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**TITLE: Comparative research analysis for the North Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia – Youth Needs and Visibility of Youth Programmes in the Field of Culture**

**Authors:** Dragana Mitrovikj, Martina Jachevska, Dragica Cekorovska, Valentina Gambiroža Staković, Josipa Tukara Komljenović, Ida Jagar, Ivona Eterović, Marija Stojanović, Jelena Stojanović and Jelena Bobić.

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**Activity coordinator:** Dragana Mitrovikj

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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. Analyze 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 and 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 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, as 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 comparative analysis of the national research conducted in North Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia 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 in all countries. 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.

In all three countries, 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.

In contrast, there are several examples of good practice related to programs that have been identified in Serbia and Croatia, illustrating youth programs organized by different cultural institutions (*Zadar Concert Office, Museum of Contemporary Art, Center for Visitors Ivana's House of Fairytale (Croatia), Museum of African Art, Memorial collection of Pavle Beljanski, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade and the Gallery of Matica Srpska*).

The available information and documents used in the conducted desk research in all three countries showed that programs for young people in cultural institutions depend on individual engagements of galleries, museums, cultural centers, on motivation and competences of cultural workers to, create programs according to the youth needs and so on.

Participation of young people in the culture 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 in all three countries is that the participation of young people is on a very low level.

According to young people, vast majority of institutions/organizations/government bodies do not involve young in the processes of designing programs related to cultural content in the local community, or in designing cultural-related youth policies. The

situation in Croatia and Serbia is very similar, with more than 90% of youth who stated that are not participating, while in North Macedonia the situation is slightly better (84,44%), but still alarming.

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. On the other hand, majority of respondents from cultural institutions/organizations (more than 75% in North Macedonia and Croatia and up to 85,71% in Serbia) claims that young people are involved in the planning of cultural content within their institutions. When cultural institutions start planning their programs with, and not for young people, they will encounter visible changes, having young people as a permanent valuable resource.

Young people, although 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. While institutions from all three countries cited that youth are generally uninterested in culture and arts, the most frequently chosen reasons by young people are: "youth are not aware that there is such offer" (Serbia), "insufficient promotion of events" (Croatia) and "there are not enough such events in the place of residence" (North Macedonia).

In Croatia and Serbia, when it comes to the visibility of cultural programs and content, it is precisely the insufficient promotion of events that young people point out as the reason for not attending events in cultural institutions. In addition, among the 3 main proposals for changes that cultural institutions need to introduce in order to increase the interest of young people is the proposal for greater investment in youth-friendly promotion.

Regarding the alternative/independent cultural scene, young people note that it "practically does not exist except in the capital" (specifically cited in Serbia and North Macedonia) and "the lack of recognition of this type of content by cultural institutions and importance for young people" in Croatia.

An additional topic of interest, if aiming to achieve increased involvement and participation of young people, is the way of informing young people about cultural events. Young people from all three countries state two main sources of information about cultural events - Facebook and Instagram and friends and acquaintances. Similarly, answers stated by the cultural institutions/organizations from all three countries show that main channel of communication/marketing through which they distribute information about their programs/events for young people are social networks in general. Even though the channels are matched, more is needed to improve the communication.

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 consider how young people

spend their free time. **In all three countries**, they mostly spend their free time in: listening to music, spending time on social networks and socializing with friends. When it comes to activities related to the culture, young people **in all three countries** visit more cultural events on the independent cultural scene (concerts, parties, exhibitions, plays...) than in cultural institutions (theater, opera, exhibitions, museums).

Part of this is certainly related to the available opportunities, especially when one considers the satisfaction with the quality of life in the places of residence of the young people, which is generally below average. While **in Croatia and Serbia** young people are most satisfied with the offer of sports and recreational facilities, **in North Macedonia** opportunities for going out, entertainment, nightlife is the most prominent. Likewise, young people are moderately satisfied with the cultural offer **in Croatia and Serbia**, and less than satisfied **in North Macedonia**.

According to the responses of the representatives from the cultural institutions, the highest ranked need **in all three countries** for developing and maintaining youth programs in cultural institutions is corporation with youth organizations and youth workers (qualified people to work with youth). This acknowledgement lays the foundation for better inter-sectoral cooperation in the future.

### **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, i.e. 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 all three countries, 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, theatres, houses of culture, galleries, etc.), desk research was conducted in each country. The analysis was conducted in the period December 2021 - March 2022, through a search of available documents and information about existing programs for youth in the field of culture available on the internet.

## - **Online questionnaire “Cultural institutions/organizations and the Youth”**

Online questionnaire for cultural institutions was conducted with the aim to identify examples of programs for youth, and ways of communicating with youth (communication and marketing channels). Gathering of the information was conducted during September 2021 by Pogon - Zagreb centre for independent youth and culture, The Gallery of Matica Srpska and Museum of the city of Negotino.

84 cultural institutions (museums, galleries, cultural centres and homes, independent art scene, theatre groups, musical organizations) around North Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia were contacted to official e-mail addresses.

Responsiveness was generally weak, that is, only about one third, i.e. only 28 out of a total of 84 targeted institutions/organizations submitted answered questionnaires, in spite of constant reminders, kind e-mails and phone calls.

## - **Online questionnaire "Visibility of cultural programs and the needs of young people regarding cultural content"**

An online questionnaire for young people was used to determine the needs and interests of young people. It was translated to national languages (Serbian, Croatian and Macedonian), created on the Lime Survey (North Macedonia and Serbia) and Survey Monkey platform (Croatia) and available for responses during September 2021 in Croatia and North Macedonia and in the period September - October 2021 in Serbia.

The online survey was published on the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Union for Youth Work, Croatian Youth Network and NAPOR and distributed through e-mailing lists to member organizations of all three networks, reaching out more than 150 association of youth organizations and youth organizations.

Final random sample consists of **500 young people aged 16 to 30 years** (256 from Croatia, 127 from Serbia and 127 from North Macedonia), with an average age of 21.4 years. According to the **gender identity** of the respondents, the vast majority (75%) are women, 22.1% are men, while 2.89% of the participants described themselves in some other way.

Half of respondents (51,77%) are belonging to one or more **vulnerable groups**, such as: ethnic minority groups, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, facing poverty, live in a rural area, and/or are physically or intellectually challenged persons.

- **Focus groups "Visibility of cultural programs and the needs of young people regarding cultural content"**

In total, eight (8) focus groups were conducted with young people. Apart from one focus group that was held in person (in Serbia), all the other were held online through the ZOOM platform due to the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Serbia and North Macedonia) and in line with the wishes of the participants (Croatia). Focus groups were organized during October 2021 (in North Macedonia and Croatia) and November 2021 (in Serbia). A total of 67 young people with an average age of 21.6 years participated in the focus groups, 64.66% of which were women and 33.66% were men, while 1.68% of the participants described themselves in some other way.

Out of the total number of the participants, 36,93% declared themselves to belong to one or more vulnerable categories (rural youth, LGBTIQ community, economical poverty and young people with disabilities).

## **4. COMPARATIVE 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**

Culture is only successful if cultural institutions continuously deal with young audiences, both existing and potential. Formal and non-formal education in the field of culture and art must be included in this process. In achieving these goals, it is necessary to create ways for their development and to promote and provide continuous support to cultural content in the educational system, through formal and non-formal programs from contemporary cultural and artistic practices.

In general, the analysis in **all three countries** showed there is a lack of long-term programs for young people implemented with continuous financial support from state institutions and independent cultural scenes, and which are carefully planned and implemented continuously by youth or cultural workers. The lack of recognition of the importance of having a strategic cultural program for young people that would benefit young people with attractive modern technologies and interactive content is in line with the lack of understanding of the importance of building cultural capital for young people, as well as the needs of their satisfaction for the consumption of cultural content. Youth culture, preferences and tastes are dynamic and institutional and infrastructural factors should follow their interests, develop the youth audience and ultimately create youth programs in collaboration with young people. Culture for young people is not only for spending free time. In addition to being users of cultural events and consumers of cultural products, young people often act (pro)actively, by self-organizing in the field

of art and culture. Culture plays an important role in the formation of their attitudes and values, and has a positive effect on socialization, personality formation and social affirmation. In order to achieve this, the state has to provide support to continuous programs in comparison with short term activities and projects.

**In Croatia**, there are four programs implemented by cultural institutions that represent examples of positive long-term practice of cultural programs created for young people, individuals and in cooperation with young people, and serve as good opportunities to multiply content in other cultural institutions. These programs are: "Backpack (full) of Culture" (program for children and young people up to 18 years old, which has been continuously implemented since 2014 in educational and cultural institutions), "Center for Visitors Ivana`s House of Fairytale" (program for young people, with the intention to inspire with a fairy tale and arouse a love for reading, knowledge and creation and to celebrating the work of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, a Croatian writer), "Concert Office Zadar - Kneževa unplugged" (program aimed at the affirmation of young musicians and visual artists) and MSU Youth Club and Programs for schools and kindergartens (youth programs of the Museum of Contemporary Art). **In Serbia**, during recent years museums have been paying special attention to the youth population. A positive examples of practice in working with young people are: the Museum of African Art, which in cooperation with the Center for Career Development (at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy), has been implementing an internship program for final year students of the Faculty of Philosophy called "Praktikum" (two-month training on the museum, the collections and on the main topics in the field of museum research on the art and culture of Africa, after which thematic public guided tours are organized); in 2019, the Memorial collection of Pavle Beljanski from Novi Sad realized the museum performance "Six portraits of Pavle Beljanski" organized by the Youth Theater "Mišolovka" from Novi Sad (young people were enabled to be actively involved in designing, implementing and promoting the cultural offer of the city); in the same year, in cooperation with the students of the School of Design "Bogdan Šuput" from Novi Sad, the exhibition "Cultural treasure: the world in a museum chest" was opened; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, in cooperation with students from the Faculty of Fine Arts (sculpture department), realized the exhibition "In touch with" intended for blind and partially sighted people (inclusive exhibition that proposed a new approach to adaptation, mediation and interpretation of art); "Little School of Museology" project (in the Gallery of Matica Srpska, twenty high school students from Novi Sad got familiar with different areas of museum work and, with the help of curators, conservators, museum educators and managers, learned how the museum works and what opportunities it offers, after which they independently designed the exhibition "Young People Choose" through three themes: "The Movement of Society", "The Beginning of the End" and "Who am I?"). **In North Macedonia** 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 or the Theater for Children and Youth; a series of events, festivals and 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. 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 North

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

The available information and documents used in the conducted desk research showed that programs for young people in cultural institutions depend on engagements of local and national cultural institutions (galleries, museums, cultural centers), on motivation and competences of cultural workers to create programs according to the youth needs, civil or private sector in the area of culture, funds for programs and so on.

## 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.

When it comes to the first aspect, [young people in Croatia](#) believe that the vast majority of institutions/organizations/government bodies do not involve young in the processes of designing programs related to cultural content in the local community, or in designing cultural-related youth policies (92.3%). A small part of the participants thinks that young people are involved through questionnaires, focus groups or workshop discussions, with associations, youth organizations, museum curators, independent cultural organizations and secondary schools. Almost the same situation [is in Serbia](#), where 93.7% participants said that they have never been involved in any way, while only 6.30% respondents on the online survey said that they were involved by youth organizations, local government, cultural institutions, faculties and secondary schools, mainly through focus groups and questionnaires. In a sample of young people from [North Macedonia](#), the results show that 84.4% participants have not been involved in decision-making or creating policies in the field of culture. The participants who answered in the affirmative state that, mostly at the invitation of some organization/association within the project, they engaged in focus groups, surveys and "free expression".

Results from the focus group show that [participants from Croatia](#) attend various cultural events and most of them are actively looking for them. However, on the other hand, young participants state that they have no special desire to get involved in the work of cultural spaces, because they actively participate in organizing various events or are creators of cultural content (half of the focus group participants). Those who want to be more involved would like to contribute creatively or through visual counseling and the development of a more youth-friendly program. Most of the focus group participants argued that cultural institutions are not open to youth proposals because they have predefined programs, are not affordable and do not want to do content outside of what is envisaged. Focus group [participants in Serbia](#) share the same experience as survey participants, stating that apart from being asked about cultural

content in the youth organisations, they don't have any other experience of being involved. Most of the focus group participants argued that is needed to support programs by institutions and organisations that include the participation of young people – both in the creation of content and as an audience - programs that support the "development of young audiences" and "their experiential learning through cultural expression". Also, focus group participants [from North Macedonia](#) confirmed the answers of survey participants, 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".

Surveying the opinion of employees of various cultural institutions/organizations through the online questionnaire on their satisfaction with the arrival of young people at cultural events, a total of 84.62% participants [from Croatia](#) are very satisfied and somewhat satisfied. Furthermore, the majority of respondents from cultural institutions/organizations (76.9%) claims that young people are involved in the planning of cultural content within their institutions. The main tool of including youth and/or identifying their needs is within close cooperation with public educational institutions and their staff, followed by focus groups and questionnaires directed at young or even created by young and informal conversations with youth during other programs. The situation is similar [in Serbia](#), where 85.7% of respondents declare that they are very satisfied and somewhat satisfied with the arrival of young people at cultural events, which implies that institutions do not even notice the low interest of young people in the programs they offer. Additionally, employees of various cultural institutions/organizations said that they are involving and asking young people for their opinions. Among the answers in which way they do it, only a few mentioned appropriate ways that could enable meaningful participation (surveys, forums, public debates, direct conversations in everyday contacts, co-creation of cultural programs), while most of them mentioned types of activities in which young people are involved as audience/users (art competitions, inviting young creators to take part in the organized events, educational workshops, etc.). [The situation is the same in North Macedonia](#), considering that respondents 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 also involved as audience/users, with slight differences in form of activities (art competitions, literature meetings, 3D cinema, educational workshops...). Also, the majority of respondents from cultural institutions said that they were somewhat satisfied with the interest and attendance at events by young people.

The results presented so far indicate rather inconsistent perceptions of young people and employees of various cultural institutions/organizations regarding the inclusion of young people in the planning of cultural programs, which confirm the third research hypothesis that young people, in contrast to cultural institutions/organizations, believe that cultural institutions do not enable them to be included in the planning of cultural programs.

Culture and artistic expression are an important part of young people's lives, as expressed by [Croatian](#) online questionnaire participants (79.2%) and focus group participants and [Serbian](#) online questionnaire participants (62.9%) and focus group participants (65,22%). In [North Macedonia](#), young people are very poorly involved as creators of the cultural products. 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.

In [Croatia and Serbia](#), however, when it comes to the visibility of cultural programs and content, it is precisely the insufficient promotion of events that young people point out as the reason for not attending events in cultural institutions, citing insufficient promotion of events. Also, among the 3 main proposals for changes that cultural institutions need to introduce in order to increase the interest of young people is the proposal for greater investment in youth-friendly promotion ([72.4% Croatian participants and 20.3% Serbian participants](#)). A similar proposal is aimed at the culturally independent scene, where the second major proposal for changes that culturally independent scenes need to make in order to increase youth interest also sees greater investment in youth-friendly promotion ([69.3% Croatian participants and 21.6% Serbian participants](#)). [Participants from North Macedonia](#) also pointed out that the promotion of cultural events is weak, and, in particular, that it is not adapted properly to reach young people. According to the respondents, it can be concluded that poor visibility and weak promotion of cultural programs and content is something that needs to be worked on in all three countries.

Participants in the online survey state that the most used channels for informing young people about cultural events are Facebook (74.4%), friends and acquaintances (73.2%) and posters (61%) for [respondents from Croatia](#); friends and acquaintances (16.95%), Instagram (15.64%) and posters and flyers (12.10%) for [respondents from Serbia](#); and social media (Facebook and Instagram), friends and acquaintances, profiles of artists (on social media), posters and flyers for [participants from North Macedonia](#).

The responses from focus groups participants are very similar. [Croatian focus group participants](#) emphasize Facebook (for older young people), Instagram (for younger youth) and visual appearance of the event – information posters. [All Serbian focus group participants](#) agree that they most often get information through social networks (Instagram and Facebook), Google or "from word of mouth". [Focus group participants from North Macedonia](#) 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.

Participants of cultural institutions/organizations state that their main channels of communication/marketing through which they distribute information about their programs/events for young people and young audiences are: social networks in general (69.23%), Instagram and websites (30.77 %), Facebook and posters (23.08%) [in Croatia](#); social media in general (36.84%), Instagram (26.32%), Facebook (21.05%), educational institutions (teachers, university professors and visiting schools directly) (10.53%) [in Serbia](#); and social media (Facebook and Instagram), posters, and also

educational institutions (teachers, professors and visiting schools directly) in [North Macedonia](#).

According to young people, in all three countries social networks, friends and acquaintances and posters play a key role in informing young people about cultural events. On the other side, participants of cultural institutions/organizations in all three countries see primarily social networks and posters, and then educational activities, as the main channels of communication and marketing. The obtained findings indicate similarities in the perceptions of young people and participants of cultural institutions/organizations regarding the channel of promotion of programs/events for young people.

## **WHAT'S NEEDED...**

*In this part we are analysing the needs and the desired state.*

### **4.3. YOUTH NEEDS**

In order to know what to offer young people and how to create cultural programs for them and in cooperation with them, it is important to identify several key elements for the starting point, ie what their understanding of culture and cultural life is and how much importance they attach to it, how young people spend their free time in general and in what activities, what they think about the offer of cultural content in their local communities and what they should be like, which cultural and entertainment content they visit the most.

Regarding the meaning of culture and cultural life, the vast majority of participants in the online questionnaire [from Croatia and Serbia](#) have their own meaning of the above and according to the answers for most of them it means attending various cultural events (Q9). [Additionally, for young people from Croatia](#), in the first place (86.6%) it means visiting cinemas, museums, exhibitions and concerts, while in second place (70.3%) it means visiting other cultural events. Culture and cultural life for many young people (67.9%) involves the active expression of creative ideas, while for almost every other young (46.3%) it means fulfilling free time. For one third of respondents [from Serbia](#) (31.44%) it means visiting cinemas, museums, exhibitions and concerts, while in the second place (27.84%) it means an opportunity for active expression of creative ideas. Culture and cultural life for many young people (21,86%) involves attending other cultural events, while for smaller number of youth (15.87%) it means fulfilling free time and only a small part do not know what it means to them (2.99%). Spending free time was also mentioned by the focus groups participants in terms of benefits of cultural content for the constructive spending of free time by young people. [On the other hand, for respondents from North Macedonia](#), 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%). It is noticeable that a significantly higher percentage

of respondents from Croatia, compared to respondents from Serbia and North Macedonia, associate the meaning of culture and cultural life with visits to cinemas, museums, exhibitions and concerts, other cultural events, active expression of creative ideas and fulfilling free time.

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 from Croatia are: listening to music ( $\bar{x} = 4.27$ ), spending time on social networks ( $\bar{x} = 4.22$ ) and socializing with friends ( $\bar{x} = 3.88$ ) and family ( $\bar{x} = 3.64$ ). Cultural values are moderately represented to the participants, i.e. they sometimes spend their free time reading books ( $\bar{x} = 3.23$ ), watching educational content on television ( $\bar{x} = 3.28$ ) and in creative work (writing, painting, playing) ( $\bar{x} = 2.96$ ). Similar situation is in the Serbia, where young people spend most of their free time listening to music ( $\bar{x} = 4.43$ ), spending time on the social media ( $\bar{x} = 4.13$ ), socializing with friends ( $\bar{x} = 3.80$ ) and spending time with family ( $\bar{x} = 3.65$ ). Moderately represented are activities such as: visiting cultural events at places of the independent cultural scene (concerts, parties, exhibitions, plays...) - ( $\bar{x} = 2.99$ ), watching series and movies of educational character ( $\bar{x} = 2.98$ ) and shopping ( $\bar{x} = 2.94$ ). At the bottom of the list are spending time in youth centres ( $\bar{x} = 1.78$ ), meditation, yoga or similar practices ( $\bar{x} = 1.82$ ) and playing video games ( $\bar{x} = 1.83$ ). Respondents from North Macedonia report similar results, thus spending most of their free time 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 ( $\bar{x} = 2.29$ ).

Moreover, expressing satisfaction with the quality of the offer of cultural, sports, entertainment, education and other offers in their local community, the respondents in the online questionnaire from all three countries are generally neither satisfied nor satisfied with the offered choices. Respondents from Croatia are most satisfied with the offer of sports and recreational facilities ( $\bar{x} = 3.27$ ), moderately satisfied with the cultural offer and the contents ( $\bar{x} = 3.15$ ) and the possibilities of continuing education ( $\bar{x} = 3.12$ ), and the least satisfied with the employment perspective in the place where they live ( $\bar{x} = 2.48$ ). Young people from Serbia are most satisfied with the offer of sports and recreational facilities ( $\bar{x} = 3.08$ ) and the cultural offer and content ( $\bar{x} = 2.88$ ) and moderately satisfied with the possibilities for going out, having fun, entertainment and nightlife offers ( $\bar{x} = 2.87$ ) and the possibilities for non-formal education ( $\bar{x} = 2.56$ ). The same as Croatian respondents, the lowest satisfaction is in regards to the employment perspective in the place where they live ( $\bar{x} = 2.13$ ). However, respondents from North Macedonia 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 ( $\bar{x} = 1.98$ ). Considering that a large part of the sample comes from the urban environment, it is somewhat disappointing that the participants are not generally satisfied with any of the mentioned aspects given in the questionnaire. These results confirm the second research hypothesis that young people are dissatisfied with the available offer of cultural programs in their place of residence by cultural organizations/institutions.

Regarding the answers of the participants to the question about going to cultural events before the COVID-19 pandemic (Q14), young people from Croatia spend most of their time on film screenings ( $\bar{x} = 3.28$ ), exhibitions/art installations in museums and galleries ( $\bar{x} = 3.04$ ), trips to the city library ( $\bar{x} = 3.03$ ), and theater performances ( $\bar{x} = 3.01$ ). In Serbia, young people reports that they have spent most of their time on cinema/movie projections ( $\bar{x} = 2.93$ ), attending theatre plays ( $\bar{x} = 2.57$ ) and exhibitions/art installations in museums and galleries ( $\bar{x} = 2.48$ ). Respondents from North Macedonia spent the most time visiting theatre performance ( $\bar{x} = 2.41$ ), city library ( $\bar{x} = 2.28$ ) and parties/parties of different electronic music ( $\bar{x} = 2.24$ ). It is interesting that young people from Croatia and Serbia pointed out listening to music as the activity in which they spend most of their time, but going to concerts and music events is not so interesting to them, unlike young people from Macedonia. The least interesting events for young people from Croatia are performances of performances of contemporary circus ( $\bar{x} = 1.38$ ), artistic performances ( $\bar{x} = 1.98$ ) and concerts of demo bands ( $\bar{x} = 1.76$ ). In Serbia, these are performances of contemporary dance ( $\bar{x} = 1.45$ ), national music festivals ( $\bar{x} = 1.42$ ) and performances of contemporary circus ( $\bar{x} = 1.35$ ), while in North Macedonia these are international music festivals ( $\bar{x} = 1.68$ ), performances of contemporary dance ( $\bar{x} = 1.58$ ) and performances of contemporary circus ( $\bar{x} = 1.39$ ). Results indicate a relatively similar situation in this regard among young people from all three countries.

When it comes to preferences of young people, i.e., what from the list of events/content they would like to see more of in the future (range of answers from "to the same extent as before" (1) to "to a greater extent" (4)), for participants from Croatia these are various workshops ( $\bar{x} = 2.62$ ) in which young people would participate in the creation of cultural content and artistic expression, theater performances ( $\bar{x} = 2.41$ ), film screenings ( $\bar{x} = 2.36$ ), film festivals ( $\bar{x} = 2.26$ ), concerts of foreign alternative music ( $\bar{x} = 2.25$ ) and exhibitions/art installations in museums and galleries ( $\bar{x} = 2.22$ ). Respondents from Serbia marked the following activities as the most desirable: creative workshops (workshops for creative writing, DJ-ing, fine arts, dance, etc.) ( $\bar{x} = 2.84$ ), movie festivals ( $\bar{x} = 2.81$ ), concerts of domestic alternative music ( $\bar{x} = 2.80$ ), art exhibitions/installations in spaces of the independent cultural scene ( $\bar{x} = 2.77$ ) and theatre plays ( $\bar{x} = 2.76$ ). Young people from North Macedonia most prefer cinema/movie projections ( $\bar{x} = 2.56$ ), movie festivals ( $\bar{x} = 2.55$ ), theatre performance ( $\bar{x} = 2.47$ ), concerts of foreign mainstream music ( $\bar{x} = 2.47$ ) and creative workshops (workshops for creative writing, DJ-ing, fine arts, dance, etc.) ( $\bar{x} = 2.41$ ). It is important to note that the question related to the attendance before Covid19 pandemic, probably depends on the possibilities (how many of those events there were, their availability, price, location, and also on the respondents' preferences); while the question related to would they like to see more of in the future

corresponds more to the real interests and wishes of the respondents. When it comes to events/content that young people would prefer to see in the future, the responses of respondents from all three countries reflect similar interests, with minor variations in the distribution of respondents' responses.

#### 4.4. INSTITUTION 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.

With the aim of developing or adapting cultural programs for young people, the first step was to determine the reasons why young people do not visit events in cultural institutions and in the independent cultural scene. None of the 11 answers offered to the question about not visiting cultural institutions is completely rejected by the respondents, which indicates that all given reasons to some extent influence lack of interest of young people.

More specific, young people from Croatia as the most prominent reasons cited insufficient promotion of events ( $\bar{x} = 3.96$ ), lack of interest of young people ( $\bar{x} = 3.81$ ), insufficient number of events in the place of residence ( $\bar{x} = 3.75$ ), not attractive to young people ( $\bar{x} = 3.72$ ), and inadequacy of promotion to young people ( $\bar{x} = 3.67$ ). In Serbia, among the most frequently chosen answers are: youth are not aware that there is such offer ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ), the offer is not attractive for the young people ( $\bar{x} = 3.69$ ), there are not enough such events in the place where they live ( $\bar{x} = 3.57$ ) "Everything happens in Belgrade", promotion of the events is lacking in general ( $\bar{x} = 3.35$ ), as well as that is not adapted to the youth ( $\bar{x} = 3.24$ ). The answers most often chosen by young people from North Macedonia are: "there are not enough such events in the place of residence" ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ), "it happens elsewhere" ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ) indicates that the main reason is the fact that there is no satisfactory offer of cultural events, "there is a total lack of promotion for the events" ( $\bar{x} = 3.72$ ), young people "are not aware that there is such an offer" ( $\bar{x} = 3.62$ ) and "the promotion is not adapted to young people" ( $\bar{x} = 3.33$ ). It is worrying to see that one of the main problems is the lack of interest of young people in Croatia in this type of content, but it is possible that lack of interest is the result of inappropriate promotion and general lack of interest of institutions to involve young people in cultural programs.

In addition to the stated reasons, the respondents were asked follow-up question to state additional reasons for not going to cultural institutions. Most of the reasons are reinforcing already given answers. For example, respondents from Croatia stated: non-education through the system of education for culture and non-development of habits lack of understanding of the needs and interests of young people; elitist understanding of culture by young people; stereotypical perception of art and culture as boring and uninteresting; lack or complete lack of interactivity in cultural programs and content; giving up young people as a target audience; lack of youth-friendly promotion and non-use of current communication channels. For young people from Serbia, in addition to the reasons they previously mentioned, these are: lack of variety of offered events, the current situation with the pandemic and low interest of cultural institutions to organise

online events, as well as lack of awareness of young people about importance of cultural and spiritual development. For respondents from North Macedonia, additional reasons are: 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, bad management of all cultural institutions and accessibility to institutions for persons with disabilities.

Regarding the reasons participants perceive as important factors why young people do not go to cultural events on the independent scene (Q18), the most prominent answers among young people from Croatia are more or less coincide with the answers given for the reasons for not coming to cultural institutions, except for the main reason for the independent scene, which is that cultural institutions do not sufficiently recognize the importance of events on the independent scene for young people ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ). Other answers are concerning insufficient promotion of events ( $\bar{x} = 3.87$ ), unfamiliarity of young people with the offer on the independent scene ( $\bar{x} = 3.78$ ) and insufficient number of events in the place of residence ( $\bar{x} = 3.69$ ). Also, Serbian 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, as the most prominent reason is the insufficient number of events in the place of residence ( $\bar{x} = 3.59$ ), unfamiliarity of young people with the offer on the independent scene ( $\bar{x} = 3.57$ ), luck of the promotion of the events in general ( $\bar{x} = 3.27$ ) and events are happening in a place different from the place where the young person lives ( $\bar{x} = 3.21$ ). Similarly, young people from North Macedonia as most important reasons for not attending events of the independent cultural scene cited "there are not enough such events in the place of residence" ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ), and "it happens elsewhere" ( $\bar{x} = 3.77$ ), while it is certainly not lack of interest ( $\bar{x} = 2.85$ ) or lack of time ( $\bar{x} = 2.36$ ).

It is not surprising that the young participants in the focus groups from all three countries, 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. In addition, young people from Croatia pointed out that the following are important elements in defining youth programs: to make culture approachable to young people; to change the perception of culture as something elitist, old-fashioned and uninteresting; to make youth the co-creators of programs and teach them about the process during the process; developing youth as the institution's audience and development of critical thinking and independence in approaching art. Similarly, young people from Serbia stated that is very important to open the cultural offer to diverse target groups of young people, and organize more diverse cultural, atypical content; to a greater extent support programs that include the participation of young people - both in the creation of content and as an audience; support a greater number of attractive programs for young people - programs that combine socializing, fun activities and cultural content; and to increase information among young people about what benefits/discounts/free content already exist and increase the offer of such activities. Additionally, respondents from North Macedonia noted that the prices for some events are too high, that is, incompatible with the possibilities of young people and that there is a lack of interest of the institutions to enable the appropriate participation of young people. These elements show the

connection with the responses of young people who equally believe that culture must be inclusive and inclusive for young people, not traditionalist and elitist. There is also an overlap in the understanding that programs for youth or youth programs need to be created in close cooperation with youth.

Young people from all three countries cited a wide range of reasons that influence their (non)attendance of cultural events and dissatisfaction with the current situation. Among the reasons most often mentioned are: insufficient and inadequate promotion of cultural events, poor content offer, unattractive and unsuitable offer (resulting in lack of interest), young people are not informed about the offer, high price of tickets etc.

However, the majority of respondents of the survey for cultural institutions [from all three countries](#), stated that they implement some programs and events for young people, and are somewhat satisfied with the attendance by them. Employees of cultural institutions/organizations [from Croatia](#) stated that the programs are based on using new tools to approach youth – the use of social media and other online tools and that the existing programs seek to introduce youth to the functioning of the institutions and lack programs that build on the existing exhibitions. According to the [respondents from Serbia](#), most of them are somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with the interest and participation of youth in the programs offered by their institution. As the main reason for not attending the events, they emphasize the lack of interest of young people in culture and art (71,42%), and to a lesser extent high ticket prices, themes and topics in museums which are not appealing to youth, especially if they're not delivered through viral means of communication. [Participants from North Macedonia](#) believe that the reasons for lack of interest of youth to attend are (in descending order of agreement): young people are generally not interested in culture and art; the contents are incomprehensible for young people; they cannot afford the ticket prices; the contents we offer are not interesting for young people; and that they have not tried to reach young people with specific marketing methods.

Employees of cultural institutions/organizations as the main reasons why young people do not attend programs and activities cite similar reasons that young people singled out (lack of interest, high ticket prices, unattractive topics, non-use of specific marketing methods), where it is noticeable that young people were significantly more critical citing a handful of reasons and explanations. Bearing in mind the stated key findings on the reasons why young people do not attend cultural events from the perspective of young people and employees of cultural institutions/organizations, it can be said that the first research hypothesis has been confirmed. In other words, 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.

Finally, from the answers of representatives of cultural institutions [from Croatia](#), it can be said that the programs are done within educational departments (however most of the educational departments are predominantly focused on children and the programs for youth are often guided tours). The program coordinators accentuate as important the element of interdisciplinarity and involvement of you in the entire process. From the answers of representatives of cultural institutions [from Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia](#), cooperation with youth organizations and youth workers stands out as the

biggest need in terms of improving youth work. Also, the representatives from cultural institutions from Croatia and Serbia emphasize greater financial support by the local/national authorities, greater budget allocated for marketing/distributing information and cooperation with the non-institutional and developing youth work skills and training for the already existing staff of the institution.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The main conclusions from the results from focus groups with young people and questionnaire refer to need to increase the interest of the young people, bring them closer to the cultural institutions/organizations, increase participation of young people in cultural activities, improve promotion of cultural activities (in accordance with the needs and language of youth) and enhance cooperation with youth work institutions/organizations, educational institutions and civil society.

More specifically, recommendations of young people from Croatia, Serbia and North Macedonia are:

- Better promotion of cultural events and programs adapted to young people is necessary, using the language of young people and current communication channels (Instagram, field interventions, direct calls to people);
- In the process of creating cultural programs whose target group is young people, take into account their needs and interests (if possible) collected through online tools;
- It is necessary to bring classical art closer to young people in an interactive way (e.g. through digitization) and create interactive and interesting cultural programs for young people in direct cooperation with young people;
- To a greater extent support programs that include the participation of young people – both in the process of creating content and as an audience;
- Through the educational system, it is necessary to develop the cultural habits and cultural capital of young people, especially by using creative and informal methods of working with young people;
- Reduce the formality of events in cultural institutions and organize local cultural activities and events outdoors, in every "neighborhood";
- Decentralize cultural events and ensure a greater representation and a more varied offer of cultural events in cities outside the larger cities;
- Increase the awareness of young people about what benefits/discounts/free content already exist and increase the offer of such activities;
- Recognize informal youth associations and youth workers by cultural institutions as important participants in content creation;
- Improve cooperation and support for civil society organizations that provide informal education for young people in order to increase their capacities and reach;
- Simplify or abolish the conditions for obtaining permits for organizing cultural events in public places/areas;
- Allocate larger budgets for organizing cultural events at the local level;

- Increase state support to institutions and organizations working in the field of culture;
- Increase the participation of young people in decision-making processes and the creation of cultural policies and planning programs in order to respond to the current interests and needs of young people.

Based on the data collected through the online questionnaire from all three countries, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made in order to increase the interest of young people in cultural content for [all three countries](#): introduce a discount on tickets, ensure greater availability of cultural content to young people, invest more in youth-friendly promotion of the cultural events and adapt activities and accompanying program of cultural events to young people.

When asked what the independent cultural scene should do to increase the interest of young people, young people state that there is a need to adapt activities and accompanying programs to young people, invest more in the visibility of youth programs and events, introduce a discount on tickets, increase the availability of such content to young people (especially important for youth [from Croatia](#)), and to increase the offer of cultural events and enable free entrance for the events (the last two are particularly important for young people [from Serbia](#)).

In order to improve work with youth, cultural institutions' representatives, respondents of the survey questionnaire, emphasize cooperation with youth organizations and youth workers (qualified people to work with youth), greater budget allocated for marketing/distributing information, education in youth work (the first three are particularly important for institutions [from Serbia](#)), cooperation with non-institutional cultural organizations (NGO-s, independent culture venues), greater financial support by the local/national authorities, better coordination with other local/national institutions, better coordination with other cultural institutions, human resources, staff knowledge and skills necessary for developing youth programmes (especially important for [respondents from North Macedonia](#)).

Also, it is important to note that there is a need ([extra for North Macedonia](#)) 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.

## 6. ANNEXES

- National report - Youth Needs and Visibility of Youth Programmes in the Field of Culture in the North Macedonia
- National report - Youth Needs and Visibility of Youth Programmes in the Field of Culture in the Republic of Croatia
- National report - Youth Needs and Visibility of Youth Programmes in the Field of Culture in the Republic of Serbia