


Youth Rights in the Republic of Serbia

FIRST TIME EVER

in the UPR

- This is a historic moment for the position of youth in Serbia.
- Only one of the recommendations made by Moldova to the Republic of Serbia in the past, could be linked to youth.
- In Resolution 35/14: Youth and Human Rights, **the Human Rights Council urges** the Member States **to consider addressing issues** pertaining to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights for youth **through the Universal Periodic Review**.
- I am representing the **UPR Youth Coalition**, made up of twelve CSOs from Serbia.

ISSUE 1: Youth Rights to work

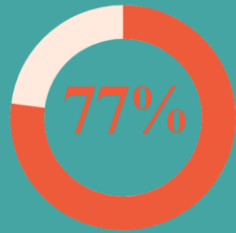
- **Every second young person in Serbia wants to leave the country!** 
- The 2021–2026 Employment Strategy and its 2021–2023 Action Plan **recognize youth as hard-to-employ persons.**
- Young people in Serbia find it difficult to employ, and even when they do, **their jobs are unstable and they do not exercise their labor rights**, making them vulnerable to exploitation.
- **The abuse of work** of those youth who are engaged via student and youth cooperatives is not addressed at all.
- Young people who have participated in traineeship programs report that **they did not sign a contract and received any wage for their work.**
- **Young people in Serbia deserve fair and stable employment** with the right to a contract and full labor protections.

Recommendation

- ✓ **Redesign** all the existing active employment policy programs **within the next 12 months to ensure** that youth beneficiaries can exercise their **right to just conditions of work**, including equal pay for work of equal value, full social insurance, and the right to join a trade union.

ISSUE 2: Meaningful participation in the decision-making process

- Young people in Serbia do not trust institutions and do not believe that their voice is heard.



do not trust
any politician



elections are not
fair and free



it does not influence
decision-making processes

- A big obstacle in creating an encouraging environment for the participation of young people is **insufficient funds allocated to the youth sector.**
- The project method of financing civil sector organizations, hinders the development potential of programs, does not encourage the sustainability of results, and represents **only occasional and temporary action in the field of youth policy** and work with young people.
- In order to educate youth about political participation, it is necessary that they are met with the civic education from the high school years, **as a compulsory subject in high schools.**

Recommendation 2:

- ✓ Implementation of the program for financing youth organizations through changes in the Law on Youth and Rulebook on financing and co-financing programs and projects of public interest in the youth sector by the end of 2024.
- ✓ Establish continuous youth participation and civic education in schools and universities during the 4th Cycle.

Issue III: Youth's right to health and access to healthcare

- **Serbia has only five mental health centers;**
- National Mental Health Protection Program Action Plan provided for the opening of another five centers in 2020, **but it never happened;**
- The existing network of psychosocial support for young people is not enough to cover their needs;
- Many young people **cannot afford** private counseling;
- The **insufficient availability of experts** in the field of mental health protection and improvement is one of the most pressing issues;
- Serbia **lacks a law on psychotherapy** clearly defining who may work as a psychotherapist and under which conditions;
- Serbia also **lacks a nationwide register of community psychosocial support service providers for youth**, which would facilitate their access to reliable information on providers of such services.

Recommendations:

- ✓ **Take urgent measures** to expand the community support network by opening youth centers offering free counseling.
- ✓ **Establish a nationwide register** of psychosocial support service providers within the next 12 months.
- ✓ Amend school curricula within the next school year, so they must include programs **equipping children and youth with techniques** for maintaining and improving mental health, as noted in the National Mental Health Protection Program.

THANK YOU

from all the members of the UPR YOUTH COALITION SERBIA:

Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, National Youth Council of Serbia (KOMS), Civic Initiatives, National Association of Youth Workers (NAPOR), the Union of Secondary School Students of Serbia (UNSS), Mental Disability Rights Initiative of Serbia (MDRI), Association of Women - FemPlatz, Za Tebe #VAŽNOJE, the Initiative of Roma Women Students, Child Rights Centre, Centre for Youth Work (CZOR) and Centre for Youth Integration (CIM).

