SECTORAL ANALYSIS for SOCIAL PROTECTION AND EDUCATION AND YOUTH IN THE PELAGONIA REGION

November, 2024

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RSM	Republic of North Macedonia
PPR	Pelagonia planning region
CSW	Social Work Center
MLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
ZLS	Law on Local Self-Government
ZSZ	Social Protection Law
MC	Youth center

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of efforts to strengthen local capacities, municipalities have continuously recorded positive developments in almost all areas of social life. However, numerous challenges in each area leave room for new expansions of services through which municipalities will enable their citizens to improve their well-being.

The development of social protection and education systems represent two fundamental pillars in the functioning of the local community, which directly shape the quality of life of citizens and directly influence their sense of belonging and connection to the community.

This analysis presents an overview of the current situation in the field of social protection and education in the municipalities belonging to the Pelagonia Planning Region (PPR) and serves as a basis for formulating recommendations aimed at further improving these areas. The intention is that its content will be useful for the professional and general public, as well as for civil society organizations working in these sectors in the region. However, the analysis is primarily intended for policymakers and local decision-makers, who can find in the proposed recommendations an incentive and guidelines for developing future activities in the field of social protection and education in their municipalities.

The research on which the analysis is based used a combined data collection method: (1) internet-based on-desk and (2) field research, which included two types of tools: a survey questionnaire intended for young people aged 15 to 29 and a semi-structured interview intended for municipal officials and councilors.

The report is qualitative, prepared in electronic form.

METHODOLOGY

When preparing the analysis, the starting point was the conclusion that the municipalities within the Pelagonia Planning Region, within the framework of their competencies, need to constantly improve the situation in the areas of social protection and education.

The purpose of the analysis is to determine the current situation in the areas of social protection and education at the local level in the municipalities within the PPR in terms of the needs of young people and to provide recommendations for future measures for their improvement.

The research was carried out in several phases and involved the application of a series of methods and tools in order to collect relevant data necessary for creating the analysis. Data were obtained through the analysis of primary and secondary sources of information. The following research methods were applied: internet-based on-desk research and field research. The on-desk research was carried out through content analysis of the websites of the nine municipalities of the PPR and the PPR Center, the legal regulations and competencies of the municipalities in the specified areas, the available documentation, decisions made at the level of the municipality and the Municipal Council, as well as the budget items related to the specified areas. The field research was carried out through a semi-structured interview, focus group discussions and an online survey. The target groups in the research were different: the interviewees were officials in the municipal administration in positions related to education and social protection; the focus groups included all key stakeholders in both areas; the online survey concerned young people aged 15 to 29 in the PPR.

The timeframe for conducting the research was the period from October 2024 to October 2025.

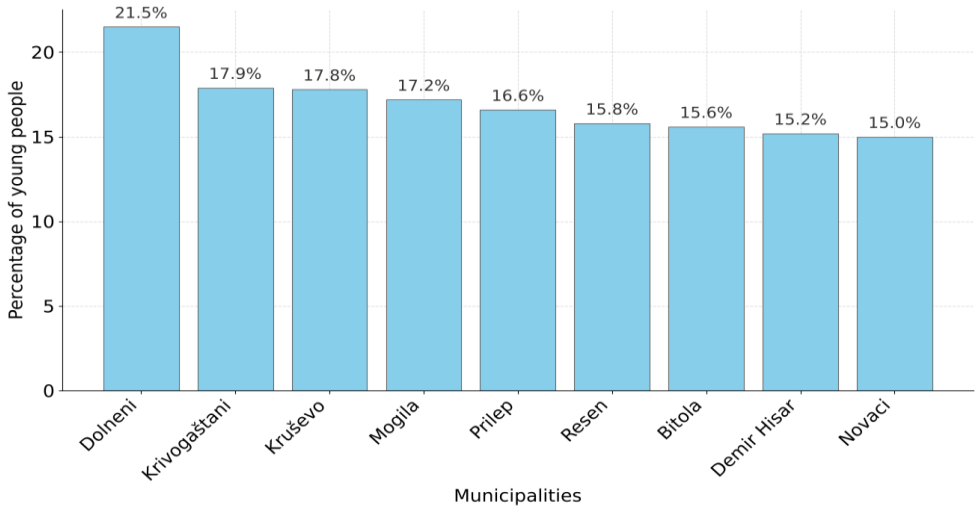
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The Pelagonia Planning Region is the largest region out of eight regions in the Republic of North Macedonia, third in terms of total population, sixth in terms of population density and with a share of 11% in the total population, as the third most populated region after the Skopje and Polog Planning Regions[1]. The state of the PPR in general, and especially in terms of young people aged 15 to 29 by municipality, is shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Overview of the Pelagonia Planning Region

PELAGONIA PLANNING REGION	Number of municipalities	Number of settlements	Area		Population		Youth participation	
			km^2	%	Residents	%	Number	%
TOTAL	**9**	**343**	**4,717**		**210,431**		**34,696**	**16.5**
Urban	5	5	80	1.7	147,034	87.4		
Rural	4	338	4,637	98.3	63,397	12.6		

Figure 1. Percentage representation of young people by municipality in the PPR



[1] Development Program for the Pelagonia Planning Region 2015 - 2019.

According to labor market indicators, PPR has a population activity rate of 64.5%, an employment rate of 56%, an unemployment rate of 13.1% and, with 2.08%, is the region with the highest vacancy rate[2].

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE PELAGONIA PLANNING REGION IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

SOCIAL PROTECTION

A large part of the most significant activities of the state, as well as of local self-government – the municipalities, is aimed at creating a stable and functional social protection system. Social protection is defined as a system of measures, activities and policies to prevent and overcome the basic social risks to which citizens are exposed throughout their lives, to reduce poverty and social exclusion and to strengthen their capacity for self-protection[3]. It is an activity of public interest aimed at promoting and maintaining the social security of citizens, preventing social exclusion, improving the quality of life of citizens and strengthening their capacities to lead an independent, active and productive life. Social protection, as a key pillar for supporting the population, implies undertaking and enabling public services for citizens and creating social cohesion and inclusiveness.

Normative framework. The inclusion of social protection in the local policies and programs of the municipalities is regulated by three basic laws: the Law on Local Self-Government (ZLS)[4], the Law

[2] Nikoloski, D. 2020. Study with sectoral analysis of the labor market. Ministry of Local Self-Government. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.
[3] Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis – Skopje. 2017. Social Protection and Inclusion at Local Level, Collection of Monitoring Reports. EU-funded project. EuropeAid/135-012/M/ACT/MK
[4] Law on Local Self-Government, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 104/2019 and 146/2019

on Social Protection (ZSZ)[5], the Law on Financing of Local Self-Government Units[6], as well as four specific laws: the Law on Social Security for the Elderly[7], the Law on Child Protection[8], the Family Law[9] and the Law on Prevention, Curbing and Protection from Domestic Violence[10]. The broader framework of documents regulating social protection includes: programs (for social protection of the municipality, for prevention of social risks)[11], strategies (for local economic development)[12], action plans, etc.

According to Article 70 of the ZSZ, social services include:

(1) informing and referring citizens about their rights in this area;

(2) professional assistance and support to individuals and families;

(3) counseling;

(4) home-based services;

(5) community-based services; and

(6) out-of-family care services.

According to the ZSZ, municipalities have the competence to form bodies that will deal with this issue. Each of the listed bodies has the obligation to identify vulnerable groups; collect and review data followed by comparative analyses; as well as the task of identifying priority measures in the area.

[5] Law on Social Protection, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 79 of 24.06.2009.
[6] Law on Financing of Local Self-Government Units, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 61/04, 96/04, 67/07, 156/09 and 47/11
[7] Law on Social Security for the Elderly, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 104 of 23.05.2019.
[8] Law on Child Protection, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 146 of 17.07.2019.
[9] Family Law, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 153 of 20.10.2014.
[10] Program for the Implementation of Social Protection for 2024 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 287 of 29.12.2023), Program for the Development of Child Protection in the Republic of Macedonia ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 246 of 28.12.2018)
[11] Law on Prevention, Curbing and Protection from Domestic Violence, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 150 of 02.09.2015.
[12] National Strategy for the Elderly 2010 – 2020, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP); National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010 – 2020, MLSP; National Strategy for Equalization of Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2010 – 2018, MLSP; National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2016 – 2020, MLSP.

At the municipal level, in accordance with the legal regulations, Social Work Centers (SWCs) are established, which have a much larger scope of work and a greater coverage of socially vulnerable groups than those of the municipality itself.

Action of local self-government. Municipalities can, from their own funds:

1) finance a program for social protection of citizens above the level provided by the state;
2) establish other public institutions for institutional and non-institutional protection (public or day centers with different purposes);
3) grant financial assistance, while determining the manner of exercising this right;
4) organize different forms of social protection in the form of education and raising public awareness.

In terms of social protection services, the municipalities within the PPR, in accordance with their conditions and opportunities and the vision and attitudes of the current leadership, have a different scope, shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Social services and their representation by municipalities in the PPR[13]

Services provided in the field of social protection	Municipalities where social protection services are provided
One-time financial assistance to endangered and vulnerable categories (including disability, assistance and care from another person, housing)	Bitola, Prilep, Resen, Demir Hisar, Krushevo, Dolneni, Krivogashtani, Novaci and Mogila

[13] Note: The data presented in Table 2, which refers to services in the area of social protection, are not always easily accessible or fully verifiable, which is why there is a possibility of certain omissions in the information for individual municipalities.

One-time assistance for a first-year student	Demir Hisar
One-time assistance for a newborn	Prilep
Scholarships	Prilep and Novaci
Home for the elderly	Bitola and Prilep
Social Protection Center	Bitola, Prilep, Demir Hisar, Resen and Krushevo
Information on current assistance projects – home care services	Prilep, Dolneni, Krivogashtani and Krushevo
The official website of the municipality has an option for people with disabilities.	Bitola and Novaci

Some of the envisaged social protection measures relating to young people are largely reduced to desired activities, for example: the municipality of Mogila in the Social Protection Program for 2022 has noted "Organizing forums for education against addictions and implementing a project for the prevention of addiction diseases" or in the documents related to the social protection of the Municipality of Bitola, Prilep and Novaci there is "Support for professional (civic) organizations that would offer counseling work and psychosocial support for various categories of citizens at social risk". However, in neither example is there any information that what is proposed has been implemented or specific guidance on where such support can be obtained, as well as whether such support even exists. The conclusion is that the municipalities are more declarative - aware that the specified service is needed, but without a specific plan and action for its implementation.

No municipality has a “Social Protection Services” category on its official website for easy access to information, advice and guidance regarding these services offered by the municipality. Information related to financial assistance or social protection services is placed in documents, reports and programs, which are difficult for citizens to access, i.e. they require greater skill in searching, or in public calls for the allocation of funds such as one-time assistance, which give an

overview of the conditions that need to be met in order to receive the funds. Such calls are time-limited and after the call ends they are archived, which makes them difficult to locate on the websites.

Organizational set-up of the area of social protection. According to the ZSZ, municipalities have several levels of organization of this area. Within the organizational scheme of the municipalities, there are different institutional solutions: a sector, a department and a job position dealing with this issue, or social protection can be part of a joint department or sector of the municipality, which also covers public activities, information technology and economic development. For example, the competencies for this area are within the Department of Public Activities (Bitola), the Department of Legal and General Affairs and Public Activities (Kruševo and Dolneni)[14], and the Sector for Support of the Mayor – Department of Public Activities (Prilep). The analysis of the specific situations by municipality indicates that the organizational set-up of the area of social protection in municipalities varies depending on their internal structure, with this area most often integrated into broader organizational units that encompass multiple public activities. This situation indicates insufficient institutional prioritization of social protection at the local level, which may affect the effectiveness and visibility of policies and services in this area.

According to the Law on Social Protection, municipalities have an obligation, and all of them have fulfilled it – they have formed a Council for Social Protection, as well as various commissions for action in the area.

Budget. All municipalities within the PPR, in accordance with the ZSZ (Article 11), have adopted documents listing local measures and activities for social protection. Such documents (programs, strategies, action plans) have been adopted and decisions have been made on them. The

[14] Public activities include social protection, in addition to culture, education, sports and health care, equal opportunities, and information of a public nature.

municipalities, within their possibilities, provide funds from the budget that are used to implement the planned activities and measures. Data on the funds intended for social protection are given in the municipal budget (as a total amount), while the Social Plan and the report on implemented activities give in detail the items and amounts spent on implementing the individual activities.

The budgets of the municipalities differ and vary from year to year, with some showing an increase in the amounts planned for social protection in a given period, while in others a decrease in the budget is evident. Specifically, for 2024, the municipalities of Bitola and Novaci have a slight increase in the budget for social protection, while in the budgets of the municipalities of Demir Hisar and Prilep the funds intended for social protection are reduced compared to the previous year. For the municipalities of Krivogaštani, Mogila and Resen it is difficult to access the budget, and thus the data on funds allocated for social protection.

Based on this information, it is concluded that although all municipalities within the Pelagonia planning region have formally adopted documents and measures for social protection and provide funds for their implementation. The analysis of the budgets shows significant differences in the amounts and trends of financing between municipalities, which indicates insufficient financial consistency and prioritization of this area. In addition, the limited availability of budget data in certain municipalities makes it difficult to achieve full transparency and comprehensive analysis of investments in social protection.

Documentation related to social protection at the municipal level. Every municipality has a program/plan for social protection, but the municipalities do not create a separate Program for the Prevention of Social Risks. For their own needs, the municipalities create various programs and strategies, with a special emphasis on the Roma as a socially vulnerable community. Some of the municipalities, those with a larger budget, also adopt a rulebook for the allocation of funds in order to ensure easier and unified functioning (Bitola).

Cooperation with the civil sector. This type of cooperation of the municipalities is evident through (1) the activities of the established bodies in the area of social protection, which through public calls enable the participation of citizens in the process of creating public policies in the field of social protection (e.g. Bitola and Prilep), and through (2) the possibility to delegate part of the social protection services to citizens' associations, financially assisting them through the awarding of grants – funds for approved projects, which generates a major contribution to strengthening the dialogue between the municipality and the civil sector.

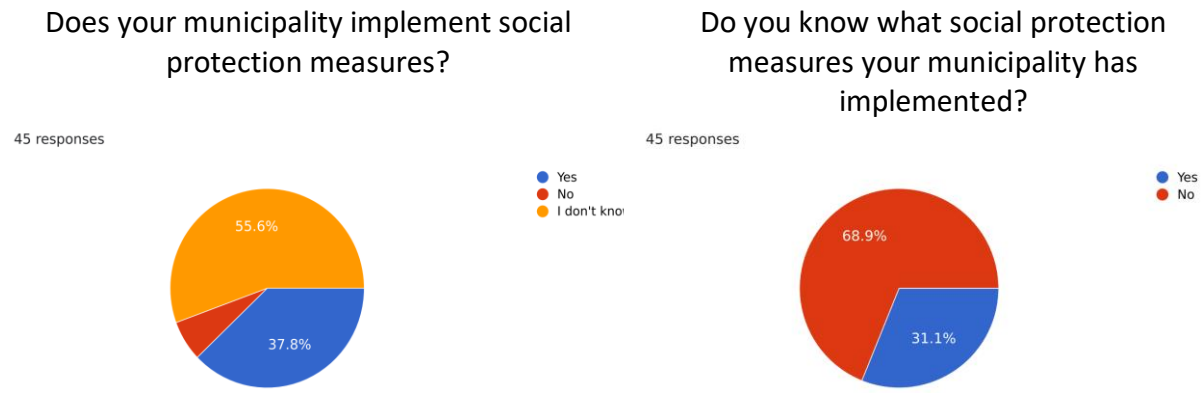
The analysis showed that none of the municipalities has established their own support centers in the area of social protection. Instead, such services are most often provided by civil society organizations, individuals or institutions through centers that operate independently of local self-government (such as the example of social work centers). In addition, these centers are rarely funded by the municipalities, and when there is support, it is most often limited to short-term project activities. In the centers that provide services within the framework of social protection, services such as career, health, marriage and family counseling are most often offered. The most numerous are psychological support centers. Such forms of support are almost exclusively present in urban areas, while in rural municipalities only individual examples are noted, such as the association "Soživot" in the village of Lažani, Dolneni municipality, which works to improve interethnic relations and provide assistance to the elderly and people with disabilities.

Results of field research. The responses received from the respondents - young people aged 15 to 29 from the nine municipalities within the Pelagonia planning region indicate a situation that requires urgent measures to be taken by the municipalities to improve the area of social protection.

The answers to the questions related to the respondents' awareness of social protection showed that 55.6% of them do not know whether their municipality provides social protection measures, and 68.9% of the respondents do not know which social protection measures their municipality

provides (Figure 2).

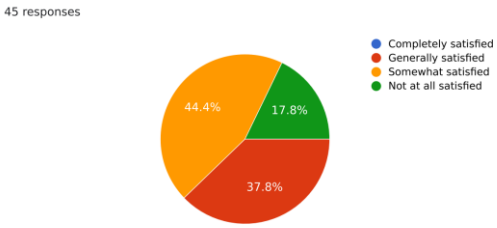
Figure 2. Results on respondents' awareness of social protection measures



The overall result of the questions related to the satisfaction of the respondents with the services that the municipality provides to the citizens showed that 44.4% of the respondents stated that they were "somewhat satisfied" with the services, 37.8% stated that they were "satisfied" with the services and 17.8% of the respondents stated that they were "not at all satisfied" with the services, and there were no respondents who were "completely satisfied" with the social protection services.

Figure 3. Results related to satisfaction with social protection measures

How satisfied are you with the quality of social protection measures in your municipality?



To the question "Can you recognize the social protection measures available in your municipality?" the following social protection measures were offered:

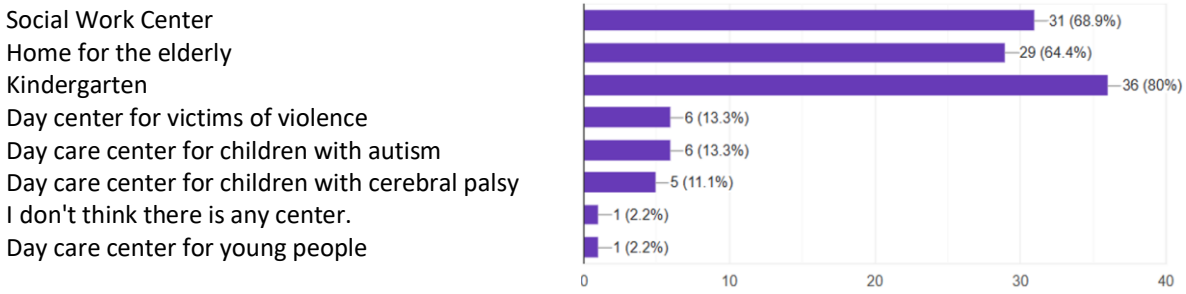
1) One-time compensation for: first-year child/newborn/funeral/illness/person with disability;
2) Financial assistance to members of socially disadvantaged families, social packages;
3) Support for victims of domestic violence/members of marginalized groups (people being treated for addictions, homeless people, former prisoners, etc.);
4) Availability of space that would be intended for the care of the homeless/Roma population;
5) Free transportation for students;
6) Prevention of juvenile delinquency;
7) A municipality tailored to the child/young person: financial assistance at the beginning of the school year/at graduation/support for talented children from socially disadvantaged families;
8) New Year's gifts for orphans/children with special needs;
9) Free legal assistance to citizens (drafting appeals, petitions, lawsuits...).

Positive responses from respondents were given only for several types of one-time assistance (for first-graders, for newborns, for families in financial need) as well as for free transportation for students.

The results obtained from the question related to the recognition of the institutions/centers that

exist in their municipality are given in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Results related to youth awareness of the existence of centers working in the field of social protection



When asked about initiating ideas for new social protection measures, only 24.4% have a proposal for a new social protection measure (without entering the proposal in the field provided for that purpose), 20% do not have any proposal, and as many as 55.6% of respondents are not even considering a proposal for a social protection measure. Without taking into account all other factors that influence the decision to emigrate from the municipality in which they live, as many as 60% of respondents stated that they would remain living in the municipality if there were an improvement in the social protection that the municipality offers to its citizens.

Conclusion. The findings obtained from the analysis of the current situation of municipalities in terms of social protection point to several conclusions:

- *Municipalities,* within the framework of legal provisions, fulfill all conditions related to social protection provided by the state.
- *The measures in the area of social protection provided by the municipalities differ;* the opportunities offered by the legal regulations have not been utilized.
- *The level of awareness about measures* in the area of social protection is not at a satisfactory level. More transparent information and provision of more efficient access to data are needed, primarily on the websites of the municipalities.

- *Young people* have minimal information; they recognize measures without being aware that they are part of the municipality's social protection; they are not interested in initiating measures that they need; rarely does anyone have an idea for new measures that would be good for young people in their municipality; when they have an idea for a proposal – measure, they rarely share it with relevant factors from the municipalities, who could put those ideas into practice.

EDUCATION

Another key task of every state is the establishment of a stable and functional education system that meets the needs of its citizens and supports their development as future factors of its progress. In that context, determining directions for the development of the institutional and non-institutional educational process is an obligation not only of every state, but also of every region and municipality within it.

Education, above all institutional, is determined as an activity of public interest. Institutional education is divided into: primary, secondary and higher education. The powers for the organization of primary and secondary education in the Republic of North Macedonia, which are mandatory, are assigned to the local government, while their content arrangement and control is within the framework of the central government - the Ministry of Education and Science.

Normative framework. The legal regulation in the field of education includes a large number of laws: Law on Primary Education[15], Law on Secondary Education [16]and Law on Local Self-

[15] Law on Primary Education, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 103/2008, ... 30/2016
[16] Law on Secondary Education, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 44/1995,.... 30/2016.

Government[17], Law on Financing of Local Self-Government Units[18], Law on Adult Education [19]and Law on Vocational Education and Training[20].

Action of local self-government. Depending on the size of the municipality (territory and number of inhabitants), primary schools have been established in each municipality, and in larger and primarily urban municipalities, secondary schools have been established. According to Article 2 of the Local Government Act, the municipality, in addition to the competence to establish, finance and administer primary and secondary schools, has the competence to organize transportation and meals for students and their accommodation in student dormitories. The situation of the municipalities in the PPR in terms of fulfilling these legal obligations is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of the representation of different types of institutions in the field of education by municipality

Municipality	Primary schools	High schools	Universities	Institutions (faculties)	Regional Center for Vocational Education and Training	High school dormitory	Student dormitory
Bitola	14	7	1	6	/	1	1
Prilep	11	5	/	3	/	1	1
Dolneni	7	1	/	/	/	/	
Resen	5	1	/	/	/	/	
Demir Hisar	3	1	/	/	/	/	
Mogila	3	/	/	/	/		

[17] Law on Local Self-Government, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 104/2019 and 146/2019
[18] Law on Financing of Local Self-Government Units, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 61/04, 96/04, 67/07, 156/09 and 47/11
[19] Law on Adult Education, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", No. 7/2008, ... 64/2018
[20] Law on Vocational Education and Training, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 3 of 03.01.2025.

Krushevo	2	1	/	/	/	/	
Krivogaštani	2	/	/	/	/		
Novaci	1	/	/	/	/		
Total in the region	48	16	1	9	0	2	2

Registers of the Ministry of Education and Science[21]

In this region, in Bitola, several higher education institutions are located - universities and academies, among which is the second oldest state university - the University "St. Kliment Ohridski" - Bitola.

The analysis of the register of regional vocational education and training centers showed that such centers exist only in 5 cities in the country: Kumanovo, Ohrid, Tetovo, Veles and Strumica. Not a single vocational education and training center has been established in a city belonging to the Pelagonia planning region.

Extracurricular activities that contribute to greater results in the education and upbringing of children and youth funded by municipalities take the form of:

- music school (Prilep – municipal and Bitola – state), and
- libraries (in urban areas – city libraries, and in rural areas – regional libraries).

The analysis showed that municipalities do not support non-institutional education in the form of a foreign language learning center, a skills acquisition center (such as making objects from wood or plastic, filigree, carving, developing fine arts skills, acquiring competences for the circular economy, innovation and entrepreneurship) or various sports clubs.

[21] https://mon.gov.mk/mk-MK/dokumenti/lista-na-aktivni-registri, accessed on 15.07.2025.

Some of the non-institutional forms of education, training and skills acquisition that are most often present in urban areas are implemented in civil society organizations. Such cooperation is most often short-term and one-off, in the form of a project activity that the civil society organization offers, and if the municipality deems it necessary, it finances it with financial resources that are part of the municipal budget for supporting civil society organizations.

Municipalities are required by law to establish Youth Centers in their municipalities. To date, about ten have been established, of which three are in the PPR: Bitola, Novaci and Mogila. The financing of these centers, and within their framework, a small number of civil society organizations receive continuous financial assistance in the form of costs for space, electricity and other overhead costs. These centers often provide such services, but their financing by the municipality is rare and partial, under the same conditions as other civil society organizations that are not located in the Youth Centers.

The legislation provides a broad framework of non-institutional activities that can be established or supported by municipalities: various centers for education, additional training and retraining of adults, and more.

Organizational structure in the field of education. According to the legal regulations, municipalities have the authority to establish public services (Article 24) or to form bodies that will deal with this issue. Municipalities most often appoint a person – an advisor – within their administration for the needs of the education sector.

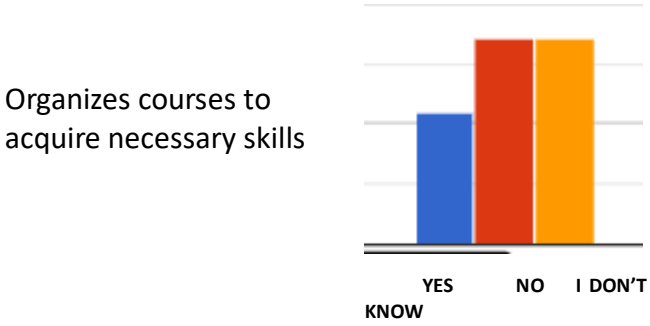
Documentation related to the field of education. At the municipal level, documentation related to the field of education includes: programs[22], strategies [23]and action plans[24].

[22] The Education Program 2024 of the Municipality of Bitola.
[23] Education Strategy for 2018 – 2025 and Action Plan.
[24] Strategy for Vocational Education and Training in the Context of Lifelong Learning 2013 – 20 with Action Plan.

Results of the field research. The state of awareness of young people regarding whether municipalities are taking measures in the field of education is as follows: 64.4% of respondents know that their municipality is taking measures, 8.9% believe that the municipality is not doing so, and 26.7% of respondents stated that they do not know whether the municipality provides services in the field of education.

The question related to the recognition of the measures that the municipality is taking in the field of education listed, in addition to primary, secondary and higher education, and measures for free transportation, the scholarship measure, which are recognized by the respondents, while the answers to "measure - skills acquisition courses" are given in Figure 5.

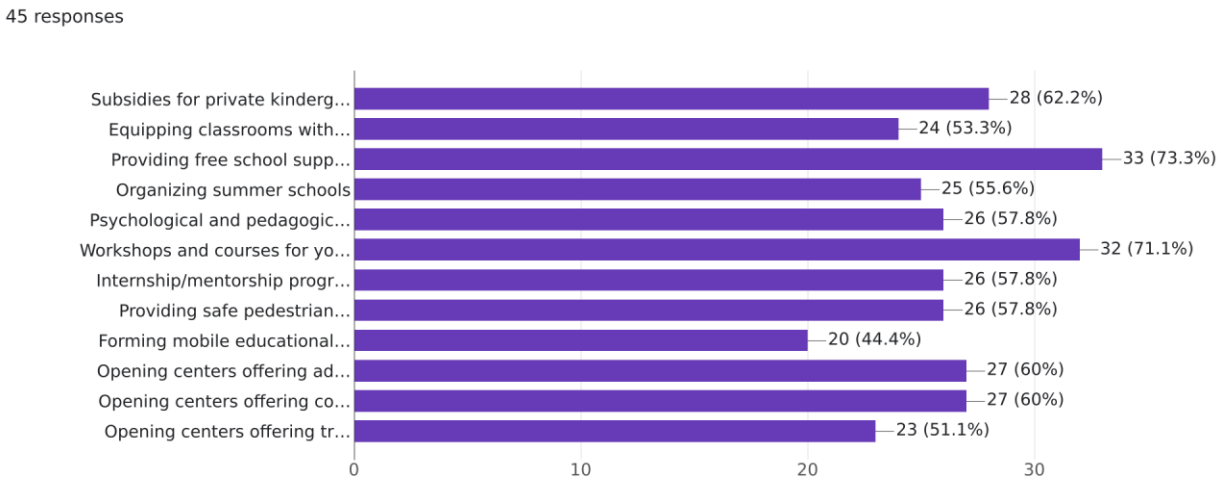
Figure 5. Display of results related to the offered measure that the municipality organizes courses for acquiring necessary skills



The next group of questions was aimed at the creativity of the respondents and their wishes regarding the introduction of new services in the field of education by the municipality. Only 1/3 of the respondents have an idea how the current situation could be improved with their own proposed measures, which they do not discuss with anyone, especially not with people who participate in the policy-making processes or specific people from the municipality in which they live and who could take action towards establishing such a measure.

When asked a question related to possible measures on what is important for the municipality to do for young people in the field of education, positive views were received on all offered measures, shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Display of respondents' interest in future municipal measures in the field of education



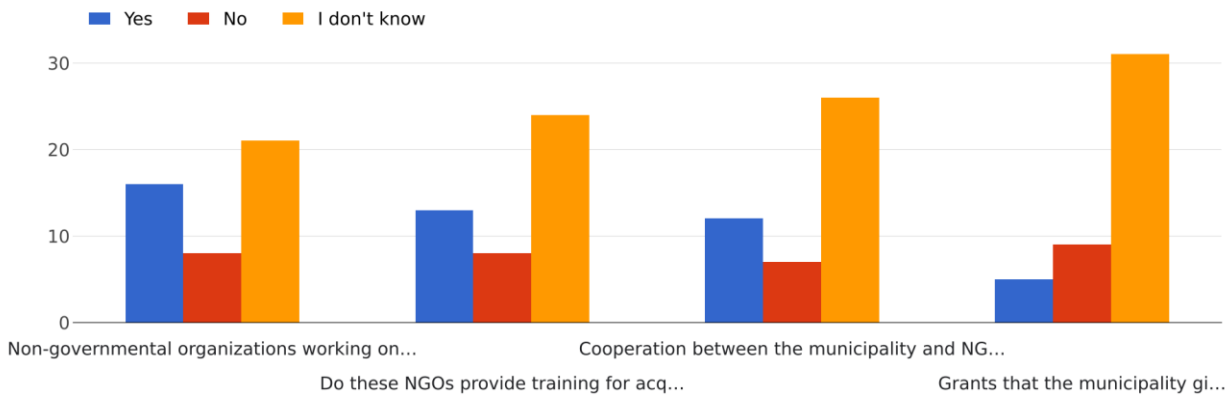
Of the measures offered, special attention was drawn to: providing free school supplies for children from socially disadvantaged families and organizing workshops and courses for young people (digital skills, entrepreneurship, ecology). Almost 1/3 of the respondents responded positively to these measures. Opening municipal centers that offer: additional classes for students; courses to increase the digital skills of young people; training in agricultural innovations, management, project creation; etc. was supported by 27% of the respondents. Psychological and pedagogical support with an educational approach; internship/mentorship programs in local businesses and institutions; Providing safe pedestrian paths to schools and student bicycles was

supported by 26% of respondents. Organizing summer schools for acquiring skills was supported by 25% of respondents, equipping classrooms with interactive whiteboards was supported by 24% of respondents, and forming mobile educational teams for rural areas was supported by 20% of respondents.

From the responses received, it is more than clear that the list of measures and services that the municipality can provide to citizens is long. There is interest in each of the listed services, which gives municipalities a wide spectrum for introducing new services in the future.

Respondents in the online survey were also asked about their awareness of the existence of civil society organizations in municipalities that are engaged in educational activities. This group of questions also included questions that were intended to assess the respondents' perception of the cooperation of municipalities with civil society/non-governmental organizations. This group of questions included: Are there (1) Non-governmental organizations in your municipality that work on improving the situation of citizens in education, (2) Do these non-governmental organizations provide training for acquiring or improving the skills required by the labor market, (3) Cooperation between the municipality and non-governmental organizations that work on improving the situation of citizens in the field of education, and (4) Grants that the municipality provides to these associations. The situation is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Presentation of the results related to the awareness of young people about the existence of non-governmental organizations in the municipality that deal with education and their cooperation with the municipality



The answers received from the respondents are dominated by the answer "I don't know", which can be interpreted in two ways: the respondents are not interested in any type of education outside of formal education, or there are no non-governmental organizations working in the field of education in the municipality, which indicates a lack of opportunities for the municipality to assist in non-institutional education through partnerships.

Conclusion. Education as one of the foundations for sustainable development of the municipalities in the Pelagonia Planning Region as an area implemented at the municipal level needs to expand existing services by establishing new activities, primarily aimed at the needs of young people in the direction of expanding existing competencies and acquiring new skills. The analysis conducted regarding the educational offer in the municipalities of the PPR led to the following conclusions:

- *Municipalities,* within the framework of legal provisions, meet the conditions related to the organization of primary and secondary education provided by the state. Larger

municipalities (urban municipalities and one rural municipality - Dolneni) have an employee in the position of education advisor. Municipalities have a small number of cooperation with civil society organizations that perform educational (non-institutional) services on behalf of the municipality, in the form of grants awarded for project activities. Municipalities do not have established centers whose activity is non-institutional education that they would continuously finance.

- *Respondents' awareness of educational services* is not at an enviable level; in a situation where the measures are listed, the respondents recognize the measures that their municipality provides for the citizens.
- *Young people* know well which new measures in the field of education would be good for the citizens in their municipality.

The introduction of such new measures (training for acquiring new skills or competencies for young people), as well as extracurricular educational activities (learning foreign languages, computers), can only be achieved by municipalities through an integrated approach and cooperation, primarily with civil society organizations as a project activity supported by grants from municipalities or long-term financing of activities.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the current situation in the municipalities in the Pelagonia Planning Region, the proposal that emerged from the analysis and that could contribute to improving the social protection and education of young people by providing a new measure by the municipalities is to start work on:

"YOUTH POP-UP CLUB"

Basic information about the club:

Location. The club would be located in the municipal MCs that have previously been established in the municipalities and that young people already visit (e.g. in Bitola, Novaci and Krivogaštani).

- The existing advisor for education and/or social protection from the municipality would be responsible for the programmatic part of the club's functioning.
- The operational part of the club would be in charge of the civic organizations that have their office in the MC in cooperation with the municipality.
- The club's functioning would be recognizable as **"a week of: entrepreneurship/circular economy/education for protection against domestic violence/psychological support/of the family** ...".

Financing of activities. The principle of financing would be through *vouchers issued by the municipalities where the young people involved in the activities come from. There would be two types of vouchers: for young people and for trainers. (The model should be further developed in consultation with the municipalities, MCs and CSWs)

Conditions for using services in clubs from municipalities that have not established youth centers. For municipalities in the PPR that have not established clubs, and want to provide measures for their citizens-young people to be included in activities, it is proposed to create a voucher for public transportation to the nearest MC where the pop-up club operates.

Informing about the work of the clubs. Of great importance will be timely informing young people in all municipalities about the activities of the club and their inclusion under the same conditions, regardless of which municipality they come from.

RECOMMENDATION No. 1: Support in social work through Youth Pop up Clubs

Activities related to social protection in the Youth Pop up Clubs would be aimed at providing **psychosocial support to young people through meetings with experts in the club premises.** A key role in the implementation of this activity is the involvement of civil society organizations whose specialty is psychosocial support and mental health.

Types of activities:

- **Thematic support groups** aimed at dealing with stress, anxiety, low self-esteem and other psychosocial challenges;
- **Peer support groups**, moderated by professionals (psychologists, psychotherapists or social workers);
- **Safe spaces for discussion** of sensitive topics, in which young people can freely and confidentially share their experiences and challenges.

Method of implementation:

- **Group psychosocial support** as a form of preventive and supportive intervention for young people.

The planned activities represent **a cost-effective solution** that contributes to **reducing the stigma associated with mental health**, strengthening mutual support and improving the overall psychosocial well-being of young people.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2: Support in education through Youth Pop up Clubs

Activities related to education within the Youth Pop up Clubs would be aimed at **educating young people - practical training** and **mentoring/assistance in learning** (primarily students at risk of poor academic performance in the education process).

Types of activities:

- **Practical trainings** on various topics that will spark interest among young people that have practical value and are not taught in formal education: housekeeping, home maintenance and repairs, finance and savings, entrepreneurship and agri-business skills, etc.
- **Youth mentoring - peer learning** involves high school and college students providing educational support to younger elementary or secondary school students (homework preparation, test and exam preparation, study techniques, and motivational support).

Method of implementation:

- Meetings are organized **once a week**, in the premises of the Pop-up clubs.

- Trainers are **experts from the local community** who transfer their knowledge of skills, while mentors receive **short preparatory training** and **continuous support** from the municipal education advisor and/or partner civil society organizations.

The planned activities represent a solution that contributes to **improving educational outcomes and personal development,** as well as **the social inclusion** of young people through structured support and guidance.

ONLINE SOURCES

[1] www.bitola.gov.mk

[2] www.prilep.gov.mk

[3] www.resen.gov.mk

[4] www.demirhisar.gov.mk

[5] www.krivogastani.gov.mk

[6] www.dolneni.gov.mk

[7] www.mogila.gov.mk

[8] www.novaci.gov.mk

[9] www.krushevo.gov.mk

[10] www.pelagonijaregion.mk