on Culture and other related laws and regulations. These documents do not contain guidelines specifically related to youth, and the term "youth" itself is mentioned very few times. However, it can be considered that the issue of creativity and culture for young people is a horizontal topic, especially considering the targeting of "all citizens" and the intention of "enabling equal cultural rights for all".

4.2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION & INFORMATION

The participation of young people in culture is considered from 3 aspects: (1) as participants in processes related to the area of culture, that is, decision-making or participation in processes for developing programs and policies, (2) as creators of a cultural product and, (3) as consumers of the cultural product, i.e. audience. Regarding all aspects - the conclusion is that the participation of young people is insignificant.

Regarding whether they were ever asked for their opinion on programs and cultural contents (**youth participation in decision making**), or when creating policies in the field of culture by organizations or institutions, only a small part said that they have been involved in some way, that is - only 15.56% of the respondents on the online survey said that they were involved (question no. 11), as well as 20.83% of the focus group participants.

Those young people who declared in the online survey that they were involved in some way, and who also provided additional information on how it was done, mainly - as methods for collecting their opinions, mentioned the following: focus groups, survey and "free expression (in NGO)", and it is also interesting to note that they were mostly asked by an association/organization, within some project activity, and almost negligible part of them said that they were invited by an institution.

The latter is also confirmed by the answers from the participants of the focus groups, where those who stated that they were asked for their opinion, also emphasized that it was almost always at an event (focus group or meeting) organized by an association, while that event was almost never specifically for the field of culture, but was on "some other broader topic" while the issue of culture and/or arts have been just tackled while exploring/discussing the "broader topic". The institutions, on the other hand, which were asked through a survey questionnaire, mainly said that they are involving and asking young people for their opinions, but among the answers in which way they do it, only a few mentioned real tools/ways that could mean involving young people of this type (surveys, forums, public debates, direct conversations in everyday contacts), while most of them mentioned types of activities in which young people are involved as audience/users (art competitions, literature meetings, 3D cinema, educational workshops...).

Young people as creators of the cultural product are also very poorly involved. While the surveys lack questions about this type of participation, the participants in the focus groups again emphasized the difference between the capital and the rest of the cities in the country, as well as the lack of opportunities and encouragement for this type of youth involvement.

Young people, although they are mostly seen as **consumers of the cultural product**, that is, as an audience, are still not very active or present in that way. The majority of respondents from cultural institutions said that they were somewhat satisfied with the interest and attendance at events by young people, and in terms of reasons why the response is not satisfactory, from the answers offered, they ranked the highest that "young people are generally uninterested in culture and art" and "contents are incomprehensible to young people".

According to the answers from the young people from the survey questionnaire (question no. 14), the attendance of cultural events before the COVID-19 was relatively weak (that is, "rarely" or "sometimes"). What is worrying is that more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents have never visited any of the 20 types of events offered as an answer choice, while exactly $\frac{1}{4}$ (25%) of the respondents said that they have never been to a theater performance – an event that is actually the most commonly visited type of event by the survey respondents. More than half of the respondents have never visited an international music festival (53.41%), a contemporary dance performance (55.68%) or a contemporary circus performance (71.59%). They mostly went to theater performances, to the city library, parties of electronic music and cinema/movie projections. We assume that this is due to the (in)availability of content, and not to the lack of interest in young people. Namely, in terms of the quality of life in their place of residence, the survey respondents rate the cultural content and offer very low (question 13).

Also, as reasons why young people do not visit cultural institutions (question 16) and events of the independent cultural scene (question 17), the most common are "there are not enough such events in the place of residence of the young people", "inaccessibility due to the place of residence (happening elsewhere)" and "lack of promotion for the events", as opposed to "they are not interested" and "they don't have time" which are at the bottom of the list of possible reasons for non-attendance.

The youth – participants in the focus groups confirm that the offer of cultural content is weak, with the exception of the capital, Skopje, where there is a richer offer and conditions, and they also noted that "- Decentralization of culture is necessary - all citizens deserve equal access to culture."; regarding the alternative cultural scene – they noted that "it practically does not exist except in the capital". They also mentioned other towns where the situation is somewhat better compared to the rest of the country, such as Kavadarci, Strumica, Shtip, Ohrid, but the general conclusion is that the offer in the smaller towns is almost non-existent, and it is "outdated and uninteresting for the young people".

They also pointed out that the promotion of cultural events is weak, and, in particular, that it is not adapted properly to reach young people. At the same time, in response to the question of how they receive/find information about cultural events, it was pointed out that the main source of information for them are the social networks (Facebook and Instagram) and a recommendation from friends (word of mouth), while some also mentioned that sometimes they are informed in schools for some events and are encouraged to attend.

Also, the respondents from the survey for young people are mostly informed about the cultural offer through social media (Facebook and Instagram), as well as through friends and acquaintances, and then through profiles of artists (on social media) whom they follow, and through posters and flyers.

From the survey of cultural institutions, as communication/marketing methods they use to distribute information about their programs and events to young people, it can be seen that social media (Facebook and Instagram), posters, and also through educational institutions (through teachers, professors and direct visits to schools). It seems that channels used by the institutions are such that young people are supposed to 'respond' to, but clearly more is needed to improve the communication than simply using the same channels, which corresponds to the noted in the National Strategy for the Development of the Culture: "Institutions in the field of culture do not develop separate marketing activities although some have sectors or departments for marketing. The latter are superficially or not at all performing quantitative and qualitative analyses and research of the audience, do not establish connections with it, do not investigate motives, cultural needs and behaviors. It is due to the lack of specialized staff, as well as the limited personnel and technical resources for management, which implies the popularization of artistic products and cultural values and the continuous development of an audience."¹¹

WHAT'S NEEDED...

In this part we are analyzing the needs and the desired state.

4.3. YOUTH NEEDS

The needs of young people, as well as their habits and interests, are an important starting point in order to create an offer and conditions for their inclusion in cultural programs. Therefore, the research included questions that would determine what their understanding of culture and cultural life is and how much importance they attach to it, what their preferences and interests are, how they spend their free time, etc.

Focus group participants have a broad understanding of culture and cultural life, and their impact over the life of each individual, as well as on the development of societies. They perceive the culture as a set of values, norms and customs that shape the behavior of the members of a community/group/state; while cultural

¹¹ (pg19) https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gfzA76RBOTS1_A00fNn62n352E3nr8kB/view

life – for them – means a life rich in events and activities that enrich the human spirit and experience. At the same time, it is not only connected with art, but also with many other daily activities and relationships. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of the artistic expression as a way to channel emotions and express opinions that one might not otherwise feel free to express.

Respondents to the survey for young people, through a choice from offered answers, had the opportunity to answer what culture and cultural life means to them. For them, it mainly means the opportunity for active expression of creative ideas (31.40%), visiting cinemas, museums and exhibitions (22.73%), as well as visiting other cultural events (21.49%). For some of the respondents, it also means fulfilling their free time (15.29%), and only a small part do not know what it means (7.44%).

Regarding the meaning/importance of culture and artistic expression in their life, most of the participants in the focus group (75%) stated that they are "very important", and a smaller part (25%) – that they are "somewhat important", while no one said they were "not important at all". On the other hand, when asked about their perception of the importance of culture and artistic expression for their peers, the most common answer (45.83%) is that they are "somewhat important" for their peers, less often (41.66%) "very important", while there are participants (12.5%) in whose opinion culture and artistic expression "are not important at all" to their peers. Some of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation and discussed that the lack of interest and non-attribution of importance to culture and artistic expression among young people is due to the promotion of negative values, promotion of commercialism and consumerism on expense of quality, general lack of interest in culture in the society, as well as the lack of opportunities and offers from cultural institutions... (" - Weak activity of cultural institutions, weak creative capacities; no space for young people to express their potential".)

The majority of the respondents of the youth survey also agree that culture and/or artistic expression is an important part of their life (49.54% completely agree, and 24.77% partially agree), while 8,26% are undecided on the question, and only 1 respondent partially disagrees.

Considering that youth work, as well as visiting cultural events, usually takes place in the free time of young people and are done on a voluntary basis, as a matter of interest, it was considered how the young survey respondents actually use their free time. From a wide list of (22) different activities, the highest ranked according to the answers from the respondents are: listening to music ($\bar{x} = 4.35$), hanging out with friends ($\bar{x} = 4.05$) (while somewhat lower –going out with friends to bars, cafes, clubs ($\bar{x} = 3.54$)), spending time on social networks ($\bar{x} = 4.02$) and spending time with family ($\bar{x} = 4.02$). After these, there are activities of the type: nothing/relaxation, reading books, watching series and movies (more of an entertaining nature, and somewhat less – of an educational nature), as well as sports activities, and in the middle of the list, there are the creative activities ($\bar{x} = 3.11$) and visiting cultural events in places on the independent cultural scene ($\bar{x} =$

3.00), and even lower – visiting cultural institutions ($\bar{x} = 2.71$). At the bottom of the list are volunteering ($\bar{x} = 2.91$) and spending time in youth centers ($\bar{x} = 2.29$).

Respondents to the youth survey had the opportunity to express their satisfaction with the quality of life in their places of residence by evaluating several aspects. It is obvious that their satisfaction is generally below average. From their assessment of the various aspects of the available offer, we conclude that they are most satisfied with the opportunities for going out, entertainment, nightlife ($\bar{x} = 2.87$), as well as opportunities for non-formal education ($\bar{x} = 2.82$) and sports activities ($\bar{x} = 2.78$), followed by opportunities to continue education ($\bar{x} = 2.60$). They are less than satisfied with the cultural content and offer ($\bar{x} = 2.44$); and they are the least satisfied with public transport ($\bar{x} = 2.16$) and employment opportunities ($\bar{x} = 1.98$).

Regarding cultural events and contents, the survey questionnaire included 2 related questions – one about visiting cultural events and contents before the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic (as a period that can be considered a "normal" situation before the introduction of prevention measures and protection, which prohibited organizing of public events, and it had a significant impact on the culture sector), and which can provide insight into what is (was) actually available as an offer, and, the other question – about their preferences, i.e., what from the same list of events/content we would like to see more of in the future. When comparing the answers to these two questions, it is interesting to consider the differences in ranking.

<i>14. Посета на културни содржини пред КОВИД-19</i>	<i>аритм. средина</i>	<i>ранг</i>	<i>15. Преференци /што би сакале да има повеќе</i>	<i>аритм. средина</i>
Театарски претстави	2.4091	I	Кино/филмски проекции	2.5632
Градската библиотека	2.2841	II	Филмски фестивали	2.5517
Забави/журки на различна електронска музика	2.2386	III	Театарски претстави	2.4713
Кино/филмски проекции	2.2273	IV	Концерти на СТРАНСКА MAINSTREAM музика	2.4713
Концерти на СТРАНСКА MAINSTREAM музика	2.1818	V	Креативни работилници и едукации (работилници за креативно пишување, DJ-ство, ликовно изразување, танц, сл.)	2.4138
Свирки на демо-бендови (неафирмирани бендови)	2.1818	VI	Изложби/уметнички инсталации ВО МУЗЕИ ИЛИ УМЕТНИЧКИ ГАЛЕРИИ	2.4023
Креативни работилници и едукации (работилници за креативно пишување, DJ-ство, за ликовно изразување, танц и сл.)	2.1705	VII	Изложби/уметнички инсталации ВО ПРОСТОРИ НА НЕЗАВИСНАТА КУЛТУРНА СЦЕНА	2.3678
НАЦИОНАЛНИ музички фестивали	2.1364	VIII	Промоции на книги, разговори со писатели и поети, литературни читања и сл.	2.3678
Изложби/уметнички инсталации ВО МУЗЕИ ИЛИ УМЕТНИЧКИ ГАЛЕРИИ	2.0909	IX	Градската библиотека	2.3563
Концерти на ДОМАШНА MAINSTREAM музика	2.0909	X	Концерти на СТРАНСКА АЛТЕРНАТИВНА музика	2.3448

Промоции на книги, разговори со писатели и поети, литературни читања и сл.	2.0795	XI	НАЦИОНАЛНИ музички фестивали	2.3448
Концерти на СТРАНСКА АЛТЕРНАТИВНА музика	2.0795	XII	Концерти на ДОМАШНА АЛТЕРНАТИВНА музика	2.3218
Концерти на ДОМАШНА АЛТЕРНАТИВНА музика	2.0682	XIII	Забави/журки на различна електронска музика	2.2989
Изложби/уметнички инсталации ВО ПРОСТОРИ НА НЕЗАВИСНАТА КУЛТУРНА СЦЕНА	2.0000	XIV	Уметнички перформанси	2.2907
Опера, балет или концерти на класична музика	1.7841	XV	Свирки на демо-бендови (неафирмирани бендови)	2.2874
Филмски фестивали	1.7614	XVI	Концерти на ДОМАШНА MAINSTREAM музика	2.1954
Уметнички перформанси	1.7159	XVII	МЕЃУНАРОДНИ музички фестивали	2.1264
МЕЃУНАРОДНИ музички фестивали	1.6818	XVIII	Опера, балет или концерти на класична музика	2.1163
Изведби на современ танц	1.5795	XIX	Изведби на современ циркус	2.1149
Изведби на современ циркус	1.3864	XX	Изведби на современ танц	2.0805

The attendance (question 14), probably depends on the possibilities (how many of those events there were, their availability¹² /price, location/, and also on the respondents' preference); while we believe that question 15 corresponds more to the real interests and wishes of the respondents.

If the city library is highly ranked (2nd place) in question 14, it is probably due to its availability, because in terms of preferences (question 15) it drops to the 9th place; it is similar with the parties/parties of different electronic music, which are the 3rd visited event (question 14), and in terms of preference – it falls by even 10 places, i.e. it is in the 13th place; etc.

4.4. INSTITUTIONS' NEEDS

In order to determine what are the needs of the institutions, and to consider how to adapt the programs and the offer to the needs and interests of the young people, the survey questionnaires and focus groups included appropriate questions.

The young respondents to the survey were asked to state the reasons for not visiting/attending events of the cultural institutions and the independent cultural scene, considering that if challenges are through determined the answers, they could be adequately addressed by the institutions in the future.

None of the 11 answers offered to the question about not visiting cultural institutions is completely rejected by the respondents, but the disagreement with reasons such as lack of time ($\bar{x} = 2.22$), lack of interest ($\bar{x} = 3.25$), or high prices of the entrance tickets ($\bar{x} = 3.10$) is encouraging, since it obviously means that the

¹² Libraries of some kind are functional in every place, no matter the size of the number of books available and the spatial capacities, and are open for the readers during certain period during the day.

young people are interested and have time to attend cultural events. Most frequently chosen answers "there are not enough such events in the place of residence" ($\bar{x} = 3.99$) and "it happens elsewhere" ($\bar{x} = 3.87$) indicates that the main reason is the fact that there is no satisfactory offer of cultural events (which also confirms the conclusion of question /no.13/ about the quality of offer from different areas, where the cultural offer and content is ranked low), and that "Everything happens only in the big towns" , as noted by one of the respondents in the follow-up question.

The visibility of the cultural events/offer is also very high on the list of reasons, that is, respondents believe that "there is a total lack of promotion for the events" (3rd place on the list of reasons, $\bar{x} = 3.72$), that young people "are not aware that there is such an offer" (4th place, $\bar{x} = 3.62$) and that "the promotion is not adapted to young people" (6th place, $\bar{x} = 3.33$).

As a response to a follow-up question asking to state additional reasons for the low attendance of youth, 10 respondents stated different reasons, with which they obviously want to further accentuate already given answers about a weak and uninteresting (for young people) offer in their places of residence, but also give a few other reasons:

- There are only in the big cities.
- The biggest reason for low attendance is that there is no organization of any kind of cultural, sports, music, film, creative events in our place of residence, while we have great interest.
- It is not represented at all in my place of residence.
- They are not interesting.
- Standard operation of the offering institutions, that is, the same program has been going on for years, despite the lack of attendance and insufficient interest of young people in it.
- The disorganization of municipalities and the disinterest of young people.
- Insufficient financial resources
- They need to recognize the cultural values, as much as the reasons listed above
- Bad management of all (literally all) cultural institutions! Inadequate appointment of the directors and the entire staff.
- Accessibility to institutions for persons with disabilities.

Respondents' answers about the reasons for not attending events of the independent cultural scene are almost no different from those given in the previous question – about the reasons for not attending cultural institutions. Namely, here too it is clear that young people are not uninterested ($\bar{x} = 2.85$) or do not have time ($\bar{x} = 2.36$), and they do not consider that "the contents of contemporary art and culture are more difficult to understand" ($\bar{x} = 2,82$), but that "there are not enough such events in the place of residence" ($\bar{x} = 3.99$), and "it happens elsewhere" ($\bar{x} = 3.77$).

It is also interesting, since it is in line with the previous conclusion – to point out the answer of one of the respondents: "For those who do not live in the capital or

in some of the larger towns in the country, such a scene does not exist.", which also opens the question – how much is the independent cultural scene present (developed) in the country, and if it is not – what are the reasons for it.

It is not surprising that the young participants in the focus groups, while discussing the reasons for the unsatisfactory situation regarding the lack of attendance at cultural events of institutions and the independent cultural scene, confirm and explain the answers from the survey. Namely, they emphasized that the offer and opportunities are very limited, uninteresting for the young people; and, although there are some positive examples in some towns (e.g. Kavadarci, Strumica), still the main events are in the capital, and in other towns: "- There are not many events organized by cultural institutions and organizations, and, rarely there are programs that are implemented continuously so that young people would acquire the habit of regularly attending cultural events.", and, "- There is no cultural life in which young people would participate, there is no offer; cultural life is reduced to going out for coffee with friends... Events are rare, there is no theater repertoire, and even less than that – creative workshops... .. Maybe it is due to the pandemic, but the new generations of youth seem as if they are unaware, especially inactive..." At the same time, they reason that the problem of passive/uninterested youth is due to "inverted values" and a lack of encouragement and support within the framework of the educational system. In addition, it is pointed out to:

- the weak promotion of the cultural events, especially that it is not taken into consideration to properly adapt it to target the young people, and even if there are enough cultural events in some towns, yet, the young people are not informed about them;
- too high prices for some events, that is, incompatible with the possibilities of young people;
- the lack of interest of the institutions to enable the appropriate participation of young people

Another interesting observation by the participants of the focus groups (those who are active in some civil society organizations as members or volunteers) who noticed that it is often the case that the same few young people appear and participate in all events, and that it is necessary to change, i.e. "- We have to think about how to encourage and motivate all young people to participate."

However, the majority of respondents of the survey for cultural institutions, stated that they implement some programs and events for young people, and are somewhat satisfied with the attendance by them.

They believe that the reasons for lack of interest of youth to attend are as follows:

- Young people are generally not interested in culture and art (8 answers, ie all who answered the survey);
 - The contents are incomprehensible for young people (5 answers);
 - They cannot afford the ticket prices (4 answers);
 - The contents we offer are not interesting for young people (3 answers);
- and,

- We have not tried to reach young people with specific marketing methods (1 answer).

It can be noted that the highest-ranked answer by the representatives of the institutions (the lack of interest of young people) does not correspond to the ranking of the young people from the survey – that is, lack of interest is placed low on the list of reasons by young people, while reasons such as not having enough offered content in their place of residence are higher, as well as lack of visibility of cultural events, and the lack of information of young people. The youth at the focus groups did not have the opportunity to rank on this issue, but their dissatisfaction with the weak offer and limited opportunities for youth participation was very evident, while they also addressed the issue of lack of interest and passivity.

This, however, clearly points out to the existence of a certain lack of interest among young people. Consequently, it would be necessary to investigate in more detail about the causes for the lack of interest, and to address them accordingly in the future.

Finally, from the responses of the representatives from cultural institutions, where the highest ranked need in terms of improving their work with young people (Question No. 9) is cooperation with youth organizations and youth workers, it is clear that a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge in the field of youth work has been observed.

5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations refer mainly to the need for increasing the interest of young people and improved communication between them and cultural institutions, and are directly derived from the answers of the participants in the surveys and focus groups.

In order to increase the interest of young people in cultural events and content, the young respondents to the survey questionnaire (Questions No. 18 and 19) give the following recommendations to the cultural and institutions/organizations on the independent cultural scene:

- to increase the opportunities for young people to participate and visit cultural contents;
- investing in promotion that is adapted to the needs and interests of the young people;
- to adjust activities and accompanying programs according to the needs of the young people;
- to provide discounts in ticket prices for young people
- free entry at events for youth

What is significant to note here, is that apparently young people do value culture and the arts and are willing to pay entry tickets for cultural events – which is evident by the frequency of choice of the offered answer 'free entry to events' which places it last (5th) on the list, while "ticket discounts for young

people" is in the middle of the list (3rd place), and is an understandable choice considering the economic ability of young people.¹³

Regarding ticket prices, respondents were asked to determine for themselves what the average ticket price should be for certain types of cultural events/content. The average prices - according to the answers - range from 100 to 250 denars, while the highest prices are for concerts (lower for domestic and higher for foreign music), and the lowest for tickets for exhibitions, museums, galleries.

The young participants at the focus groups believe that in order to increase the interest of the young people and bring them closer to the cultural institutions/organizations, and in addition to the above-mentioned recommendations from the survey, the following should be done:

- enhanced education in the field of culture and art, especially through the use of creative and informal methods of working with young people
- allocation of larger budgets for organizing cultural events at the local level
- increased cooperation and strengthened interventions in education in order to inform children and young people and to expose them to culture and arts, so that love and respect for cultural and artistic products and expressions are nurtured from a young age and in continuity
- increased cooperation and support for civil society organizations which provide non-formal education for young people in order to increase their capacity and reach
- organizing local cultural activities and outdoor events in every "neighborhood"
- strengthened inter-institutional cooperation
- eased or abolished requirements for securing permits for organizing cultural events in public places/areas
- decentralization of cultural events (to have a greater and more diverse offer everywhere, not only in Skopje)
- increased state support to institutions and organizations working in the field of culture
- increased support for young talented artists
- increased youth participation in the decision-making processes and creation of cultural policies and planning programs (in order to respond to the youth's current interests and needs)

Given that the different interests and preferences of young people should be taken into account during planning, and with the intention of responding to their real needs, in this section we also highlight the types of events that youth have expressed interest in.

¹³ Only about ¼ of the respondents are working (in some way) and receive some kind of financial compensation for their work, while the majority (about 2/3) are high school students or university students (question no. 3). Also, about 18% of the respondents declared that they face economic difficulties/poverty (question no. 6).

91% of focus groups' participants stated that they would be interested in participating in workshops or programs on various topics (human rights, freedom of expression, intercultural learning and dialogue, mental health, expressive reading, craft workshops, etc.) organized/held in cultural institutions. They also listed a number of other and different types of events they would like to participate in:

- film/movie screenings
- art exhibitions
- concerts of orchestras
- theatre plays/performances
- organizing readers' clubs
- poetry readings / poetry evenings
- motivational lectures
- festivals where different contents would be integrated
- events/conferences in the field of culture at the national level
- "Informal events"

Regarding the preferences of the young respondents of the survey questionnaire for events and contents in the field of culture and arts, that is, what they would like to see more of in their place of residence, the following ranking list was obtained (from highest to lowest):

- cinema/movie screenings
- film festivals
- theatre plays/performances
- concerts of foreign mainstream music
- creative workshops and education (workshops on creative writing, DJing, artistic expression, dance, etc.)
- exhibitions/art installations in museums or art galleries
- exhibitions/art installations in spaces of the independent cultural scene
- book launchings and promotions, conversations with writers and poets, literary readings, etc.
- the city library
- concerts of foreign alternative music
- national music festivals
- concerts of domestic alternative music
- parties/parties of different electronic music
- artistic performance
- parties/gigs of demo bands
- concerts of domestic mainstream music
- international music festivals
- opera, ballet or classical music concerts
- contemporary circus performances
- contemporary dance performances

Of course, the cultural institutions' representatives, respondents of the survey questionnaire, were asked about what they would need in order to improve their work with the youth. According to their selection of the offered answer choices, the following list of priorities was created:

- Cooperation with youth organizations and youth workers (professionals qualified to work with youth)
 - Better coordination with other cultural institutions.
 - Better coordination with other local/national institutions
 - Cooperation with non-institutional cultural organizations (NGO-s, independent culture venues)
 - Greater budget allocated for marketing/distributing information.
 - Education in youth work.
 - Greater financial support by the local/national authorities
- Only one of the respondents added another suggestion to the list:
- Human resources, staff knowledge and skills necessary for developing youth programs.

An additional note from the research team as a recommendation, especially while taking into account the limitations in conducting the analysis of documents via the Internet, is that there is a need for additional research specifically to explore the existence of youth programs with a long-term character by applying youth work methods by requesting access to information directly from the institutions and interviews with persons involved in youth programs. There is currently no organized data in that area, and the research team, while taking into consideration what has been determined as the needs of young people through the other research instruments, believes that there is a need to investigate further in the future and to identify the existence of youth programs and good practices as well as to identify the specific challenges that cultural organizations and institutions face when implementing youth programs in order to be able to plan their appropriate solutions, and consequently, opening up new and diverse opportunities for young people.

6, ANNEXES

- Analysis of survey questionnaire for youth
- Analysis of questionnaire for institutions/organizations
- Focus Groups Report
- Desk research report